

## Ukraine: Romana Vasylevych

May 15, 2005



Romana Vasylevych lives in Minneapolis. She moved to the U.S. from Ukraine seven years ago. (MPR Photo/Marta Berg)

Minneapolis, Minn. — Romana Vasylevych grew up in Lvov, Ukraine. She moved to the United States seven years ago.

Lvov is called the second capital of the Ukraine. Kiev is the capital city, but Vasylevych says Lvov is very patriotic and traditional.



Traditional  
costume

Vasylevych was a professional musician back in Ukraine. She played the bandura, a traditional folk instrument with 64 strings.

As is the custom in Ukraine, she retired after 25 years as a performer. She then had a chance to move to another country, and chose the U.S. because she has many relatives who live here.

Vasylevych still plays the bandura at various functions. She's also a server at Kramarczuk's deli in Minneapolis, which caters to Eastern Europeans.



Professionals

Vasylevych likes the United States very much, she says.

"I like so much that everyone is smiling. It's very comfortable to be around people. Everybody asks me, 'How are you?'" she says. "It's different story how they never listen to me how I am. But everybody says 'How are you?' and smiling. It's very comfortable in life."

Vasylevych says, however, there are a few things she is not happy with, particularly the ready availability of guns.



Young musician

"I can't understand how I can go and give somebody money and take to home a gun -- like children, you know what happens sometimes. It's a shock for me," she says.

She also says she doesn't like that medical insurance is so expensive, and that too many people can't afford the insurance, or the cost of health care.

Vasylevych is a permanent resident of the U.S., and needs to improve her English skills before she can apply for citizenship.

Bosnia-Herzegovina: Armin Budimlic  
by [Erin Galbally](#), Minnesota Public Radio  
May 16, 2005



Armin Budimlic at work in Rochester.  
(MPR Photo/Erin Galbally)

Rochester, Minn. — Armin Budimlic grew up in the city of Prijedor, located in the northwestern corner of Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was born in 1964 into a family of non-practicing Muslims.

Budimlic went through the Bosnian school system, and after graduating from college he secured a job with a ship painting company in the neighboring state of Slovenia. His wife and young daughter stayed in Prijedor. Budimlic planned to make enough money to move back permanently, build a house and raise his children.



Back home in  
Bosnia

But in 1991, the former Yugoslavia began to fall apart. Bosnia-Herzegovina declared its independence,

angering Serbia. Soon Prijedor was occupied by the Serbs, who conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing and set up concentration camps around the area.

It was during this time that Budimlic lost contact with his wife for several months. When they were finally reunited, he learned the she and his young daughter had spent a week imprisoned in one of the camps.



Their arrival

After fleeing Prijedor, Budimlic and his family lived in a refugee encampment in Croatia for a year and half. Finally they gained admittance to the United States and moved to Rochester in 1994.

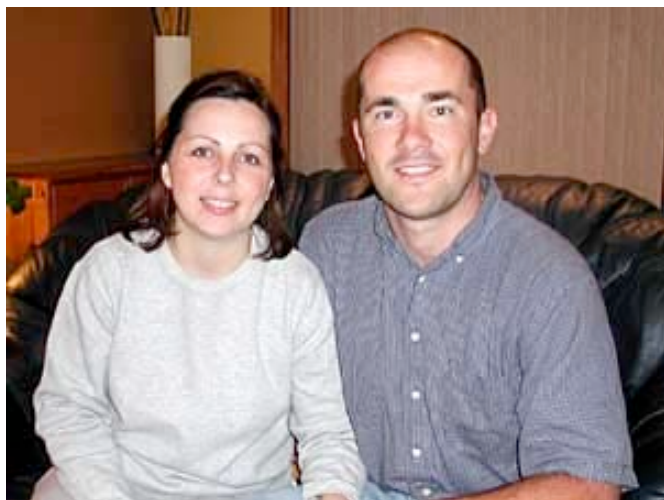
Now Budimlic is associate director of the Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association, which helps refugees and immigrants settle into life in the Rochester area.

He returns to Bosnia every other year to visit with family. He says nearly a decade after the conflict, mass graves continue to turn up remains of missing relatives. Budimlic says he feels lucky to be alive.

## United Kingdom: Lindsey and Andy Lee

by [Eugene Cha](#), Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



Lindsey and Andy Lee live in Belle Plaine, Minnesota. They moved here from Scotland three years ago.

(MPR Photo/Eugene Cha)

Belle Plaine, Minn. — The Lees -- Lindsey, 29, and Andy, 33, immigrated to Minnesota from Scotland. They have daughter, Myrren, who is 3.

Lindsey is a stay-at-home mom. Andy is a production manager in the semi-conductor field. He works in Bloomington. job. They live in Belle Plaine, southwest of the Twin Cities.



Their old house

The Lees are from Stratham, a small town southwest of Glasgow. Their hometown is much different from this area, they say. It's got a very rural atmosphere. It's hundreds of years old, with a lot of history behind it.

Lindsey says the house they lived in had its own history - over its first 400 years of existence, it was a bar, then a bank, then another bar -- before being converted into a house.

The Lees say they moved to the U.S. because they wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to travel and experience new cultures, while they had the freedom to move.



Stratham,  
Scotland

"Both of us were on the same page about moving to another country, just to try out other culture," says Lindsey. "We were just two years married, and we were no children, just the two of us -- a good time to pick up and do something with it while we both had the urge to try it."

The Lees say that living in Minnesota has taken some adjustment, but since they've traveled to the U.S. before they weren't really surprised by much. They do say that Americans keep to themselves more than their Scottish countrymen, so it's taken a while to feel more at home.

Lindsey and Andy Lee say it was quite difficult to navigate the bureaucracy when it came to getting a Social Security card, driver's license and so forth.

The biggest issue for them being away from Scotland is not being close to their families. Andy also misses the sports back home.

"I miss soccer. I don't get into American football. And, the golf -- the season is very short. I miss my friends as well. Sometime I would play soccer, training and going for a beer. I miss that."

## Uzbekistan: Elena Klimenko

by Nikki Tundel, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Elena Klimenko grew up in the Soviet Union. She came to the United States in 1999 from Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. Today she works at Marshall Field's and lives in Burnsville.*

*(MPR Photo/Nikki Tundel )*

Burnsville, Minn. — Elena Klimenko, 40, was born in the Soviet Union. She is an ethnic Russian -- her parents were born in Russia, but were moved to Uzbekistan during World War II.



In Lenin we trust

Klimenko says it was interesting being Russian in Uzbekistan, which is a Muslim culture. She says there were Russian schools for Russian society, and Uzbek schools for Uzbek society.

In Russia, when the Soviet Union fell, Klilmenko

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says it was hard to get food, and she worked for months without getting paid. Klimenko moved from Tashkent to the United States in 1999 with her two children, saying she came for a better life.

"I just brought my kids, boys 13 and 11, \$400 in my pocket, and my boiling pot," she says.

Klimenko says she wanted to move to the U.S., in part because of the feeling that anyone can be successful if they work hard. She also recalls seeing her brother's citizenship ceremony.



Coming to  
America

"And the judge said, 'It's not the perfect country, but let's make it better.' I really liked that. To get something better, we have to work hard. And I really agree with that," says Klimenko.

Klimenko lives in Burnsville with her two sons, now aged 19 and 16. She is a sales associate at Marshall Field's.

## India: Krishna Rao

by Julie Siple, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Krishna Rao at his desk at Medtronic.*

*(MPR Photo/Julie Siple)*

New Brighton, Minn. — Krishna Rao, 24, is from Madras, India. He's an associate software engineer at Medtronic.

Rao came to Minnesota in the fall of 2001 to do his graduate work at the University of Minnesota. After completing a masters degree in computer science, he got an internship at Medtronic, and eventually a full time job.

Rao is now developing software that gets embedded in machines and devices. He is currently working on a device that would provide treatment for enlarged prostates.

Slightly more than one-third the size of the U.S., India is home to more than one billion people. The country is located in southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and Pakistan. New Dehli, located in the north, is India's capital.

The official languages of India are Hindi and

English, but many other languages are also spoken. Indians are 81.3 percent Hindu, 12 percent Muslim, and 2.3 percent Christian. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh leads the government; India is the world's largest democracy.

India has received significant attention recently for its contributions to the high-tech economy. The southern city of Bangalore is often considered its high-tech hub.

## Laos: Xu Xiong

by Toni Randolph, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Maiyia Thao and Xu Xiong are Hmong. They came to St. Paul nearly a year ago, after spending more than a decade at a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand.*

*(MPR Photo/Toni Randolph)*

St. Paul, Minn. — Xu Xiong is 36. His wife, Maiyia Thao is 32. They and their seven children were in the first group of Hmong from a refugee camp in Thailand that arrived in St. Paul in 2004.

Xu Xiong is from a village called Houi Kham Pheng in northeast Laos, near the border with Vietnam.

Xu Xiong was about 9 when his family left their home in Laos, and were sent to the Ban Vinai refugee camp in northern Thailand. They spent 10 years there before transferring to the Wat Tham Krabok camp, just north of Bangkok.

Ban Vinai, on the border of Laos and Thailand, was one of the largest refugee camps. The camp had no electricity, running water or sewage disposal, and was severely overcrowded. At its peak in 1986, Ban Vinai had nearly 43,000

residents, 90 percent of whom were Hmong.

When the Thai government closed Ban Vinai in 1992, some refugees were deported back to Laos. Others were sent to Wat Tham Krabok, including Xu Xiong. He and his family stayed at the Wat camp for 11 years, until being allowed to move to the U.S. in June 2004.

Xu and Maiyia say they like the U.S. because they're learning English, they have better housing, and their children have a chance at a better life.

"Back in Thailand, we didn't have a chance or an opportunity to find a job," says Xu. "We don't know how to better educate our children, or to find a job to help our children. So we thought coming to the U.S. and having them go to school, and having them learn to find a job ... is much better than living back in Thailand."

Over the past year, more than 1,000 Hmong refugees have moved to the area from the same refugee camp.

Xu Xiong says he and his family don't miss the camp at all, except that they have many relatives still living there.

## Thailand: Tanee Meeboon

by Toni Randolph, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Tanee Meeboon is from Thailand. He says he likes the U.S. because of the opportunities for education and advancement here. (MPR Photo/Toni Randolph)*

Minneapolis, Minn. — Tanee Meeboon is from Bangkok, Thailand. He's 46 and lives in Minneapolis with his wife and three children. He first came to the U.S. as a student in 1988 and then went back to Thailand.

He came to the U.S. again in 1999, first to Florida. He moved to Minnesota the next year because he has cousins here. Meeboon says learned about good opportunities for foreigners and decided to move his family here.

For the past five years, Meeboon has managed the Sawatdee Thai restaurant in Minneapolis.

Meeboon says he wants his kids to get a good education in English.

"Because I graduated from here and I know the system over here, that's why I just want my kids to get education like I did 20 years ago," he says.

Meeboon says it's harder to get a good education in English in Thailand, because the schools are very expensive.

Meeboon is a permanent resident right now, but says he plans to become a citizen soon.

"I like this country because, as everyone knows, it's the land of opportunity," he says. "If you work hard you can stay here and be happy over here."

## Cambodia: Vannak Tep

by Toni Randolph, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005

Tep says she would like to continue her education, to get another degree in business administration or management. She says her dream is to return to Cambodia to start her own business, "or do other things that can help my people over there."



*Vannak Tep is from Cambodia. She came to the U.S. seven years ago, at the urging of her family, to pursue a better life. She is now a U.S. citizen. (MPR Photo/Toni Randolph)*

St. Paul, Minn. — Vannak Tep grew up in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. She came to the U.S. in 1998, when she was 20. Her family encouraged her to come to make a better life. She has a sister who lives in the Twin Cities, but the rest of her family remains in Cambodia.

Tep spoke little English when she arrived, but now she's working as a loan officer in a financial services company. She's also in school studying accounting.

Vannak Tep became a U.S. citizen four years ago.

"I like America, because there's a lot of opportunity here and people follow the laws," she says. "When you need help, people always help you. I like studying in school here because the teachers are great. They help you. They understand you're an English second-language speaker."



## Vietnam: Tam Bui

by Toni Randolph, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005

just wants a simple life -- to get a job and have enough to survive. Then, he says, he'd be happy.



*Tam Bui is from Vietnam. He's been in the U.S. for nine years.*

*(MPR Photo/Toni Randolph)*

St. Paul, Minn. — Tam Bui, 42, is from Saigon, Vietnam. He's 42 and has been in the US for nine years. He entered the U.S. as a refugee, along with his parents and a sister. They live together in St. Paul.

Tam Bui's other seven siblings are still in Vietnam with their families. Bui is taking English classes at Vietnam Social Services. He says he enjoys the schooling, although English is hard for him to learn because of his age.

Tam Bui says he and his family members came to the U.S. seeking more freedom. He says when they were in Vietnam, his father was imprisoned for 10 years because of the Viet Cong.

Tam Bui is responsible for taking care of his parents and sister, all of whom have health problems. So he's been unable to search for a job. When asked what his goals are, he says he

## China: Qingling Liu Fritz

May 15, 2005



*Charles Fritz of White Bear Lake and Liu Qingling on the morning of their wedding in February 2005.*

*(Photo courtesy of Qingling Liu Fritz)*

White Bear Lake, Minn. — Liu Qingling just arrived in Minnesota a few months ago. Her English name is Qingling Liu Fritz.

Ling moved to the Twin Cities on Feb. 8, 2005 from Zhanjiang, People's Republic of China, to marry a Minnesotan, Charles Fritz. Zhanjiang, a coastal city of about 6.5 million, is one of the larger cities in Guangzhou Province and one of China's special economic zones.



Wedding dress

Ling, 50, has been in Zhanjiang for most of her life. She lived in an apartment with her mother until her mother died a few years ago. Her father

died several years earlier.

Ling has held various government factory and office jobs, but retired last year. She likes to travel, and she's visited many places in southern China.

Ling met Charles, who works for Xcel Energy, on the Internet a couple years ago. They started corresponding with the help of the Internet site, which translated their messages. Charles visited her a little more than a year ago -- it was the only time they met before she moved to the States, and he took her on her first airplane ride.



Ling and  
interpreter

Ling and Charles were married at the Ramsey County Courthouse on Feb. 26, in the presence of a packed courtroom of friends and Charles' family. They live in White Bear Lake.

Ling stays at home most days. She doesn't drive, but she walks to Kowalski's, which is about a block away, whenever she needs groceries. She does housekeeping and cooks, and she watches TV to pass the time. She speaks very little English. Charles has a computer translation program to help them communicate.

They had spoken of plans to enroll her in an English class, but she has yet to start any formal or informal language lessons. Ling is a very warm and social person, and has already made several friends who speak Chinese; they're mostly women who also immigrated from China or Taiwan and attend Twin City Chinese Christian Church, where Charles is a member.

The only other people Ling knows in the U.S. are a few women from her city in China who also met their American husbands through the same Internet dating service, but they live in other states.

## The Philippines: Haide and Jay Florentino

May 15, 2005



*Haide and Jay Florentino moved to Minnesota from the Philippines in October 2003.*

*(MPR Photo/Melody Ng)*

Mounds View, Minn. — Haide and Jay Florentino moved their family to Mounds View from Manila in October 2003. They have four sons -- Stephen, 22, Franco, 19, Gabriel, 12, and Jesson, 4.

Haide, a registered nurse, had always wanted to work in the U.S. Her husband was ambivalent about moving, but when a hiring agency that brings nurses from the Philippines to the U.S. offered Haide visas for the entire family, he was willing to uproot and give the U.S. a try.

Haide works as a nurse at the Presbyterian Homes in Roseville. Jay was an architect in the Philippines. Once in the U.S., he could not find work in his field. After a year of job-hunting, he took a position as a technician in a dialysis center.

Haide and Jay are originally from a small seaside village on the island of Negros Oriental. People in their village grow most of their own fruits and

vegetables, and Haide and Jay have a very strong love for growing food and working the earth. They hope to learn more about the types of foods they can grow in their backyard in Minnesota.

They say they would not have come to the U.S. if they had to live in a city like New York or Los Angeles, but they like life in Minnesota. They say it's a good place to raise their children, that it's a comfortable and pleasant place environmentally, socially and spiritually.

Haide and Jay say they hope to save some money while here so they can return to the Philippines when they retire.

## Korea: Mi Sook Kim

by Nikki Tundel, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Mi Sook Kim moved to the U.S. with her husband and two children in 1991.*

*(MPR Photo/Nikki Tundel)*

St. Paul, Minn. — Mi Sook Kim, 41, is originally from Seoul, Korea. She and her family moved to the United States in 1991, because her husband wanted to immigrate here.

In Korea, they were in the middle class. Her husband was running a publishing business and she was a full time housewife. Kim says in Korea, the husband's income is enough to cover the family's expenses, but in the U.S. both have had to work. Finding a job is very hard here.

Her husband is a carpenter, remodeling houses. She works at the Korean Service Center.

Kim says the cultural differences are still quite apparent, even after 14 years in the U.S. In school, she says her children are sometimes kept at lunch because they don't like the school lunch food.

In Korea, people are approached very indirectly,

and here things are very direct. There is more confrontation here. She thinks her children have faced embarrassment many times because of this.

Kim says the biggest surprise about moving here was that she expected a luxurious life, because America is such a rich country. What she found is that people are working very hard here, but she likes that.

Kim says she wishes Americans would have more understanding of different cultures. For example, Kim says, "we eat differently, so we smell differently. Americans smell like cheese. And Americans smell like garlic. It's just different. One isn't superior or inferior. Also, when we speak English, we have an accent. It's not easy to learn English. So be patient."

## Somalia: Abdirahman Adan

by Nikki Tundel, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Abdirahman Adan left Somalia to escape the country's violent civil war. He lived in a refugee camp in Kenya for nearly four years before moving to the United States.*

*(MPR Photo/Nikki Tundel)*

Columbia Heights, Minn. — Abdirahman Adan is a native of Somalia. Adan, 23, came to Minnesota in 1995 with his parents and siblings. They fled their hometown of Mogadishu in 1990 when war broke out in Somalia, and spent several years in towns in Somalia and Kenya before being accepted into the United States.

Adan lives in Columbia Heights. His mother and eight of his brothers and sisters live in Minnesota. The last brother lives in Kenya.

Adan is a student at the University of Minnesota, studying computer science and medical technology. He also is a member of the U.S. Army, having joined six years ago. He served in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Adan says the only reason his family came to the U.S. was that it was open to them.

"My oldest sister came here first with my uncle. And she sponsored us to come to the United States," he says.



American soldier

Adan says he enjoys being in the Army. He says he joined because of the experiences he had as a child during the war.

"I really liked what the Kenyan government and the UN did for us during the war, after we fled our country with just clothes and shoes, with nothing. We started from zero as a refugee so the Kenyan military helped us," Adan recalls. "With that experience in my head, it was one thing I always wanted to do was help other refugees. And the one way I could do that was join the Army and help with peacekeeping."

Adan says during his childhood in Africa, he had dreams of becoming a civilian pilot, but that didn't happen because of the civil war.

"Dreams in Africa are mostly dashed because they are in a situation they have no control over," Adan says. "Young man growing up in Somalia, Sudan, you want to set high goals for yourself. But when you are 20, you fight in a civil war. I'm crossing my fingers right now that the young ones growing up now have a better chance than my generation did."

Adan says his dreams now are to finish college and take care of his family.

"I'm also begging God that the war stops in Somalia and around the world."

## Kenya: Peter Kingoina

by Brandt Williams, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Peter Kingoina moved from his native Kenya to the U.S. in 1995, to continue his education. He is the pastor of a church in Minneapolis. (MPR Photo/Brandt Williams)*

Andover, Minn. — Peter Kingoina is a native of Kisii, Kenya. He's 52 and a pastor of the Minneapolis Kenyan Adventist Church. He is married and has four children. They live in Andover.

He came to the United States in August, 1995 -- first to Berrien Springs, Michigan, to gain his Ph.D in theology at a Seventh Day Adventist university. Kingoina and his family moved to Minnesota in June 1998.

Kingoina says they moved to Minnesota because they heard there was a group of Kenyans here. His aim was to establish a congregation in the Twin Cities.

Kingoina was a pastor in Kenya as well, overseeing thousands of congregants in several parishes at one time.

He says he is glad to be helping Kenyans and

other Africans who now live in Minnesota, through his work at his current congregation. Still, he says he dearly misses his home country.

"My congregation was over 4,000 people," says Kingoina. "We met many national leaders and we interacted on national issues, so you miss that kind of privilege and profile to impact that many. But ... we're meeting the needs of other Kenyans here and making an impact in this community, we think."

"We're not crying for what we've lost," he says. "We make the best use with what we have."

## Oromo immigrants strive to be heard

by Art Hughes, Minnesota Public Radio

May 18, 2005



*The Oromo region occupies a portion of southern and central Ethiopia, including the capital Addis Ababa. (Map courtesy of Oromian National Academy )*

**The Twin Cities area offers refuge for many immigrant groups from around the globe escaping social and political problems in their homelands. One such group is the Oromo people from Ethiopia. One of the largest populations of Ethiopian immigrants in the United States has settled in the Twin Cities metro area.**

**The varied cultures and disparate groups from the eastern African nation make national identity a complex and touchy issue. The Oromo find fertile ground in the Twin Cities for speaking out against claims of human rights abuses in their homeland. Meanwhile, relationships with fellow Ethiopian immigrants remain strained because of a long history of political differences.**

Minneapolis, Minn. — The sycamore tree is an important symbol for people who come from the Oromia region of Ethiopia. Its broad limbs and green canopy serve as a town square of sorts. It's a meeting place and a signpost in the landscape. Oromo people put pictures of sycamores on their walls, on calendars and even on the flag for their political movement.



Robsan Etana

The tree isn't native to Minnesota, but the Oromo Center in Minneapolis' Cedar-Riverside area could serve the same purpose for the immigrants who live here.

Oromo elders sit on chairs against the walls of a small front office space. The walls are covered with pictures, many of graduating Oromo students receiving diplomas and other awards.

Hassan Hussein has been an active volunteer at the Oromo Center since he first arrived in the Twin Cities in 1994. The U.S. offers freedoms Hussein said are not available in his country.

"Back home in Oromia, the mere act of expressing a political opinion could get you in prison for years," Hussein said. "There are people who have been in prison for like 15-20 years never being brought before a judge or a court, simply for expressing their views. Being Oromo here you can organize openly, you don't have to hide."



Hassan Hussein

Hussein is Head of Foreign Relations for the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), a militant opposition group formed in the 1970s after more than a century of oppression of Oromo people.

The OLF is seen by the current ruling government of Ethiopia as an unlawful organization. Others say the government's claims are exaggerated to justify brutal security measures.

Either way, some people say the OLF offers the best hope for some sort of unified government there. Hussein hopes the ability to speak freely in America can help generate support for the Oromo cause.

"You can develop your language, nobody looks at you as a threat," Hussein said. "So it is a lot easier to be Oromo here in Minneapolis than in Oromia."



Oromia flag

The state demographer's office estimates there are about 7,500 immigrants from Ethiopia in Minnesota. Immigrant groups say the number is double that.

About half the Oromo population, both in Ethiopia and the United States, is Muslim. The rest are mainly Christian. Two Minneapolis churches offer Oromo language services.

At Bethany Lutheran Church on Franklin Ave., singer Tirfe Guteta warms up the crowd with a 20-minute song and prayer session as the Sunday evening sun came through the traditional stained glass windows. About 300 people in the pews stand and sway, clasp their hands, weep and sing with religious devotion. A spicy mixture of smells waft in from food prepared in the downstairs kitchen.

It's unlikely any Ethiopians other than Oromos are at this church service. The history of strife in their homeland translates to a loose self-segregation here in their adopted country. There are dozens of different ethnic separations in Ethiopia, based largely on language and cultural differences.



Lutheran Oromos

While the average Minnesotan may not know the national origin of their coffee shop owner, the different Ethiopian ethnic groups often patronize restaurants, coffee shops or stores depending on the ethnic identity of the proprietor.

Robsan Etana is a member of the Oromo Citizens Council centered in St. Paul. Among other things, the three-year-old organization started an effort with the Advocates for Human Rights to document stories by Twin Cities Oromos of abuses in Ethiopia.

"These people are just political prisoners," Etana said. "They did not commit any crime. They just didn't want to endorse this regime's oppressive agenda."





Ahmed Wassie

Etana said many Oromo immigrants in the U.S. still have friends and family in Ethiopia, and so the ties are strong. But like many people who land in the American melting pot, they find the ability to hold on to vital cultural links weakens with every generation.

"For me, my culture is still my culture," Etana said. "But for second generation Oromos, you come to America, you go to American school, and the language is probably not going to die -- but it gets mixed with mainstream American language. That's our worry."

Ahmed Wassie has lived in the U.S. since 1973. He is ethnically Amharic, not Oromo. He supports the Oromo people's right to live freely and participate in the Ethiopian government. But he doesn't understand why many Oromos and others in America put ethnic differences ahead of the greater good of the country.

"They don't fight. You don't see name-calling," Wassie said. "You don't see fistfights in neighborhoods or something. But you see cold shoulders. People not speaking to somebody who speaks Amharic if you are an Oromo. Most Oromos, for example don't care whether they speak to an Amharic speaker. That always shocks me."



Solomon Gashaw

Wassie hosts a weekly talk program on KFAI-FM radio called "Voice of Ethiopia," where he said he sometimes tries to bring each side together to arrive at common solutions.

Solomon Gashaw, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota, Morris, grew up in the Oromia region but does not consider himself Oromo. He left Ethiopia in 1977. He is hopeful the ethnic differences won't always be such an obstacle.

Gashaw said immigrant life in America sometimes has a way of tempering differences, as people from divergent backgrounds live and work near one another.

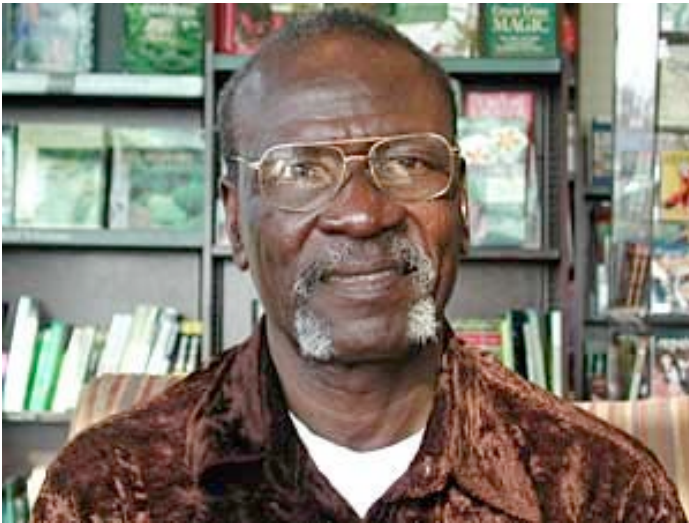
"As an immigrant you'll be sometimes forced to work in the same industry, factory and so on," Gashaw said. "There is cordial relations. Generally people are polite."

Gashaw said many Ethiopians in the U.S. retain hope of someday returning to their homeland. But after more than 30 years of political unrest, most have developed quiet, productive lives in America.

## Nigeria: Kola Coker

by Julie Siple, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Kola Coker, a native of Nigeria, lives in Champlin, Minnesota. (MPR Photo/Julie Siple)*

Champlin, Minn. — Kola Coker is from the state of Lagos in southwestern Nigeria. He belongs to the Yoruba ethnic group. Coker, 61, came to Minnesota in 2000 and now lives in Champlin with his wife and three of his children. His eldest son is still in Nigeria; Coker has filed a request to bring him to the U.S. to join the family.

In Nigeria, Coker studied mathematics and education. He worked for the Ministry of Education, then started his own business. In Minnesota, he works with developmentally disabled adults at Mount Olivet Rolling Acres.



Coker with son

Coker and his family came to the U.S. through the Diversity Visa Lottery Program, in which the U.S. government issues 50,000 immigrant visas each year to people who come from countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S.

The lottery's goal is to broaden the nation's pool of immigrants. Winners are chosen randomly from all qualified entries, and millions of people apply every year. Lottery winners are allowed to bring their spouse and any unmarried children under the age of 21.

Nigeria, which lies on the west African coast between Benin and Cameroon, is the most populous country in Africa. It is home to more than 128 million people. Lagos, its largest city, has a population surpassing 10 million.

Nigeria is comprised of more than 250 different ethnic groups. The largest ones are the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast.

The country's official language is English, although a large number of African languages are spoken. The country is approximately 50 percent Muslim and 40 percent Christian; 10 percent of people follow indigenous beliefs.

Nigeria is led by President Olusegun Obasanjo. The country has substantial oil wealth, but more than 60 percent of people live in poverty (according to 2000 estimates from the U.S. government).

## Ghana: Michael Amoako

by Julie Siple, Minnesota Public Radio

May 16, 2005



Back home

Ghana is a country of more than 21 million people on the west coast of Africa. Its neighbors include Togo and the Ivory Coast.

In 1957, Ghana became the first sub-Saharan country in colonial Africa to gain its independence. The country is a democracy, led by President John Kufuor.

The capitol of Ghana is the coastal city of Accra. A number of different ethnic groups make up the country, of which the Akan tribe is the largest.

In terms of religions, 63 percent of Ghanians are Christian, 16 percent are Muslim, and 21 percent follow indigenous beliefs.

English is the official language of Ghana, although a number of African languages are also spoken, including Akan, Moshi-Dagomba, Ewe, and Ga.



*Michael Amoako, a native of Ghana, is shown here with his wife and infant son. (Photo courtesy of Michael Amoako)*

Golden Valley, Minn. — Michael Amoako is from Accra, the capitol city of Ghana. He's 28 years old, and he lives in Golden Valley with his wife and 6-month-old son. Amoako is studying accounting at Normandale Community College in Bloomington. He hopes to become a certified public accountant.

Amoako first came to the United States in 1999 to work as a camp counselor at Luther Park Bible Camp in Danbury, Wisconsin. After a brief trip back to Ghana, he returned to the Wisconsin camp, and soon after applied to study in the U.S. He has been living in Minnesota since December 1999.

## Liberia: Moses Hyneh

by Julie Siple, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Moses Hyneh and two of his children at their Minneapolis home. (MPR Photo/Julie Siple)*

Minneapolis, Minn. — Moses Hyneh is from Harper, a city in Maryland County, Liberia. He was born in 1953 and belongs to the Grebo ethnic group.

Hyneh left Liberia on Sept. 25, 1990, to escape war. He and his family lived in a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast until civil war struck that country as well. A resettlement program allowed Hyneh to come to Minnesota.



Moses and his wife

He arrived on May 19, 2004, with three of his children. His wife remains in the Ivory Coast with a fourth child, and Hyneh has filed a petition to bring them to the U.S. Hyneh now lives in south Minneapolis.

Hyneh worked for the government of Liberia before the country's political instability. Then, while living in the Ivory Coast, he was ordained a pastor. Here in Minnesota, he works overnight at Sam's Club.

A nation of three million people on the west coast of Africa, Liberia was founded as a home for freed African-American slaves in the 1800s.

The country was relatively stable for more than a century, until a coup in 1980 overthrew an elected government. In 1989, a rebel uprising led by Charles Taylor resulted in civil war. Taylor was later elected president.



Ordination

In August 2003, a peace agreement ended 14 years of civil war and led to Taylor's resignation. Today Chairman Gyude Bryant heads the transitional government, and the United Nations maintains a strong presence in the country.

Civil war destroyed much of Liberia's economy, especially the infrastructure of Monrovia. Today thousands of Liberian refugees remain in other west African countries. English is the official language of Liberia, although a number of ethnic group languages are also spoken.

## Guyana: Deo and Shari Outar

May 15, 2005



*Shari and Deo Outar moved from Guyana, in South America, to Minnesota in 1987.*

*(MPR Photo/Curtis Gilbert)*

Maplewood, Minn. — Shari Outar, 54, and her husband Deo, 56, came to Minnesota from Guyana in 1987 and live in Maplewood. Shari's two sisters, her brother and her father live in Minnesota.

She also has a sister who lives in New Jersey, and another, who is a legal resident of the U.S., but lives in Guyana. Deo has a brother in New York, two sisters in the United Kingdom and two sisters in Guyana.

The Outars are of East Indian decent, and Deo is a practicing Hindu. On Sundays he worships at Shri Gaayatri Mandir, a temple founded by Guyanese Hindus that occupies an unassuming one-story wood building in North Minneapolis.

Deo works as an auditor for the state of Minnesota and Shari is a nurse. Even though they had good jobs in Guyana (Deo was the controller of the Guyana Gold Board), the overall economy was bad, and the crime rate was, too. They were worried about being robbed or worse, and they

had grates over the windows of their house.

Shari had family who lived in Minnesota, and so they decided to move to the United States. They lived with her parents until they were able to find an apartment nearby, and all told it took them two years to get on their feet.

They were both chartered accountants back home, but most U.S. companies didn't recognize their credentials. Deo studied to become a CPA, and Shari worked as a bookkeeper and then got her nursing degree.

They have prospered in the U.S., and Shari can't imagine ever going back to Guyana. Deo gets homesick sometimes and dreams of moving back there when he retires. He misses being around his own people, the relaxed lifestyle and cricket.

## Colombia: Gerardo Cajamarca

by Bianca Vazquez Toness, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Gerardo Cajamarca moved to Minnesota in 2003. He protested against the government in his native Colombia, and says he left after receiving death threats. (MPR Photo/Bianca Vazquez Toness)*

Minneapolis, Minn. — For Gerardo Cajamarca, it was his fight against globalization that brought him to Minnesota.

Cajamarca organized labor unions in his native Colombia and protested against Plan Colombia, the United States' proxy war on coca growers and traders in Colombia.



Speaking out

He says it was after fellow dissidents were killed and he received death threats that he sought

political asylum here.

Cajamarca arrived in Minnesota in 2003. He lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two sons.

He says living here is bittersweet. He holds the United States responsible for aiding corruption in his country, where he says government leaders are complicit in drug trafficking. But he also enjoys the liberties of being able to speak freely here and live without fear of retribution.

Cajamarca is a member of the Steelworkers Union, and spends his time speaking around the country against Plan Colombia, globalization, and the Coca Cola Corp.

## Ecuador: Manuel Marcatoma

by Bianca Vazquez Toness, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Manuel Marcatoma is originally from Ecuador. He moved to Minnesota in 1998, seeking a better life. But he says his time in the U.S. has been hard as well. He's had financial problems and difficulties with his marriage.*

*(MPR Photo/Bianca Vazquez Toness)*

Minneapolis, Minn. — Manuel Marcatoma, 42, arrived in Minnesota in 1998. He's from a rural area outside the city of Cuenca, Ecuador. He worked there in house construction as a carpenter.

Marcatoma says he left Ecuador because life there was hard. But his experience in the U.S. hasn't gone that well either.

Marcatoma and his wife came went to New York first, and quickly amassed \$40,000 in debt because of some medical bills. He says he and his wife split up during that difficult time.

Marcatoma ended up on the street, totally broke. A counselor suggested he move to another state. He had cousins in Minnesota who had said good things about the area, so he came here.

Marcatoma says the scene was better in New York since there were a lot of Ecuadorians there, but Minnesota is more calm. He found work, and paid off all of the debt he had accumulated.

Marcatoma works in the kitchen at a restaurant in downtown Minneapolis. He works about 12 hours each day, five days a week. Before he used to work all seven days.

Marcatoma says the rest of his family is still in Ecuador. He says he misses his mother most of all -- he hasn't seen her in 10 years.

## Guatemala: Pedro and Maria Ochoa

by Bianca Vazquez Toness, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Pedro and Maria Ochoa at home with their four children. (MPR Photo/Bianca Vazquez Toness)*

Minneapolis, Minn. — Pedro and Maria Ochoa, from Guatemala, have lived in Minneapolis 10 years. They left Guatemala primarily because of political unrest.

Pedro says the unrest and insecurity is still present there, years after the civil war ended.

"During the civil war, if someone didn't like you, they would kill you. Either the guerrillas or the military," says Pedro Ochoa. "Lots of people disappeared, including my brother-in-law. People still don't know what happened to him. So we couldn't put up with it anymore."

Pedro came to the U.S. first, and lived in Texas for six months. Maria joined him then, and they moved to California, where a brother of his was located.

They had a chance to come to Minnesota in 1996 -- Pedro says he had a job lined up with a flexible work schedule.

At that time, Pedro says, there weren't many Latinos in Minnesota.

"And there wasn't much to waste your money on like in California," he says. "That was the difference. There aren't so many places here to go out and spend money, so that's one reason we've stayed."

Maria says there are more opportunities in the U.S. She is going to school to learn English, and in the last year, she got her driver's license.

Maria says during their first Minnesota winter, she fell on some ice and broke her arm, "so for a long time I was scared to walk outside in the winter."

If they still lived in Guatemala, Pedro jokes that his cholesterol wouldn't be so high.

"Because there we had to do exercise. The food is much different and not as fatty as it is here. Here when people walk, it's only the distance to their cars," he says.

Maria says she misses her parents and other family.

"I miss the food and music," she adds. "When I hear the marimba, I think of my country."



## Mexico: Marta Morales

by Bianca Vazquez Toness, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Marta Morales moved to Minnesota from Mexico. She says she misses almost everything about her home country. But the move was worth it, because working in Mexico is "horrible." (MPR Photo/Bianca Vazquez Toness)*

Minneapolis, Minn. — Marta Morales, 43, has been living in Minneapolis for four years. She's from Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico.

Morales says she had a variety of jobs in Mexico. The last one was cutting hair, and that's her current occupation in Minneapolis.

Three of her children moved to the U.S. first, and she joined them three years later.

Morales says back home, it was hard for her to find good jobs because she didn't have a high school diploma. She also says it's hard for women over 30 to get hired.

"When you go to apply for a job they look you up and down, and they say, 'No, sorry. The job is for

someone with so many years experience, and, is skinny,'" says Morales.

Since her children were here, she decided to come to Minnesota.

Morales describes Minneapolis as a pretty city. The cold and snow are "a drag," she says.

"People here are very understanding. People here don't seem too bothered or affected by immigration," says Morales.

Morales says she misses everything about Mexico -- the streets, food, her family. There are some things she has sacrificed by moving. But she says it's worth it.

"Working in Mexico is horrible," she says. "You are poorly paid and poorly treated. You work 12 to 15 hours a day, and there's no incentive for hard work."

## Canada: Neil Marriott

by Marisa Helms, Minnesota Public Radio

May 15, 2005



*Neil Marriott, a native of Winnipeg, Canada, watches a curling match in his Eden Prairie home. (MPR Photo/Marisa Helms)*

**Neil Marriott is a native of Winnipeg, Canada. He is 42. He's been living in Eden Prairie with his wife, Brenda, and two young children since 1998.**

Eden Prairie, Minn. — Neil and Brenda Marriott both work in the field of information technology, and came to the Twin Cities in search of better jobs. Neil's hometown of Winnipeg is only six hours from the Twin Cities.

He says assimilating into American culture is very easy. Neil says he doubts there are two countries more alike than the U.S. And Canada.

Both Neil's and Brenda's parents, and some siblings, still live in Winnipeg. Neil, Brenda and kids Ryan and Alana easily travel back to Canada several times a year to visit.

Since Canadians don't have to register when they come to the U.S., it's difficult to get a precise

number of how many Canadians live in Minnesota. The common estimate is between 10,000 and 20,000. About 500 of them live in the Twin Cities.

Marriott enjoys watching curling, a very popular sport back home, on satellite television from Canada. On a recent day, he was tuned into the Curling World Championships.