

## Appendix B

### Two Illustrations of Threads Posted in the Bios Assignment

NOTE: These are 2 of the 65 threads in that class discussion of the bios. One of the reasons I have up to 65 people in my totally online courses is to maximize the diversity of experience that will be shared within the online community.

#### Illustration 1: Thread of cultural consultant in the Bios discussion.

Vladimir is the cultural consultant. Note the content and perspectives taught through his bio.

##### Message no. 71

Posted by **Vladimir** on Thursday, June 20, 2002 5:21pm

**Subject Vladimir**

Russian Cossack from Kazakhstan, Student of Political Science and Foreign Languages, Graduate Teaching Assistant in French

##### 1. My Culture & Its Norms:

I grew up in the former Soviet Union in the 1980s and 1990s. I began to understand the concept of the USSR at a very early age. It all started when a nineteen-year-old woman gave birth to a boy at the Sheremetievo Airport in Moscow, while traveling back home to Kazakhstan after a vivid vacation in the Great Capital. Without any recollection of the first two years of my life, I entered this world through the city that will forever mesmerize my imagination.

"All roads lead to Rome". In the former USSR, all roads led to Moscow. Growing up in Shymkent, Kazakhstan, I spent most of my summers in the Soviet "city of lights".

My uncle, then a mechanical engineer, amused himself observing the culture shock I underwent during each of my visits. To him, who left Shymkent after high school, my adolescent experiences of coming to Moscow were slightly reminiscent of his own. He religiously took me around the city trying to teach me as much of its history and culture as I could absorb. As I grew older I began to appreciate these excursions more and more often. Soon, I was able experience Moscow on my own. My vacations seemed to become shorter and more remarkable than ever.

One does not comprehend nor does one really care about

the political or cultural reality at the age of nine. Playing tag in the local park in the center of Shymkent, I never wondered why my best friends looked Asian, why they were circumcised by the age of 5, or why at home their grandparents called them by different names and spoke a different language. Going to Moscow and listening to my uncle's take on life made me notice such things. I became more aware of such differences and soon I was to face them.

In mid 1980s, Almaty (the capital of Kazakhstan then known as Alma Ata) saw a series of ethnic riots directed against Russian population. Several people were murdered. At the time I was staying with my aunt in Omsk, a large industrial city in Siberia, Russia. My Russian buddies gave me a warm welcome and the scent of exciting adventures in the city's allies and parks was in the air. Everything was going great - the tag, the hide and seek, the back-yard soccer - until one day I found myself all alone, boycotted by everyone I knew. Not understanding why, I tried to make a conversation only to get beat up by a local bully. Injured and humiliated, I couldn't stop hearing the words he repeated as he roughed me up: "You, damned Kazaks, will pay for everything you've done!" "Kazaks", but I was Russian!

My life has never been the same. It changed forever and also for everyone. Suddenly, I found myself in a clear and well-defined reality, where there were Kazaks and there were Russians, and no Soviet Union in between. After 1991, and the "break up" of the USSR, my family, all the Russians, and I became guests in our own country. Kazaks became our hosts. Our physical and cultural differences became more obvious than ever. Things like the color of one's skin; the shape of one's eyes; one's original culture became the main factors of social definition and separation. Pretty soon being a Russian meant tougher job market, narrower educational opportunities, and more defined social borders. Thugs had a field trip on the streets. Russians started to develop a complex of inferiority in many areas of social and personal life. By the early nineties, the Russian population in Kazakhstan started to shrink. Russians moved to Russia, hoping for a warm welcome, but almost never receiving it. They were outsiders without jobs, without homes, hoping to start over in their original Motherland. The local Russians were almost of no help, seeing them as nomads, or rejects from a newly established muslim state.

My family stayed. Surprisingly, I managed to keep most of my Kazak friends. I knew all of them since early childhood and our old friendship kept us together. In fact, my friends were a ray of light in my life. My parents were not. My father, who was a dedicated communist once, took the "break up" very personally, as

did my mother. All they have supported, believed, and lived for crumbled in front of their eyes. The wave of "new culture" was too strange, too drastic, and too liberal to accept. Street violence of the degrading society frightened them. Concerned about my physical and moral well-being, they became very protective. A typical Saturday night would be a scene of family crisis, with me wanting to hang out with my friends and them shutting me in my room. Soon it became too extreme to bear. At the age of sixteen I left my family and Shymkent driven by a dream of starting a new life in Moscow.

Ever since the "break up" my trips to the Moscow became a way of escaping from the suffocating social environment of Shymkent. I longed for the next trip. In August of 1991, my uncle (already a street vendor with engineering degree) and me spent a night at the barricades of Kremlin. It was a life-changing experience for me. It was there that I first heard such words as "democracy", "freedom", "independence", etc. It was then that I started to dream about changing the former USSR for the better. The idea of helping people to be the best they can be, in spite of their cultural, ethnic, racial, or social status grew very quickly on me. It was then that I got an idea of coming to the US and learning all I could about the democratic way of life and the ways of bringing the country towards it. In 1994 I submitted an application to the AFS (American Field Service), an intercultural exchange and communication organization. Less than a year later I was on my first ever flight to the US.

## 2. My Educational and Work Background.

I graduated from the Gymnasium # 8, a selective well-known State High School in Shymkent, Kazakhstan. I entered the school at the age of six and graduated in 1995 with an equivalent of the American diploma. I specialized in social sciences, humanities and foreign languages.

In 1996, I participated in the Freedom Support Act, initiated by the AFS with the purpose of intercultural learning between the former USSR and various Western countries, including USA. As part of the AFS program, I enrolled and graduated from Francis W Parker High School in Chicago, where I completed my senior year and received a high school diploma.

In 1996, I entered a four-year program at xxx College. There, I studied various liberal arts courses, choosing Political Science as my major. In 1997, I spent a summer studying at the University of xxx. In 1999, I spent a summer studying at the Catholic Institute of Paris, France. In 2000, I graduated from xxx College with BA in Liberal Arts

majoring in Political Science, with concentration in Political Economy.

In 2001, I worked. I had a variety of jobs, ranging from service industry and retail to interpretation and e-commerce. In the fall of 2001, I entered xxx University where I currently teach French as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, simultaneously perusing MA in Humanities. In the future, I would like to work for the UN. I plan to get involved with promoting and implementing educational policies around the world.

### 3. My Learning about Other Cultures, Prejudice and Inequities:

My learning about other cultures has always been a part of me, or in any case ever since I was a child playing in the park. In the beginning it was about noticing simple differences and similarities among racially different members of the same group. Later, it turned into seeing nothing but differences, whether they were physical or cultural. The concept of group was rapidly withering away. Now, I am trying to define the similarities (of which I see so many), and disregard the differences between Kazaks and Russians. However, I do not limit myself by the former, or the latter. I would like to believe that I see much father beyond just that part of the world. My goal is to link any culture and all cultures. I would like to help people see the similarities inherent in all cultures.

What happened in the former Soviet Union was an outcome of the repressive and artificial soviet policies, which completely excluded culture from consideration. The Soviets tried to erase and forget people's beliefs, cultural identity, and religion, substituting them by the phony notion of equality and brotherhood within the failed utopia of communist establishment. No state is, or ever will be powerful enough to take one's culture away from them. And when it tries, what happened in Kazakhstan and Russia is a good example of the consequences that would result.

Kazak culture and traditions are being revived. In fact, they have never left, but were suppressed for a while. It is a matter of time until they are rehabilitated. It is also a matter of respecting their return and dealing with them on the equal basis.

As for myself, I would like to participate in helping to create a healthy environment for cultural revival. I would like to help build institutions and laws that reject any sort of discrimination and allow for an open, peaceful, and above all, mutually stimulating cultural intercourse between two or more cultures. I would like to be able to learn about these cultures through direct and natural interaction. I would like to believe that

one day there will be a world with less cultural borders; a world that would make it all possible.

4. What I Want to Learn from this Course: I, along with Merry, would also like to learn more about how to build a crosscultural learning community. I would also like to learn more about my own culture through the interaction with all the participants of this course, as well as all Cultural and Resource Consultants, and all of the resources used in the course.

Vladimir, Cultural Consultant

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**Message no. 125**[Branch from no. 71]

Posted by **Morris** on Sunday, June 23, 2002 12:56am

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Hello Vladimir, For a young person, you have done more traveling than many do in a lifetime!

I really enjoyed reading your biography and I would like to ask you several questions.

In your first paragraph you wrote "I began to understand the concept of the USSR at a very early age". You went on to explain very well your impressions of Moscow and your home.

I was especially interested in your phrase "the concept of the USSR". What was your understanding of that concept when you were younger, and how do you think of it now?

Later you wrote about the "repressive and artificial Soviet policies...." Can you relate your thoughts about the repression then and now as you look back at your early life? As a young Soviet citizen how did you feel and understand that repression? Was it talked about much in your family and friends?

You also wrote that as a young person you heard terms such as democracy and freedom. What did these terms mean to you then, and what do they mean to you now?

Thank you very much for your response. I look forward to continuing a dialogue.

Best, Morris

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**Message no. 158**[Branch from no. 125]

Posted by **Vladimir** on Monday, June 24, 2002 1:54pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Hello Morris,

I also enjoyed reading your Bio, which by the way is very well written. I will be very happy to share with you as much info as I can regarding the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

"The concept of the USSR" was a fascinating thing in the imagination of a growing boy. Since I first entered a learning institution (approximately around 4-5 yrs old), I was immediately exposed to the idea of multi-culturalism under the parental care of the great USSR. As you must know, the former USSR was composed of 15 republics, each of which represented a particular nationality. So, for instance, Kazakhstan was known as KazakhSSR (which stood for Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic), Uzbekistan was known as UzbekSSR, Ukraine was known as UkrainianSSR, etc.

Each one of the republics was presented as a part of a huge family of the former USSR. All of the republics had similar rights and obligations in face of the others and of the state. Each republic was equal under the popular soviet motto of: "Brotherhood, Equality, and Hard Work". Really, the only difference between the republics was the nationality according to which they were classified by the soviet state. However, these nationalities were insignificant next to the greater nationality of the Soviet Union. Being a soviet citizen, a member of the same family came first, before the actual nationality (or original culture) of a particular individual.

Combined with the outspoken greatness of the military power and therefore of the guaranteed security; with the overwhelming idealism of communism and of the bright communist future full of happiness and leisure; with the geographic vastness, "the concept of the USSR" rotating around the idea of one "big" "warm" multicultural family seemed pretty incredible and wonderful to me, as a boy.

Morris, as you have probably noticed, in my Bio I call Soviet Union a utopia. Well, that's precisely what it was. As a boy, I tended to idealize what I saw and understood. It was not so hard to do, considering the amount and the high quality of the soviet propaganda delivered through any possible form of communication and learning. As I grew up I began to realize that. My experience of being "roughed up" in Omsk was very revealing. It showed me how far apart really are places like RusSSR and KazSSR. That happened several years before the "break up".

What is it like no? Two years ago, I was flying back to Kazakhstan with a pit-stop to visit friends and family in Moscow and then Yekaterinburg, Russia. One of my Russian friends was wanting to come with me to

Kazakhstan, to look around and learn more about the newly established country. His family and friends in Russia were extremely opposed to that, and convinced him to stay. They were afraid that he would get hurt, or worse yet, kidnapped far away from home. "Far away from home" in my vocabulary simply meant "in Kazakhstan". Russians' (the native residents of Russia) perception of the other former soviet republics, now mostly independent states, is biased because of their fear and ignorance towards other nationalities of the former USSR. They may have known about the existence of other nationalities, but they didn't really know the other nationalities. When "all roads lead to Moscow" and you are a citizen of RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic), why and what would you possibly want to know about the outskirts of the empire? My answer to that: not much, in fact, nothing at all!

Today, the "distance" between the newly established countries of the former USSR is increasing very rapidly. With the revival of their original cultures, traditions, and religions the countries are becoming more and more alienated from each other. The popular belief is that the stronger they become economically and politically, the less need they will have for each other. The Russian influence (RSFSR - Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic was the most dominant player among the former soviet republics) is becoming smaller every year. Give them another generation or two, the newly formed countries will be fully independent and free to act however they desire. With American support and interest growing in that part of the world, and with newly advertised American-Russian "buddy-buddy", no one has much interest in bringing up the USSR. My hope is that in the distant future, all of the newly developed states will live in mutual respect and tolerance. I also hope that they keep their borders open to the neighboring states. For most people in the former USSR, including myself, looking back will soon become pointless. The USSR is gone forever. What stays, is the memory of unity and sharing of the same history. I think it would be easier to build on this foundation working together than separately. The economic and political success of all of the former soviet republics will depend on how fast they will swallow their nationalistic attitudes and learn to respect each others cultural differences. The fastest and the easiest way towards better future for all of them lays in their cooperation and not in their complete independence.

Morris, as for the repression and the repressive policies, I only mentioned them to stress the fact that the original culture, the religion particular to that culture and religion in general, native customs and traditions, etc., were simply disallowed, or repressed. The artificial policies of the former Soviet Union

stressed the idea of public existence. In other words, one must find a balance outside of oneself among one's comrades, in other words one's brothers and sisters. One's life was meant to belong to the group first. It is the well-being of the group as a whole that mattered the most, etc. Worrying about such petty things as one's spiritual peace and happiness, or one's conscience before God, etc., were ridiculed and later prosecuted. Individualism, self-expression, self-exploration were repressed and banned. Communal existence was encouraged and enforced.

Morris, I hope this is helpful. I'll look forward to your response. Take care,

Vladimir, Cultural Consultant for Russian and Eastern Europe

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**Message no. 156**[Branch from no. 71]

Posted by **JERRY** on Monday, June 24, 2002 11:19am

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Vladimir

I found your bio very compelling. I have always been interested in Soviet culture and politics. I was wondering in your initial sentence you describe yourself as a Cossack but you don't mention it in the rest of your bio. I know about the traditional concept of Cossacks, but how is this culture and identity described in modern Kazakhstan or Russia?

Jerry

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**Message no. 159**[Branch from no. 156]

Posted by **Vladimir** on Monday, June 24, 2002 2:07pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Jerry,

Thank you for the reply. You ask a wonderful question. I decided not to say anything about my "cossack" origins once I realized how long my Bio had turned out. I did hope someone brings it up, and here you are!

Three years ago I discovered that most of my family are cossack. I visited a hermit relative who lives in a small cabin in the woods just north-west of the river Don, along the Russian-Ukrainian border. He told me that most of my family were sent away to Siberia and Kazakhstan under Stalin's "cleansing act" of 1933. As you probably know, the "reign of terror" also known as Stalin's repressions officially started around 1928-9. That is when the repressed were given a reason of why they are being executed or sent off to Siberia. In reality, the repressions started before that. I would

say around 1926. That's when chunks of the soviet population were physically removed from their land and transferred to various other parts of the USSR, some to Siberia, others to the Far East, third to Central Asia. Chechens would make one good example of such peoples, Cossacks would make another.

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**Message no. 192**[Branch from no. 71]

Posted by **BEN** on Monday, June 24, 2002 10:07pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Vladimir-

Your bio is fascinating. Living in xxx, I am so conditioned to think of racial issues as being about black and white. Your life illustrates how racial issues can exist outside of this paradigm. Your observations about the artificial attempt of Soviet brotherhood to erase individual culture is very thought provoking.

Ben

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**Message no. 233**[Branch from no. 192]

Posted by **Vladimir** on Tuesday, June 25, 2002 11:41am

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Ben,

I am glad you have noticed another perspective on racial relations I attempt to explain in my Bio.

People often oversee the ethnic and cultural diversity of the former USSR, which is not a surprise considering the tremendous effect of the dramatic social and cultural transformations that took place in the former USSR throughout 70 yrs of communism.

The soviets started from "zero". To put in bluntly, the they had erased all history prior to 1917. "Over night" Russians, Tartars, Chukchas, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Ukranians, etc., became Soviets. Suddenly, it didn't matter whether you came from the South, North, East, West, or what color skin and what shape eyes you had. It didn't matter if your family tree dated back 500 years. At a drop of a hat all that ceased to exist. Your official status was that of a soviet citizen, and your life's goal and your duty before yourself was to prove you deserved it. From the very early age you were taught to define yourself as a Soviet person, the most fortunate title in the world!

In his essay "Clash of Civilizations", Samuel Huntington talks about the identity crisis many of the Eastern Block countries, including the former Soviet republics,

would undergo with time. He raises a question of conflict between the social and the private. He stresses the exceeding importance of culture, religion, and family opposed to political and economic values. His main point is that when it comes down to it, people will always chose the former before the latter. People are born with former, while the latter is learned and can easily be rid off.

This may explain the conflicts that keep arising in the former USSR. Today's chechnya is one great example of it, the Balkans are another.

Vladimir, CC

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**Message no. 544**[Branch from no. 367]

Posted by **Vladimir** on Friday, June 28, 2002 5:11pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

I enjoyed reading your Bio as well. Thank you for an opportunity to learn more about you and your family.

In my recollection, the soviets did a good job securing as much information about the US as possible. With well screened mass media, history books, etc., and also because of the vastness of the country, millions of soviet people knew very little about the US. In fact, even if the government desired its people to consider the Americans as villians and a major threat, most people we too ignorant about the US to hold any sort of extreme opinion about it. Curiosity often borders with fear. Naturally, unable to obtain any solid knowledge about the US and isolated from the rest of the world for decades, soviet people were afraid of the enemy they couldn't even concieve of.

Of course, schools and society in general stressed the large nuclear potential the Americans have. But the soviet propaganda did a wonderful job securing people's sleep but reassuring them about the soviet nuclear superiority. And it wasn't hard to believe, considering that the entire soviet culture was centered around military. 2/3ds pf the state budget were poured into the military. Every single member of the population was trained to face a nuclear attack and knew what to do the worst case.

Bottom line, people's minds spent very little time wondering about the US in general. It would change by the start of the 80s, with fear, but also the interest in the West growing among population.

I hope this helps. I will look forward to continuing our talks.

Take care,

Sincerely,

Vladimir, CC for Russia and Eastern Europe

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**Message no. 389**[Branch from no. 71]

Posted by **Susan** on Wednesday, June 26, 2002 10:47pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Hello Vladimir -

I am glad to read that you are participating in this online course! Since we don't have any modules on Central Asia - maybe between the two of us we can cover it - just as Justin and I share Central Asia.

On another note, how is Arabic going? I didn't see anything in your bio about the number of languages that you know. If you don't brag, can I brag for you?

Let me know if you need anything regarding resources, I may have some in the office.

Susan, Middle East Resource Consultant.

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**Message no. 545**[Branch from no. 389]

Posted by **Vladimir** on Friday, June 28, 2002 5:15pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Susan,

Thanks a lot! I will look forward to working with you as well. I am very glad to be side by side with you on this one. Arabic is just getting started. You need to give me a couple of weeks. I am just beginning to learn the alphabet. I will be more than happy to get together with and do some research on Central Asia. I've come across a few website, so we know they are out there. Take good care and have a wonderful weekend,

Vladimir

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**Message no. 558**[Branch from no. 71]

Posted by **Maryam** on Friday, June 28, 2002 9:31pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

I found your bio quite personal and provocative. I read your response to my bio as well, so you know my Czech background as well. I was in the Czech Republic during its Break-up from Slovakia. Although personally memorable for me, I am sure the dissolution of the Soviet Union was much more dramatic. The break-up of Czechoslovakia was relatively peaceful. I was wondering if you feel that the ethnic strife that lies throughout the former communist bloc will ever lessen? It seems in every corner of that part of the world there is some

kind of ethnic strife - whether it be the relatively small problems in Hungarians in Slovakia or much more violent struggles in Chechnia and Yugoslavia. As an undergraduate, I had a history professor who said that the only way to maintain ethnic peace in this region was to have a strong authoritative government. At the time, I vehemently disagreed with him, but today I am a little less hopeful. I would welcome any opinion on the matter. Thanks.

Maryam

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**Message no. 724**[Branch from no. 558]

Posted by **Vladimir** on Monday, July 1, 2002 12:14pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Dear Maryam, how are you?!

I would like to disagree with your history professor. I think that the former authoritarian governments are the reason of the today's ethnic strife in several countries of Eastern Europe.

As I've said in several discussions so far, and also in my Bio, the Soviet Union and other authoritarian states under its influence, suppressed the original cultural, religious, traditional identities of their people for many decades. The revival of these identities is currently resulting in sometimes severe conflicts and wars.

You would probably say that many of the conflicts existed prior to the authoritarian rule. In fact, that they have been there for centuries. Ok, but is suppressing, silencing, shutting them up, frightening them by Goolags, etc., a way of helping them to come to a resolution. They have never been political and economic institutions favoring a positive resolution of these conflicts. With the establishments of such institutions there will be answers leading to more peace and prosperity in that part of the world. If it takes several generations, it must.

I hope this is helpful.

Take good care,

Vladimir CC for Russia and Eastern Europe.

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**Message no. 766**[Branch from no. 558]

Posted by **Marc** on Monday, July 1, 2002 6:23pm

**Subject Re: Vladimir**

Dear Maryam,

My take on ethnic conflict in Eastern Europe is that it can occur under democratic or authoritarian

government. While the war in Chechnya occurred after Russia became nominally democratic, the ethnic conflict/civil wars in the former Yugoslavia occurred under the authoritarian leadership of Milosevich, who was a virulent Serb nationalist.

I think the more important factor is how minority ethnic groups are treated. In Russia today Chechens are called "Blacks" and are considered a criminal people by probably a majority of ethnic Russians. There are some good reasons for ethnic Russians to harbor resentment toward Chechens (they control fruit and vegetable markets in Russia and they have very effective mafia networks throughout the Russian Federation), but for Russians to take such a negatively racist attitude toward a whole group of people is a big problem.

Ethnic Serbs and Macedonians generally have similarly racist views of ethnic Albanians who live in their countries (and they also have good reasons to distrust ethnic Albanians since they, too, often are involved in criminal activities). So my point is that as long as people strongly hold racist beliefs and divide their country into "we" and "they" groups, ethnic conflict is likely, regardless of whether the government is dictatorial or democratic. I think the same dynamic is at work in democratic Israel, where Jews and Arabs too often view each other first and foremost through a racist prism.

Best regards,

Marc, resource consultant for Eastern Europe.

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## Illustration 2: Thread of a teacher in the Bios discussion.

### Message no. 191

Posted by PAUL on Monday, June 24, 2002 9:56pm

### Subject Paul's bio

American, midwesterner, Jewish, husband,  
father of 3, traveler, upper-middle class, educator

**1. My Culture and Its Norms** My family stressed the importance of education. This was a value held throughout the Jewish community of the small midwestern city in which I spent my first 18 years. The emphasis was on collecting academic accomplishments rather than on having rich learning experiences. Having a child go to Harvard or Yale would be a real source of pride for a family in the community. By extension, parents hoped their children would enter prestigious (meaning high paying!) professions. Most of my friends are either doctors or lawyers. To his credit, when I told my dad that I wanted to be a teacher he was very supportive and proud of my decision. My younger sister went on to be a teacher as well, which was a lesser violation of community norms because most of my mother's friends didn't work outside the home. A woman's wage would be a secondary income, not the family's primary source of income.

Prejudices seemed to lessen with each passing generation in my family. My father's mother, an immigrant from Poland, was prejudiced against non-Jews and African-Americans with a sense of benign obliviousness. My parents were much more open, but were not always politically correct by modern standards. I have made a serious commitment throughout my life to examine and get beyond the prejudices that are implicit in my subconscious mind. My sister is like me in that regard; my brother is more like my grandmother.

### **2. My Educational and Work Background**

I received a B.A. in economics from University of xxx and an M. A. in Global Education from xxx. I just finished my 13th year of teaching social studies to high school students. My teaching has focused on global education and community service. I have also taught social studies methods in a collaboratively taught course at xxx University for nearly a decade. I have worked for the past 6 years on projects involving civic education with educators from Poland, Ukraine, and South Africa. This work has enabled me to share my classroom with many international visitors, while allowing me to make several trips to Eastern Europe for conferences and workshops.

I will be participating in this class for only 3 of the 5 weeks, as I will be in South Africa from July 9 to July 22. I currently teach in an alternative

School humanities program.

### **3. My Learning about Other Cultures**

One of the most important experiences in my life was the arrival of a Fulbright exchange teacher from New Zealand for my 6th grade class. Brian Wilson was an extraordinary educator who got me excited to learn about the world. I found very little of global value in my K-12 education beyond this experience. After college, a close friend and I decided to go to New Zealand to visit Mr. Wilson. One thing led to another and we ended up traveling for 10 months to 20 countries in the South Pacific, Asia and Europe. Since then I have continued to travel extensively, especially in Nepal. I consider myself an experiential learner, so I value my direct experiences much more than anything I have read. I find that there is nothing better than sitting down for a meal in someone else's home to really get a global education!

### **4. What I Want to Learn from this Course**

I have two main interests in taking this course. First, I am interested in the experience of taking an online class. I am enthusiastic about communicating with a group of interesting people about global education. My second interest is to study opportunities for my students conduct primary research via technology with people in various parts of the world.

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**Message no. 193**[Branch from no. 191]

Posted by Ramon on Monday, June 24, 2002 10:26pm

**Subject Re: Paul's bio**

Paul,

Enjoyed reading your bio. I do agree that spending time and having the experience of interacting with people from other cultures really makes one see things differently. Based on my experiences, one begins to appreciate the simple things.

In your bio where you talked about your family, community and their attitude towards others, you have made a comment that "I have made a serious commitment throughout my life to examine and get beyond the prejudices that are implicit in my subconscious mind." How did you manage it? What strategies did you use?

I look forward to more conversations with you.

Ramon

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**Message no. 211**[Branch from no. 193]

Posted by Yasemin on Tuesday, June 25, 2002 1:22am

**Subject Re: Paul's bio**

Hi Paul,

Nice meeting with you. I just wanted to share a comment. In the same line with Ramon's reply, you were talking about overcoming your own prejudices. I strongly believe that I do not have the same prejudices my parents have especially against the non-Muslims. Throughout years, I learned to disagree on issues but believed in the importance of living in an equal and just world. I am doing my best. But sometimes I honestly find myself very challenged because of some controversial issues.

For instance, this Spring quarter we were discussing on how to teach about homophobia in our classrooms. Until that time, I thought that I had overcome these issues but apparently I did not. I have homosexual friends but as a teacher I felt uncomfortable talking about these issues in the classroom, probably because of my religion. Now, I am paying more attention to my own biases and I am very happy to other people who can go beyond their biases.

I look forward to working with you.

Peace, Yasemin, Cultural Consultant

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**Message no. 198**[Branch from no. 191]

Posted by Hunsuk on Monday, June 24, 2002 10:54pm

**Subject Re: Paul's bio**

Hello Paul,

Welcome to this WebCt course. I think this cyber world will make us get along with in a real world. Your work background and your stories are very interesting to me. Could you tell me more about your teaching in an alternative humanities program? Is your program related to 'Rethinking Columbus'?

And could you tell me your students' responses to many international visitors in your projects involving civic education? I am looking forward to learning more about global cultures from you. Thank you for your attentions.

Hunsuk, Cultural Consultant

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**Message no. 327**[Branch from no. 191]

Posted by Ileana on Wednesday, June 26, 2002 2:15pm

**Subject Re: Paul's bio**

Hi Paul:

I read your bio and I 'm impressed with your crosscultural experiences and traveling. I definitively agree with you, having a meal with someone from a different culture is much more valuable as an experiential learning than reading dozen books on that person's culture. Now with the huge advances of technology this would be an interactive way to have students conduct research. Do you have a set up project in mind with goals, procedures, etc. I' m asking because I like to share your insights as you are an expert in teaching global studies. Thanks for your time.

Ilena, Cultural Consultant for LA

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**Message no. 479**[Branch from no. 327]

Posted by PAUL on Thursday, June 27, 2002 11:31pm

**Subject Re: Paul's bio**

Ilena-

One of my goals in this class is to establish opportunities for my students to communicate with people from around the world via computer. I do not have such a program in place yet, but I am looking for opportunities.

Paul

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**Message no. 386**[Branch from no. 191]

Posted by Forest on Wednesday, June 26, 2002 10:33pm

**Subject Re: Paul 's bio**

Paul - I teach at a local high school and have recruited a couple of participants for your program over the past few years. They all think it's a great program. Keep up the good work.

Forest

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**Message no. 392**[Branch from no. 191]

Posted by Susan on Wednesday, June 26, 2002 10:56pm

**Subject Re: Paul's bio**

Dear Paul,

My name is Susan. I was very interested to read your bio. I am interested in your Polish/Jewish background. Though I didn't mention it in my bio, my god-parents are Jewish and have attended many Sadars in my lifetime! I have studied Arabic and Turkish and hope to start Hebrew this year. Even though she was raised Irish-Catholic, my mother studied Hebrew when I was growing up. I think it had some influence in my interest in the Middle East.

I also do a lot of research on migrant populations,

specifically the middle eastern diaspora. Of course, the most well ancient and documented Middle Eastern diaspora are the Jewish populations all over the world. I am currently researching for a book on the Somalis.

I just wanted to introduce myself. Please let me know if you need anything regarding Middle East resources. It may not be your area of interest, but I am trying to recruit some teachers during the course into studying the Middle East.

I am very happy to be a part of this course.

Take care, Susan, Resource Consultant for the Middle East

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**Message no. 1261**[Branch from no. 191]

Posted by Angela on Monday, July 8, 2002 4:56pm

**Subject Re: Paul bio**

Dear Paul,

I just read your bio for the first time and can't believe how similar we seem to be! I, too, became hooked on traveling soon after college and have spent almost every summer overseas, mostly in developing countries. I am very curious about your trip to South Africa this summer and would love to know more about it.

I spent 6 weeks in Soweto, Durban and Capetown on a "reality tour" the summer before the big election, in '93. It was amazing to stay in Black areas that white South Africans wouldn't dare go to. Wow, what an experience that was.

Have you ever taken any of your students overseas? The last 2 summers I took 12- to 16-year-olds to a small village in Nicaragua. What an eye and heart opening experience for affluent Northern California suburbanites.

I'm curious to know more about the projects you mentioned with South Africa, Poland and the Ukraine. Is there a website I can go to learn more? Can you point me in the right direction?

I created an elective course 7 years ago called "Teens Around the World" [teensaroundtheworld.com](http://teensaroundtheworld.com) in which my students learn about how children live all around the world TODAY. I used to get in trouble for teaching too much of that in "regular" social studies classes because there just wasn't enough room for it.

My students have put together a terrific booklist that you may be interested in sharing with your students. I will e-mail it to you if you like. You can also go to our class website for a partial list. They are fabulous adult and young adult novels about children growing up in other cultures.

One more thing: I'm interested in knowing about the workshops and conferences that you attend overseas. Again, if there are any websites or particular organizations you can refer me to, I'd be grateful!

I hope you don't mind that I've asked you for so much information in my reply. It's obvious to me that you and I could give each other a lot of great ideas.

I will be out of internet range from July 23-28, but hope to hear from you sometime after that.

And thanks for reminding me that I'm not the only person out there obsessed with global education!! Sometimes I feel like such an odd duck.

Angela

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