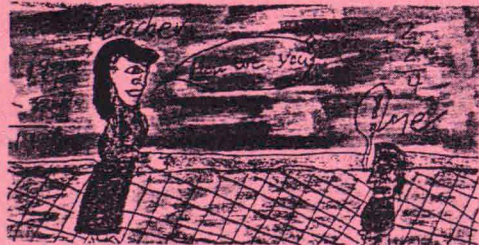


An Immigrant in the United States

I AM A Cambodian immigrant refugee living in the United States. My family and I left Cambodia because of the war in my country where I was born. I can't believe that we are free in this country. I was eight years old when I first saw different colored people. How strange, scary, and frightening to see white and black colored people, red and brown and yellow hair, blue, green, and brown eyes. I thought they had costumes on. My eyes had only seen brown-skinned people with black hair. The only pictures in books I had ever seen in my country were of Cambodian people who are of the brown race. Everything was different. The climate was so cold, and when I saw something white on the ground I thought somebody went up in an airplane and dropped lots and lots of tiny pieces of paper down on the ground. It was the first time I saw snow.



When I went to school I couldn't speak English and the teacher didn't speak Khmer. I couldn't understand what to do. It was very difficult. Eating in the cafeteria at the beginning was so different. I had never seen or tasted milk and never eaten cheese or butter. I had never used

a fork or knife. There were about five other Cambodian kids in my room who had been in America longer so they showed me how to use a fork and a knife. At first I didn't like the foods cheese, salad, pizza, and milk, so I threw them away. The foods I hated are some of my favorite foods now, like pizza, cheese, and milk.

American kids showed me how to play American sports and we became friends. Today I feel very happy to be in a free country in America.

The color of people doesn't scare me anymore. I think how silly it was to be afraid. Everyone is the same inside with the same feelings.

*Ponn Pet, 11,
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