

# international CONNECTION

University of Southern California Office of International Services

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> *Belonging to many cultures,  
but owning none.*

*Clockwise from top left:  
Daniel Grove, Queluntam Banjai,  
Battulga Buyannemekh,  
Ana Paula Pereira de Souza,  
Christin Toubia, Loan Verneau,  
Shannon Haugh,  
and Negin Baradari.*



by Deborah J. Burke

Imagine being hauled away as an eight-year-old from the only country you know and love, to live in a foreign land. Then three years later, again, a new country. Then again. Each time you reinvent yourself, leaving friends, family and cultural traditions behind to start a new life. This is what happened to Loan Verneau (24), a USC interactive media graduate student, who was born in France, only to move to Switzerland, then Japan, and then China. He best describes himself as a Third Culture Kid. A term coined in the 1950s, Third Culture Kids (or TCKs) are people who spent their childhood living outside their parent's culture. According to sociologists, TCKs build relationships to all cultures, while not having full ownership of any. As such, they struggle to feel a sense of "home." However, the radical paradigm shifts TCKs experience give them a broad cultural mindset which is incredibly valuable in our rapidly shrinking world.

*continued on page 2*



*"...dream big and share  
your vision with as many  
people as possible."*

## Cycle Chic Comes to Campus *by Quyen Le*

Straight from the capital of cycle chic, Copenhagen natives, Johan Bender Koch and Kim Sanderhoff, are bringing their innovative bicycling lifestyle to USC. True to the pioneering spirit of entrepreneurs, these two undergraduate exchange students from the Copenhagen Business School created the FreeBike Project, LLC

while at the Marshall School of Business. Inspired by a popular marketing concept in Denmark, Johan and Kim built FreeBike Project at USC because of the entrepreneurial opportunities in the U.S. They describe it as a "green and innovative marketing company that helps brands reach out

*continued on page 7*

## Third Culture Kids *continued from page 1*

Loan's paradigm shift can be illustrated through a surrealist video game he invented. He opens his laptop to a maze in which the player's avatar is exploring a world. Just as the player gets comfortable, the maze is tipped over and the player falls into a completely different universe. "Things change," he says, "the objective is to create in the player one new way to look at things. Multiple things can be true based on your point of view." Loan had to modify his point of view after his mother, a modern dance teacher, moved him around the globe in search of work. The culture shock made him realize that identity constructs are not as rigid as they seem. "The way people do things is not right or wrong, just different."

For TCKs, this paradigm shift creates an incredible openness to other cultures. Ana Paula Pereira de Souza (21), a bubbly critical studies graduate student, moved from sunshiny Brazil to freezing Amsterdam at 11-years-old. She struggled to adapt to more than just the weather: "In Brazil people are mainly optimistic. In Holland, people are more closed. It can be hard to get to know people." Now, Ana Paula is like a cosmopolitan chameleon, easily adapting

Angeles home for now. But Daniel moves like the wind. Home "is wherever I am at the time."

The disconnect between a TCKs' birth home, cultural home and parental home can create an identity conundrum that makes it difficult to define oneself. For Christin Toubia (19), a political science and business administration double major, it is a "challenge" to define herself, because she is a kaleidoscope of culture. With a Norwegian mother and a Sudanese/Egyptian father, Christin was born in Norway and raised in Libya, Paris and Dubai. Besides this, her parents raised her with a *mélange* of beliefs. "My dad is conservative, coming from a Christian-Arab household, whereas my mom is quite liberal, having grown up in Norway," she says. So, how does Christin see herself? "Based on my cultural values, I identify most with Dubai. Honesty and respect are two very important things for me, and in the Middle East respect is huge."

A TCK's time abroad often cultivates a unique perspective on what it means to be "foreign." Shannon Haugh (26), a public diplomacy graduate student, grew up in the Philippines and is half-Japanese, half-American. Because of her American father, a Peace Corps volunteer turned economic development worker, Shannon always felt American. That is, until she came to the U.S. "All of a sudden,

## "Sometimes I feel like a fish-out-of-water among my people."

to wherever she roams. "I have a thirst [to travel]," she says. Yet still, when facing the fear of leaving home, "I'm always hesitant, what if I don't make friends?"

Home. That is a flexible word for TCKs. Where exactly is one's home? Is it one's birth country? One's adopted country? The country of one's parents? Or... is it whatever country one lives in at the moment? Public administration graduate student, Battulga Buyannemekh's (27) greatest dream is to return "home" to his birth country of Mongolia, even though he's lived there the least amount of time. Battulga, a diplomat's son, was raised in Russia in the last few years of the Soviet Union. In school, Russians teased him for being the only Asian kid. "I felt like, 'Why are they doing this to me?' I have a special place in my heart for Russia."

To combat the taunting, Battulga excelled at speaking Russian beyond the natives. "Teacher's jaws dropped because I was speaking perfect Russian." His Mongolian, on the other hand, is not-so-great: "Mongolians make fun of me because of my Russian accent," he says. "Sometimes I feel like a fish-out-of-water among my people." Despite this, Battulga's mission is to fully embrace Mongolia as his home, and become a government leader there - an unwavering commitment inspired by attending Mongolia's celebration of its 800th year of statehood. "My Mongolian DNA awakened!" he says.

For some TCKs, defining home is not nearly as clear. Daniel Grove (27), a graduate film student, was raised between Singapore, Sydney, Jakarta and Los Angeles. He is extremely flexible when describing his home. "I am Australian by citizenship, but I don't go around touting my Australianness," he says. With his Asian features, Daniel's Australian accent throws off listeners. "There are a lot of presumptions in the first three seconds," he laughs. Like many TCKs, he calls the cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic world of Los

I didn't understand the cultural references like *Star Wars*. I realized even though I was American, I wasn't a real American," she says. Thus, Shannon often felt like a "hidden immigrant" - a TCK who looks and sounds like everyone else but acts and thinks differently.

Like Shannon, many TCKs gain a unique perspective on 'Americanness' after arriving here. "The U.S. still baffles me. It is different from Europe and Asia," says Loan. "I love it because of the freedom. [But] there are no rules, no ritual, no set structure to society." Loan struggles to belong here and to grasp what it means to be American in such a diversified culture. On the other hand, many TCKs have found the rich cultural diversity welcoming, especially in places like Los Angeles. "Even if you're a Martian, people will accept you [there!]" laughs Daniel.

Globe-trotting, socially progressive, and culturally-attuned "global nomads," TCKs have what it takes to change the world. Bucking cultural categorizations, they bring a unique perspective that highly values other nationalities, redefines 'otherness' and reveals that identity is much more fluid than one might think. Daniel jokes that his perspective is "better than most registered voters. At the end of the day, everyone's still from the same Lego block. Ethnicity is just 4000 years of history that's lobbed onto us." With that understanding, it is not hard to believe that different races and cultures could eventually see past their differences and come together. Ana Paula believes, "If more people traveled, married from different cultures, there would be more understanding, less prejudice, more tolerance." Yes, in a rapidly shrinking world where adaptability and cross-cultural collaboration are critical, TCKs hold the key to the future: They simply adapt to the cultural maze of life - just like in Loan's video game.

*Deborah J. Burke is pursuing a MFA in Writing for the Screen and Television.*

# ONE OF A KIND

These students broke the mold! Meet the only international students at USC from their country, and learn what makes each of them unique.



**NEGIN BARADARI**  
**LUXEMBOURG**

- LLM, Entertainment Law
- Most fabulous thing about me: I showcased my own jewelry at London Fashion Week with fashion icon Vivienne Westwood. I was the youngest designer there!



**JULIA DA COSTA**  
**EAST TIMOR**

- MS, Regulatory Science
- Most impressive thing about me: I am a Fulbright Grantee.



**EMMANUEL DRABO**  
**BURKINA FASO**

- PhD, Health Economics
- Most fascinating thing about me: I am a flautist, cook and computer programmer.



**EMANUEL KHACHATUROV**  
**ARMENIA**

- BS, Business Administration
- Most extraordinary thing about me: I learned Armenian, Russian and English at the same time. So, I don't know my native tongue!



**SHAMSIAH ZURAINI KANCHANAWATI TAJUDDIN**  
**BRUNEI**

- Doctorate of Education
- Most regal thing about me: I hail from a sultanate state on Borneo Island.



**BADAR SULTAN**  
**OMAN**

- BS, Business Administration
- Most intriguing thing about me: I am a Jet Ski and flyboard enthusiast.



**USAMA DOUGLAH**  
**IRAQ**

- BS, Civil Engineering
- Most incredible thing about me: I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro to the summit in only 5 days.



**QUELUNTAM BANJAI**  
**GUINEA-BISSAU**

- BS, Accounting
- Most unique thing about me: I write, record and produce Hip-Hop, R&B, Zouk, and Dancehall music!



**MARIA LOPEZ PALACIOS**  
**NICARAGUA**

- MA, Strategic Public Relations
- Most admirable thing about me: I wrote the congress-approved "Nicaraguan Animal Protection Law" with my mother.



**ALEJANDRA AVILES**  
**BOLIVIA**

- PhD, Chemistry
- Most marvelous thing about me: I speak Spanish, French and English and love multi-cultural cuisines.



## Strings to the Future

by *Moni Simeonov, contributing writers Lauren Bailey and Deborah J. Burke*

I could not imagine my life without my violin. I began playing at the age of four in Plovdiv, Bulgaria where I was “lucky” enough to witness the end of communism. The years after the wall collapsed were not easy. They were closing down the orchestras and there was no real future for musicians - a precarious situation for our family of professional musicians! You see, 35 years earlier, my uncle helped launch a music school in Plovdiv. It was the only school where kids could take musical instrument lessons. But concert music struggled to flourish because everyone’s concern in the dawn of democracy was survival. I knew I would have to shelve my dream of playing professionally, so I set my sights on going to a sports academy high school. A deep sadness washed over me at the thought of leaving the violin. One day, I decided to give it one last chance. I sent an audition tape to the Idyllwild Arts Academy in California and nothing short of a miracle happened: I was awarded a full-tuition scholarship! My family collected money for the flight and I was on my way. That one audition tape gave me the magic ticket out of Bulgaria and sealed my fate.

In Idyllwild, my new life began in earnest: violin rehearsals, performances and boot-camp like study. Like most of the scholarship students, I travelled around the States to perform on behalf of Idyllwild. What really marked that trip was when a gentleman heard me play, and was so moved he gave me an Italian violin made in 1729. I still have it today.

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“...I understand the importance of inspiring young minds through the power of the violin.”

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All the practice paid off. I received a full scholarship to the Eastman School of Music in New York where I won the concerto competition and got to perform on the school's priceless Stradivarius violin of 1714! It was divine. Afterward, I obtained my Masters in Music and Artist Diploma from Yale University. While in New York, I had a chance meeting with my idol, Midori Goto, a world-renowned violinist and Chair of the Strings Department at USC’s Thornton School of Music. Of course, I was familiar with her music before I even arrived in the States. I have watched her thrilling concerts in awe and always dreamt of meeting her. She gave me a special one-on-one lesson that lasted all afternoon. Afterwards she asked me if I would like to come to USC to pursue my graduate certificate. I was stunned. Midori is one of the best violinists living and I wouldn’t have, in my wildest dreams, imagined she would take me on as a student!

Well, I am so thankful she did. For the last four years at USC, I have performed together with Midori across the U.S. and abroad. From her I have learned to never stop improving. Midori does at least one new thing every day to hone her craft intellectually or physically. I believe I have learned more through her mentorship than through all the years I’ve spent in school.

Right now, life is moving at lightning speed. I serve as the acting concertmaster for the Sacramento Philharmonic, perform in the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, mentor novice students, and somehow manage to get away for solo engagements. I have even played for major movies and popular icons like Barry Manilow. But more satisfying than playing with the stars, is playing with the orchestra. My fellow musicians and I have played Brahms symphonies and Mozart operas, and have developed a special connection with those pieces. Each time, we access a new level of genius, a level which we might not have previously achieved. The beauty of playing in an orchestra is the

humility it inspires. It's not about shining individually, but rather, the magic of blending and creating music together – like in a family. I try to instill these values in my students. While it is not easy to juggle teaching with concerts and schoolwork, just like my uncle, I understand the importance of inspiring young minds through the power of the violin. I want my students to feel the same majesty I have felt all these years.

I am in my last year of doctoral work at USC, and I feel my next step is to become a university music professor. I mean at some point I should really stop studying, right? I am months away from achieving the highest degree offered in my field but yet I'm still instinctively drawn to the university campus. I think, perhaps, it is the thirst to learn that I find so stimulating here. I've even discovered my two other passions here at USC - Judo and the Japanese language (my minor)!

Looking back, I can see how much music has evolved for me over the years. At first it was a game, then a challenge, then a ticket out of Bulgaria. Now it's my identity. I think back to that little boy in Bulgaria with the audition tape in his hand. I've come a long way. Now I know it is possible to play music professionally if you simply have the dream, the courage, the discipline, and the passion to follow it.

*Moni Simeonov is pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Performance Violin. Lauren Bailey and Deborah J. Burke are both pursuing MFA degrees in Writing for the Screen and Television.*

## International Students Rack Up the Numbers at USC

*Data compiled by Lisa Liberatore*

# 115

Current number of countries represented by international students at USC.

# 7891

Total number of international students enrolled at USC.

# 1882

Year the first two USC international students arrived from Japan.

# \$21.81 BILLION

Estimated amount international students and their dependents contributed to the U.S. economy during the 2011-2012 academic year according to NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

# 11<sup>th</sup>

Year in a row USC ranked top in international student enrollment in the nation.

USC overseas international offices located in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Mexico and Taiwan.

# 7

# 50%

Percent increase of international student enrollment at USC in the last decade.

Number of international students enrolled in the Viterbi School of Engineering.

# 3364

*Lisa Liberatore is pursuing a Master of Public Diplomacy.*

# Padlocking the Purse Strings

## Iranian Students in the U.S. Hit Hard by International Sanctions

by Kevin Regan

In response to Tehran's nuclear program, crippling sanctions have been imposed on Iran by the international community. Embargos restricting nuclear, missile, energy, transportation, and financial sectors are taking its toll on Iran's plummeting economy. As hostilities rise, Iranian citizens suffer from unemployment, food insecurity and medical shortages. One of the groups hit hard by the sanctions are Iranian-born students studying right here in the U.S.

At USC, many Iranian students now struggle on a daily basis to pay their living expenses and tuition. Reza\*, a biomedical engineering graduate student, says the sanctions make it nearly impossible to transfer money out from Iran. Consequently, he applied for a private U.S. loan. Even with a creditworthy U.S. cosigner, he was denied because the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) lists Iran as a sanctioned country - making him ineligible for loans. "The money concern is the worst," he says.

Keyvan, a mechanical engineering graduate student, echoes Reza's concerns, "The sanctions make it difficult to transfer money from Iran to the U.S. because almost all Iranian banks are under sanction. To survive, one had to bring money in their pockets or luggage, which is obviously not safe." This has caused Keyvan undue financial stress. "I can't waste money for anything. I cook for myself, live far from school to keep rent down, don't go on trips or holidays, use the bus, and buy the cheapest food from grocery stores."

The problem does not stop there. Even if Iranian students are able to graduate, they have difficulty obtaining jobs in the U.S. because employers either cannot, or are reluctant to hire. "Some jobs don't offer positions to people from Iran, Syria, Libya, Cuba and North Korea. When I see that other international students find jobs easier than Iranian students, I wish I weren't an Iranian. On the other side, I'm proud of being Iranian because of my country's history," says Keyvan.

Add to that Iranian inflation, an increasingly drastic issue. The value of the rial has dropped dramatically. It is now the world's least valued currency per unit. As a result, trouble brews for Keyvan's family back home as their salary has decreased to 35% of what they used to earn. This makes it nearly impossible for his family to continue to financially support his education even if they were able to somehow transfer funds to him.

Niloufar\*, an ambitious mechanical engineering graduate student, has similar concerns. Her family still has the resources to support her education, but their finances are trapped in Iran. "With these conditions, I have few options," she says. "It's very possible I [will] have no other choice except for going back to Iran [and leaving] my education, because I cannot afford my tuition." After working so hard to get admitted to USC, this would be an unfortunate end to such a bright academic future.



In addition to financial woes, travel has become a critical issue. Most recently, the Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Human Rights Act of 2012 passed. The act denies U.S. visas to Iranian citizens who study fields related to the energy sector. This makes travel for Iranian students all the more difficult. Since most Iranian students only receive a single entry visa, if they leave the U.S. for any reason, they must reapply for admission to the country upon return. In broad terms, any Iranian student pursuing an engineering degree, or anything tangentially related to energy, could potentially be barred from returning to the U.S., despite having already started coursework towards their degree. "It is too difficult for Iranian students to go home and come back," says Reza. "Travel is impossible."

Although today's geopolitical climate and security concerns make sanctions a necessary evil, every action, military or diplomatic, creates critical consequences across the globe. Amid these challenges, Iranian students persevere, determined to do whatever it takes to achieve their USC education.

\*Names have been changed.

*Kevin Regan is pursuing a MFA in Writing for the Screen and Television.*

# Never Forget: Fighting Against the Vanishing of History

by Megan Rilkoff

Is there a way to give the voiceless a voice decades after horrific tragedy?

This is the question that the USC Shoah Foundation: The Institute for Visual History and Education has aimed to answer since its inception in 1994. Founded by Steven Spielberg with the goal of collecting and archiving testimonies from Holocaust survivors, the Shoah Foundation has recorded and catalogued over 50,000 personal testimonies in 32 different languages. It is the largest archive of its kind in the world.

Karen Jungblut, Director of Research and Documentation, explains that the mission of the Foundation "is to give a voice to the voiceless [so that] current and future generations... understand what it means to be a responsible, global citizen." As such, the Shoah Foundation is committed to preserving the stories of survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity. This reflects the Foundation's broadened mission to inspire action against all kinds of intolerance through education.

Pursuing the same mission, the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service also supports efforts to end intolerance by offering young Austrians the opportunity to serve at major Holocaust memorial institutions in lieu of a year of civil service. This year J-1 Exchange Visitor Marc Bertel, a 20-year-old aspiring filmmaker, is serving in the Shoah Foundation. He archives, translates and transcribes testimonies, as well as speaks to Holocaust survivors. Using these documents to educate others is what resonates with Marc the most. "The goal is to try to realize what happened, why it happened, and how we can make sure this is not going to happen in the future," says Marc. With recent atrocities occurring in Rwanda and Cambodia, the powerful voices in these testimonies are extremely pertinent today. Marc believes these voices fight against the vanishing of history and foster change for the future through education - "the most powerful weapon against prejudice, hate and mistrust."

Like Marc, many Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service servants engage in delicate remembrance work across the globe to create understanding between people. According to Former Federal Chancellor of Austria Franz Vranitzky, "Every generation must be made aware of the horror of the past era in order to help build a world of peace and respect for human rights. [The Service] serves the important task of creating political awareness through education, summed up in the words: Never Forget."

Snir Levi, a senior communication major from Israel, also believes that Holocaust education is crucial for mutual understanding and peace in future generations. "There are children worldwide who grow up not fully understanding or being educated about the Holocaust. Growing up in Israel from a young age, we live, we breathe those memories. It's in our social fabric," he explains. "There is always a sense of hope that can apply to young peoples' lives when they come across the material."

Next year, the Shoah Foundation will celebrate its 20th anniversary of existence, an anniversary honoring two decades of education, collaboration and mutual respect between cultures and across generations. The Foundation will also welcome another Austrian intern. By fostering empathy and an understanding of past horrors and tragedies, the Shoah Foundation and the Austrian Memorial Holocaust Service work together to create a future without hate and prejudice.

To access videos and learn more about the Shoah Foundation, visit <http://sfi.usc.edu>.

*Megan Rilkoff is a senior majoring in Comparative Literature and French.*



*Marc Bertel, an aspiring filmmaker, translates testimonies of Holocaust survivors.*



*Kim Sanderhoff and Johan Bender Koch pose with their advertising brainchild, FreeBike Project.*

## **Cycle Chic** *continued from page 1*

and connect with the college student consumer in ways that are very different from traditional marketing."

Indeed, FreeBike Project is different. It provides branded bicycles free of charge to college students who advertise the brands by riding the bicycles around town and posting photos of themselves online. It is meant to be a "social viral [marketing] campaign." When students no longer need their bikes, Johan and Kim collaborate with Bikes for the World and charitably donate them to developing countries where bicycling is often the only economical mode of transportation.

Currently, nine clients support the project: My Social Cloud, Jack's-N-Joe, Soy, Jody Maroni, Margarita Pizza, USC Credit Union, Every Kid a Bike, 23rd Street Café, and the USC Department of Public Safety. Johan and Kim continue to seize their prospects at USC by developing new partnerships to expand their business to other campuses in Los Angeles and around the country. Their advice to other international students? Be tenacious, "dream big and share [your] vision with as many people as possible." Wheeling into the world with a successful business behind them, Johan and Kim hope to challenge others "to take risks and be willing to fail in order to become successful later."

For more information on FreeBike Project go to [www.freebikeproject.com](http://www.freebikeproject.com).

*Quyen Le is the SEVIS Coordinator in the Office of International Services.*

## Ringling in the New Year with a Glücksschwein: *German Style!*

by Jens Windau

**W**ant to wish a German good luck? Just give them a small, sweet, rosy pig! It may seem like an odd gift, but for Germans, giving a lucky pig, or a Glücksschwein, is a way of wishing financial prosperity and well-being for the new year.

Since the late 19th century, friends and relatives have wished each other luck by exchanging marzipan pigs and pig-shaped trinkets on New Year's Day. This lucky charm tradition originates from times past when farmers counted themselves lucky if they had done well enough to keep a pig for the winter. Since pigs can live off anything, (and are great breeders to boot), a farming family with a pig will never go hungry. What's more, 2000 years ago, German's ancient people, the Teutons, sacrificed pigs to the gods to ensure pregnancy. Considered symbols of fertility and strength, pigs were even revered as holy animals!

New Year's Eve 2011, my parents gave me a Glücksschwein to wish me luck on my USC application. It worked like a charm. I was admitted to USC and am now a happy Trojan! So, if you encounter a German having a bad day, give them a Glücksschwein and wish them "Viel Glück!" Or better yet, try the luck for yourself by giving a Glücksschwein to a member of your own family. Happy New Year!

*Jens Windau is pursuing a PhD in Computer Science and hails from Bavaria, Germany.*



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