

# The **ESL** Writers' Review

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GROSSMONT COLLEGE

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## Si-Si Aye, A Woman of Character and Courage

*(An interview of a student in Robin Koontz's ESL 105 class written by the students of ESL 105 and edited by their teacher)*

Where were you born?

Si Si: I was born in a small town in Burma called "Palaw" in 1967.

Tell us about your family.

Si Si: I have three sisters and 1 brother. I'm the second child in my family. We were a middle class family. My dad was a gardener and my mother owned a grocery store. I was so lucky because we could eat and get whatever we wanted. Even though my parents didn't like it when I went anywhere without them because I am a girl, I always found a warm place with my family.

What kind of child were you and what were you interested in?

Si Si: I usually played with my friends in the temple. At home, I played with toys which were made by my father. I also helped my family a lot before and after school. I was very happy doing that.

When did your life change?

Si Si: I was a law student when I was 17 years old. At that time, Burma had a big crisis about the use of "black money," which was illegal money flooding the economy. Because of this money, people had no money or food, so they destroyed all the stores. They were angry that the government couldn't do anything to help them. I went to talk to the Dean of my college about the danger to the students at the college. While we were talking, government troops started shooting students on our campus. The students tried to escape by running across the bridge over the lake across the street from the college. As the students were shot, they fell into the lake. The lake turned red from all of the blood of the students who were killed that day. The bridge is still called "Bloody Bridge." A good friend of mine was killed that day, and I lost a lot more friends after that. I decided to leave school and move to the jungle near the border of Thailand and Burma to live with the revolution army. For ten years, I lived with other student rebels. We built our own shelters, grew our own fruits and vegetables, and hunted animals for meat. I learned to use a rifle.

Why did you decide to join that army?

Si Si: I wanted to join the army because I wanted to make the government pay for killing innocent people. I really needed *(continued on page 2)*



*Si-Si Aye, age 20, training in Burma*

### From the Editor

Students in this issue write about someone they admire. Our first article is an interview with Si-Si Aye, a student admired by her classmates and teacher in ESL 105. You'll also read about national heroes in Iraq and Belarus, written by students in Darlene Farnes' beginning ESL 1 class. You'll read about Reiko Takizawa's admirable grandfather, and lastly you'll read an e-mail success story written to instructor Mimi Pollack. I hope you are as inspired by all of these stories as I was!

*Si-S: A Woman of Character and Courage* □

freedom and peace in my country. Also, I wanted democracy for my country. As the spokesperson for the army with the media, I became one of the leaders of the army, and I was given a bodyguard.

Who was your first lover?

Si Si: My ex-husband was; I met him in the army in 1991. Shortly after we arrived in the United States, I divorced him because he didn't want me to go to school or work outside the home. That wasn't good for me.

What situation made you decide to come here to the U.S.?

Si Si: I had no home after the fighting ended with the Burmese government. Thus, I had to live in a refugee camp with my husband and three kids.

What problems did you have after you arrived □ in the United States?

Si Si: I couldn't speak English, and I had no family, friends, car, or job. I started teaching myself English by talking to my mirror.

When did you start going to school?

Si Si: In 2001, I started going to adult school while my children were in preschool. I had no car, so it was difficult.

When did you get your first job?

Si Si: I started my first job in 2002 working in a nursing home.

Six years ago, Si Si arrived in the U.S. with her three kids. Now they live in San Diego. Sometimes, Si Si misses her parents and friends, whom she left in Burma. Being a very strong-willed person, Si Si got a job at Grossmont Hospital as a nurse's assistant, and she still works there today. At the same time, she is taking classes in ESL and the nursing program at Grossmont College. It is very hard for Si Si with three kids at home, but *continued on next page*



*Robin Koontz and the students in ESL 105*

## They Write about National Heroes

*Students in Darlene Farnes ESL 96 class write about heroes who have inspired them. You can find out more about these national heroes by visiting the websites below.*

*(ESL 96 is a beginning level class. These paragraphs have been edited to improve comprehensibility)*

By Olga Zhidkova

Francis Skorina was the first printer/publisher in Belarus. He was born in 1490 in Polotsk. His family was rich. His father was a merchant. Francis Skorina was 14 years old when he was a student of Krakov University. He studied liberal arts. In 1512 he received the rank of a Doctor of Medical Sciences in Italy. Francis Skorina founded a printing house in Prague. In 1517 he printed a psalm book. Then he printed a new version of the Bible. He printed 23 illustrated books in 2 years. Francis Skorina's books are invaluable property of world culture.

For more information:

<http://findarticles.com> search for *Franciscus Skorina*

A research question: In what language did Franciscus Skorina print the Bible?

By Fateema Aljabber

The hero in my country (Iraq) is the singer Kadim. He is a hero because he helps the country by giving money and helping little kids. He sings to get the money and gives it to sick people. That's why he is a hero.

For music and interviews in English, [www.staytuned.com](http://www.staytuned.com) (search for *Kadim (Kazeem) al Sahir*)

[www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) (search for *Kadim al Sahir*)

Research questions:

What awards has Kadim al Sahir won?

When was Kadim al Sahir born, and where does he live now?

What does he do to help people?

Keila Aljabber

I don't know who is a hero in my country, but I think the police are the heroes now in Iraq because they save people's lives. There are a lot of terrorists in Iraq and now the police are helping and saving people's lives and a lot of them get killed in order to save people's lives. They are killed, but they leave behind many others after them, like their family and children.

## A Success Story

*The following is an e-mail written to Instructor Mimi Pollack by one of her former students.*

Hello Mimi,

I am sorry that I forgot to give my mom the info you requested today. Well, it was nice to see you again!! You haven't changed a bit!!! At any rate, my last name is "Gore" now! After I went to a few language schools as well as adult school, I took TOEFL and got a high enough score to enter a college. I decided to go to Grossmont College because it offers an AS degree in Disability Services Management (1999). I continued my education at SDSU where I earned a Bachelor degree in Vocational Education (2001) and a MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling (2004). After graduation, I also studied for and passed a National exam for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. As far as my career, I have been working in various aspects of the field of Social Services to support people with developmental disabilities since 1999. While working with one organization, I was promoted twice and ultimately became a program facilitator. I have also participated in a variety of volunteer opportunities. Since last year, I have been working as a social work counselor at San Diego Regional Center. There were countless struggles along the way. However, I did not give up and continued to believe in myself. In addition, I also had a core group of friends that I could always confide in and lean on for support. The end result is...tadaaaaaaa here I am! Megumi Gore, a brand new working mom who is happily married.:-)

I hope I answered all of your questions.

Take care,

Megumi

*continued from previous page*

she is still a good mother. She pays attention to her kids' studies and plays with them during her free time. Even with all of these responsibilities, Si finds time to do volunteer work. She helps Burmese refugees when they first arrive in the U.S. by meeting them at the airport and helping them with donations. She is also asked to translate for them now that her English is good. In our ESL 105 class, Si-Si is always cheerful and willing to help other students. We are all especially proud of Si Si because on March 14, she was given the Spirit of Caring Award by the Sharp Healthcare Company. All of the employees at the hospital voted for the most caring worker, and Si Si won the award along with \$1000. Si Si has really come a long way since her jungle days!

For more information about Myanmar (also called Burma) visit these websites.

[www.uscampaignforburma.org](http://www.uscampaignforburma.org)  
click on "about Burma"

[www.geographia.com/myanmar/](http://www.geographia.com/myanmar/)  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)  
search for "8888 uprising"

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## An Admirable Grandfather

Rieko Takizawa  
*ESL 110*

I came to in the United States in June 2005. During college in Japan, I was thinking of what I was going to be or do after I graduated from my college. I had totally no idea at the time. However, I have had one dream since I was a child. It was to be an interpreter like my grandfather. My grandfather was a Japanese and English interpreter. He passed away when my mother was 16 years old. Therefore, I have never met my grandfather. My grandmother has been telling me about him. I was so impressed when I heard what he had done in his life. He always carried his dictionary when he was young. He was a really motivated person. After he became an

interpreter, he worked for Japan and America while we were in the World War. I think it was a really hard situation, but he was doing a really good job. He had a good effect on my life. I started thinking about learning English in America. I have really wanted to speak English, and also had a job which needed English. My family was happy to let me go to America because nobody learned English like my grandfather in my family. I am the only one who is learning English. Also, I believe that I could do something to help people or work for Japan and the other countries if I could use English and Japanese.

Instructor Joanna Esser gave her students  
in ESL 80/96 this assignment:

***“Write about someone in your family that you admire.”***

ESL 80/96 students are beginning to learn English. Their answers  
have been corrected.

Nina Pavlovskaya

I admire my husband's sister. Her name is Helena. She is very  
attentive to my family. She often visited our house and always asked  
about our health. She likes her granddaughter. She knows many  
stories about our family. She worked as a teacher, because she is  
very hard working. My husband and I like her and are always very  
glad to see Helena.

Reyes Lopez

I admire my brother Jose Pio. He was sick for a long time, about  
four years. He was sick from Multiple Sclerosis. This disease is bad.  
My brother was immobile for a long time. He had a wife and three  
young children. His children were two boys and a girl. They are 8,  
10 and 12 years old. My brother died last year. He was 45 years old.  
When he died, my mother and father cried a lot, and so did we.

Armando Lopez

I admire my wife, Yadira, because she is beautiful. She is hard-  
working. She is special. She is a student. She is a good daughter, and  
she works very hard for us.

Yolanda O'Campo

I admire my mother, Maria, because she is wonderful. She helps me  
with my babies when I go to work, and she helps my sister with  
her babies when she goes to the university.

Narjis Hameed

I admire my father (Ghalib) because he is very wonderful and very  
smart. He is a teacher. He is 65 years old. He has seven daughters.  
He's very nice. He likes to take me to the park. He's very friendly.  
He helps me all the time. He is in Iraq now. I miss him very much.

Armando Alvarez

I admire my son Aaron because he is very smart in school. He likes  
to write stories and read books too. The first thing that is special  
about him is that I love him a lot. He is five years old. He likes to do  
his homework every day and when he is finished he always tells  
me about his homework. I really love him a lot. I like to play  
soccer and baseball together because he always laughs a lot  
and I laugh too, with him. I love my son, Aaron.

## Editor's Corner

*Sara Ferguson, Editor*

If you would like to submit your writing  
to the newsletter, please contact Sara at

saragal@earthlink.net

*Robin Koontz  
and the students in ESL 105*

*Olga Zhidkova*

*Fateema Aljabber*

*Keila Aljabber*

*Megumi Gore*

*Reiko Takizawa*

*Si-Si Aye*

*Nina Pavlovskaya*

*Reyes Lopez*

*Armando Lopez*

*Yolanda O'Campo*

*Narjis Hameed*

*Armando Alvarez*

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Submit your best paragraphs and essays.

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