**Interview Paper: Mangpi**

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Interviewing someone always has such a unique twist to typical assignments. When working with someone new, you never know what to expect or what type of responses the questions will spark. In this case, we have been blessed to be enrolled in a class that contains critical college curriculum but also the unique experience of immersing ourselves within an entirely new group. Mangpi was the gentleman that I had the pleasure of interviewing within this immersion process. The part that I find the most interesting and what I will focus on most in this assignment is that regardless of family structure, birthplace, politics or religion, all of us are human and have relatable traits at the end of the day.

Mangpi, (pronounced Man-guh-p) was born in the country of Burma, also known as Myanmar. Mangpi is a young college exchange student at the age of 18 and has found himself here in regards to receiving an education to become a Civil Engineer. When asking about how his travels were from Burma to the United States, Mangpi quickly responded by saying, “too long” (Mangpi, personal communication, March 2017). If flying from Burma to Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia to New York and New York to Nashville does not sound like a lengthy trip then I do not know what does.

Even though Burma is half way across the world, the lifestyles are distantly similar. Although a man of few words, Mangpi began to crack a grin when asking him questions about family and his lifestyle back home. In Burma, Mangpi lives with his Mom, Dad and sister, a nuclear family living style. This is something that somewhat surprised me. It is not that I had a solid presumption of anything, but rather had just thought a nuclear family lifestyle was more based in the fast paced United States culture and not much elsewhere.

Mangpi’s sister is 13-years old and does not know what she wants to do yet, but may eventually come to the United States for the opportunity to learn as well. Mangpi is also close to his aunt and uncle along with his three cousins. Mangpi is so close to this part of his family that this is why he chose Bowling Green, KY for his United States educational journey. The three cousins that live here are 22, 15 and 7 years old and this family has lived here for 5 years. His uncle and aunt are a part of the working community in Bowling Green with his uncle working in a car factory and his aunt working as a tailor and seamstress.

Mangpi also told me the comparison of his school life back home compared to his school life in the United States. Back in Burma, school work had to be memorized. School was of so much importance that students who wanted more curriculum would attend a second school. Mangpi told us that school would go from 7am – 12pm and then a second school labeled ‘tution’ would go from 1pm – 4pm. ‘Tution’ was more focus based learning around the subjects of Chemistry and Physics.

When digging deeper into his life, Mangpi had mentioned that he is doing civil engineering as his field of study because “my dad wants me to” (Mangpi). Now this is something that is rather different than what we are accustomed to. When growing up I was always told that I could be whatever I wanted to be and to work hard at it, not told or recommended what I should become. Mangpi continued to tell me that his father started out as a businessman within the field of diamonds but is now a politician doing work for part of their country while his mother is a housewife, which Mangpi said is a typical occupation for wives in Burma. Mangpi has said that he and his family are close, talk weekly and will travel home in the summer.

The things he looks forward to when returning home are the family time, their vacation to the beach, and the home cooked meals. Here in Bowling Green, Mangpi has been blessed to live with his branched family and enjoy the lifestyle of a homey feeling, which is not typical for most exchange students. Mangpi tells us that his comfort level is a lot higher than if he were to be living on campus or in an apartment elsewhere. Family meals in the Burmese culture include a nightly sit down meal with the consistent basis of rice that is a plentiful crop in Burma, homegrown vegetables, fruits and the preferred protein of pork. At one time, Burma was known as the ‘rice bowl of the world’ yielding to countless countries as a major exportation crop due to the consistent growth of the crop because of the fertile soil and the consistent rainfall that would occur.

Burma has become known to the world due to the exportation of crops, but also due to the tourist attractions that bring countless Europeans and Americans in every year. Mangpi said that Buddhism plays a big role for the religion choice in Burma and as a result, there are countless temples and worship centers in Burma. Known as Pagodas, these Buddhist worship temples are spread all across the country. These captivating worship sites are home to some of the oldest Buddhist traditions along with some being sites for spiritual masters in the Buddhist religion that have passed away. Precious metals and religious connections are hosted at each site along with the religious tradition of these places warding off evil spirits. Even though the main religion in Burma is Buddhism, Mangpi told me that his family are avid Christians, attending church and abiding by the proper yearly celebrations.

Along with being a practicing Christian, Mangpi is also an avid movie watcher and likes to draw and watch sports in his free time. “Hugh Jackman is my favorite” was Mangpi’s reply when asked who his favorite actor was (Mangpi). He enjoys the *Wolverine* movies along with other adventure and comedy flicks. Watching sports is also something Mangpi enjoys from time to time. Boxing and Soccer are big sports in Burma, with Boxing being Mangpi’s preferred sport to watch.

In all, nearly 7.2 billion people inhabit this earth and I was lucky enough to interview one of those that I would not have met if it were not for this amazing assignment. In all my years of schooling, I have never had an assignment such as this. I truly hope that this Interview Paper will continue for years to come because the insight that you gain from the understanding of others that are ‘not like yourself’ is truly addicting. Regardless of our background whether it be influenced by family status, views on religion or politics or even our health standards, at the end of the day we are all human. It does not take much to look someone in the eye and host a general well-meaning conversation with that person. When you are able to do these things, you will be able to open up new doors for opportunity that will lead to not only a better understanding of the world we live in but also a personal growth that is contagious.