

# The ARNIC Observer

The English-Speaking Union of the United States (ESUUS)

Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC)

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## Paving Ways to Life Anew

BY UFUALE “CHRISTINE” AFOLA AMEY  
(TOGO)

*“Remember, remember  
always, that all of us,  
and you and I especially,  
are descended from  
immigrants and  
revolutionists.”*  
—Franklin D. Roosevelt

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA continues to welcome numerous immigrants from all over the world. These newcomers face different types of challenges as do the students from the Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center (ARNIC). “I was diagnosed with a serious blood problem in Paris when I was preparing to move to the U.S. Despite this, since I arrived in New York, I’ve never been to the hospital because I’m not yet able to pay for a health insurance plan as I’m not working. If I get any real health problem now, maybe I’ll die,” said a member of ARNIC.

Created in December 2012, ARNIC is a brand new Immigrant Program in New York City. But in spite of its young age, ARNIC enrolls immigrants of diverse ethical and sociological backgrounds. Refugees, students and professionals join this center day after day because of the standing and the early repute of its programs.

A fast and good understanding of American civilization is necessary for the newcomers to face their first challenges. Priam Saywack, a specialist on immigration issues in the U.S., described the housing problems: “They lived in the crowded tenements in Lower East Side of Manhattan where rents were very low.” Indeed, many ARNIC immigrants members are living in tiny and, often, crowded single rooms. “I am living with my mother and my elder brother in the same small room till one of us gets any job somewhere,” said one of them. Another immigrant confirmed the sad reality in these words: “I lived in the roof of my landlord’s house with my husband and my two over twenty years old kids more than two years, before we got an apartment in one of New York’s housing project programs.”

Although a lot of the ARNIC members are highly educated, a large number of them remains unemployed several months—sometimes years—after landing in the U.S. “I earned a Master of Science in Electrical Engineering and worked more than ten years for the biggest electrical power provider back home, but I lived here more than two years with no job. Now, I am working as a server in a McDonald’s,” said one of the ARNIC members.

Today, the racial discrimination endured by the first wave of immigrants in the 19th century has somewhat been alleviated in American society. However, recent immigrants currently encounter a highly globalized workforce competition which is tough and selective, to the prejudice of unskilled immigrants who are compelled to accept any kind of jobs to survive.

In order to be more competitive in the job market, some of the newcomers at ARNIC intend to earn new language learning certificates. Still, others are fully happy with the ARNIC program: “Before I came to ARNIC, I had already attended four existing programs of language, and my last one is ARNIC, because I’m really satisfied with its training,” said one attendee.

As their precursors, who courageously faced their challenges, all the new immigrants who joined ARNIC are motivated and determined to overcome their present barriers and fulfill their dreams.



ARNIC participants benefit from small, intensive classes on topics such as Advanced Writing and Business Communications.

Courtesy Photo

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## Six Job Search Tips for Skilled Immigrants

BY IDA NGUESSAN  
(CÔTE D’IVOIRE)

THE HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT rate should not deter skilled immigrants from pursuing their dreams to rebuild their careers in the U.S. As a jobseeker you should think unconventionally, consider alternatives, and remember to promote your transferable skills. Below are six job hunting tips to help skilled immigrants navigate their job search.

**1. Look for hidden jobs.** Be more diligent in your job search by creating a list of targeted companies and visiting their websites to learn about career opportunities. Research a company’s website to learn more about its performance. Demonstrate your familiarity with the company’s development and new initiatives. Needless to say that the job goes, in

all likelihood, to the best prepared applicant.

**2. Research industries** in some areas of activity where there is growth and focus on transferable skills.

**3. Consider volunteering and internship.** Most U.S. employers like to see that you have U.S. work experience. That’s why it is important to have an updated résumé considering this reality. Volunteering or internships are good ways to start. Referral is also important in the recruiting process and you must get references from professional acquaintances.

**4. Be open to relocation.** In the current economic condition, jobseekers must re-evaluate their strategies and consider moving to other cities in the U.S.

**5. Keep developing your skills.** Companies want to hire people who need less training because it means less expense. Keep yourself abreast of developments in your industry. Attend workshops, take academic courses, join ethnic professional associations, and participate in online trainings.

**6. Create an online profile and network digitally.** The U.S. job market is very dynamic and it is increasingly common for employers to conduct online searches to fill a position. LinkedIn, a professional networking website that has 32 million members, allows you to digitally showcase your skills and experience. LinkedIn has also a new job search function that allows jobseekers to find other members who work at companies that are hiring.





The ARNIC Observer

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IDA NGUESSAN, YUNXIN LIU, **Editorial Page Editors**

NGIMA PAKHRIN, **Assistant Managing Editor**

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ARNIC students have been escorted on tours of Gracie Mansion, the mayor’s residence; City Hall, where government business was being conducted; and in the photograph above, Grand Central Station.

IMMIGRANTS AND JOB  
SEEKING IN NYC

BY LASSANE ZOUGRANA  
(BURKINA FASO)

“I HAVE A GOOD JOB today in a hospital setting. At the beginning I really struggled. I had to find a survival job to pay my bills. It was actually a hard and crazy life. I have been like a slave for almost two years, going to school and working as a restaurant cleaner at night time. But when I graduated I found a job that I really like and make good money,” said a nurse from Haiti.

Every year, New York City welcomes thousands of immigrants. Despite their expectations and motivations, they face a lot of challenges such as, but not limited to, language, the job environment, the lack of information, and the devaluing of their degrees and skills. Confronting those challenges, most of them move to another State or back to their country. Nevertheless, some people overcome their issues and they successfully find a good job.

“I am broken because my life consists of work, sleep and work. I have to send money back to my country and I don’t have a choice. Although I have been in New York for four years, my English is still bad because I don’t have time to take English classes. New York City is crazy. I plan to go back after I save a couple thousands of dollars,” said an immigrant dishwasher.

“To succeed in New York City, you have to set goals and strive to reach them. You need to be realistic. Everybody has his own steps to success and we need to be patient. Many immigrants become wealthier than native Americans. You should know what you need and be determined to reach your goals,” said a job developer in a non-profit organization.

Planning, determination, patience and confidence seem the most valuable qualities for an immigrant’s success.

Money

BY NGIMA PAKHRIN  
(NEPAL)

WE NEED TO BUY the things we need and the things we want, not only commodities but also services. What can we think of having these days without money? Can we travel? Can we see a doctor? Can we watch TV?

Everything requires money. We might get upset when our pockets are empty. Why? Because rent has to be paid. Bills need to be taken care of. Food has to be purchased. So we are relieved when our pockets are full.

People in developing countries still may not have the same need of money as in developed countries. What do people need money for when they grow their own food, they have a house, and there is no need to pay taxes. They make their own clothing. They do not watch TV. But still, they cannot live completely without money. They cannot grow salt. However, I have heard that people barter for those things in the old days. But a barter system hardly exists nowadays. They have to sell their own products to get money and use that money to buy the things they need.

The more money one can earn, the higher the standard of living. The less money one is paid, the lower one’s status. However, I do not feel like that in New York. One’s status is acquired by how hard one works in New York. It does not matter what work one does, it still matters how much money is paid for the work. And if the person working is satisfied with the work, it’s a great thing.

We have to look at the other side of money as well. Money creates crimes in many countries. Money can make people dishonest. People kidnap, fight, build relationships, end relationships, migrate, beg, and work all for money. Can we imagine life now without money?

Editorial

Immigration Is Good for the U.S.

People are often unsure of where to stand on the hot button issue of immigration, while the specter of illegal immigration often overshadows the larger debate.

Basic economic analysis and studies have confirmed that immigrants boost the productive capacity of the United States through their labor, their human capital, and their entrepreneurial spirit. Instead of competing with American workers, immigrants typically complement them by filling niches in the labor market. For example, lower-skilled immigrants will be satisfied with low-status jobs that a substantial number of Americans don’t aspire to fill. Higher-skilled immigrants allow American companies to create new products and raise productivity by stimulating innovation. Immigrant workers make capital more productive, boosting investment and output per worker.

It has also been demonstrated in countless studies that immigrants, after a period of adaptation, contribute to tax revenue, and the production of wealth. Furthermore, cultural diversity is a positive thing in itself: A diverse populace brings spirited customs and cultural influences. Finally, immigrant workers help pay for Medicare and Social Security. More immigrants would mean more people to share the heavy burden of America debt.

Some members of Congress have been competing with each other to adopt the toughest positions to enforce existing law, including the completion of a fence along the entire 2,000-mile border with Mexico. Outside of Washington, legislatures in Arizona, Georgia, Alabama, and other states have enacted laws designed to make life more difficult for undocumented immigrants. But we have to be prudent about these extreme actions! From experience, these measures have never been the best solutions, for they only provoke partisan conflicts and would be devastating for U.S. political, economic, and international interests.

As a melting pot, America is touched deeply by immigration; it is in the DNA of the country. More than any other major nation, the U.S. is defined by its immigrant past and present, and immigration policy will define its future. It is important for Americans to understand their heritage more clearly and then move toward an immigration system that better serves economic interests, as well as the ideals of a free society. In other words, immigration policy should be more flexible and thoughtful.



# NYC Subways: 21st Century Wi-Fi in a 20th Century Environment

BY YUNXIN LIU  
(CHINA)

AS ONE OF THE OLDEST SUBWAYS in the world, the NYC system has witnessed its 109-year history. It was good news for New Yorkers that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) extended cell phone and wireless service to thirty six subway stations, but the MTA has not mentioned anything about improving the environment of subway stations.

There are more options for subway riders because they have access to wireless service and can use cell phones in the subway station. When subway riders are waiting for their trains on the platform underground, they can make and receive phone calls, get and text messages, receive and send e-mails, chat on social networks, and so on.

The subway should reflect the life style in New York City, as one of the top centers for economics, finance, and culture in the world. But the MTA’s network does not look as fashionable and elegant as most people expect; also it is not clean and modern as other big cities.

Subway stations are not as clean as they should be. There is lots of smelly garbage on the train



Photo by Nikki

A typical underground station, part of NYC’s extensive subway network, gets especially crowded and messy during rush hours.

tracks, and trash is not properly disposed of in cans. The worn-out platforms are dark with plenty of black gummy dots on the ground with rusty and decaying walls at some stations. The ceiling paint is cracking and falling down.

In contrast to the shiny and new Wi-Fi signs at the stations, the MTA does not seem to care about the environment at the subway stations, nor does the government in New York City.

It is convenient and fast to take subways in New York City, but there is no guarantee for subway riders to arrive on time. There are too many reasons for train delays, but there is always an apology on the speakers with a heavy accent in the train. The schedule and routes change often, and even the number of trains is reduced on weekends, notice given with a paper stuck on the wall at the platform.

The London underground system is the oldest in the world, but it seems to run better than the NYC subway system. Does the MTA need to learn from London?

“The MTA has been on a clearly defined mission to bring our mass transit system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with upgrades to the station environment through several ambitious new technology communications projects like this one, aimed at improving the travel experiences of our customers while offering another level of security,” said the MTA Interim Executive Director Thomas F. Prendergast.

## Sophie’s Corner

# Lunch around the Block

BY ANNE-SOPHIE D’ALTON  
(FRANCE)

BETWEEN ENGLISH IN ACTION and the Immigrant Program, I sometimes spend my day in the neighborhood. Desi Shack is an Indian-Pakistani Grill located at the corner of Lexington and 39<sup>th</sup> Street, that is to say two minutes from the English Speaking Union building. You can have lunch, a nutritional one, for less than \$10.

I usually have a Chicken Tikka—chicken with a type of curry—with rice. I found the chicken tender. Instead of having it in a plate, you can also have it in a roll. The roll is soft but it is smaller, therefore two rolls are recommended for one meal.

First you chose your favorite: Chicken Tikka, Lamb Kebab, Seasoned Potato or Farmer’s cheese for a dry cured cottage cheese. Instead of the rice, you can have it with salad. You can add the greens you want: Mixed Salad, Sautéed Peppers, Corn Salad, Fresh Lettuce, Hot Green Chilies and/or Sliced Onions.

At the end you choose a chutney: mild

(“tsatsiki” cucumber yoghurt), medium (mint), hot (green chili coconut) or extra hot (red chili). The waitress said, “You should add a chutney, it gives all the flavor to the dish.” The portions are generous.

The most popular are meats. The *New York Times* wrote about the concept: “Skewered meats are the specialty.”

Desi Shack also offers drinks and desserts. As for drinks: soft drinks, Mango Lassi, Spices Tea are proposed. For dessert you can have Donuts which seem dodgy to me or rice pudding which is good.

The place is clean; the grade is an “A.” You can eat in, the wood decoration is simple and warm.

I think in this Grand Central area, Desi Shack is not amazing but a great value. Desi Shack’s food was graded 22 by Zagat.

I was satisfied with the portion but according to Ngagne Fall, a regular customer and an ARNIC member, “The portion is skimpy.”



Photo by Ngima Pakhrin

The desi shack at the corner of 39th and Lexington Avenue.





Photo by C. Murphy

# The ESU’s Kitchen: Immigrants, Coffee, and Cultures

BY NGAGNE FALL (SÉNÉGAL)

RECIPIENT OF THE MURRAY HILL ARCHITECTURAL AWARD, the building of The English-Speaking Union of The United States (ESUUS) displays, at 144 East 39th Street in New York, a sober and artful design. Once you step over the threshold, the ever warm reception and the picturesque Garden Lounge behind could, in all likelihood, allow you to miss an amazing space: the kitchen! Located in the basement, the kitchen-cafeteria is the point of contact for members of Andrew Romay New Immigrant Center and other attendees of ESU programs.

## Network Building

During the three weeks of English intensive classes last March, the coffee break was an optimal moment to engage in dialogue with one another in the kitchen. From then, this tiny place has become an essential stop. Here you will learn more about everyone because newcomers are less haunted by the mistakes made while talking. Also they are more relaxed and eager to bond over coffee, tea and snacks.

Conversations first concerned arrival in the US, and more importantly the American English obstacle, the job research labyrinth, the repeated blue mood and melancholy. About these sad feelings, said Emel Karaca, “Meeting here and dicussing our apprehensions and fears is comforting.” Far from a room of lamentation, the kitchen itself is a network. You will know all about the organizations which provide support to immigrants in The Big Apple. Clues for successful job research are shared spontaneously. Though, sometimes you need multilingual skills to follow the conversations.

## “A Miniaturized United Nations”

In fact, English competes at random with Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Ukrainian, Turkish, Nepali, French, Japanese, Uzbek, Chinese, and even Ikposso (the language of an ethnic group in Southern Togo, West Africa). Before such a linguistic mix, Diell Gripshi, an Italian immigrant once joked. “This place is a miniaturized United Nations.” Indeed, the meeting point in the basement of ESU’s building is a cross-cultural space that confirms the popular image of New York as a melting pot, full of immigrants from all over the world.

After nearly five months spent in New York, one of the ARNIC members confessed that he has “never seen a gathering of such a lot of people from different countries since he arrived in this city.” Definitely, the Global kitchen of ARNIC is a vivid fulfilment of the ESU’s vision: Immigrants share their pleasure of learning English and culturally nurture one another.

## Inquiring Photographers

### What has been your most rewarding experience in the ARNIC program so far?

BY GENEVIEVE CARRASCO (FRANCE) & MUKKADAS ABDURASULOVA (UZBEKISTAN)



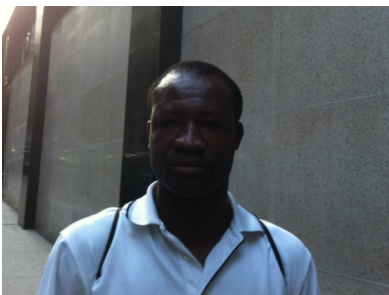
The program supports building oneself. People are friendly and workshops interesting. Site visits are creative, very educational. ARNIC lets anyone really express themselves. You learn about American culture and then you learn how to merge yourself in the culture together. Workshops are very practical. They help in your day to day life to establish yourself. I have also learned to share with other members at ARNIC and to understand how the life is in NYC. I appreciate the creativity of the approach. —Bushra Pereira

Workshops brought information related to various topics, including tips to adjust and navigate the new environment. I got information on how to register and succeed at colleges and universities. —Ida Nguessan

My most valuable experience was to go to the theater with ARNIC students. It was fun, a good opportunity to practice comprehension skills. —Anne-Sophie D’Alton



My valuable experience so far is the workshops. The give us accurate information and allow us to integrate easily in new city life. Without this information, even as we study English, we would stay out of the real life in New York. —Lassane Zoungrana



I have been in many programs—everywhere it seems to be the same things—but ARNIC classes are well-structured and you have to be responsible for yourself, be on time and present. On Fridays, the way we watch movies and discuss after is a very good and helpful way to understand American culture. We also have the possibility to mingle and discuss the challenges we face. When you talk with others who have the same problems, you get the strength to overcome the problems. —Ufuale Afola Amey



I have taken only a few programs, however, they have been beneficial for me. My purpose in joining was to improve my language skills, but I am getting more than that. The workshops are of great value. One-on-one tutoring is superb. In general, I have found the programs are great. Friendly and professional staff are another thing that makes ARNIC count. —Ngima Pakhrin

Many realities, from our countries of origin to our languages and even our age gaps, tend to distance us. But in the ARNIC program, these differences evaporate. It nurtures our individuality and at the same time brings us together. —Ngagne Fall and Yunxin Liu

