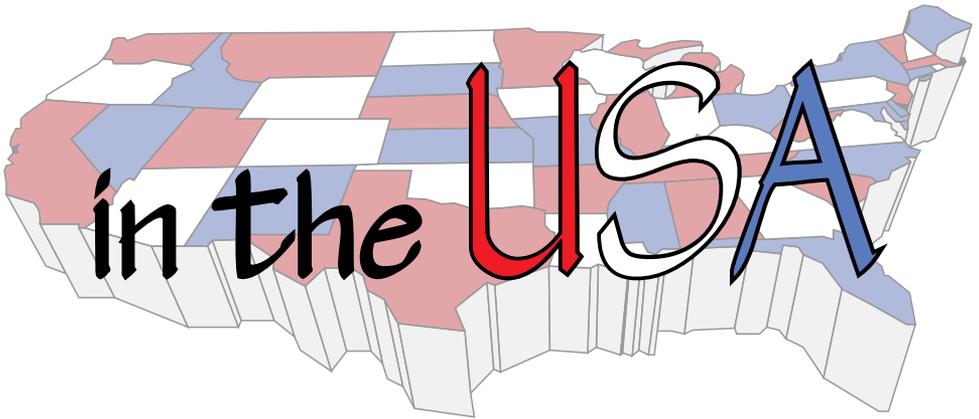

SHOCKING CULTURES

**Hilarious and Disastrous Challenges
of Foreign Workers...**



Emmanuel Ngomsí, Ph.D.

ABOUT ALL WORLD LANGUAGES & CULTURES...

All World Languages & Cultures, Inc. is a corporate consulting and training company that serves clients across the U.S. and throughout the world.

When people with different cultural backgrounds or nationalities work together, there comes an inevitable moment of misunderstanding during which communication — both verbal and nonverbal — can hinder working relationships and productivity. A lack of knowledge or appreciation of the differences in background experiences is often the cause of frustration and decreased productivity.

Developing communication competency has become one of the primary goals of today's competitive organizations. A workforce with strong cultural and linguistic skills at all levels of the organization can boost productivity and broaden your client base.

All World Languages & Cultures provides productivity-enhancing solutions through four categories of service to ease cooperation and increase productivity.

- > Diversity Education and Training in the Workplace
- > Cultural Awareness and International Relocation Training
- > Team-building Facilitation and Intercultural Communication Training
- > Foreign Language Services: Translations, Interpreting, Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

EACH CULTURE HAS ITS OWN SYSTEM OF BEHAVIOR, its own principles and laws — written or unwritten. People from different cultures view the world through “cultural lenses” constructed by them or imposed on them by society. As people increasingly move, live, and work across cultures, the first and major step toward successful interaction with others — whose lenses are different from our own — is to become aware of the presence and the impact of these lenses in their daily attitudes and behaviors.

When in a new culture, we judge the host culture and their values based on our “common sense,” which we unconsciously perceive as the norm. Very often we fail to recognize that our common sense may be very far from being “common” to our hosts. This also translates into the false belief that what pleases us will inevitably be pleasant to our hosts, by the application of the rule of the ethic of reciprocity.

SHOCKING CULTURES: HILARIOUS AND DISASTROUS CHALLENGES OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE USA relates true stories of foreign workers who offend as many people from the host country as often as they are offended themselves by local behaviors. The consequences of such conflicting, but quite innocent, behaviors often lead to slow work productivity, low work moral, broken

co-worker relationships, firing, or return of foreign workers back to their native countries.

This book demonstrates that in today's global society, the "Golden Rule" paradigm does not always apply in the context of multicultural situations. People from different cultures would not necessary like us to do unto them what we would like them to do unto us, nor would we like them to treat us as we would like to treat them.

Failure to quickly develop keen strategies through training, coaching, mentorship, or personal observations to bridge one's cultural insights with the new ones will inevitably lead to culture shock. And that can lead to feelings of frustration, surprise, disorientation, confusion, isolation, hurt, and sometimes even retaliation because they operate in an entirely different cultural or social environment. The difficulty for the newcomers in assimilating the new ways of doing things in the new culture on the one hand, and the inability of the hosts to determine why these foreigners behave the way they do on the other, create a cultural chaos in which minor incidents end up provoking unnecessary legal interventions.

To protect the identity of the persons in the stories, fictitious names are used, while the circumstances of the events are kept as accurate as possible.

While the cultural challenges related in the following pages are taken mostly from educational settings, they could easily be documented in other industries where foreign workers and their

host colleagues perceive daily workplace interactions with different understandings.

Some of the stories in “SHOCKING CULTURES” will make you laugh. Some will make you angry. Some will leave you frustrated. But all of them will make you more aware of — and more sensitive to — the differences that bind us all.

Told by a school teacher who came to the U.S. from Cameroon in West Africa, here are the true tales of people, including himself, from cultures very different from the U.S., who find in their workplaces, in their co-workers, and within themselves an unexpected lack of understanding and acceptance.

“Culture shock usually occurs when people unconsciously apply their own rules to people from another culture,” the author says. And that can lead to feelings of frustration, surprise, disorientation, confusion, isolation, hurt, and sometimes even retaliation.

Let this heart-warming book be a guide and teacher for you, your family, and your co-workers. In today’s global society, nothing will build bridges of understanding faster than an awareness of the differences that join us in our humanity.

“To [Emmanuel] Ngomsi — a cultural ambassador who remains well-grounded in his African heritage — trying to get through Day One of his new teaching job, the middle finger display meant nothing. To third graders in Kansas City, well, you can imagine. They gasped. They screamed. They howled. It was mayhem. The simple cultural miscue had plenty of fallout. Parents called to demand an explanation. The [school] principal wanted one, too.”

– The Kansas City Star

“Along with teaching languages, it is critical that companies hiring foreign workers learn about cultures to reduce frustration and increase productivity. People from different cultural backgrounds do not perceive issues the same way. Through “SHOCKING CULTURES: Hilarious and Disastrous Challenges of Foreign Workers in the USA,” [Emmanuel] Ngomsi exposes a set of American social and business values.

– The Kansas City Business Journal



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