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Final Paper: Thanksgiving with Foreigners

Before black Friday sales, exams and Christmas break, foreign students are introduced to a Thursday that is filled with carved pumpkins, pilgrim stories and turkey.

Thanksgiving Day is rooted in America and celebrated with a lot of family fervor and elation on the fourth Thursday in the month of November.

“On Thanksgiving, my family and I do not have a big feast like Americans.” Fama Agne, 18, freshman nursing major from Nigerian, said. “We just express love and admiration to everyone in the family like on any other day.”

To most foreign students and families, Thanksgiving Day is looked upon as just another typical day to the human race.

“My family looks at Thanksgiving Day as an excuse to eat more calories than normal.” Christine Butson, Immigration Services Specialist at Catholic Charities of West Tennessee, said.

During Thanksgiving week, people tend to beautify their homes and give the interiors a whole new look. They light lamps to brighten the environment and the tables are adorned with the best china and antique silver cutlery.

“I don’t understand Thanksgiving so I don’t do anything.” Musa Njie, senior engineering major from Gambia, said. I just go to my friend’s house and help them to decorate their homes with wreaths, fresh and dried flowers and eat with them.”

“In Africa, we always have feasts like Thanksgiving.” Elie Nymbo, junior accounting major from Rwanda, said. “We give thanks every day, not just on one day of the year.”

Thanksgiving Day is typically about gathering with friends and family and also remembering what the Native Americans provided for the Pilgrims.

In the time of the Pilgrims, when they arrived to America, the Native Americans gathered around and helped teach the Pilgrims how to hunt, cook and survive. At the end of their long day, the Pilgrims and Native Americans gathered around each other and had dinner together with a lot of different dishes, including turkey.

“Thanksgiving to me and my family symbolize coming together as one body.” Catheine Gross, World Relief caseworker, said. “It’s always great seeing my family together happy and at peace.”

To most Americans, Thanksgiving is not all just about togetherness, indulging in massive amounts of food and being around family, it is also about a certain sport.

“Football, football, and more football is my families Thanksgiving.” Lucie Johnson, Catholic Charities Intake coordinator, said. “We eat, watch, sleep, and repeat all day long.”

“American football does not make sense to me.” Nymbo said. “It wouldn’t surprise me if that was all Americans did all year round.”

Thanksgiving to foreign students is interesting but they still go along with the holiday. They definitely enjoy the time they have off from schoolwork and work.

Most of the foreign students are refugees from different countries and they are grateful for all America has to offer them, including all the American holidays they do not understand.

Aside from what Thanksgiving is portrayed as, foreign students understand that is all about thankfulness and gratitude. They most importantly understand that having a grateful heart everyday is an essential part of the human race.