

ESOL VOICES: Student Spotlight

Nawar Ashour



Nawar Ashour, 2015

Nawar is an ESOL refugee student from Iraq. He came to the United States with his wife and son in 2012. In Iraq, Nawar worked with the U.S. military and several NGOs. He currently works as a DRP case manager at Catholic Family Center Services and is completing his studies at MCC; he plans to begin the Executive MBA Program at R.I.T. in fall 2015. In this narrative, Nawar writes about traveling through the streets of Babylon during the night-time curfew after the birth of his son in February 2009.

Welcome to the World

There is no happiness more than when you have a baby, but I didn't know that this happiness might end.

While I was talking to somebody in the sunny hospital waiting room, I felt that cellphone sound. I got the phone from my pocket. Oops, I forgot to tell my manager! I left my work without permission. I answered the phone, and started to explain to him what happened, but he understood. He said, "Congratulations for your baby. I wish to him all the best and a good life." After that, I went back to the main door of the delivery room.

I hate waiting. This is my weakness. Finally, my wife and son appeared from the main gate. My heart was pounding so hard. I wanted to hug our new boy, and I wanted to feel and smell him, but I had fear about touching the little babies.

The next day we noticed that my son's color turned yellow. My sister said, "Probably he has jaundice; you

have to get him to the hospital right now. If he remains like that at home that disease could damage his brain."

I took him to the hospital immediately. My concern was that the hospital didn't have good technology that could help with these kinds of health issues.

I was moving back and forth in the hallway beside the patients' rooms. I heard somebody calling me, and I turned my head to other side of the lobby. It was a beautiful moment.

One of my friends, Dr. Murtadha, was working at the hospital. He said, "I saw your name on my patients' records. I figured that the baby is your son, right?"

I answered, as my eyes returned to see the hope again, "Yes, he is my son. Could you tell me what is wrong?"

He said, "He has jaundice. I am glad you figured that out early. I need you to stay close to the hospital in

case I need blood."

My face turned different colors and I replied, "Why do you need blood? Does my son have a serious disease?"

He responded to me with a smiling face, "Don't worry, I have done this before. I need blood just in case we need to do blood exchange in order to recreate fresh blood and get rid of the old blood."

I went home, but I was thinking, "If the doctor calls me, how can I reach the hospital?" In Iraq, the curfew started at 11pm, and it would take at least fifteen minutes walking.

I had a phone call from the doctor at 2am. My heart shrank when I heard the ringing of my cell phone.

He said, "I need the blood now. Your son needs the blood exchange."

I don't remember how I got out from the building. The darkness covered everything. I couldn't run because I couldn't see any thing. I

barely could see the street. The way was gloomy and dreary. If anybody saw me, probably they would have thought I was a thief.

I have no idea how I got to the hospital. The doctor gave me a little box made of cork. He said, "You have to go to the blood bank." It was located almost fifteen kilometers away, and there was no ambulance available. I had to walk all these miles. It would take at least two hours each way. I didn't care. I walked all the way to the blood bank. As I walked, my mind stopped thinking anymore. I wanted to get there whatever the cost. I hiked between the buildings, trying to avoid the police or the strangers. I walked until my feet got blistered and I couldn't feel the time anymore.

During these moments, I didn't realize the fear. I was staring at the next street I had to walk in. The sky was full of stars. The stars were my

only guide. For a moment, I felt alone on this earth. I had a lot of friends and relatives, but for some reason I couldn't find anybody. I thought I was in a middle of nightmare. The situation in Iraq was scary. The insurgents had the power, and there were acts of sabotage in that time. I was a good target for the police or the night guys.

Ironically, the blood bank was closed when I got there. The place was dismal. I knocked on the door more than two times. Finally, somebody came out looking at me. I told him, "I need a blood now please. My son is dying." I had no words to say or explain the desperation I felt.

He said, "I can't give you the blood unless you give us some in exchange."

I said, "OK, let us do it. I am ready."

He answered, "We are closed now, so I can't get your blood."

I looked at him for a moment, and I tried to realize what he had just said

to me. I thought that probably he was just messing with me or he wanted to do jokes. I was ready to destroy the building on his head.

He saw my reaction in my angry facial expressions mixed with scary night darkness, and he quickly said, "I will give the blood, but promise me to come back tomorrow and donate." He absorbed my anger and probably saved a life.

I replied, "I swear I will donate tomorrow. I will give two bottles instead of one." Then, I remembered my friend who lived near the blood bank. He answered me after a couple of rings, and he came to me quickly. In spite of the curfew, we got back to the hospital miraculously.

I gave the blood to the doctor, and he did the blood exchange for my angel. After a long two days, Sinan recovered and everything was fine.

Welcome baby to the world.

ESOL Voices a collection of stories written by ESOL students at Monroe Community College. This semester, we are highlighting students from Middle Eastern countries. Look for a new story in the Tribune each month. We hope you will find these stories interesting and inspiring.

Katie Leite & Pamela Fornieri, ESOL Program, February/March 2015
