

# LIVIN' IN THE U.S.A.

## How do visitors rate our country?

Seven American Field Service exchange students who attended school here for a year have strong feelings about America. They shared their views with *React* reporter Sandy Fertman before returning to their own countries.

### What's the main difference between American teens and teens in your country?

**Fah:** I'm from Thailand, and Americans are more individual. They just do whatever they want. They follow what they are interested in and work hard for it.

**Celine:** Teens here are friendlier than in France.

**Roberto:** I'd say teens here take stuff more seriously, like sports and jobs. They're more competitive than in Italy.

**Teresa:** I don't want to generalize, but kids here tend to take things for granted. For example, they'll say, "Oh, I messed up my car, but my dad has insurance to cover it." In New Zealand, we use public transportation.

**Oboshie:** I think teens here are a bit rude to the teachers. In Ghana, it's not like that. You have to respect, and if you get in trouble with a teacher, it's a big deal there.

**Tim:** Expectations for American teens to succeed in life are a lot higher than in Australia.

**Diego:** Kids here are more into material things than teens in Paraguay.

### What was your favorite thing to do in the United States?

**Fah:** Swing dancing.

**Teresa:** Going to WNBA and baseball games.

**Roberto:** I really liked the school pride. If there is a soccer game or a play, everybody goes. They're all into it.

### Is there anything you don't like about the United States?

**Teresa:** I think Americans are too "sue-happy." Wasn't there a lady burned by a cup of coffee from McDonald's and she sued? Of course it was hot! She needed to be told that? It's just too easy to call up a lawyer here.

**Diego:** There's too much takeout food here. Also, I think people are too into making money. Like my host family—I love them, but they were working all the time. It's kind of weird.

**Celine:** On the news, it's America, America, America, and they don't care about other countries. I didn't hear anything about France until the death of Princess Diana!

### Is school more difficult here?

**Celine:** It's less difficult! You can choose the subjects you want.

**Tim:** The workload is the same, but it's easier to get your work done in class so you don't have any homework. And it's easy to get good grades.

**Oboshie:** In Ghana, you have to wear a uniform. And you have up to 13 different classes every day.

### What do you think about the way Americans dress?

**Fah:** They wear what looks good on them and what they like. They don't all dress the same. It's very cool.

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**Roberto:** Everybody wears baggy pants here. In Italy, they wear tight jeans. I liked the bleached hair, too.

**Oboshie:** I think body-piercing is too much. In Africa, if you have four earrings, they think you are a prostitute.

**Tim:** In Australia, if you wear makeup to school, you're a bit of a tart. Here, when I first saw all of these girls with makeup, I was like, "Wow!" It really made them look good.

**Fah:** I really liked the henna tattoos. If I did that in my school at home, I'd get in trouble. And no colored hair. Some schools don't even allow long hair!

## Do American teens have more freedom than teens in your country?

**Diego:** I think there is less freedom here. We don't have a drinking or smoking age in Paraguay, and you can smoke in bars, too. Here, kids are so repressed about drinking that when they finally can, they drink as much as possible! It would be better if they didn't have a drinking age, because it's no big deal to drink in Paraguay.

## What's your favorite American food?

**Tim:** Burgers, even though we have them in Australia.

**Celine:** Tacos, because we don't have them in France.

**Oboshie:** I also like french fries and lasagna. The food in Ghana is much more healthy. It's not like lumps of fattening food.

## How is dating different here?

**Fah:** Here, I would say that dating is more about making out. People touch a lot. In Thailand, you just go out. And you don't do anything in public there.

**Teresa:** I walked down the hallway at school and I had to cover my eyes! Here, there's more emphasis on couples doing things together. It's very different in New Zealand. Dating is meant for after-school hours, and it's always a group thing. Even when you go to dances, you all go together.

**Roberto:** In Italy, we don't have school dances and don't buy flowers for girls. When I wore a tuxedo to the Winter Ball here, I felt like James Bond. It was great!



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Confidence Building Middle School