

# Worldly Spartans



CAMERON DAYNARD | SNN

Junior Deshawn Fernander holds up the national flag of the Bahamas. Fernander moved to Florida in his sophomore year. "The best part of being here is I have more freedom; the worst part of being here is I miss my mama," Fernander said.

## Deshawn Fernander, 11th grade

"I moved to the United States from Nassau Bahamas during the 2016-2017 school year. (My country is) very beautiful. We have some of the best beaches in the world. I came to Florida in my 10th grade year ... for a better life and opportunities. I came here by myself, but I live with my uncle. (The biggest difference is that) there are more buildings here. It's not like the Bahamas. It's not like the beach life. I miss the Bahamas, but I miss my friends and family more than the place itself. I like it here because there is a lot more to do. The best part of being here is I have more freedom; the worst part of being here is I miss my mama. I like the United States better (because) you can do more and go more places without taking a boat or a plane. ... I think President Trump is a smart businessman but I could do without the racist, mean comments and petty arguments. Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Minnis is smart. I'm glad he got rid of a lot of corruption that was going on before he was elected. The previous Prime Minister was stealing money from the government and as soon as Minnis was elected he began lawsuits and cases against those involved. (My advice to someone coming to the United States is to) stay focused and don't do drugs."

- By SNN Staff Writer CAMERON DAYNARD



CAMERON DAYNARD | SNN

Senior Femke Brasser poses with a book that is in her first language, Dutch. Brasser came to St. Petersburg at the beginning of last year. "I came alone. It was nerve-racking," Brasser said.

## Femke Brasser, 12th grade

"I'm from Holland, a small city called Goes Zeeland. It's all flat so people bike a lot everywhere. There's lots of agriculture. In the north they grow flowers. I'm from a small town. It's boring, because there is not a lot to do once you get away from the city. I came (to St. Petersburg) at the beginning of last year. It was a different opportunity. My dad works at L'Oréal so he was already living here. I came alone. It was very nerve-racking. I live with my dad and stepmom. I was sad to leave my mom and friends. (In the United States,) people are more outgoing. I lived in a small town before this and everyone knew everything about everybody, but here there isn't so much attention to detail. Sometimes (I'm homesick). I left my whole family and my friends behind. (But) I like being here ... because it's a total different experience. (The best part is) the people and clubs. We don't have school clubs in Holland. (My advice to someone wanting to come here is) be open to it. I was very shy when I first came here, but if you're open to it, it will be easier."

- By SNN Staff Writer CRISTIN THOMAS

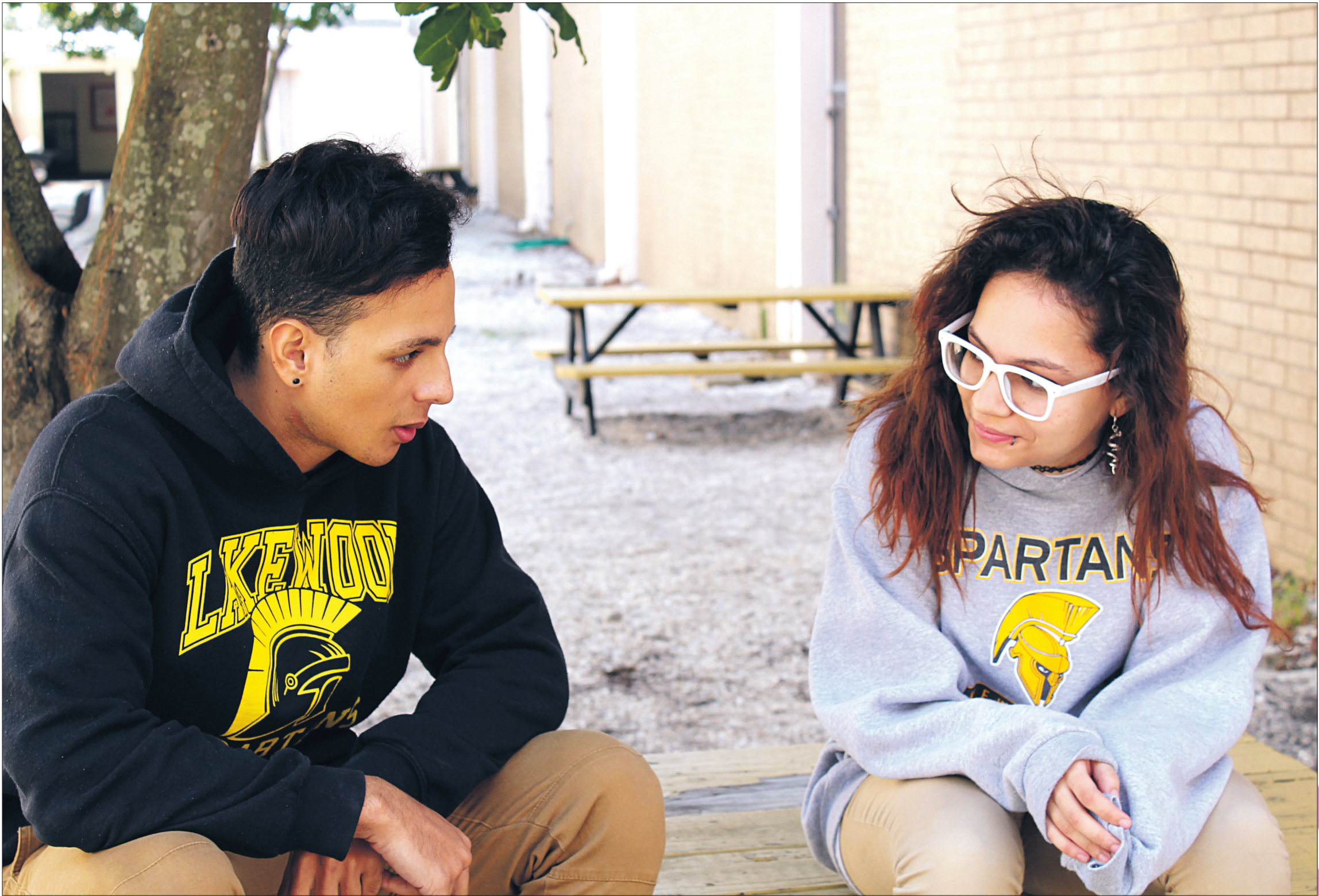


JAMILA DEDMON | SNN

Senior Zolo Danaa points to Mongolia on a map. Danaa originally comes from Ulaan Baatar and moved to the United States when she was 8 years old. "I definitely get to live a more worldly life," she said.

Lakewood is home to a diverse student body.

Seven students from different countries share their stories in their own words.



KEONDRICK DAVIS | SNN

Senior Kaesell Emerson talks to his cousin, junior Mia Maldonado, while sitting on a picnic table between A and B Wing on Nov. 27 during sixth period. Emerson moved to Florida from Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria swept through the island in early October. "I am never alone anymore; he is my best friend, my brother," Maldonado said.

# Hurricane victim finds refuge in St. Pete

BY CAMILA CHERONE

SNN Staff Writer

It came at night, a natural catastrophe that nearly destroyed a whole country, but never the spirit of its people. Senior Kaesell Emerson Perez lived through Hurricane Maria, the strongest storm to hit Puerto Rico in 89 years. "I felt like the windows were going to break, and the house was going to fly away," said Emerson, who described the situation after the storm as awful.

There was no water nor electricity and for some people very little food and medical care. Some places still don't have access to the internet.

After the hurricane was gone, Emerson saw how even people who disliked each other became a family and worked together to fix what they once called "my block."

"The hurricane lasted for 24 hours, but it is going to take more than that to fix everything. Everything got flooded, everything is destroyed," Emerson said.

Emerson's school was being used as a shelter for people who lost everything, but he did not want to waste time, so he came to the United States to continue with his high school career. "Some people say that it was going to start in some months, and that we had to stay there for double the hours. I don't want that," said Emerson, a senior.

He ended up at Lakewood High School, living in St. Petersburg with his cousin, Mia Maldonado, who is a Lakewood junior.

"I am never alone anymore; he is my best friend, my brother," she said.

Spanish teacher Linda Santiago said the school district may not be prepared for the

wave of students who still may come.

"Other schools may give them better opportunities; schools that have ESOL and a translator can give them an easier transition," Santiago said.

The majority of the residents wanted to escape the island, Emerson said, but airlines raised the ticket price.

"You had to ask your families in the U.S. to help you buy one ... but that was a hard task already since it's hard to find internet," he said.

A shared struggle for a lot of immigrants is

"It was a dream to be here, but now that I am here, reality impacts me. I had no idea what I was putting myself into."

Kaesell Emerson  
12th grade

leaving your family behind. The majority of Emerson's family lives in Puerto Rico, and it was particularly hard for him to come without his mom, who had to stay behind.

"It is so sad since you get used to being with them all the time, but my mom said it was for my own benefit and future," he said.

There are a lot of differences between the high school that he attended in Puerto Rico

and Lakewood.

"Classes in Puerto Rico are shorter and the lunch lasts for one hour," he said.

When Emerson was in Puerto Rico he thought coming to America would be much easier, but people's accents and the way of life here has made this adventure harder.

"It was a dream to be here, but now that I am here reality impacts me. I had no idea what I was putting myself into," Emerson said.

Emerson described himself as shy, but said he does not have trouble in maintaining a good conversation if someone talks to him.

"I will not make the first move ... but I will definitely be nice and I will pay attention to what people are telling me," he said.

Emerson's hobby is going to the gym. He enjoys weightlifting and sports like basketball, handball and soccer.

"I can do any sport if I really put my heart into it," he said.

He also enjoys listening to music. "I can spend hours and hours listening and working with sounds; it transports me to another dimension," Emerson said.

One of the advantages that Emerson has is that he can speak English, which he learned in a private school in Puerto Rico.

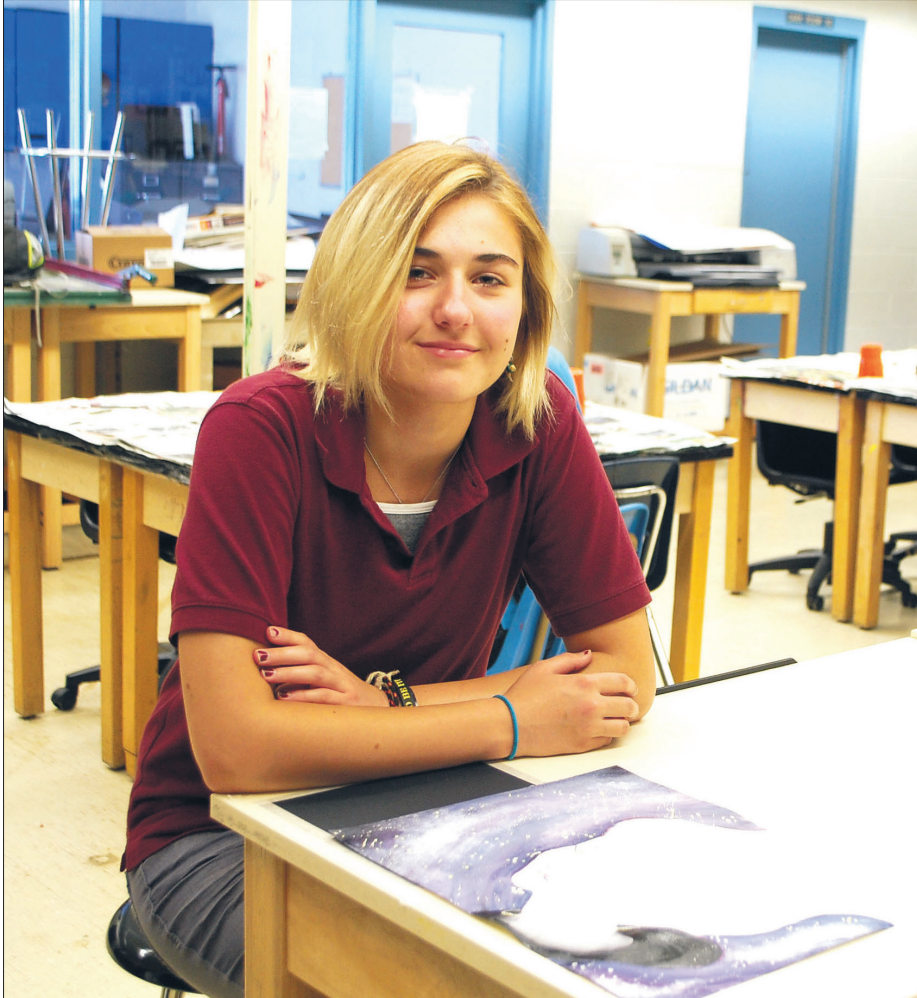
It is unclear when Emerson will return home. He does not want to change schools again; the idea of starting everything from scratch seems horrible to him.

"Life changes quickly, but I am thinking of staying here and continuing my school life here," he said.



WILLIE SMITH | SNN

Senior Kaesell Emerson does a dead lift during his eighth period weight training class on Nov. 14. Emerson said he enjoys weightlifting and hitting the gym. "I can do any sport if I really put my heart into it," he said.



JATREE JACKSON | SNN

Junior Lilly Schmidt sits in front of an art project she did in her art class on Nov. 14. Schmidt is originally from Germany and came to Florida in August. "The best part is that school is very easy and the worst part is there isn't as much freedom as my country," she said.

## Lilly Schmidt, 11th grade

"I'm from Germany and from a very little village called Lostau. It has 2,000 people. (My country is) very liberal, not very patriotic. Germany is one of the smallest countries. It takes almost seven hours to go from the highest point to the lowest point of it and that's how small it is. I came on the 10th of August this year. I wanted to exchange to an English speaking country. Australia was too ... hot, the United Kingdom was too cold, so I chose the U.S. Also I had never been and I wanted to discover it. I came alone. I live with a host family. It consists of a father, mother and a 9-year-old daughter. The biggest difference (between my country and the United States) is that you can drink alcohol at the age of 16 (in Germany), and the police are not as strict as here. For example they don't have guns like they do here. I've never seen a gun in my whole life before. I'm not (homesick, because) I travel a lot. I do (like being here) because of the weather and I also experienced my first hurricane, which was Irma. The best part (about being here) is that school is very easy and the worst part is there isn't as much freedom as my country."

-By SNN Staff Writer HIBA AITGRIF



DIANA ROSENTHAL | SNN

Sophomore Jamanson Fremond holds up the national flag of Haiti on Nov. 7. Fremond moved from Haiti when he was 10 years old. "Haiti schools are much different from over here. You have to pay for education and the kids are different from over here," he said.

## Jamanson Fremond, 10th grade

"I'm from Haiti and moved to the USA in fifth grade. I was 10 years old. (I came because) my mom had gotten a job offer in Florida. My airplane had stopped at Miami and we found a friend in the area and stayed with them for a few hours. Haiti schools are much different. You have to pay for education and the kids are different from over here. School is the worst part about Florida, but the best is I have friends. I don't have a lot, but I have some good friends. (If I could go back to Haiti), yes, I would, because all my family are down there, but I'll be down there in the summer. I am not homesick. I came to the U.S. with my mom and my brother. It was kind of (difficult) because we had to buy all new furniture. I speak French and Creole. I'm very fluent in Creole because I speak that language to my mom, but English to my brother."

- By SNN Staff Writer DIANA ROSENTHAL

## Ricardo Gardner, 11th grade

"I am from St. Elizabeth, Jamaica. To me (my country is) very fun and a great place for a kid to grow up, because we just have so much freedom. ... I came here when I was 11; I was supposed to come when I was 2, but I didn't because I didn't want to because it was so fun in Jamaica. My dad had a job down here and we had to stay here with my grandma. I had a hostess on a plane to accompany me on the way to America. I currently live with my aunt. (The biggest difference here is that) the U.S. proclaims to have freedom, but the freedom in my country is way different, like here at school when it's lunchtime you're not allowed to go anywhere, but in Jamaica you can go anywhere like your home or the arcade. Also people here are more secluded like if you go out in the street you won't see anyone, but in Jamaica there would be groups of people standing outside having a good time. I've gotten over (being homesick) a long time ago. The only thing though is the food; the food is more natural in Jamaica and here everything is full of GMO's and like chicken on steroids. I like being here because I like how everyone here is different and that they all have different backgrounds and cultures; it's always something new, but I have gotten used to it also. You get to experience a

lot more, too. The best part of being here is that everything is easier, but not everyone down here realizes that because this is their lives. If you went back to (my) country you would realize what you had in America and what you can appreciate. ... The worst part of being here is that there are a lot of cases of domestic violence, like it's crazy. You have smaller kids out killing people and doing the gangster things that grown-ups would be doing in Jamaica. I don't have a problem with (President Donald) Trump, but his thoughts are irrational. He tries to be too dominant; it's like he's offended by everything and everyone. He tries not to show it, but it's obvious. The thing with immigration with him is he talks about it but never does anything. I want to see action and see if he really means what he says. Right now (in Jamaica) we have a prime minister, Andrew Holness, who was head of the board of education. I believe he is fit for the position. (The advice I would I would give someone is) when you come here enjoy the things here, set a goal and accomplish it. I like Jamaica better because I've been there all my life and I experienced a lot down there. (But) those things that I've learned down in Jamaica I can apply here."

- By SNN Staff Writer NATACHA OLIVERO



DAIZAHNE MOORE | SNN

Junior Ricardo Gardner poses in front of the Jamaican flag on Nov. 29. Gardner moved to Florida when he was 11 years old. "I like being here because I like how everyone here is different and that they all have different backgrounds and cultures," he said.