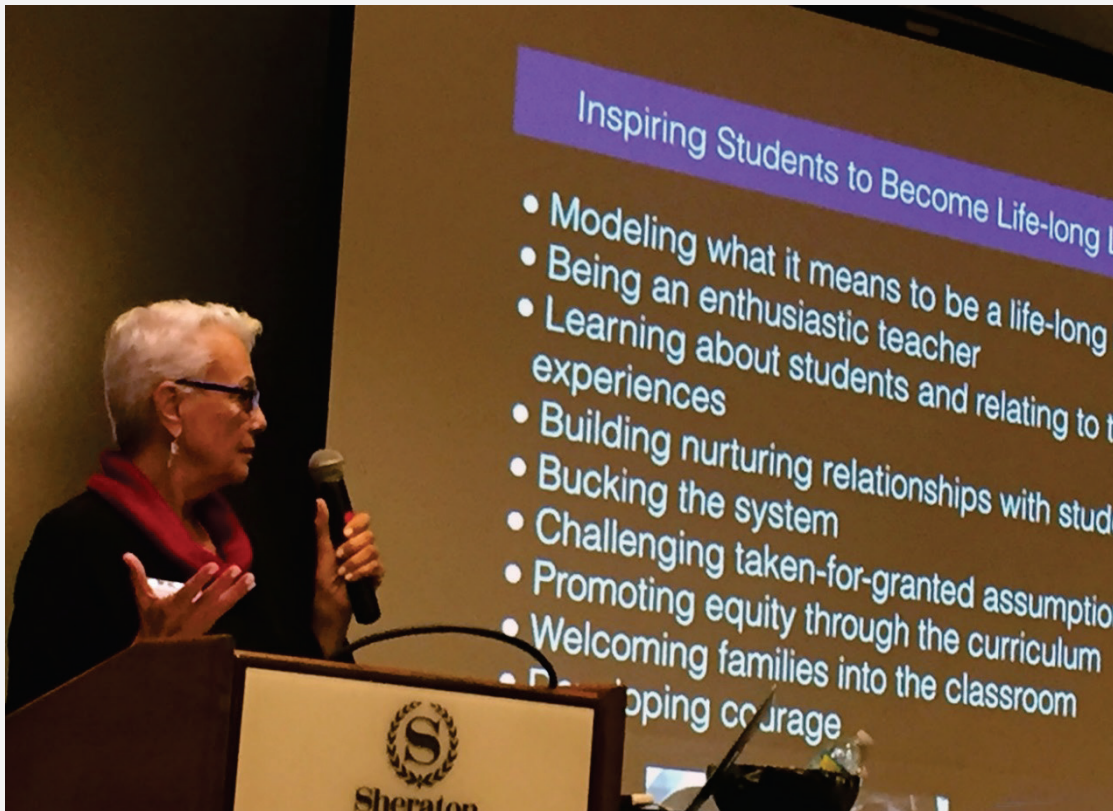


# CONN TESOL QUARTERLY

The Connecticut Affiliate of the National TESOL Association

• ISSUE 10 FALL 2016



Dr. Sonia Nieto, keynote speaker at the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual ConnTESOL Conference in October.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Sonia Nieto, has devoted her professional life to questions of diversity, equity, and social justice in education, with research focusing on multicultural education, teacher education, and the education of students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In her address “Life-Long Learning from Life-Long Learners: Modeling Enthusiasm and Excitement in Learning, Nieto described some of the mindsets, values, and strategies that teachers use to motivate their students to become life-long learners. Based on her research with teachers over many years, she drew from teachers’ stories, successes and frustrations to suggest how all teachers, including ESL and bilingual teachers, learn from, and teach, their students.

*The following is an excerpt from Dr. Nieto’s presentation:*

## MATT HICKS, LIFE-LONG LEARNER

An English teacher and soccer coach in Athens, GA.

His essay in *Why We Teach Now* is about ‘coming into full humanity through teaching, sharing, and connecting.’ In it, he describes how he became a social justice educator after beginning his teaching career by building ‘deep, meaningful relationships with some very special students.’

Matt writes, “Intellectually, I gained a better understanding of what it meant to be one of the estimated 11.1 million undocumented immigrants in the United States through conversations [with my students] on car rides home from high school soccer practices.” And through the students’ writings, Matt began truly to “get” them.

He writes: “Their words swam through my head, their words pounded in my heart, their fears wrenched my gut. And I asked myself, ‘What the heck have I done? How can I open this up and not know how to handle it? How can I carry this burden and sleep at night?’”

He took on this burden. For example, he dreamed up a plan to help his students get into college. Because undocumented immigrants are classified as ‘international students’ regardless of how long they’ve been in Georgia schools, college admission is very difficult for them, regardless of how strong they may be academically.

To help them gain admission to college, Matt created a class for undocumented students: “I had to do much of this under the table for fear of reprisal from administrators or community members, and, of course, I needed to make sure not to violate any part of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act or ‘out’ any students. We gave the course a vague, innocuous name, and from there we used our relationships with other kids to bring together 15 aspiring, college-bound, undocumented students who we believed could benefit from this information.”



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46<sup>TH</sup>

ANNUAL

## ConnTESOL CONFERENCE

**Lifelong Learning for  
Linguistically & Culturally  
Diverse Populations**

FRONT, 2: Keynote speaker, Dr. Sonia Nieto, Essay by Matt Hicks

PAGE 3-5 ConnTESOL Scholarship recipients and their winning essays.

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PAGE 8 Video documentary on the war in Syria by advanced ESL students ([link](#))

PAGE 9 BOARD

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**MATT HICKS cont.**

Matt inspires his students to become life-long learners by creating pathways and hope.

"The deal was simple," he wrote. "We would do all we could to help them get into college with as much scholarship support as possible. We started that first year with a small group."

"Out of this work, community was built, family grew, and so did their dreams, empowerment, and open doors. Seven students left there accepted to at least one college. Three students earned 6 scholarships."

As a result of these experiences, Matt has increasingly become an advocate for his many undocumented students, supporting their plans for postsecondary education by teaching a voluntary enrichment course, participating in panels around the state, speaking at the state level, attending rallies and demonstrations, and volunteering with local immigration advocacy organizations.

On becoming advocates for social justice:

"It was no longer an abstract intellectual pursuit. It was close to my heart each night as I prepared for school.

It was what brought me there each day. Those kids brought me there each day. It's what pushed me. This wasn't politics. This was my family.

I teach, because I see the humanity revealed in these spaces and through our struggles.

Teaching for social justice is a part of who I am, on a deeper level now, and the resolve to use my place of privilege to advocate for each and every one of my students is now a part of my very being."

***"Language is the  
road map of a  
culture. It tells you  
where its people  
come from and  
where they are  
going"***

***Rita Mae Brown***





# CONN TESOL QUARTERLY

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**At the ConnTESOL Conference 2016**, the four scholarship winners proudly read their essays before graciously accepting their scholarships. In their essays they were asked to explain how learning English has influenced their life and their future plans. Here are their essays:



From left to right, CAPELL winner George Atalla, Adult Education winner Tram Nguyen, Two-year College Winner, Glorianne Rusate, Luis Quilli, and Four Year College Winner, Guadalupe Nava.

## GEORGE ATALLA CAPELL WINNER

**N**o one ever imagines themselves speaking to others in a language different from their native language. I would have never thought of it, because it seems so difficult, different, and strange. However, here I am, in that very same position, speaking to people in English, a language that was once foreign to me. I'll admit that transferring my thoughts and what I want to say from my native Arabic into English hasn't been at all easy. The two languages are completely different, with different alphabets, and consisting of exceptionally different sounds and pronunciations.

Experiencing the major transformation of moving to the U.S., and doing things I had never considered doing, like speaking a different language, changed a lot of things for me, including my plans for the future. Learning English opened a lot of doors, such as planning to possibly attend medical school and studying to become a cardiologist. This is a significant goal, one I had not even ever considered before learning English. Most medically related college majors are taught in English. This is one of the main reasons why many young men and women are discouraged from studying one of these majors. Learning English has given me the chance to do it, and one day, I may be able to return to Syria to help people like me, whose first language is not English, so that they may be afforded with the same number of choices that I have available to me. Being able to read, write and understand the English language will afford people like me with many more, and varied, opportunities.

What was once an almost an impossible goal to me, pursuing a profession in medicine, is now a goal that I will soon realize, and all of this has been made possible because of my learning the English language. This is the key that has opened, and continues to open, so many different doors.

### 2016 CONN TESOL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS ESSAY TOPIC

"A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE IS A DIFFERENT VISION OF LIFE." (FEDERICO FELLINI)

APPLICANTS EXPLAINED HOW LEARNING ENGLISH HAS INFLUENCED THEIR LIVES AND FUTURE PLANS.

**CAPELL WINNER**  
GEORGE ATALLA  
BRISTOL CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL  
ATTENDING EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

**ADULT EDUCATION WINNER**  
TRAM NGUYEN  
BRISTOL ADULT EDUCATION  
ATTENDING TUNXIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**TWO-YEAR COLLEGE WINNER**  
LUIS QUILLI  
HENRY ABBOTT TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL  
ATTENDING NAUGATUCK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

**FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE WINNER**  
GUADALUPE NAVA  
SHEEHAN HIGH SCHOOL  
ATTENDING SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY



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## TRAM NGUYEN ADULT EDUCATION WINNER

Learning a foreign language means learning about life in another vision as the famous film director Federico Fellini said, "A different language is a different vision of life." I could see this point of view through my process of learning English. Other than helping me to overcome the language barrier, learning English gives me the opportunities to learn about diverse cultures in the world, as well as, further my education in the United States.

First of all, learning English helps me to better communicate with other people in the United States. Although I studied English as a second language in Vietnam, I couldn't express my ideas accurately for others to understand what I wanted to say. For that reason, I decided to come to ESL classes at Bristol Adult Education Center. At the beginning, I was shy and usually kept quiet because of my bad pronunciation and my fear of making mistakes. However, teachers and everyone in the Center always encourage me to improve. My teachers are enthusiastic and continue to teach me how to pronounce English words correctly, guide me to review basic grammar, and inspire me to become more confident in communicating in and out the classroom. It didn't take me much time to be more comfortable to interact with everybody.

In addition, learning English gives me the opportunity to have international friends, and learn about various cultures in the world. I have many ESL classmates who came from different countries: China, Cambodia, Peru, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Dominican Republic... Apart from helping each other learning English, we can introduce our countries and our specific cultural customs through presentations, or research assignments. Especially, in international party on Christmas at Center, I have chance to taste original food coming from various parts of the world.



“  
**A DIFFERENT  
LANGUAGE IS A  
DIFFERENT VISION  
OF LIFE.**  
”  
**(FEDERICO FELLINI)**

## GUADALUPE NAVA FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE WINNER

"A different language is a different vision of life. A door that English has opened for me, is the opportunity to have a great job. I always remembered my dad telling my siblings and me - "I get up at 5 am in the morning, rain or snow I have to be outside, get my hands and clothes dirty. Because if I had had the opportunity that you have to study and learn English, I wouldn't be a simple construction worker, who needs a bilingual person to express what I need. I would be in an office with air-conditioning and my hands without many scars." His words have been stuck in my mind since they left his mouth. Probably they could

have been just a complaint. But for me it was a lesson, my dad exposed me to the reality. Learning English is an opportunity for a better life. The benefits of being bilingual will give me a bigger chance of finding a job.

In today's society, language is a very important aspect to our multicultural society. Knowing another language will get me to many places in life and help me in times of need. I'm going to be a doctor, a pediatrician, so my ability to help people would not be limited to English speakers, but it will be expanded to Spanish speakers, too. Besides the satisfaction of helping different groups of people being bilingual can help promote my earnings and enhance my mental development. Being bilingual is like a 'Super power' it has helped me to understand and appreciate new people.

English has expanded my horizons in an enormous way, thanks to the fact that I have learned English, I will be able to continue learning what fascinates me - medicine- and I'll be able to help my family economically. Now I can demonstrate to my dad that his sacrifices have paid off and I, his daughter, will help more people as him to be their voices.





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## TRAM NGUYEN, continued

Each food is associated with particular culture. I was mostly impressed by "Tamale pie", a traditional Mesoamerican dish made of corn dough, filled with meats and covered by corn husk. Its origin goes back thousands of years and it was very flavorful, I have never tasted something like that before. Moreover, my teachers' fascinating lectures, and field trips to museums organized by the Center also give me interesting lessons about American history and society. My teachers, my classmates and I are people who speak different languages, yet English helps us to become friends and understand more one another's culture.

Last but not least, learning English helps me to further my education. English is an essential key for my college education because this is an English speaking country. Together with taking ESL classes, I also joined GED classes to learn more about language arts, social studies, science and math. This will prepare me for the college placement test. I plan to enroll in courses this summer at Tunxis community college. I believe that my hard work at ESL and GED classes will enable me to excel in college education and achieve my career's goal.

Learning English, a foreign language, has significant influences in my life and my plans.

English helps me to integrate with the community, make new friends, discover new cultures, and be confident in continuing my studying. Being able to use more than a language gives me the strength to live in an overseas country, and the opportunity to see the colorful world in another vision.

"The word vision means to be able to think about the future with imagination."

Luis Quilli



## LUIS QUILLI

### TWO YEAR

### WINNER

Federico Fellini once said in regard to students learning a new language which also affects me personally, "A different language is a different

vision of life." In my life, I see how important it is to learn the English language because it opens doors to new opportunities. The word vision means to be able to think about the future with imagination. By me learning English, I can do more things than I can ever imagine. I would say learning a different language is not the easiest thing to do because I have to work at it everyday. At home, I only talk Spanish and therefore, I needed to learn two different languages growing up. Learning English was hard because my words had an accent. An accent is a distinctive mode of pronunciation of language that is associated with one particular nation. My accent made me not want to practice a lot because I talked differently than others talked.

Today, I am still learning English and even though I do not speak perfect English, I still try to practice my English as much as possible. In the future, I want to learn how to speak both English and Spanish fluently so, I can one day be bilingual and help people who speak either language.

If I learn to be fluent in English, then I will have more opportunities to continue my education. There are so many things changing each and every day that it is just incredible because the technology we're using today can be old fashioned ten years from now. With technology innovating everyday, it is important for me to be aware of my surroundings and stay connected to new technology. This is why I want to pursue higher education.





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## TESOL Award of Professional Excellence



As an undergraduate at Binghamton University, Anna Marie Deem (AMD) fell in love with jurisprudence. At Teachers College, she was able to combine that, with her passions for travel and language, and received her Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language. Starting her career over 20 years ago as an ESL teacher in the South Bronx, she then found herself teaching English as a Foreign Language abroad for several years and eventually made her way back to the east coast of the U.S. and Greenwich High School. Her passionate concern for students is felt at a visceral level, stemming from her time as an ex-pat and the child of an immigrant family. At Greenwich, she works with an incredibly diverse population, supporting the high school's department as the Program Associate. Charged with making sure her students thrive and are able to avail themselves of the same opportunities as any other student in GHS keeps her busy working closely with guidance, mental health, and interdisciplinary colleagues. AMD is humbled to be recognized as the recipient of the TESOL Award of Professional Excellence from ConnTESOL, just as she is humbled by her students, time and time again. There are countless English as a Second Language educators who give so deeply of themselves and who deserved of being recognized; CT State's efforts of doing so for her and other esteemed colleagues this year are much appreciated. She extends her gratitude mostly to her GHS ESL Dept. "Family," because she knows it is thanks to the team effort of this distinguished staff of educators that they are able to make the greatest impact on students' successes. And witnessing her students' successes, whether it be mastering the third person singular 's' or getting into their dream nursing program, is like receiving the greatest of awards over and over again.

Angela Fragoso joined the Meriden Public Schools as a bilingual teacher in 1999. Prior to her current position as a Bilingual Support/ESOL teacher, she was a third grade bilingual teacher. Angela stated that this award is very special to her because she too was an English Learner who came to the United States at nine years old. She credits her success to the positive influence of teachers throughout her own childhood education. Angela stated - "Every day that I am in front of children, I pray and hope that there is something I can do or say to change the course of a child's life. Maybe I will be the seed that turns into a desire to go further, to succeed and to be nothing short of amazing."

Mrs. Fragoso holds a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Connecticut, and a Master's Degree in Bilingual/Special from Fairfield University. She also holds a Sixth Year Degree in administration from Southern Connecticut State University. In addition to her career, Mrs. Fragoso is a dedicated mother and wife







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## How They Got Here:

### Diversity in Refugee and Migrant Experiences

Presented by

Kristin Bengtson Mendoza and Tanya Kimball Genn

Our hope as presenters at this year's ConnTESOL conference was to bring some more experiential learning to the TESOL community. A dynamic and very different scene unfolded in our conference room, with chairs pushed aside and props filling the open space. Teachers from around the state joined color-coded "families", entering into scenarios faced by real refugees here in Connecticut. Together we embarked on an hour-long role play meant to simulate some aspects of refugee and migrant experiences, using *Passages*, a freely available series of games published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The blindfolded families, babies and children in tow, managed to reunite in a noisy and chaotic environment. They hurriedly selected emergency supplies to take on their journey, and chose which items would need to be left behind. They bartered with the things they carried, sometimes paying bribes. They arrived at the border tired, hungry, and disoriented, and struggled to fill out forms in an alien language to gain entry to a new land. In our brief simulation, three of the five families made it across to safety before the conclusion of the session. In reality, we know that less than 1% of the world's refugees have the opportunity to resettle through the UN's refugee resettlement program.

In the few minutes we had left to unpack our experiences of *Passages*, teachers shared powerful stories and insights about their work with immigrant youth and families. We shared a list of local and national resources for teachers, including tips for working with children with post-traumatic stress disorder from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. It is our sincere hope that our dialogue around these topics continues, and that participants left empowered with resources they could bring back to their schools and communities.

*Passages* is free and available to download at <http://www.unhcr.org/473dc1772.pdf>.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network's "Suggestions for Educators" is available at [http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/CTTE\\_Educators.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/CTTE_Educators.pdf).



*"Teachers from around the state joined color-coded 'families' entering into scenarios faced by real refugees here in Connecticut."*





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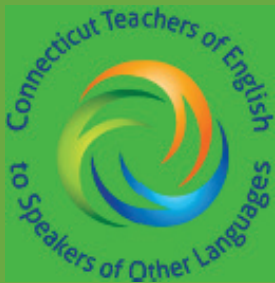
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## [The War in Syria by ESL students March 2016](#)

This 30-minute video documentary was made by a group of advanced ESL students as their final project while attending Education First in Tarrytown, New York.





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Conn TESOL is Looking forward to having all vacant positions filled. Are you interested? If so, please submit your name, district, and position to [ConnTESOL@Gmail.com](mailto:ConnTESOL@Gmail.com), with the Subject Line "ConnTESOL Board."

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