



Oakland Tribune

Serving Oakland for 135 years



BHIM TIMSINA, center, relaxes before work March 31 with his niece, Yashoda, and friend Khamba Rai, near his brother-in-law, Khada, and brother, Bala. Timsina and his family arrived last year in Oakland from a refugee camp in Nepal.

DREAMS LIVE AFTER EXILE

By Matt O'Brien
STAFF WRITER

Bhutanese refugees build lives in Oakland from dust of banishment from their homeland

ON THE FIRST DAY of English class, a dozen classmates from a dozen countries introduced themselves. They stood up and told one another what brought them to the United States.

Bhim Timsina had the most to say, sharing a long, bleak story about a kingdom that expelled a sixth of its people. "There became two types of people in Bhutan," he said of his native country. His people — those of Nepali descent — were the type who had to leave.

Carefully grasping for the right words and relaying them with cheerful formality, the 26-year-old tried to explain in English why he spent the past 17 years in a refugee camp.

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"For my existence, I will do any kind of work. But I need to aim quite high."

— Bhim Timsina

IN MORNING REPORT

Dalai Lama's call for peace

MORE THAN 6,000 people showed up to hear the Dalai Lama speak at UC Berkeley for the third time since 1994. He donned a Bears visor and preached about finding peace through compassion. The Dalai Lama, 73, had advice about staying healthy: "Don't take oneself as the center of the world. Think of others, then your health will become better. That's my medicine."

COMING WEDNESDAY

100 DAYS

The beginning of President Obama's term is explored in a special section



OnlineExtras

InsideBayArea.com

Meet Bhutanese refugee and ESL student Bhim Timsina as he starts a new life in Oakland.

Immigrants learn, one syllable at a time



JANE TYSKA/STAFF

MARIANNA MATTHEWS instructs an ESL class Jan. 7 at The English Center in Oakland. The center also offers other classes to help immigrants in their search for work.

By Matt O'Brien
STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND — "How are you?" Marianna Matthews asks her class. "How are you?"

Identical words, slightly different questions. The teacher asks her adult students if they understand the difference.

"It's called intonation," she said, diagramming the flow from one syllable to another. "It's the music of English. Whether your voice goes up or down."

The mysteries of English are, in part, about words and how to pronounce and write them.

But the students at The English Center in Jack Lon-

don Square, hailing from the Ivory Coast, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, China, Bhutan, Myanmar, Latin America and elsewhere, want more than words and grammar. They are looking to understand the nuances.

"I want to find the same job here that I had in Lithuania," said student Pavel Sedliar, of Walnut Creek. "But I must have perfect English."

Even in the best times, the kind of students who find themselves at The English Center, many of them refugees, all of them immigrants, have trouble finding jobs in an unfamiliar world.

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NAACP leader sees a future of fortune

By Kevin Leahy
CORRESPONDENT

The 100-year-old National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will embrace online organizing tools to "retrain and re-equip" a new generation of civil rights volunteers, its newly elected president said Saturday.

Benjamin Jealous, 36, laid out his vision for the country's oldest and largest civil rights organization in front of about 250 people at the Oakland Museum of California. He said that though the organization

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RAY CHAVEZ/STAFF

BENJAMIN JEALOUS, president and CEO of the NAACP, right, talks to people Saturday at the James Morgan Theater at the Oakland Museum.

Forecast

Sunny
Highs 60s, Lows 40s
Details on B12



Another candidate?

■ Alameda County deputy district attorney Scott Jackson is considering adding his name to the Oakland mayoral race. **A3**

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Goodbye, 'Golden Girl'

■ Actress Bea Arthur, known for roles on "Maude" and "The Golden Girls," dies at age 86. **Morning Report**



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