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different places and meeting new people, like I love Hip-Hop clubs," Jasmine said. "I don't have any American friends, because they don't understand my accent," Jasmine said. Shrugging her shoulders, Jasmine shows despair. Looking into her eyes, I can tell that she feels that because of her accent, Americans resent her. During class lectures Jasmine found it hard to follow her professor, but was too afraid to ask questions in fear of embarrassment.

Before leaving Korea her friends worried. "They worried about me because I'm very shy and didn't speak English. I have become outgoing since I came to the U.S. I make myself talk when I go to parties, and I ask questions to get conversations started. It's a thrill for me," Jasmine said. Jasmine has found balance through her personal drive to achieve. Transforming like a caterpillar into a beautiful social butterfly, Jasmine is no longer shy but confident in herself.

Unlike Jasmine, Omar Perez came to LBCC by choice. Omar enrolled in the commercial solo voice class after a friend told him about the music program LBCC offered specifically for vocalists. His early experience as an intern at Mango, Dominican Republic's music television network, kept the window open for him to one day attend school to become a professional musician.

"I always loved to sing. I sang at church and began to play guitar to make music on my own," Omar said. He chose LBCC (ruling out schools in Miami, Chicago and New York) because he felt the vocal training, and the music program in general, would help him succeed as a musician.

In the Dominican Republic, at the age of 26, Omar openly expressed to his family how

much he wanted to study abroad. When the possibility presented itself, Omar did not hesitate. It is that mentality and assertiveness that keeps him on track. "I was prepared to make the move. I wanted independence, to live on my own, and rely on myself," he said.

Omar began his new life in January 2007 and recalls what it was like his first days in

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America. "It was cold in the early mornings and nights. It was a quest to find a room for rent, plus I felt anticipation toward my new life." For Perez some of the hardest issues to solve as a foreigner in the US were housing, making money and even eating three meals a day. "Now I feel more in control of my life in every way. I'm more responsible and conscious of the things I have to do to achieve my goals."

Besides preparing his own breakfast and washing clothes Perez is now able to pay his rent thanks to his job at the International Students Office. He also tutors students in French and Spanish to help with his other expenses. "I never thought I could be getting paid to teach anything, much less something I learned in high school, now I have a little car to get around and tutor," Omar said.

Two years after his voyage Omar can tell his friends and family back home that his preparation at LBCC has increased his confidence and made him happy. "I can say that everything I went through was worth it to get where I am now and where I'm going in the near future." Perez has even done field work