Elijah Umek: 10th grade

Over the course of my interaction with the students from Ghana, I learned many things. For one, I learned that other countries, like Ghana, pay a lot more attention to the US and its affairs than we pay to theirs. The students spoke about the election [in the US] as if they were living here and they talked about the election night and how excited the people of Ghana were as if they themselves were in America the day it happened. Then as their election day grew closer, I realized that no one knew of the election, of the candidates, of anything. There was no front page of the *Washington Post* announcing a run-off, there was no column dedicated to the political instability of Ghana and what the people have gone through for democracy – a thing we take for granted. But then in our final DVC, I also realized that the people, the students we were talking to were just that, students. They were just happy to have democracy and … be able to enjoy the one thing many look to the US for.

Throughout all three DVCs, I was very happy with the way things went. In the first two, the video feed didn't work, but we compensated with the phone call. From there, things moved smoothly. It was structured but relaxed, and I enjoyed the conversations we had. I was also surprised by the students' knowledge of US politics. As for my views on Ghana and Africa as a whole, they have not changed. I have many friends from Africa so I know a lot about the culture and I know how much emphasis they put on education. I think the students were more prepared than us, but I know I was just as eager to learn from them as they were to learn from us.

Tedros Bitew: 10th grade

I, Tedros Bitew, attend School without Walls High School and I am from Ethiopia. My communication with the students was a phenomenal and exciting experience, in which we got to learn about each others' backgrounds and the presidential elections. I learned numerous things, such as their geography, culture (religion, food, clothes and daily life), background and mainly the presidential election. Some particular things that I learned was that Ghana was colonized by Britain. I also learned that it has a democracy, rather than most countries in Africa whose government is based on a dictatorship. Another interesting thing that I learned was that Ghana is divided into different regions based on religion, infrastructure and cultures. These different regions vote for different candidates. For example, the southern part of Ghana is more modernized than the other parts of Ghana and this could be due to the colonization of Britain in the coast rather than the inland.

On the other hand, it was interesting to learn about the presidential race. For example, one interesting thing I learned was that many of the campaigns, debates, speeches, etc., were not well-broadcasted for people to receive news of the nominees in order to base their vote. I also learned that it takes a really long time to count the votes due the paper ballots. Another thing that I was startled about was the way the Ghanaians were interested in our election and they knew plenty of stuff about our presidential election. However, we here don't receive any news about Ghana's elections and attending this program was the only way that I found out about Ghana's election.

Finally, my views of Ghana have changed enormously. Before, I didn't know that Ghana had a well-organized government (democracy) because in most African nations there is nothing like that, such as in Ethiopia. I also thought Ghana was a Muslim country because most countries in Africa are influenced/ ruled by Muslims. However, by communicating with the students in Ghana, I have learned that Ghana is mostly Christian. This was an excellent opportunity and I thank the State Department and GCDC for this opportunity.

Alyssa Scarlett: 10th grade

After communicating with Ghana, I felt special to have had this opportunity. I learned about how their government worked before they declared independence. The people in Ghana were all required to be in their houses before 6pm or they were … punished somehow. I used to think that more areas of Ghana were poorer than they are, but the students that we spoke to were middle class, which is similar to most of us here. I would have liked to speak with them for a while longer to discuss basic things and to ask them individually about their family and friends. Overall, this was a great experience and I would love to do it again.