

Olly racela in bangkok essay sample



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Summary

Olly Racela had been living and working in Bangkok, Thailand for nearly three years now. She learned about the country from her Thai classmates while taking her MBA studies. They became her good friends and in June 1997, a year after graduation and working at a job she did not find challenging enough, she traveled to Bangkok for a visit and to ponder on her next career move. That first experience made her love the country, its beautiful tourist sites, and its people. Racela enjoyed her stay in Thailand so much that she expressed a desire to go back. Her friends, meanwhile, suggested she apply to local firms in Bangkok for work. She did, and a few months later she found herself back in Thailand having accepted a job offer from a Thai employer.

Problem Statement

Racela is deep into her career with the Thai consulting firm that hired her. She is admired by both her colleagues and the company's clients. However, working and living in Thailand were not without their challenges. Despite adjusting to the new way of life, cultural differences between Thailand and her native Hawaii would continue to confuse and frustrate her. Her present dilemma presented itself by way of a job offer from the United States, from home. The position would be more challenging than her former position before she moved to Thailand, it would bring her close to her family and erase her struggles with cultural issues. But she has come to like living in Thailand and the experience has brought positive changes to her personality that even her old American friends noticed. Racela is torn between

continuing to live and work in Bangkok or accepting the job offer back in Hawaii and his old life.

Analysis

Racela liked Thailand the first time she visited it in 1997. She was excited to go to a country far different than hers; she was impressed with the modern and clean Don Muang Airport and the booming commerce; and even liked the inexpensive Thai dishes. When she started working for the medium-sized consulting firm in Bangkok, however, she realized that being a tourist in the city is far different to actually living in it.

The issues that Racela had to contend with had to do with two main factors: the country and her workplace.

In Thailand

Racela struggled with the cultural differences between the Thais and her native American. She found it hard to buy food since local vendors never had a menu and when they did, it was in Thai. She solved this problem later on, however, by learning to pronounce the names of the dishes.

Her friends were always ready to help her whenever she called them, but Racela wanted to be independent, something which led to many frustrating situations. Yet, when she did find her way around, she enjoyed her weekend excursions to museums, tourist districts, and bargain shopping. Traveling and her various interactions with the Thai people also made Racela develop a great respect for others and cultivated tolerance for a different way of doing things.

Bangkok was infamous for being over-crowded, polluted and unbearably hot. Poor urban planning led to traffic jams that made commuting a nightmare for Racela. Public buses were dirty, over-crowded and known to host pickpockets so she usually rode the more expensive air-conditioned buses or, if she was pressed for time, the expensive taxi. A good thing, however, is that the Thai government had been exerting effort to ease its traffic problems.

The language barrier compounded the challenges of living in the foreign country. After 3 years, Racela did not find the time and effort to learn the language because she would always find someone among city crowds who would understand English and speak enough English to help her every time she got lost.

Finally, Racela constantly missed her family. She also had no personal life because Thai men were intimidated by her Western aggressiveness.

The Workplace

The pay was far lower than what she received in her former job in Hawaii but the responsibilities of her new job was more challenging and promising. The job offer was also right timing for her, made at a time when she felt disillusioned with her first job. Moreover, her monthly income in Thailand placed her in the upper-middle class income bracket.

Being a Westerner in Thailand, she was given better living conditions than the average Thai. She also received preferential treatment by virtue of her citizenship. However, being a woman had disadvantages in the Thai

workplace. For instance, women were paid less than men doing the same job.

The Thai work ethic was disorienting for Racela at first. Thais took their time to accomplish anything. They did not honor deadlines. They did not adhere to most of the rules in the Personnel Handbook. Senior staff members were more concerned about preserving harmony and creating “ good atmosphere” than about improving office productivity. However, to appease her disappointments the management is willing to send her to an expensive training program. This meant that her superiors valued her membership within the company that they would offer her extra perks in exchange for her continued employment.

Alternatives

Racela is posed with two alternative actions: stay in Thailand or go back to Hawaii.

Alternative 1: Stay with her current employment in Bangkok

Pros:

- She keeps a job in a workplace where her membership is valued.
- Racela loves the idea of living independently in an exotic place with a culture far different from what she grew up with. By staying she would be able to travel. not just all over Thailand but even its equally exotic Asian neighbors.

Cons:

- Being a woman in Thailand has its disadvantages like unequal pay with male colleagues.
- She could face more frustrations with the work ethic that the Thais have.
- In spite the improvements going on in Thailand, it will remain overcrowded, polluted, full of pickpockets, and crimes against women.

Alternative 2: Go back to Hawaii and accept the new job offer

Pros

- Higher compensation in a new company that promises a challenging job.
- She would live close to her family and the culture she grew up with.

Cons

- It will stifle her need for a sense of adventure and limit her personally.
- The “ promising job” might not prove promising after all and she might just feel the same frustration as in her first job.

Recommendations

Based on the facts presented in the case and the personal opinions expressed by Racela regarding living and working in Thailand, it can be inferred that she is more interested in staying in Thailand and keeping her job. She has a challenging job, her life is full of unpredictable events that oftentimes catch her off-guard but which she value as all contributory to making her stronger, more open-minded and tolerant of the differences among humans. Even her friends noticed the positive improvements living in

Thailand had brought to her personality. The following recommendations are therefore given:

1. It would serve Racela better to stay in Thailand and give her job another chance. She has invested so much time and effort fitting in, understanding how Thais work and think, and with more time, she could make the difference she wanted in her workplace.
2. Learning the language helps in making one meld with the natives. Racela contends that this is not important. However, to really become more comfortable in a new country especially if one wants to stay there long, it pays to know the language. Racela would find that taking a formal course would motivate her to learn the language. She would also find it easier to socialize.
3. She should, however, find a way to circumvent the 3-year clause that accompanies her acceptance to the training offer of the company. Racela thrives in the freedom of being able to choose and the possibility of just giving up what she is currently engaged with if another adventure presents itself. The idea of being tied might work against her personality and make her want to leave her job instead of inspire to do her best to affect how things operate in her workplace.

Reference

Merchant, Hemant. (2004). Olly Racela in Bangkok. Ivey.