

Relationships

# Couple's love beats cultural differences

**Editor's Note:** What follows is a response by Moises Kaplan of Colombia and Christina Hugly of the United States to a series of questions about their lives together. They will be married in April.

**Diversions:** You come from different countries, speak different languages . . . do you ever have trouble understanding each other?

**Moises:** Only the slang.

**Christina:** Basically no. Moises had already lived in Lincoln for five years by the time we got together.

**Div:** What's the hardest thing about living with someone from a different culture?

**M:** You have to accept the differences associated with the different cultures, sometimes it is a big exercise in tolerance and understanding.

**C:** The hardest thing for me is to keep in mind that my references are not necessarily the same as Moises' and to keep on top of any potential misunderstandings. Also, some things are just different and you have to accept those things in the other person. You have to become tolerant of differences. Less seriously, he has these long, humorous conversations with friends and family on the phone and I can't understand a word of them, yet.

**Div:** The best thing?

**M:** In part, it opens a new world to you and in part it allows you to see where you came from and who you are.

**C:** You get a very special view of a world that is not your own, you begin to feel more open and accepting. This openness resounds through other aspects of your life. The process of learning and accepting is essentially a very enlightening experience.

**Div:** How did you meet?

**C:** At the Zoo Bar, through some mutual friends, listening to an African-American gospel band.

**Div:** How has your relationship changed your social life?

**M:** It has lightened up my social life. In part because it brings with it new friends and activities that are more satisfying and in part because relationships with old friends also becomes more satisfying.

**C:** Moises' social group, when we met, was made up primarily of other foreign students. I have enjoyed meeting and becoming friends with these people so much so that I now consider some of them life-long friends. I feel my horizons have been broadened. It has also been fun bringing Moises into my social group, getting him to be a Star Trek fan and finding that there is no tension between the two groups.

**Div:** What's the hardest thing for you to accept about each other's culture?

**M:** That social classes don't exist.

**C:** I can't imagine what it would be like to live in a country that is so violent and chaotic and to become relatively accustomed to it. But I've never been there so it is a difficult question to answer.

“**Yes, culture affects the ways in which love is expressed, it is manifested through different customs, rituals and sayings... For example, the word for fat (Gordita) is a term of endearment in Spanish, which may not sit to well with the average American woman.**”

**Div:** What is the worst thing about you own culture?

**M:** That social classes do exist.

**C:** You ask this in an election year? In a nutshell I would say an obsession with immediate gratification, be it economic, political or social.

**Div:** What have you learned about yourself, seeing yourself reflected through the other's cultural viewpoint?

**M:** That I have a very strong identity. One is defined by one's culture, by the place where they are born, more than perhaps you thought at the beginning. This helps you to understand any difficulties, to come to a universal understanding.

**C:** I began to understand that I am far more entrenched in my culture than I previously thought. That I, in fact, view the world through the particular vision of an American. Coming to this recognition has allowed me to think more openly about issues, morals and attitudes and to understand more of who I am.

**Div:** You lack many cultural similarities, what do you have in common?

**M:** The same version of family values, we are both in the spectrum of Western civilization. We both give a lot of importance to the intellectual aspect of our lives.

**C:** We have an affinity for each other that is rather hard to explain. We both value our families, humor, education, art. We enjoy the same pleasures and abhor the same situations. We often agree in theory on a given issue but we arrive at that agreement in very different ways.

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Michelle Paulman/DN

Christina Hugly, Nortamericana and student-at-large shares a moment with her fiance, Moises Kaplan, Colombian citizen and doctoral candidate in Evolutionary Biology.



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