

# Immigration's many forms

The varied Wisconsin immigrant experience, as told by three UW-Madison students.

## 'I never felt different or had to hide myself'



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

By Cameron Schneider  
PHOTO EDITOR

Haia Al Zein's family left Baghdad to move to the U.S. when she was six years old. The Iraq War was making it difficult to stay. Their home was so close to bombings that her bottom lip would rattle and her eyes would widen out of fear. Al Zein's parents decided it was best to take their three children and leave the country. They ended up on the South side of Milwaukee.

Al Zein never felt like her nationality defined her, as she is surrounded by many other kids with immigrant backgrounds. Not having her background constantly be highlighted made way for another important part of her life: education.

"I never felt different or had to hide myself. I just never felt like I had to bring [my nationality] up, which is a privilege within itself," she said.

Eventually, Al Zein attended University of Wisconsin-Madison as a journalism and legal studies student. She said education has been the greatest opportunity she received after coming to the U.S. and plans to pursue law school after her undergraduate studies.

However, something changed when Al Zein arrived in Madison to attend University of Wisconsin-Madison as a

journalism and legal studies student. She started to get treated differently because of her background. Attending a predominantly white institution made her realize she could not be complacent when it came to how she was perceived by others.

Al Zein doesn't claim to be an activist but feels the need to speak out for herself and others. This became a more prominent aspect of her life after witnessing pro-Palestine encampment protests on campus and the reelection of President Donald Trump.

"Advocating for basic human rights should not be seen as someone being an activist," she said.

She feels Arabs in the U.S. are often under a microscope, and the media amplifies negative or fearful attitudes toward them. Al Zein wishes for the state Legislature and university to enact protections for her community.

Al Zein became more involved with the university's Middle Eastern North African cultural group and the Associated Students of Madison. Through these organizations, she saw how the administration treated issues facing students of color compared to white students.

But she still loves the school. She said critiques can help foster a better relationship between the university and students of color.

## 'I don't share a lot of political views'

By Cameron Schneider  
PHOTO EDITOR

Before Carminia Carmona was born, her parents met and got married in the U.S.

Her father was an American citizen while her mother was a citizen of Mexico. She moved back for five years while going through the process to obtain residency. Carmona was born during this time and resided in Mexico for five years.

When she arrived in the U.S., her family lived in South Beloit, Illinois. Carmona attended English second language classes in elementary school. Reading English wasn't a skill that she developed until third grade.

Her early years in education are by no means an indication of the future. Carmona enrolled in a head start program in high school and earned an associate's degree before graduating. She is now a sophomore at UW-Madison.

Carmona is studying political science, history, philosophy and Chicano/a & Latino/a studies.

Carmona plans to attend law school.

At UW-Madison, Carmona shared her cultural experiences with other children of immigrants. She rarely experienced her Mexican culture outside of her home growing up.

While with these groups, Carmona said she found friends that not only share the same background but same ideals.

"Mexican culture is very conservative, so I don't share a lot of political views. I know a lot of Latinos that are against or want strict immigration," Carmona said.

Her parents volunteer as immigrant outreachers to provide that help. Seeing her parents be so selfless has had a huge influence on her pursuit of law school, she said.

Carmona hopes current discussions on immigration will lead to people actively listening to immigrant struggles.

She thinks positive changes will come when people talk about these difficult topics.



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

## 'Immigrants are alienated and dehumanized in the media'



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

By Cameron Schneider  
PHOTO EDITOR

Isidora Andrick's family were accidental refugees. Her grandparents and mother were visiting her uncle in college when the Yugoslav Wars broke out. Andrick's family took one of the last flights out of the country.

"[My mother] likes to say that her old life ended when she was 22 and her new life began at that same age," she said.

When raising Andrick, her parents instilled respect toward elder family members. Her father is a first generation Yugoslavian immigrant, and he still raised her in an "eastern home," Andrick told The Daily Cardinal.

One of the only things that made her feel different growing up was celebrating Christmas on Jan. 7, because they are Orthodox Christian.

Andrick is now a sophomore studying communication sciences and disorders at UW-Madison. She gravitates toward other first generation immigrant students.

She said that the shared experiences growing up allowed her to find a community.

Andrick feels as though current discourse around immigration is needless. She wishes people saw more humanity in the struggles that people are facing that drive them to come to the U.S.

Andrick said that she views immigrants as the backbone of the national and state economy, working as house cleaners and bussers at restaurants — jobs her family first took when arriving in the United States.

"Immigrants are alienated and dehumanized in the media a lot. It's fear mongering," Andrick said.

Andrick views the topic as a scapegoat for other systemic problems that face the country.

"The best way to get people to go against something is to scare them, to tell them that it's gonna come for them and come for their families," she said.

That sentiment is ironic to Andrick.

"It's almost like an oxymoron because the people that are coming here are families," she said.

# photo feature



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

Al Zein's desk pictured on April 2, 2025 is cluttered with pictures of her family and a stuffed animal goat.



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

A happy birthday note from Al Zein's parents on April 2, 2025.



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

A framed photo of Carmona's grandfather, pictured on April 2, 2025.



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An altar in Carmona's room, pictured on April 2, 2025.



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A picture of "Mali slani kuvar," a cookbook given to Andrick by her grandmother, pictured on April 2, 2025.



FINNEGAN RICCO/THE DAILY CARDINAL

A framed photo of Andrick with her older sister, pictured on April 2, 2025.