

IMMIGRANTS WANT AMERICANS TO LISTEN

Immigration proves important factor in 2020 election

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An ambitious journalist, an excellent student, and an immigrant, senior Carlos Alonso did not make his American debut until he was 15-years-old.

After the Cuban government shut down his father's mechanic shop, Alonso's life changed forever.

"We were having a great life, we were doing pretty good. We had a nice house, and then out of nowhere I had to move in with my grandma into a one-bedroom place with my mom," Alonso said.

Alonso's father now in Spain, his mother knew Cuba could not be their home much longer as she worked three jobs and was still left with nothing at the end of every shift.

"There were nights I would come home and not have food on the table; I just had to accept it," Alonso said. "We had dreams of America but the process of saving and leaving Cuba behind took time."

As he saw his mom grow tired of the endless work, Alonso found jobs around the community, working with whoever would offer him a peso while they awaited

their American visas.

"I felt the need to help out and began delivering flowers and doing odd jobs," Alonso said. "Now, here in America I only have to work for extra spending money."

While being grateful to finally be in America, Alonso was upset by the thought of how such a progressive country could still be at a standstill on immigration policies.

"Facing discrimination because of my nationality is nothing I am unfamiliar with," Alonso said. "People at my job used to call me out because of my accent; they would say, 'Go back to your own country,' I don't know what goes through their mind, but I know they don't like the idea that we're taking their jobs."

Alonso, as someone who came to the country legally with his mom, acknowledges that illegal immigrants can cause difficulty for the people. However, he also points out that Americans often are uneducated about the reasons that they feel the urgent need to come here, and cannot wait as long as the system currently takes.

"America is such a big country, and everyone wants to come there for a better life. Most of these people come from third world countries that don't have very much, almost nothing," Alonso said. "It's important because right now, Cuba is going through a civil war, where the streets are run by drug dealers and gangs, not the police."

"The 'American dream' is something immigrant parents risk it all for, hoping for

their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

"There is no country I would rather be in, but I wish Americans viewed me as a member of their society too"

-Immigrant Carlos Alonso

"It is more than just an opportunity for me and my husband, it was an opportunity for my children," Mary's Arepas owner and immigrant Maria Romero said. "I know my children would not be in the position they are in today if it had not been for the sacrifices that me and my husband made those many years ago. I would never take

In Color. Immigrant, Carlos Alonso poses for a picture after sharing his concerns involving the upcoming election. Alonso will be granted the chance to vote for the first time this November. *Photo by: Saylor Cuzzort*

that back, no matter the pain and struggles we went through."

Running the food tent, Mary's Arepas, Romero's slogan is "Spreading Colombian culture, one arepa at a time." The family has lived all over the country, trying to find an area to plant their Colombian roots into American society.

"The country is made from the people that immigrate there," Romero said. "It is not just the immigration of individuals, it is the immigration of many diverse cultures."

Romero and her husband both teach Spanish to locals, benefiting and diversifying American culture.

"We do it solely for the kids, it is all about spreading both the language and culture behind it," Romero said.

The parents came to America for their children, because they saw the environmental and circumstantial improvements compared to Colombia, but societally, immigration policies were something Romero feared.

"After living in the countries for so many years I have yet to see the change I desire," Romero said.

Studies have proven that immigrants play a crucial part in American society and have built the country into what it is today- so much so that one in four people living in the U.S. is an immigrant, or has an immigrant parent. Voting for a voice, immigrants statistically have been leaning more towards Democratic candidates with progressive ideals on immigration policies.

After polling, students at the SIPA journalism convention named immigration as their number

one issue to be tackled in the 2020 election.

"Immigrants make up a large percentage of the U.S. population and contribute a lot to society, which is why their presence is an important topic to discuss," sophomore Tina Dong said. "The candidates of the upcoming election have to take into consideration what their policies towards this large population of immigrants are."

Each presidential candidate has input on how they want to make change to the current immigration policies. Senator Bernie Sanders says he wants to completely reshape and reform the system, while former Vice President Joe Biden is focusing on pursuing the security of immigrants for the crucial part they play in our society and does not want to turn them away.

With the steady increase of authorized immigration, voting numbers among immigrants are rising as they find their place in American democracy.

"Immigration policies in America are undeveloped, leaving immigrants scared to open the door at any knock," Romero said. "I hope policymakers remember they are representing immigrants too."

On the Streets: Immigrants share 2020 election concerns

"I am worried that American's views of immigrants have changed over the last four years with the current administration"

-Rose Garcia
La Cochinita Employee



"Health care and immigration are my biggest concerns in the next election"

-Maria Romero
Mary's Arepas Employee



"Voters need to remember this country was built by immigration; we are the backbone of society"

-Mario Lamvararde
I Love Paella Employee

