



I am an Iraqi student from Baghdad, where I lived for the first twenty years of my life. Two years ago I was selected to study on full scholarship at Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada, where I recently graduated with an International Baccalaureate diploma.

Prior coming to Canada I worked various jobs alongside my education to support my family. A few months before the start of the recent war on Iraq, I became involved with the media. I worked as a translator, interpreting for various media channels and freelance journalists. During this time I became skilled in film making which enabled me to document some aspects of the war and work with various international news organizations.

Filming and surviving during the war was an experience that contributed a lot to me personally in many ways. The additional pressure of taking care of my family, which includes my three younger brothers and my mother, often left me with very little flexibility and limited options. Managing these issues helped me to become very resourceful and find creative solutions to daily struggles.

Spending two years at Pearson College allowed me to think carefully about my future and try to get to the bottom of what I wanted to do after Pearson, perhaps going to university or continuing on a different path. I discovered a great passion for movie making in me. Recognizing this, my art teacher encouraged me to apply to Emily Carr Art Institute in Vancouver, B.C. to continue my education and to develop and blossom my love for film media.

I consider myself very fortunate to have been accepted to Emily Carr Art Institute to do a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree. I have been granted a \$5,700 scholarship. This scholarship will cover approximately half of my tuition.

However, my situation is very complicated due to where I come from, and also the instability my country is going through. It is impossible in my current situation for me to finance the remaining costs myself. My family is also unable to make any contribution to these costs, in fact relying on me for ongoing support. I cannot go back home Iraq, because of the instability and violence that is commonplace there. Because of these circumstances I am uncertain as to how am I going to be able to continue my education and even where I will be in the immediate future. This uncertainty is complicating my situation further.

Being in Canada has been a great experience for me, and it has given me incredible opportunities, for example allowing me to apply to a great school like Emily Carr. Furthermore it has widened my perspective about the western world. I came to see and learn more about this country and the people I would be studying with. I learnt more from them than would have ever been possible in the turmoil of Baghdad. I learned the meaning and importance of international understanding, living and studying with people from over 88 different countries worldwide. This multicultural setting has opened my mind to many things and equipped me to understand global issues from different perspectives. I also feel enriched by the many people I have met at Pearson College who are so different from me, and yet can share with me a mutual respect and close friendship.

These experiences have led me to believe that I still have so much to gain from this part of the world, personally and professionally. Contemplating many possible ways to help my country has led me to the conclusion that getting an education and furthering myself is the best kind of help that I can offer to Iraq. These goals are a strong motivation for me. Having them gives strength to the struggles that I face along the way.

Waleed Nesyif Rabia'a