



**Left:** Assistant Director of Ministry and Service Desiree Guzman welcome (L-R) Yahya, Mirhan, and Samira at O'Hare International Airport's baggage claim. After traveling for 25 hours from Jordan, the 45-minute ride to the Guzman's apartment in Aurora is the last stretch of their journey. They temporarily lived with the Guzman's until their own apartment became available shortly after their arrival.

**Left:** The Monday after their arrival, Yahya (who also goes by John) and his family cooked a common Iraqi meal of beef, catfish, eggplant, yogurt, cabbage and herbs at the Guzman's apartment. There students from North Central College curiously listened to Yahya as he spoke of his experience growing up, falling in love, fighting for marriage and working in Iraq as an electrical engineer and translator. His helpful interactions with the United States Army eventually made living in Iraq a risk to him and his family. Shortly after they were relocated to Jordan to await their final destination of the United States.



**Right:** Late night, Feb. 21, 2008, prior to picking up the never-before-seen or spoken-to refugee family from O'Hare, students from the Uncommon Life Movement gather in Koten Chapel to create welcome signs.

# Welcome TO America

Photos & Layout  
Benjamin Chernivsky

THE JOURNEY OF AN IRAQI REFUGEE FAMILY ACROSS THE WORLD TO THEIR NEW HOME IN AURORA, ILL. AND HOW NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE STUDENTS HELPED



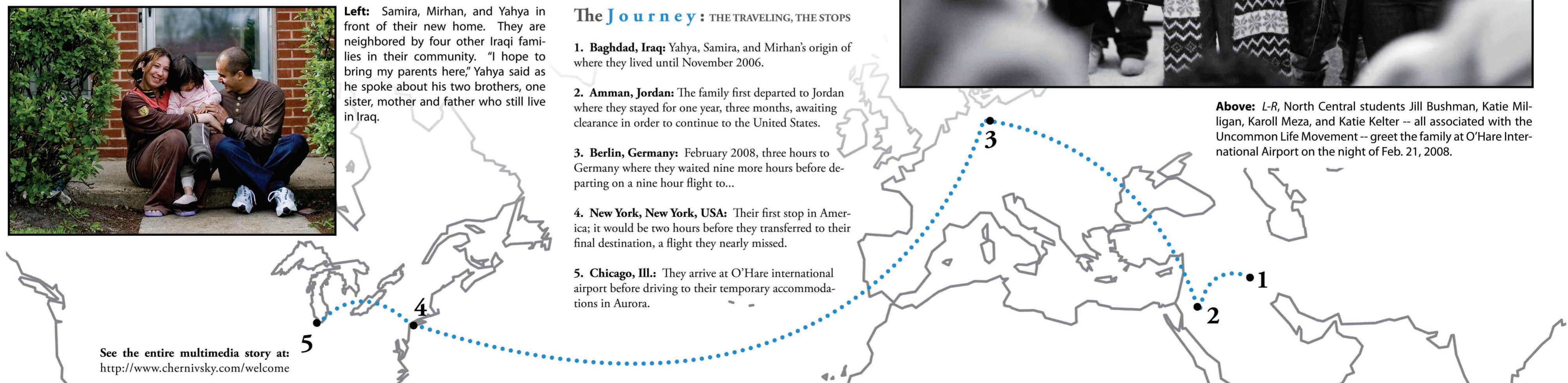
**Above:** L-R, North Central students Jill Bushman, Katie Miligan, Karoll Meza, and Katie Kelter -- all associated with the Uncommon Life Movement -- greet the family at O'Hare International Airport on the night of Feb. 21, 2008.



**Left:** Samira, Mirhan, and Yahya in front of their new home. They are neighbored by four other Iraqi families in their community. "I hope to bring my parents here," Yahya said as he spoke about his two brothers, one sister, mother and father who still live in Iraq.

### The Journey: THE TRAVELING, THE STOPS

- 1. Baghdad, Iraq:** Yahya, Samira, and Mirhan's origin of where they lived until November 2006.
- 2. Amman, Jordan:** The family first departed to Jordan where they stayed for one year, three months, awaiting clearance in order to continue to the United States.
- 3. Berlin, Germany:** February 2008, three hours to Germany where they waited nine more hours before departing on a nine hour flight to...
- 4. New York, New York, USA:** Their first stop in America; it would be two hours before they transferred to their final destination, a flight they nearly missed.
- 5. Chicago, Ill.:** They arrive at O'Hare international airport before driving to their temporary accommodations in Aurora.



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