

Elahe Izadi



"Humor has the ability to create unity . . ." says journalist and comedian Elahe Izadi. When she makes an audience laugh, she feels an instant connection.

Elahe's parents moved to the U.S. from Iran. She was born in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Maryland. She was inspired by her parents' ability to laugh at life and be resilient in the face of challenges. She loved to watch and memorize comedy routines, and she also liked writing. While in college at the University of Maryland, she started doing stand-up comedy, and she says it gives her an "amazing feeling."

After graduating in 2006 with a degree in journalism and African American history, she started writing for print and online publications. Elahe now combines her passions by reporting on popular culture for *The Washington Post* and doing stand-up comedy performances. She also enjoys Bahá'í community building activities, dancing, and yoga. She lives in Washington, D.C.

Q: What was your most challenging experience when you were a kid, and how did you handle it?

A: When kids would make fun of me . . . because I was Persian . . . that was really hard for me. [But] . . . my parents always made me feel very loved . . . Even at that time, I realized that this was a difficulty that wouldn't last forever . . . Thinking about the future and the things I wanted to do helped me . . . I've always had a sense of humor, [and] maybe having those experiences developed that a little more . . . Anybody who is a good comedian is able to have a sense of empathy . . .



Left: At 16, Elahe played on the lacrosse team and often joked around with classmates. She later discovered her love for comedy. **Right:** Elahe celebrated her graduation from the University of Maryland in 2006 with her older brother, Shahin (left), and her younger brother, Ramin.



Q: What motivated you to go into journalism?

A: I always liked writing . . . ever since I was a little kid . . . When I came to college, I took an African American history class, and I immediately was like, oh, I love this, I want to major in this, but . . . I wanted to combine it with something . . . Journalism seemed more practical [than other subjects] . . . With each class I took, my interest in it deepened . . . and I really felt passionate about it as I gained more experience.

Questions and
Answers with an
Inspirational Bahá'í



Above: Elahe appeared on an MSNBC program in April 2015 to comment on a new law.

Left: Elahe performed at the DC Improv Comedy Club in Washington, D.C., in August 2017.

Q: What are some of your favorite experiences from your career?

A: I spent about two years as a reporter on Capitol Hill . . . and it's such a privilege to be . . . interviewing members of [Congress] . . . You're kind of representing the public in that way of holding [politicians] accountable and asking them questions . . . In my current position . . . I got to shadow Seth Meyers . . . and see what it takes to make a late-night comedy show . . . I've gotten to interview . . . some of the best comedians . . .

Q: Do you ever feel anxious about going onstage? How do you handle it?

A: I feel some anxiety if it's a really big show . . . I visualize myself going out there, greeting the audience . . . like I'm welcoming everybody to a party . . .

Q: What virtues are important in your work?

A: Truthfulness is a big one. "Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues" * . . . Justice and equity, fair speech . . . oneness . . . Whenever you're writing . . . about another person . . . it's very important to remember that person's humanity . . . We are all connected . . .

Q: How do you think humor impacts our spirits, and why is it important?

A: Humor has the ability to create unity between . . . people . . . We're laughing together, we're enjoying something together, we're connected. I also think when you're creating humor you have to have a sense of detachment . . . When you have an amazing experience that makes you feel so good, it's okay to enjoy it, but don't become so attached to it that it prevents you from going back out there. Same thing if . . . you bombed. [It's] part of the process . . . It's important not to become so attached to the "failure" because you're not going to learn the lesson . . . from it . . .

Q: If you had one wish for *Brilliant Star's* readers, what would it be?

A: That they all know that they are very loved . . . and that they have power . . . They don't have to wait until they are an adult to contribute to improving their neighborhood, their community, their city . . . It's okay to dream big . . . We're all created with capacity. We don't know what that capacity is. We're just asked to develop it and to fulfill it.