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Hyder Alyan 2006

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Oral History Interview with Alyan Hyder,
Conducted over phone, July 17th, 2005

Student: What years were you involved in the MSA?

Alyan Hyder: 2000 to 2003.

Student: And how involved were you?

Hyder: Just a member my first two years, and my last year I was executive board, I guess.

Student: Okay. Was it an active organization when you were a part of it?

Hyder: On and off. My first year, it - it really depended on kind of who was kind of in charge my first year. When Hanif was doing it, it was- we were pretty much doing our Friday prayers and then a (unsure, 0:42??) or two. And then my second year, I don't think we did much but I was gone for half the year...or was that my third year? I'm confused. Hold on. [Student laughs] Okay. First year, I think it was- first year, we were regularly active as far as like Friday prayers and stuff.

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: Second year, it kind of died- it died down a little bit. But, yeah it picked up again I think my last semester, it was most active when I was with you guys, like during Ramadan we had the Quran session and like prayers and hanging out with the MSA and stuff.

Student: Uh- uh.

Hyder: Like a breakfast and stuff.

Student: Yeah. What type of events can you remember the MSA sponsoring?

Hyder: Events?

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: I don't think we actually sponsored very much. I know we- did we do? We would co-sponsor some speakers. There was at least like one speaker I know that we booked at the chapel. They were one or two speakers.

Student: Okay. Do you remember their names or dates or anything?

Hyder: No. The chaplain girl would know. The one that I'm thinking of, it was a chaplain from Springfield.

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: I don't remember her name.

Student: I think I remember her.

Hyder: I can't remember. Did she come back?

Student: Yeah, she- yeah, Rebecca Gearhart was saying the same thing. She did it twice.

Hyder: Okay. And there was some feminist.

Student: Okay.

Hyder: I don't remember her name either.

Student: That's okay. Do you remember any like Dawah events that the MSA sponsored?

Hyder: What events?

Student: Any Dawah events?

Hyder: Dawah?

Student: Like educating about Islam?

Hyder: I don't think that we did anything. Well, we had no Eid there so I can't imagine the MSA sponsored. That was more Chaplain Gearhart I would think. I don't know though.

Student: Okay. Can you describe an event that stands out in your mind?

Hyder: I'm sorry?

Student: Can you describe an event that stands out in your mind?

Hyder: No, not anything in particular. Again, like I was thinking was like- like- (unsure, 3:01??) myself and my fellow students were always just connecting on that level.

Student: Okay. What was probably the best part about- would you say was the best part about being in the MSA?

Hyder: Yeah. That would be it. The connecting with people who had at least in some way had kind of similar background to me. That was kind of neat.

Student: Okay.

Hyder: Instantly. Yeah.

Student: Can you name some students who were in it while you were in it?

Hyder: No. Oh, you mean like before like they

Student: Yeah. Yeah.

Hyder: (name, 3:36??) Do you know him?

Student: Yeah.

Hyder: (name, 3:39??) was there. Samir...who else was there? Did you talk to (name, 3:49??)?

Student: Yeah.

Hyder: Is he in charge of it?

Student: Yeah, he is.

Hyder: Okay. Is (name, 4:01??) still there? Also, Rahim? That guy, Rahim.

Student: Rahim?

Hyder: Rahim, yeah.

Student: Oh.

Hyder: Samir- oh, Ahmed, and- I can't think of anyone.

Student: Okay. That's good though. Do you know any of their roles- if anyone played a particularly a- a good leadership role or anything?

Hyder: Hanif did when he was still there. I think he was doing it the first year when I was there.

Student: Oh. How- how would you say the MSA impacted the greater Wesleyan, community, if at all?

Hyder: I would have to go with not very much. I mean, things potentially could have after 9/11 and stuff. I think actually, now that I think about it, I'm not sure. They would have to- they had students on that panel after 9/11. Were you there after 9/11?

Student: No. I wasn't.

Hyder: Okay. I think Rebecca Gearhart was involved with it but I can't remember what the actual thing was. But they talked about doing a panel to have like- on having students discuss what had happened, you know, through religion and stuff.

Student: Mm-hmm.

Hyder: And something like that would have been good but I don't remember if that actually took place.

Student: Oh, okay.

Hyder: I think as far as like there wasn't a very big impact at the school when I was there, I don't think that was part of the mission. I mean, it goes back from the Chaplain with the chapel. I think it was mainly a support group.

Student: Okay. To what degree do you think the greater Wesleyan community was interested in MSA affairs?

Hyder: Not very much, and I think- I think that Wesleyan was probably changing-

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: -as like Islam became more and more in the spotlight, but I don't think it was as broad as it, anyways.

Student: Do you know anything about the MSA origins?

Hyder: Not a clue.

Student: And can you think about any challenges the MSA might have faced?

Hyder: Might have faced?

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: I think probably the biggest fight there was this lack of students, that they weren't- I don't think that they were (unsure, 6:33-6:35??) of all the Muslim students.

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: -and that was a big challenge and...yeah. I think that's the main thing.

Student: How can Wesleyan recruit more Muslims?

Hyder: I think by doing like...advertise- I have no idea how Wesleyan would do it. [laughs] I think part of it is that dealing with the Muslim students it already has, making sure that there is good support whenever it is support, or opportunities to speak, or whatever.

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: And encouraging them to let people in the community know 'cause I think that's a big way- and I mean, a community as far as minority recruitment goes, it's- it's not something you can like go out there and find. And it's not like- unless they had more of like events like BSU and (unsure, 7:38??). If you do events, you can go out there and advertise and like I think that too in a lot of ways. People like and will find at Wesleyan as far as like groups go, and then they go back and they tell their friends and people at their high schools and in the community that helps it grow. I think that's a big way to help get the students more involved and interested in the MSA and- and the school, and then encourage them to go back and tell their people at home.

Student: Okay. Do you think the events of 9/11 or anything else changed the dynamics of the Muslim Student Association?

Hyder: I think it did a little bit, 'cause I think just before that we got together and we prayed and stuff. At least for me, and I mean I'm not particularly (unsure, 8:31??) because you came more

afterwards, but for me, it just kind of became more like I- I want to learn more about the religion. I want to know what I'm talking about when people ask me things.

Student: Mm-hmm.

Hyder: And that's one of the reasons that I was interested in doing that (unsure, 8:45??) with you guys. And...yeah. I think- and I remember when 9/11 happened, I remember being cautioned, you know, like not to leave campus alone and stuff for the first few days.

Student: Uh-huh.

Hyder: And I don't remember if the MSA got together, but I think...they liked the idea that there was a support group there and that Chaplain (name, 9:10??) and Rebecca Gearhart were there. It was helpful for (unsure, 9:14??) and stuff.

Student: Okay. And if you could tell someone who would be looking through the Wesleyan archives fifty years from now anything about Islam or the MSA, what would you tell them?

Hyder: Anything about Islam? Okay. [laughs] I think- and this is that the MSA right now is crucial in preserving like our rights as Muslims and preserving our identity as Muslims, and getting the word out there that, you know, this isn't like a terrorist or evil religion, you know. It's something beautiful and very peaceful. And I think it's up to us on the small grassroots level to make sure that gets out there and that people are aware of that and, you know, whatever overshadow, real life is sometimes doing on an everyday basis in the States or anywhere else in the country or world.

Student: Okay. Is there anything else about the MSA or anything else that you'd want to share?

Hyder: No. I mean, I thought the MSA was great as far as a minority organization because I mean, we didn't go out there, you know, and teach and preach and stuff, but I liked that it was a quiet little group that got together and did what it wanted to do with no pressure directed by the school and stuff.

Student: Okay. Can you talk a little about the- the breakfast during Ramadan?

Hyder: Yes. It was really early in the morning. [both laugh] Yeah, I think it was fun 'cause it was (unsure, 10:53??) it's great and it was also really hard getting up and it was hard calling people early in the morning to get up with you and eat with you. And most of us are away from our families and so it was nice to have a little group who was waking up for breakfast with you and

morning prayer and stuff, and going together through the day kind of in some way until evening, so-

Student: Okay. Well, thanks a lot. That's all I have unless you have anything to add.

Hyder: That's it.

Student: Okay. Well, thank you.

Hyder: No problem.