



muslim
students
association

national

Understanding Muslims on Campus
February 28, 2008

Standing at the Gates of Georgetown, Father Godfry and I discussed the upcoming Muslim Student Association (MSA) Fast-A-Thon. In my capacity as President of the Georgetown MSA, Father Godfry and I regularly met to discuss MSA events and activities. Often we discussed the reoccurring question of religious groups on campus: what, if any, are the membership criteria?

For MSA National, inclusion is not a question of 'if,' rather the focus is on 'how' and 'how best,' to be inclusive. Two of our guiding principles summarize our outlook: *Moderation is the compass of our journey. Tolerance is the banner of our outreach.* Simply put, Muslim students are encouraged to reach out to, embrace, appreciate and include everyone who wishes to work with and serve students on campus. And lest our critics claim that this is a post-9/11 outlook, in early 2000, *The MSA Link*, published an article entitled "Embracing the Silent Majority," which outlined strategies on being inclusive and the best ways to reach out to students on campus.

Even as far back as our founding, the first president of MSA National, in 1963, was a Shiite; over the years the organization has taken great strides, including having two female presidents and several female executive board members, to create a more inclusive and representative body of students across North America. In addition, MSA National's cadres of volunteers across the US and Canada, is reflective of racial, ethnic, national, and ideological diversity.

MSA National is an inherently North American organization, founded and led initially by the best and the brightest of the Muslim world, who sought refuge here from repression and injustice in their homelands. Today it is led and supported by second and third generation American and Canadian Muslims, whose sole desire is to serve humanity and in doing so, to serve God. Programs like the Fast-A-Thon and Project Downtown, which promote interfaith understanding, while raising funds and consciousness to end hunger and homelessness in America and Canada, are more reflective of who Muslim students really are. And ultimately, Muslim Students, just like any other college students – seek to be understood for who they really are.

Asma Mirza currently serves as President of the Muslim Students Association (MSA) National. She is the second female President in the organization's 45 year history. Mirza is currently an MBA Student at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland and a recent graduate of Georgetown University.

Find out more about MSA National, visit www.msanational.org