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A Few Former MAL Head Delegates.

Converse Holds Model Arab League Reunion

by Joe P. Dunn

As part of Converse College's 125 Year Alumnae Reunion Weekend, April 25-27, Converse Model Programs, held a 25th Model Arab League Reunion. Former Model participants from the full 25 years of the program were joined by members of the present delegation to reminisce over the history of the program. Although only a small number of the a little less than two hundred participants in the program over the years were able to attend,

the group included a large number of former head delegates and some of the most distinguished former delegates. These included Sally Lee "Danneman" [married names in quotations], one of the six original delegates who ventured to American University in March 1988 with little idea what we were doing. Dr. Lisa Wimberly "Allen", now a professor of religion at Gardner-Webb University, was a member of the second year delegation, Converse's first council

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chair, and her performance was so outstanding that the National Council gave an award for the first time as Best Chair in her honor. The award was not given again until 1994 when again a Converse student received it and Converse took that award each year from 1994 through 2003 at the National Model. For three consecutive years Converse held every chair position at the National Model.

A small sample of other notables among an entirely distinguished assembly included Casey Addis, foreign service officer who would leave within days to become the political officer in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad; Valerie Brock "Naglich," director for HIV/AIDS prevention for the Center for Disease Control International, who has worked extensively in southern Africa; Megan Madison, former Fulbright Scholar in Jordan, who has continued to live there, plays with and teaches for the Royal Jordanian National Symphony, and has formed her own NGO to work with Syrian refugees in Amman; Dr. Nitu Bagchi "Lindskog," political science professor and director of the center for women's and gender studies at Millersville University in Pennsylvania; Dr. Melanie Brown "Knox", assistant professor of mathematics, at Chaplain College in Vermont.

Participants from the early years were amazed to see how the program has grown, developed, and professionalized over the years. Some traditions have remained for 25 years and other current practices were new and novel additions for the "oldtimers." Delegates from the various decades told stories about the different venues and rivalries from the past.

Converse's first year in 1988 the Model was held at American University and delegates were housed several miles away at the Howard Johnson Hotel (which the next year became the Savoy Hotel) on Wisconsin Ave.

across from the Russian Embassy. The six individuals the first year, selected from Dr. Joe Dunn's course on Islamic and Middle East Politics, traveled in the family van of one of the delegates. An exploratory venture, the delegation had done virtually no preparation and had no idea what to expect. Nevertheless, two of the six delegates won awards, and the group was hooked. The next year a delegation of ten members won more awards and held two of the five chair positions. In 1990, in its third year, the Converse delegation, representing Palestine, took the Best Delegation Award, and Converse was on its way to what would become the long record of achievement of the delegation. For most of the 1990s Converse had two delegations at the National Model and several times both delegations won delegation awards; the highpoint occurred in 2001 when both of the Converse delegations took the Outstanding Delegation Awards. After 2002 Converse was not allowed to have more than one delegation.

Traveling to DC was always an adventure. The trips to DC produced some memorable events and crises over the years. In 1993 a northeastern snow storm, which deposited 17 inches of snow on the nation's capital made it impossible for the team to leave on Sunday. Dr. Dunn spent an entire day digging the school bus out from the snow drifts before the team could depart on Tuesday. In 2009 the Georgetown Hotel moved the Converse rented bus without informing anyone and then did not know where it was located. The bus was reported stolen, which resulted in five hours of police reports, insurance paperwork, and arranging to rent two vans to get the students back to Spartanburg; the weary group finally made it home after 3:00 a.m. While on the return trip home, the hotel found the bus, which necessitated a return trip to Washington to reclaim the bus. The next year

Dr. Dunn engaged a professional transportation company to deliver the delegation, but the bus broke down on M Street before reaching the hotel. The delegation, which had spent much of the night on the bus traveling to Washington, had a briefing scheduled at the UAE Embassy on M Street. On one of the busiest streets in the city, the students unloaded their luggage from under the bus, changed clothes on the bus, walked a mile to the Embassy, and arrived on time for their briefing. These are only a few examples of the travel adventures.

In 1991 the National Model left the American University campus for Georgetown University, where it had actually begun back in 1982. In late 1990s the councils started being held in the host hotel rather than on the Georgetown campus. Over the years, the hotel venues moved to the Georgetown Holiday Inn, the Capitol Hill Hilton, the Sofitel Hotel at the Watergate, the Washington Hilton, Washington Plaza Hotel, and the present location at the Georgetown Hotel on the Georgetown University campus. Each location had its merits and demerits.

The first Converse National Model Secretary General was "Missy" Stuart in 1995 and Katie Abbott served as ASG. Today Dr. Melissa Stuart "Dillmon" is one of the nation's leading oncologist physicians and scholars. Others who followed in her footsteps as Secretary General include Wendy Rogers in 1999, Angie Brookhart in 2001, Maria Perry in 2002, Josie Fingerhut in 2005, Hillary Berry in 2012, and Kaylee Boalt in 2014. Converse also produced several ASG's over the years. All of these women have pursued distinguished careers.

Converse started out at the National Model but began attending the Southeast Model in 1997, then held in Savannah, Georgia. In 1998 Converse agreed to run the Southeast

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Model on its campus for one year, and it became a permanent fixture there since then. Converse has taken the Outstanding Delegation Award every year during this tenure, and the Southeast Model has become the premier regional model in the nation, at times rivaling the National Model in number of participants. Attracting the top delegations in the country, the winning delegations at SERMAL usually reprise their success within the next two weeks at the National Model. In 2005 Converse expanded into participation in International Model NATO. In the second year of participation Converse was named the permanent Secretariat for International

Model NATO and runs the event annually as well as being the award-winning delegation every year as well.

In every respect, the 25th Model Arab Reunion was a great joy and success. Dr. Dunn expressed that he was overwhelmed by the outpouring of praise for the program in the lives of these women and for the personal tributes to his role in their development. He remarked that although past retirement age, he plans on being around for many more years to bask in the glory of continued Model Programs success. He stated, "It is the best thing that I have been able to do for my students in my 44 years as a classroom teacher at the college level,



Three former MAL debate stars.

and we still have a lot to accomplish in the next decade."

Converse Wins at Southeast Model

Once again Converse had a strong showing at the Southeast Model Arab League event, held at Converse College, March 14-16, 2013. The Converse Jordan delegation, which gained an outstanding delegation citation in all eight councils, finished first and the Converse Lebanon delegation, comprised primarily of freshman finished in a tie for fourth-place. The three delegations judged Outstanding were Jordan (Converse), Qatar (Georgia State University), and Sudan (Northeastern University). The next three delegations, deemed Distinguished, were Lebanon (Converse), Bahrain (Mercer University), and Oman (Georgia Perimeter College). Other colleges and universities attending included Jacksonville State, Citadel, Spartanburg Community College, Virginia Tech, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, University of North Carolina-Pembroke, Guilford Technical Community College, and Kennesaw State. A distinctive feature at the conference was the participation of two premier secondary schools. Southside Christian Academy from Greenville, South Carolina returned for a second year and represented

Kuwait. The Spartanburg Day School, represented Somalia, in its first year. Both schools distinguished themselves and received notice by both the judges and their peers.

Victoria Ball presided as the Secretary-General and Mary Clare

Johnson served as Assistant Secretary General. Kaylee Boalt (Converse) was voted the outstanding chair for her leadership in the Heads of State Council and Ginny Sponzili (Northeastern) was named as distinguished chair for her work in the Political Council.

Secretariat at SERMAL Summit





Converse delegation at SERMAL

Rickey Millwood, a retired social studies teacher with twenty years' experience in high school Model United Nations, who has served as a judge at SERMAL for many years, was recognized with the *Southeast Model Arab League Lifetime Service Award*, for his excellent work and invaluable contributions to the success of the model.

A new venue at SERMAL was the Joint Crisis Council, in which

two cabinets, one representing the Bashir Assad government and the other the Syrian Opposition Coalition, engaged in a series of diplomatic and international power play machinations during the entire weekend. Participants had a lively and enjoyable time as they interacted in real time in both serious diplomacy and in pure-fun fantasy.

The keynote speaker for the conference was Dr. Grace Bagwell Adams, assistant professor at the



Lifetime Service Award for Rickey Millwood

University of Georgia. Dr. Adams spoke about the skills acquired during in Model Arab League during her career at Converse and offered advice for delegates who aspired to pursue careers in whatever fields they might choose after graduation. Delegates again enjoyed an Arab banquet on Saturday evening.

The 2015 Southeast Model Arab League will be held next year on March 13-15, 2014.

Largest National Model on Record

The largest National Model Arab League ever, almost 400 delegates, representing the 22 Arab League nations and two observer countries, India and Turkey, convened on the Georgetown University campus, March 28-30, 2014. The Keynote Speaker was His Excellency Mohammed Jaham Al Kuwari, the Qatar Ambassador to the U.S. Other special guests included Her Excellency Selwa "Lucky" Roosevelt and His Royal Highness Prince Abdulmajeed bin Abdulilah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Secretary General Kaylee Boalt (Converse College) presided with able assistance from Assistant Secretary-Generals Victoria Ball (Converse College) and Tyler Swenson (University of Houston Honors College). Alongside the eight councils and the Arab Court of Justice, the new Joint Crisis Council convened at the National Model as participants devoted

the three days to an ongoing series of diplomacy, negotiations, and conflict between the Bashir Assad regime in Syria and the Syrian Opposition Coalition.

Faculty advisers were treated to a breakfast discussion on regional issues by Dr. John Duke Anthony, President and CEO of the sponsoring National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations and a luncheon presentation and Q & A by Colonel David Des Roches of the Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, in Washington, DC. All delegates and faculty enjoyed a very nice banquet on Friday evening.

The Converse delegation was hosted for a briefing by Amjad H. Al-Mbideen, counselor of the Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and his staff. Once again, as it has for the last 17 consecutive years, the Converse delegation was one of the top award delegations.

Northeastern University (Sudan), Converse (Jordan), and Georgia State University (Qatar) finished as the top-rated three delegations, just as they did two weeks earlier at the Southeast Model Arab conference, held at Converse College. Converse's Molly Glibbery was also co-recipient of the Best Chair Award for her leadership of the Environmental Council. Next year, she will chair the Special Council (topic to be determined later) and two other Converse students also were selected for the 2014 Secretariat. Kandice Miles will chair the Social Council and Brandy Blanton will co-chair the Joint Crisis Council.

Despite rainy weather for most of the weekend, which limited the opportunities to explore the city, it was another successful National Model, an event that annually holds a high place on the Converse community calendar.



Converse Winning Delegation at the Northeast Regional MAL in Boston.



Secretary-General and Assistant Secretaries at NMAL Summit



NMAL Councils in Action

A View of Tunisia, October 2013

by Cathy Jones, Associate Professor of French & Italian

As someone who has repeatedly traveled to Tunisia many times over the years, with some seventy-five students, four family members and various friends in tow, it was with great eagerness and some trepidation that I left for Tunisia last October for the first time since the events of January 2011. The event was a two-day celebration of the life of Dr. Nabiha Jerad, an accomplished scholar and champion of human relations who worked indefatigably to encourage students as well as educators from North Africa, Europe and the U.S. to engage each other in conversation. Victim of a tragic car accident in her hometown on the islands of Kerkennah, scholars and friends from several continents were convening, one year later, to pay homage to her person and to her work.

The news from Tunisia since January 2011 had frequently been disquieting: two opposition leaders murdered in the light of day, police officers killed by militants clashes near the Algerian border and also south of Tunis, attacks by *Salafists* on hotels and other sites serving alcohol, the imprisonment of cartoonists and journalists, the storming of the American Embassy and the ransacking of the American School, the rape of a young woman by three policemen, the defacement of art work labeled sacrilegious, an unemployment rate of 15%, and, most recently, mass protests demanding that the Islamist party *Ennahda* step down. There were also, though, a number of triumphs frequently cited by observers domestic and foreign, including the formation of numerous political parties, the writing of a constitution, the proliferation of independent newspapers, peaceable elections, the apparent willingness of *Ennahda* to cede power to an interim government of technocrats when demonstrations throughout Tunisia highlighted the party's inability to meet

the expectations of those who had called for societal change.

Nabiha had marched down Bourghuiba Avenue during the January 2011 protests in Tunis and had gathered people of varied persuasions in her apartment in Tunis to discuss the event known by such diverse names as the "Jasmine Revolution," the "Burning Man Revolution," the "Spring of the People, and the "Dignity Revolution." Active on the ground, engaging people in the streets in conversation, she was equally busy in the academy, studying the mottoes of the uprising and the way they were tweaked by various political parties in subsequent months. As a linguist, she expressed great pride in the event that proved a people could work together to strip a dictator of power while relying primarily on words, not weapons. Tunisians, she wrote in an article she presented at a conference in Italy, refused to allow the frustration that led Mohammed Bouazizi to immolate himself to go unnoticed, and instead gave it a voice, echoed by thousands, in the slogan, "*Shoghl, horriyya, harama wataniyya/ Travail, liberté, dignité/ Work, freedom, dignity.*" Words transformed one person's act into a motto that mobilized a nation of people for social change, but words also, she added in a less optimistic note, could erect barriers between people.

Months after the events of winter 2011, Nabiha worried that because of Tunisia's complex relationship with language, words themselves could stymie the nascent democratic movement as the reliance on oversimplified translations of terms like "*islami*" and "*laikiyya*" polarized people into parties that both firmed up and betrayed the complexity of their aspirations. Tunisians move among several languages with varied levels of comfort. In addition to classical Arabic or *fusha*, the official language

that surfaces only in Koranic school and in administrative circles, there are *derja*, or Tunisian Arabic, media Arabic that blends *fusha* and *derja*, and French, and each exerts an influence on how one perceives the world.

What Nabiha noticed about the early mottoes of the revolution is that they came in several languages, including English. Although Mohammed Bouazizi's suicide was scarcely an act sanctioned by Islam, society did not hesitate to express support for this man who urgently proclaimed his need for change in terms that were neither specifically Arab nor Muslim, but instead universal. His supporters used phrases that were variations on slogans from other countries, "Obama, yes we can: yes we do;" some emphasized both national pride and membership in a larger community, "*Je suis 100% tunisien, ma langue officielle est la Derja. Comme dit ma grand-mère: google it/ I am 100% Tunisian, my official language is Derja. As my grandmother says, 'Google it.'*" What characterized the mottoes was their multilingualism, and that they were uttered using the entire verbal repertory of Tunisians without ever referring to Western imperialism, to the ideology of pan-Arabism, to ultra orthodox Islam or to the Palestinian cause, all four of which often lend shape to political conversations in the Maghreb. Present were often short phrases in the imperative such as the command issued to Ben Ali and to his family that adopted the word "*Dégage/Get out!*" formerly used by the French when addressing Tunisians.

Unfortunately, the multilingual and often playful nature of the slogans that reappropriated historically significant terms was lost as the country engaged in the political debates that led up to the elections for the Constitutional Assembly. As various entities competed for votes, forums

The House of Wisdom in Carthage





Hamadi Ben Saad Homage to Nabiha Jerad

on television, the radio, Facebook and elsewhere began opposing two main groups: the secularists versus the Islamists. Because there is no word in Tunisian Arabic for “secular” that is commonly recognized, the original intention of words like “*laikiyya*,” an Arabized form of the French “*laïcité*,” or “*almaniyya*,” *fusha* Arabic for “secularization” and originally used in the 19th century to designate adapting religion to the “*alam*” or world in which one currently found oneself, were easy to manipulate. Rarely understood outside circles schooled in *fusha* Arabic, “*almaniyya*,” in the social media, came to designate all that which would pose limits to any expression of religious faith. Those more familiar with the spirit of the words as they were originally coined used them to focus on Bourghuiba-era reforms like attention to women’s rights, education and economic development but because of certain connotations of the words that soon gained currency, any reference to “*laïcité*” or “secularism” became linked to French rule or to Ben Ali, under whose rule a woman could be fired for wearing her *hijab* in the workplace.

Similarly, the word *islami* became

a source of misunderstanding as people used it in the European sense of “*islamiste*” to refer to someone for whom Islam became tied to extremist politics, this when the original term can mean someone for whom Islam serves as a cultural referent only. By exploiting the negative connotations of words often mistranslated into other languages, each party courted votes by presenting Tunisians with an untenable dichotomy, either you felt respect for the nation’s age-old traditions or you were a friend of progress, a binary opposition present that trampled the universalism present in the opening days of the uprising.

With all this in mind, I wondered what I would notice about Tunis in late October of 2013, just days after the protests that led *Ennahda* to agree to step down. I spend my first afternoon in the welcoming fold of Nabiha’s family and also, briefly, in the narrow streets of Tunis’s lovely medina, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Accompanied by a good friend Hamadi Ben Saâd, a very talented collage artist whose works adorn the United Nations office in Tunis, as well as many other buildings in and near the medina, we head for

the section where I can buy scarves for my friends. Hamadi stops to point out a building covered with graffiti. It once housed a school where nuns offered programs for the neighborhood children. “Now the poor children have nothing,” this man who has frequently donated his time to working with street children in Tunisia and France laments. His dismay that people were made to feel unsafe in his treasured old city is obvious.

The next morning, it is time to head to “*Beit el Hikma*” or “House of Wisdom” for a day of talks in honor of Nabiha. Set on the Mediterranean just below the main entrance to the ruins of Carthage, this historic villa is where the documents for Tunisia’s independence from France as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Women were signed. “Houses of wisdom” date back to the ninth century and appear to have been places that served as libraries, conference centers and places where scholarly works were translated and copied. Right across from the villa lies the site of the ancient Phoenician port that dates back to the fourth century BCE, remarkable in that in the heyday of this maritime power, it held one port ensconced within another, part of an ingenious system of self defense that allowed its fleet of some two hundred and twenty of the era’s most powerful warships to lure enemy boats into what looked like a peaceable, commercial harbor. In this city, Punic sites like the home of Amilcar, Hannibal’s grandfather, neighbor Roman baths, which lie within a short walk of Christian basilicas where Saints Cyprian, Tertullian and Augustine discussed whether it was the office of the priest or the value of the incumbent that gave meaning to the sacraments. Here is where Dido is said to have set up her *Karth-hadash*t, or New City, here is where navies have been defeated, entire cities burnt to the ground, heresies settled. Overlooking the main ruins of Carthage is the presidential palace whose gardens have now, I have read, been transformed into a public park. In this place by the sea that has been the

site of repeated arrivals and departures, and where the stratification of cultures has created a complex mix of traditions, it seems fitting to pay tribute to Nabiha’s extraordinary cosmopolitanism.

I notice that the mood is somber in the car as Nabiha’s cousin drives from Tunis to Carthage. There had been three bomb scares the previous day: one twenty-three year old Tunisian suicide bomber recently returned from Syria blew himself up on a beach at a tourist resort in Sousse when guards prevented him from entering the Riadh Palms Hotel; someone left a bomb near the mausoleum of Tunisia’s first president, Habib Bourguiba, a champion of women’s rights and of education; a suspicious package was found in *Sidi Bou Saïd*, whose *Café des Nattes*, the subject of paintings by Paul Klee and others, is a popular destination for tourists. The Tunisians I spend the day with are horrified by what is happening to their country. They are not accustomed to seeing their own youth participate in *jihadi* movements abroad and then return to wreak havoc on their home turf. Yet another distressing story in the news speaks of a group of young girls stopped at the last minute from heading to Syria to service the sexual needs of rebel soldiers. This is a new and frightening Tunisia, friends concur. “We have to save our country from stupidity,” says Mounira Chapoutot, who has written extensively on Islamic architecture and who is a member of the Academy, a think tank of researchers associated with *Beit el Hikma*. She and others are deeply troubled by the foreigners who have moved to the country and who are setting up training camps in rural areas and who are also permeating certain neighborhoods in the capital. “You can not reason with these people,” adds someone else later, “they have to be made to leave.”

At the foot of Byrsa Hill where Dido is said to have created her new city, we who have gathered from various universities in Tunisia, but also from the Sorbonne, from Stanford, from U.S.C.--Riverside and from Duke

University, celebrate Nabiha. The accomplished collage artist Hamadi Ben Saad displays a painting he has just completed to pay homage to our friend. Like most of his work, it is monumental and uses recycled paper. Unlike much of his work, which shows faces or else implies figure in large-scale hieratic compositions, this painting evokes only a vast expanse of varying shades of blue in its tribute to the woman who constantly journeyed across seas and oceans to learn from the world. Nabiha loved her country but she also refused to be defined by any identity specific to either the northern or southern rim of the Mediterranean. She navigated her way among languages and peoples in hopes of constantly expanding her knowledge, and strove to build networks that would enrich its members. In this place rich in the confluence of cultures and also, as a house of wisdom, linked to the golden age of Arab culture, I marvel with my friends at the person of Nabiha, who was at once proud of her ancient Berber origins and quick to tout the accomplishments of Tunisia, but also eager to avoid dichotomous ways of thinking that pit peoples against each other.

The following day I make a pilgrimage to *El Abdellia* palace. Built at the end of the sixteenth century by Aboud Abdallah Mohamed, it is a rare and elegant example of Hafsid architecture in Tunisia. Located on the site of the ancient port of La Marsa, this is where *Salafists* defaced several works during an art exhibit called the “Spring of the Arts,” an annual event that predated the “Arab Spring.” The director of the event meets me there and shows me how extremists gained access to the site during the final hours of the exhibit. He explains that Tunisians who had already left for the day returned to the palace to try to prevent further destruction. The government’s handling of the fight that ensued, particularly the arrest of like numbers of attackers and art enthusiasts, angered many Tunisians and was one of many incidents that resulted in a lack of confidence in the

government’s willingness to crack down on those who were perpetrating acts of violence. I asked how the event had affected Tunisia’s art scene. “We sold every piece of work in the exhibit,” the director tells me. A friend adds that the galleries in the area thrived as Tunisians demonstrated their support for freedom of expression and for the arts.

As we drive to and from La Marsa, my friend points to a huge Tunisian flag flying on a hilltop. That is the University of Manouba over there, he says. When the Dean of the university, Habib Kazdaghli, forbade two women who were wearing the *niqab*, a black full-face veil that I had only seen once in Tunisia before 2011, from taking their final exams, they invaded his office and ransacked it. One of the women claimed Professor Kazdaghli had slapped her, but several students witnessed the event, including the president of the film club, who shot a video of what transpired. The next morning, two hundred some men showed up bearing the black flag of the *Salafists* and demanding revenge against the man who had insulted their “sister,” this though he had simply been upholding what was a university-wide policy. The black-clad youth temporarily succeeded in flying their flag above the University, but a French major named Khaoula Rachidi climbed a wall and tore it down before being tossed to the ground. Other students, initially paralyzed by inaction, rushed forward, and ran the Tunisian flag back up the pole. The Dean, whose office had just been pelted with stones, has claimed that her courage may have saved his life. The university quickly became a battleground between progressive students and ultra conservatives, and a trial against Kazdaghli dragged on for a year before his name was cleared. Closed for two months in the spring of 2012, the University of Manouba was the site of strikes and battles, and the discord launched a nation-wide debate on whether or not the university system’s policy of forbidding the *niqab* should be reversed, which *Ennahda*

avored doing.

Later that day when I'm walking down a street in *Sidi Bou Saïd*, a man walks toward us pulling his wife, I assume she is, by her left arm. She is in the *niqab*, and the arm he holds at an upward angle while pulling on it is in a cast. He scowls as he walks toward us. "*Ces gens sont venus ici pour nous casser la tête,*" my friend says, his sadness evident. In a play on the French idiom "to break a person's feet," which means "to get on a person's nerves," my friend is letting me know that he feels that this newcomer in Tunisia is "breaking his head." "He is ruining our tranquility," he adds.

Sidi Bou Saïd is the first place Nabihah brought me to in Tunisia. I had just stepped off the plane and she wanted me to see something beautiful so that my first impression would be positive, as it was, and richly so. *Sidi Bou Saïd* houses the mausoleum of the Sufi saint who lent his name to the city. His resting place, which also houses rare manuscripts, was deliberately set on fire two days before the second anniversary of the fall of Ben Ali. It was the twelfth attack on a Tunisian mausoleum, targets of the Wahhabis who consider the preservation of sacred mausoleums as a form of "*shirk*," or association of other beings with Allah. Every other time I have been here, including the summer when I rented a small house near the top of the village, it has swarmed with tourists and locals. Today, I see no one else in the street below *Sidi Bou Saïd's* mausoleum except for a couple of shop owners and this sad duo.

I ask my friend Hamadi if I can see his latest paintings so he takes me to the framer in La Goulette who is preparing them for his upcoming show. It is fabulous work, full of color and movement and texture. Whatever assaults on his tranquility the twists and turns of Tunisian politics have mounted, he has still succeeded in creating magnificent work that transcends boundaries. Light dominates these collages that are traversed by fluid black lines that rise and fall in a movement

almost suggestive of mountain peaks. There is a play between light and dark and between stasis and movement, but light triumphs in these works that sometimes have the luminousness of stained glass.

The next day, on the plane home, I think of the words of a friend who is about to retire from his job of many years as a Tunisian advisor to the cultural attaché of the American Embassy of Tunis. "Not one good thing has come from this Revolution," he told me emphatically as we drove to the airport. He is quite convinced *Ennahda* will not step down and that strife will escalate. On my way back to the U.S., I imagine how chagrined Nabihah would be to see the people who had banded together in streets all over the country to call for "Work, Freedom, Dignity," now locked in conflict. In her essay on the mottoes of the revolution, she voiced dismay that the sit-ins that occurred when the Constitutional Assembly first began convening ended up pitting two opposing factions against each other: "*Cela donne l'impression d'être devant une mise en scène du clash de civilisations. L'axe du mal contre l'axe du bien. Deux camps s'échangeaient des insultes aux cris de: 'Vous êtes les orphelins de la France, un homme ne porte pas de boucles d'oreilles' auxquelles répondaient: 'Eh, les barbus, retournez où vous étiez!'*" One has the impression of sitting in front of a staging of the clash of civilizations. The axis of evil against the axis of good. Two camps exchange insults along the lines of, "You are orphans of France; a man doesn't wear earrings" to which is responded, "Hey, you bearded men, return where you came from." »

In the plane, it is not the voice of strife that returns to me but instead the sound of the Mediterranean as it laps at the shore, there at the foot of the «House of Wisdom.» I picture the variations in the color blue of that sea, and the beauty of Hamadi's tribute to Nabihah. I think of how often this country of the southern rim has proved to be a place where the stratification of cultures has resulted in new identities. It can be disquieting, but

also inspiring. Will Tunisians be able to prevent further bloodshed by members of *Ansar al Sharia* and other extremist organizations? Will their politicians respect the rights, particularly the rights of women, that Tunisians have known since the era of Bourguiba? Will the economic downturn be reversed so that the populace can find the work they need? Will leaders who not only incur but also hold the trust of the majority of Tunisians come to the fore? Will there be the national debate Nabihah hoped for that will allow people to move beyond cartoon versions of faith and secularism?

A few months after the trip, there is good news from Tunisia. The new Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa is receiving support at home and abroad, and a new constitution has been approved. The language of certain phrases leaves some human rights activists nervous because of the line, "The state is committed to spreading the values of moderation and tolerance, and to protect the sacred and prevent it from being attacked," but it is nonetheless widely praised as an important step. Will 2014 bring to the Tunisians who took to the streets the new elections they have been promised and, even more importantly, "Work, Freedom, Dignity?"

I met just recently a former student of Nabihah's by the name of Sana at a conference on the island of Mauritius. When I queried about the state of Tunisia, she, who was listed as a professor at the University of Manouba, responded with confidence, "The women of Tunisia will not let the revolution fail." Tunisians often proclaim, "*Nisa biladi nisa'un wa nisf*" The women of my country are women and a half." As I think about her extraordinary teacher whom we have been celebrating, and also about all the women I have listened to and heard about during the two and a half short days in Tunisia, I feel a surge of hope and also great gratitude for having yet again had the opportunity to travel to this country and spend time with its welcoming and accomplished people.



Southside Christian Academy at National High School Model

Southside Christian School Wins National High School MAL Event

In 2013 Dr. Joe Dunn, the director of the Southeast Model Arab League, encouraged his former graduate student Idell Koury, who was at the time doing some adjunct teaching at Converse, to develop a high school Model Arab League delegation at her home institution, Southside Christian School (SCA), Greenville, South Carolina. He invited the delegation to the Southeast University Model held at Converse, and he volunteered to work with the students to prepare them for the event. Subsequently, Dr. Dunn and his head delegates traveled to SCA to train the students, and the SCA delegation came to Converse to practice with the Converse delegation. In their first year, SCA performed quite admirably. Again in Spring 2014 Converse trained a larger but for the most part younger delegation and SCA performed with distinction at the Southeast Model. Dr. Dunn told Ms. Koury that she should consider taking her delegation to the National High School Model to be held in a few weeks.

In mid-April, seven SCS delegates

traveled to Georgetown University to compete against 150 other students from fifteen high schools. Representing tiny Comoros, the students participated on three councils—Joint Defense, Social Affairs, and Environmental. Well prepared from their experience at the Southeast Model, all seven students collected awards with three Outstanding and two Honorable Mention citations. And most importantly, the delegation was named as Outstanding Delegation. Junior Sarah Survance, a veteran of the previous year's delegation, played a key role in leading the SCA delegation and received an Outstanding Delegate Award at the National High School Model. Juniors Carson Polk, Lucie Sikes, and Mary Katherine Linn also received Outstanding Delegate citations and the team of senior Joseph Franks and sophomore Jacob Day received Honorable Mention awards.

Ms. Survance praised the role that Converse students played in SCA's success: "If it weren't for our time spent at Converse, our success at Nationals would have been impossible. Their

excellence is what inspired us to step up and give it our all." Delegation advisor Idell Koury stated that she could not be prouder of her team and also cited Converse's contribution: "What helped our students succeed was the professionalism modeled by Converse women, the students' drive to succeed, and our delegation's gracious ability to get along with others." With all but one person returning next year, both Koury and Survance expect to have a larger delegation and to again be a force at the Models. Ms. Survance remarked, "Our team will definitely grow next year." Dr. Dunn reflected that he could not be more pleased with SCA's success. "In working with these students, we quickly realized that they were very bright and committed to excellence. We were privileged to have played a role as mentors and we look forward to a continuing relationship next year." He mused that "Maybe in a couple of years, some of the young women will be members of the Converse delegation and they can be mentors of future SCA's delegates."

Converse Model Seniors: An Eminent Legacy

by Joe Dunn

Every year I write a salute to our Model Programs graduating seniors that discusses their achievements in the program. It is only one of our practices and traditions. Established practices and traditions are important to a well-ordered organization, and ours is a well-run operation that has garnered the top awards at the National Model for 17 consecutive years. Obviously, we do a few things right. Our program is about consistency based on student leadership, peer-modeling, and mentoring.

Model Programs is about leadership development. During my 38 years at a women's college, that is a core component of my teaching philosophy. As a professor of international affairs, I am quite interested in knowledge about the Middle East in MAL and international security issues in Model NATO; but I confess that that element is secondary. We don't draw our team primarily from politics majors, but from the whole range of majors at the institution. Many who enter the program from fields as diverse as music, accounting, or art therapy do become fascinated by the issues and some join our department, usually as double majors. As the examples below demonstrate, for me the great joy of our Model Programs is the diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and the ultimate futures of students who have been developed through the Model experience. I believe that we have a system, a process, an environment that helps students to become all that they can be. We have been successful in selling to prospective participants that no matter what your academic interests, this program will enhance your talents and propel you into leadership. You play with the best, model after the best, and you will become like them.

Proud as I am of how our system

works, this isn't the venue to describe in detail all the components of our program, one that we constantly evaluate, tweak, and perfect in hopes of continually making it better. It is a team effort of constant self-awareness, critique, suggestion, and refinement. Our senior leadership plays a large role in this dynamic. That is my segue to introducing the people.

I had another outstanding group of seniors again this year. Their records speak for themselves. But I could echo the same refrain in any year. The names change, the program continues. Most importantly, the seniors go on to graduate schools and to illustrious careers. I keep the statistics and stories, and it is an impressive tale of individuals who are movers and shakers on a national and global scale. That would be another volume. This year I decided to go public with what normally is an internal story. For privacy reasons, I will not use the individuals' names, but there is no masking their personal stories for anyone who knows the particular people.

Delegate #1 is undoubtedly the finest Model person that I have had in 25 years as the sponsor of our program. This is no small statement. In every model over four years, four per year, that she was a debater, she won the outstanding delegate award, often taking every vote in the room. When she moved to the chair role, she won best chair in every model in which she performed this function. She was selected for the National Council trip to Saudi Arabia, and through a summer internship program with the Bard Government and International Affairs program, she worked in Brooklyn with the Arab-American Family Council. She capped off her career as the Secretary-General of the National MAL. Her first major

is music performance and she is an opera singer of exceptional talent who will study in Italy this summer; but her Model involvement touched her life and she added a major in politics. Naturally, she won the award as the outstanding politics graduate as well. Upon graduation she joined the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations as a Program Assistant.

Delegate #2, is the roommate of #1. Quite an accomplished room one must remark. Former music major, turned historian, she has done it all—debater, committee chair in both our programs, Chief Justice of the Arab Court of Justice, initial representative on the Joint Crisis Council, Secretary-General of both the Southeast MAL conference and International Model NATO. She works in a local law office, has won research grants to study the impact of Bluegrass music during the Great Depression, and she has been a consultant and campaign manager for several successful political campaigns. Before going to graduate school, she will be a campaign manager during the Fall 2014 political cycle.

Delegate #3 ranks as possibly the second best debater in our program's history. A pure debater unsullied with chair or other administrative roles, she too won in virtually every model over four years. I can remember only once when she failed to take home an award. Blessed with a brilliant mind, a quirky and disarming personality, a sense of humor of epic proportions, natural modesty, and overwhelming southern charm, she lights up a room. A true Renaissance intellect who dabbled in virtually every discipline at the college from the sciences, humanities, music, she is off to study English literature with one of most lucrative fully-paid Ph.D. packages that I have seen in nearly 45 years in the profession. She

is the stereotype of a 19th century British academic, if females could play that role then, and future college professor is written all over her.

Delegate #4, is a psychology and theater major specializing in technical arts with a political science minor and she is one of the best classroom students that I have taught. A star debater, she won award after award, was selected to be an observer at the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago, and will be off to graduate school in international affairs at Northeastern University, our chief Model rival. Very likely we will be confronting her as a member of the Northeastern delegation next year. In the longer term, a policy career is probably in her future.

Delegate #5 is an art therapy major, Division II volleyball player, and the Student Body President. Her athletic endeavors limited her participation. She joined the delegation as a sophomore where she established her stature as a debater, but she had to leave the group in her junior year with a serious athletic injury and the need to attend to serious health issues in her family. She returned in her senior year as a first-rate chair and award-winning debater. In the short term, she will be an admissions office recruiter next year before proceeding to graduate school in art therapy.

Delegate #6 is the anomaly and my greatest challenge in all my years in our program. As a freshman, she was arguably the most introverted student that I had seen in my classroom. As a talented two instrument musician with an acute mind, she had obvious abilities, but her social development was inchoate and her life experience almost nil. I thought that her chances of making it through college were slim. But this kind of student touches something in me and I determined to make her a project. It took two years of reaching out to her but the results finally started to manifest. With her pure terror of me starting to moderate, she showed up and excelled in



Converse 2014 Model Seniors at the Annual Model Picnic.

another of my classes and later declared a history major. She had friends on our delegation, and out of the blue, she asked if she could be considered for the team. I had always found her meek southern charm intriguing and in a fit of total arrogance, I determined to make her into a successful competitor. I wasn't easy; indeed I have seldom taken on a more frustrating task. She had very little self-confidence, speaking in public was actually painful for her, and she knew almost nothing about international issues. Beyond the confines of music performance, she lived in a very tightly circumscribed world. What political thoughts she had were narrow and archaic. But she is example *par excellence* that our system works. With intensive peer mentoring from just the right person and a combination of encouragement and tough love, we accomplished our goals. She tried to quit numerous times, but I simply would not allow it. As a personality, with a fine sense of humor and disarming charm in abundance, began to emerge from her, my pride swelled and the level of

my arrogance of what could be made of her reached ridiculous proportions. Her story could fill pages, but suffice it to say that she and her partner won an award at the National Model, she learned to be an effective chair, and she performed admirably as the Assistant Secretary-General at the Southeast Model. As if the stereotype wasn't bad enough, she aspires to be a librarian, but I'm not done with her yet. In many ways, she eclipses the achievements of all her more high-powered peers and I will continue to invoke her development as testimony to our program.

We have a very good cadre of underclassmen returning, so next year I will have the same kinds of stories to relate about the next graduating senior class. For me, although well past normative retirement age, I hope that I can continue to keep doing this for many more years. I have said it many times before that this is the best educational and developmental opportunity that I have been able to offer my students in my more than four decades as a college professor.

LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Book Review

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Peter R. Mansoor *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War* (Yale University Press, 2013).

As many commentators have stated, the Iraq War launched in 2003 was “a war of choice, begun badly for vague strategic reasons and then nearly lost.” Despite the positive achievement of ending Saddam Hussein’s rule, the war in its early years was a disaster in conception and conduction. By 2006, the country was disintegrating and the short and long term outcomes appeared bleak. The so-called “Surge” changed the environment. This term represented more than merely an increase of U.S. troop deployment. It was a major change in strategy and a reconceptualization of the war. Although the long term future of Iraq is still in question, the Surge was vital in turning sure defeat to a viable opportunity for Iraq to succeed.

Several books have addressed the

Surge, most particularly Thomas E. Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2006-2008*; Bob Woodward, *The War Within: A Secret White House History, 2006-2008*; Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq*; Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq*; and Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Endgame: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Iraq, from George Bush to Barack Obama*. But the reigning study of the multifaceted event, and a book that will remain for a long time as one of the best books on the entire war is Peter Mansoor’s *Surge: My Journey with General David Petraeus and the Remaking of the Iraq War*.

Colonel Mansoor, first in his class at the U.S. Military Academy and Ph.D. historian, served as the executive officer to General David Petraeus during the Surge in Iraq, and he was intimately involved in every aspect of the process. In any earlier tour Mansoor was the commander of the Ready First Combat Team and authored the book *Baghdad at Sunrise: A Brigade Commander’s War in Iraq*. Retiring from the Army in 2008, Mansoor accepted the position as the General Raymond E. Mason, Jr. Chair of Military History at Ohio State. *Surge* is the product of the skills of a first-class academic historian who brings the advantage of an insider perspective during the decisive period of the conflict.

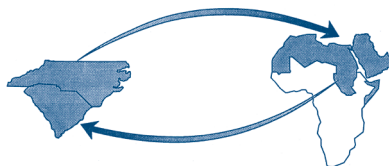
Despite the high attention on the Surge, a large amount of myth and misinformation about it exists, and Mansoor offers insightful correction. He emphasizes that it was the right strategy at the right time that saved the country from the disintegration seemingly inevitable in 2006. Moreover, he explains that this was not just a tactical adaptation based on greater troop employment but indeed a totally new comprehensive, multifaceted approach to the conflict that could not have

occurred earlier because conditions were not ripe for it.

The rescue of the losing war in Iraq had three major components. First was the “Awakening” in Ramadi that spread throughout Anbar Province in 2006 when the Sunni tribes broke with the barbarism of Al Qaeda and joined forces with the U.S. military efforts. Mansoor argues that until this happened a change in strategy would not have yielded results. Second was the complete change in strategy from unilateral U.S. military operations to a ground-up counterinsurgency strategy with emphasis on security for the populace. As Mansoor addresses a surge of both military actions and strategic ideas, he affords significant attention to the development of doctrine in the preceding years and the rethinking of a new strategy, to which he contributed as a member of the Council of Colonels who assisted the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this effort in 2006. Finally, just as important as either of the above, according to Mansoor, was Nouri al-Maliki’s commitment to clear the militant Shia Muqtada al-Sadr forces out of Basra, Sadr City, and Amarah. Thus in operation “Charge of the Knights” the Shia Prime Minister unleashed a Shia Iraqi military against the Iranian-supported Shia militias and changed the dynamics of Iraqi politics for the longer term.

Mansoor’s conclusion is apt as he quotes from counterinsurgency expert David Kilcullen, that “The Surge worked; but in the final analysis, it was an effort to save ourselves from the more desperate consequences of a situation we should never have gotten ourselves into.” Or in other words taken from Kilcullen, Mansoor agrees that “Just because you invade a place stupidly doesn’t mean you have to leave stupidly.”

This excellent book is a worthy contribution and an interesting read for those interested in the conduct and place of the war in Iraq.



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