

In the name of Allah,
The Stony Brook Minaret
the most Beneficent, the most Merciful.

The official newsletter of the Stony Brook Muslim Students' Association

The Minaret

Volume X, Issue I
October 2010

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Editors-in-Chief

Khushbakht Chaudhary

*Editors*Nabiha Zakir
Nazia Rahman
Yousra Yusuf*Writers*Nabiha Zakir
Farooq Zafar
Fawzia Syed
Zain Syed
Komal Magsi
Mariam Shareef
Omar Shareef
Dawah Committee

STATE OF THE MSA

Nabiha Zakir, MSA PRESIDENT

Bismillah hir rahman ir raheem- in the name of Allah the most merciful the most beneficial

SubhanAllah. Here comes another school year- full of midterms, friends, exams, social events, sleep (maybe) and finals. Oh how I've missed this! As abnormal as it may seem, this is what I *love*. Going to school, learning, hanging out with my friends, being a part of the MSA. Knowing this is my senior year makes me very nostalgic, and a little voice in the back of my head tells me I should fail a class on purpose just so I can stay here a *little* longer. Even though my four years as an undergraduate are almost up, I have to say I'm very thankful for this MSA and all that it's done for me (and I'm sure for others as well). Let me tell you a story- this is my favorite story to tell whenever I remind myself and others that everything happens for a reason. No matter what we believe we have planned out for the future, Allah always has better plans for us.

Let's start with when I was in 7th grade, shall we? Seventh grade was the grade where my school district started to segregate students in the sciences for the upcoming year. However, in order to get into honors earth science in 8th grade, you needed to be recommended in 7th grade. I was not. I remember going home that day in tears. I prided myself on being a good student and this incident crushed me.

Time went by though, as it always does and I accepted the fact that I never got into earth science in 8th grade. So of course, I took that class in 9th grade instead. When I did take it a year later, I had the *best* teacher I could have ever asked for. Mr. Page was his name. I had already liked science, but Mr. Page made this class funny and enjoyable. Since I enjoyed his teaching style so much, I had promised myself that I would take whatever other classes he was teaching. Turns out that other class was AP Psychology.

My intentions for taking that class were just so I could enjoy Mr. Page's teaching skills once more. The outcome? I'm a psychology major at Stony Brook University and plan on pursuing it, InshAllah. This is a *major* difference from the architectural field I was pursuing before I took AP Psychology in 12th grade. Taking this class also impacted where I decided to go to school. Had I not taken Psychology in high school, I would have continued to study architecture and I would have wound up at NYIT or Pratt. When I decided on Psychology, I decided to go to Stony Brook University. Little did I know how much Stony Brook's MSA would impact me.

So how did I get here? How did I become part of this MSA? How has my entire future been changed? My 7th grade teacher decided I didn't make the cut. That's all it took. Remember during the good and the bad- that Allah knows best. Trust in him- no matter how harsh or how well life may be treating you.

Alhamdulillah.

"The Stony Brook Minaret" is dedicated to expressing the views, concerns, and ideas of Muslims living in America and especially in the Stony Brook community. It seeks to promote and achieve community empowerment and the global success of Muslims by instilling the Ummah with the spirit of Worship, the love of Allah (SWT) and the example of Muhammad (SAWS). It also serves to correct the mainstream media's misinformation about Islam and Muslims and to provide non-Muslims with accurate information about Islam.

The views expressed in letters, articles, cartoons, and advertisements do not necessarily reflect those of *The Stony Brook Minaret* staff, or the Muslim Students Association at Stony Brook University.

Note: We have decided to include Arabic du'as & the name of Allah in this issue of the Minaret, so please treat this newsletter with due respect.



A MESSAGE FROM OUR *Chaplain*

So much has been said about Islam and Muslims in the last few months, from people threatening to burn the Qur'an, to others questioning the fundamental rights of Muslims to build places of worship, to people picketing in front of mosques in favor of Muslims and others picketing against them. Nowadays, we hear and see so much coverage about Islam and Muslims with extensive features, as in the latest ABC show, "Should We Fear Islam?" This is where we can see that there are many voices for and against Islam and its followers. But in the midst of all this, I acknowledged a blessing when I realized that the voices of moderation come together on one side and that the voices of extremism also on one side. Regardless of their perspectives or religious conviction, "an extremist thinks only of himself and his way of life and looks at what God has created as his own." An extremist does not attempt to see the middle ground of any issue and he cannot see the liberty of others to exist according to their own traditions. The saddest part is that they proclaim that they speak God's justice, but it is merely petty human interpretations of what God has meant for the good and the righteous to be in this world. He sent many messengers and prophets in different times for different people, but the message is the same: to believe in the Creator to be just and righteous, to extend mercy to your fellow man and to all creation, to protect your body and your mind and do unto others as you wish they would do unto you. To know that this life is a short journey and we shall all go back to where we came from and that we will stand before the One who has brought us into reality and we will all be held accountable for the atrocities we committed on this Earth, from the Crusades to the Spanish inquisition, the Holocaust, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the ethnic cleansing in Europe, Rwanda, Kashmir, Darfur, Sept 11, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the tragic state of the Palestinian people and many other devastations. So many will be questioned before God. And As God Almighty said in the holy Quran, "I judge amongst you on all that you have differed upon."

We are not in the judgment seat of one another—only God is. He created us all in our different nations and tribes, colors and languages, ways and beliefs and our test is hold on to our identity as God has intended for us and find the unifying factor that brings us together. That is our humanity.

For Muslims—it matter not if you are Sunni, Shi'a, Sufi, etc. What matters is that you stand on "La ilaha illa Allah mohammadur rasul Allah." That is our common ground to work and build together for a bright and unified future for the Muslim community and the world.

Non-Muslim friends and fellow citizens are *ahl al zima*, those who God has entrusted to Muslims to protect them. They are the people of the book, and the creation of Allah. For all of us, the peaceful people of the world, no matter what religion or what group, we must strive for reason, coexistence and responsible citizenships; these will always sound clearer than those voices of anger that portray fear, disarray and confusion in the hearts and the minds of people by continuously dividing them.

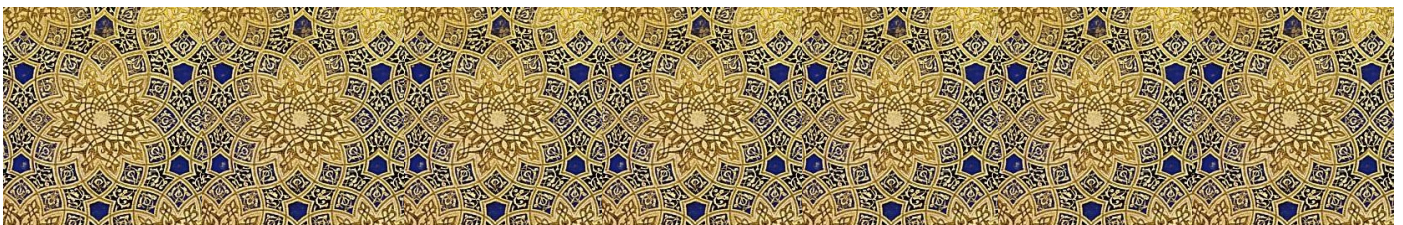
I have always believed that the new generation of Muslims needs to learn their social responsibilities to this country. To show Islam as the great religion that embraces others by order of the Creator (Allah) and enjoins us on all that is good for the community, for the society, and the world. Extremists have hijacked the religion, and extended the duty of Muslim Americans to be people who must always be on the side of education and patience as they deal with the misconceptions of those who wish to paint us all with one brush. For every wrong deed there should be ten good deeds as loud and public to offset the unhappiness that people suffer at the hand of the extremist, whether it is the guy that was ready to terrorize a plane full of people with his underwear on fire, or the cowardly act by the Times Square extremist. I repeat these incidents because for us we need to understand the root of this resentment. As Muslims we feel for causes of Muslims around the world whether they are under occupation or dictatorships, in a state of war or poverty, lacking education, oppressing women or abusing children.

All this is because the Muslim world is not united, due to the ailment of its leadership. Muslims are not poor—they are the richest in this world. Look at Prophet Mohammed (pbuh)'s prophecy, "The barefooted and the naked will have competed to build the tallest buildings." I am sure that the tallest building in Dubai attests to the true sights of the seal of prophets. The Muslim world needs to understand its responsibilities to its members and to the rest of the world in this century. This will only happen when they truly understand that the foundation of common grounds in this faith is much stronger than all that which divides them.

When every faith group lives up to the best of their principles and morals codes, the world will truly see another Andalusia, where knowledge and borders were shared, there was justice for all, and where no one went to sleep hungry because the One had made sure it was shared. Mercy surpasses love.

Let us stand tall and hold the banner of peace, dignity and pride for the greatest gift is the gift of submitting to the will of the Creator in Islam. Let us be righteous and just. Let us be merciful and strong, for we are all of us the Ummah of Mohammad (pbuh). The best of generations have come out to people to enjoin righteousness and never stand with evil deeds. Mohamed (pbuh)'s duty was to be a mercy to all creations. Let us also be a mercy.

Sanaa Nadim



Honorable Burden

“...what Allah saw in us when he granted us these blessings.”

“...Allah is still giving you time to live up to His expectations and your own. And when Allah believes in us, how can we not do the same?—”

Words of Wisdom...

“ From a fellow senior...

Imagine, for a moment, that you worked at a business. One day your boss gathers you and hundreds of other employees so that he could pick just one of you for a promotion. How would you feel if he picked you? Now imagine how you would feel if you were chosen out of not hundreds, but thousands of employees. What about millions? You'd wonder what you did to deserve the honor and would probably be motivated to live up to your distinction.

Let's consider reality for another moment. If the world was a village of 100 people, 80 would live in sub-standard housing, 70 would be unable to read, 50 would suffer from malnutrition, 24 would be Muslim, only 1 would have a computer and only 1 would have a college education.

Given that you're reading this as a college-educated Muslim with all the good and probably none of the bad mentioned above, it should make us wonder what Allah saw in us when he granted us these blessings. There were literally millions upon millions of other souls He could have chosen, yet here we are. At this point there are two possible reactions we can have: either we can be humbled by these numbers or we could shrug it off and act as if we deserved these things all along.

For those who felt the former, understanding the following ayat is crucial: “On no soul do We place a burden greater than it can bear,” found in Surah al-Mu'minin. One possible meaning is that the opportunities you are given in life are representative of your potential to use them. If Allah decrees that a calamity should fall upon anyone, it is because that person has the potential to bear it and grow closer to Him through patience. Blessings work much the same way as punishments. If Allah grants you health and time, you are obligated to use it wisely. If you are given the opportunity to attend college, work as hard as you can because there are literally millions of people who wish they could be in your place.

For those who felt the latter, you should remember that Allah owes us nothing. Often times we neglect our duties and expect Allah to simply forgive it all and keep favoring us. He is, after all, the Most Merciful right? Sure, but he is also the Withholder, the Abaser, the Dishonorer, the Distressor, and last but not least the Destroyer. With that in mind, not only do we risk catastrophe in this life by being unappreciative of his gifts, we risk trouble in the next. The Prophet said, “Allah will not accept the excuse of any person whose instant of death is delayed till he is sixty years of age.” This hadith is true for not just time, but wealth, health, knowledge and even Islam. *You gotta use it, or you'll lose it.*

As mentioned before, if Allah gives you Islam, then that means He sees potential in you. If He grants you an education, He believes you're able to use it. If you feel like you have squandered any opportunities He has given you, then remember that Allah says in the Quran, “*No one despairs of Allah's Mercy, except those who disbelieve.*” None of us is guaranteed that we will live until tomorrow or even the next second. So if you are reading this, Allah is still giving you time to live up to His expectations and your own. And when Allah believes in us, how can we not do the same? ”

Over Simplifying Dawah

A message from SBU Dawah Committee

Your heart beats faster. Trying to avoid eye contact is not going to work. The victim is onto you. Your palms are sweaty, and you try to crack a smile to break the tension, but that doesn't work either. You see him try to avoid you, almost like two positive sides of magnets, but you studied his movement patterns for half a block now and you're ready to intercept his sway. He's within arm's length, this is your chance. You extend your arm to reach the prey. Using the wrist action you've been practicing for a while, you've put the bait out there. Now, the waiting game! Will he take the bait? The victim's arm starts moving in the right direction. You can almost hear Chris Berman exclaiming "AND LOOK AT HIM GO! HE - COULD - GO - ALL - THE - WAY!" And there it is!

You have just handed out your first Islamic pamphlet. The crowd goes wild, and now you too can join the rest of the people who have turned this activity into their habitual way of Dawah. You too can count how many leaflets you've handed out while Dawah mode was in the on position.

Yes, unfortunately, there is a state of mind called "Dawah Mode". This concept has percolated throughout the fabric of the Ummah in America. Somehow, somewhere, some people got the idea that others would love to read about their way of life, especially if printed on glossy paper with "exciting" colors. Add in a few grammar and spelling mistakes, take away as much human interfacing as possible, replace "keepin' it real" with prepared Islamic statements and memorized explanations, mix it with a "pick-your-own-hours" schedule, and you have "Dawah Mode". You can be sure that you were in Dawah Mode if, once you are out of Dawah Mode, you can relax, think back, and say, "Boy, that was good Dawah".

One brother I know recently related a story to me that will further elucidate my point. He and another person had just walked out of his building, and they saw a man snatch a purse from a lady and jet faster than I run to food (and once again, you could hear Chris Berman's voice, but we won't get into that here). Taking quick action, the brother started running to his car so that he could chase down the purse snatcher, but was stopped by the other person who screamed, "No, wait! I have a better idea!" He quickly ran inside. The first brother stood there comforting the lady, thinking that his friend is calling the police or hopefully something better. The man came running back with a big smile on his face and Dawah pamphlets in his hand. He hands the lady the Dawah literature and requests that they be on their way.

Yeah, great idea buddy! Why do what's right when we can have people read about it. I mean sure, you could have at least gave chase, but that would be going a little overboard, don't you think? Especially when a pamphlet can explain what they should have done, and isn't that what really counts?

I don't know what enrages me more. This story or the fact that falling coconuts kill more human beings than sharks, and The Discovery Channel has NEVER done a special on "Killer Coconuts".

I'm sure if I could speak to the person who first used Dawah pamphlets, they would explain to me that it was used complementary to all the other efforts that were happening. This was not supposed to turn into the main form of invitation. And even if it did, someone out there would be observant enough to see that it can only be used at specific times and places, and that it has the potential of turning more people off than on. Some people have taken this creative and informative idea, and overdosed on it. The situation has gotten so bad that the terms "giving dawah" and "giving pamphlets" can be used synonymously. These people believe that handing out pamphlets is the *raison d'etre* of the existence of the opposable thumb in human beings.

The idea of Dawah is being debased. People are now looking at it as just an activity to do, words to preach, and finding the right time to do it. Dawah is all these things and much more. The word means to 'invite'. What can invite better than sincerity. Someone giving me a drone-like invitation to an event is not as appealing as the person giving a sincere invitation. Plus, when it's an invitation to something that guarantees to improve life as we know it, it better be evident in the most real form (as opposed to disingenuous smiles and hypocritical talks about great changes while their life is falling apart because of it) in the person inviting.

Let's play a little game. Think about what comes into your mind when you see the word "inviting", but this time think of the adjective, not the verb. What makes something inviting. Sincere, prosperous, tranquil, peaceful, attractive are some of the usual words that come to mind. When you invite, keep some of these things in mind. You must be inviting while you are inviting.

Ramadan Reflections

By *Arslan Rahman and Yousra Yusuf*

"We are in a very unique time, this will likely be the last Ramadan we experience on campus for many years to come. The iftaars and taraweh that bring our MSA campus communities together and build bonds will be an experience that future students will

Ramadan has always been the mark of a truly unique time in the school year. After a three-month summer break, we're immediately greeted by a friendly and inviting community. People return to their campus routines which were left behind the semester before, and curious new freshmen, slowly discovering the newest phase of their lives, make a home for themselves in the family we call the Muslim Students Association. Ramadan has made the start of each school year a really special and memorable experience for all of us.

As was experienced, the first day of fall semester as a freshman was also the very first day of Ramadan. So my brand new college experience was already significantly different than any of my non-Muslim classmates. In the midst of getting used to a brand new campus environment, class structures and meeting new people, my fellow MSA freshman class and I were learning how to survive the completion of Ramadan on campus. As was the case with many of us, Ramadan iftars were my first experience with the MSA. Aside from iftars at home, the only previous experience I had had with the breaking of my fast was in the basement of a masjid with scores of older people – many of whom just seemed interested in eating

their fill and leaving thereafter. Due to cultural and age gaps, and perhaps even social awkwardness, there was very little conversation and no sense of community.

As a new freshman at Stony Brook, however, I had very different expectations of what the Muslim community would be like. Here, it was much different. This was a community. People ate, socialized, and were at ease, as they reconnected with friends they hadn't seen in a while, as well as meet and interact with the plethora of new faces. Alhamdulillah, our iftars have commonly been a venue to develop many strong and long-lasting friendships.

Ramadan is the one time of year where everyone comes together. During iftar and at taraweh, you could be in the company of brothers and sisters who may not be able to regularly come to MSA events throughout the year. However, many made it a point to be there during those special days. What we would experience in those days could never truly be replicated outside of Ramadan.

"MSA Iftars offered something that no other MSA event could ever offer- on a sheer scale all its own, with an environment of brotherhood and sisterhood that only a holy month could ever foster on such a level- night

after night we would build such strength in bonds and brotherhood that you would never forget for years to come. I truly hope that our MSA, a decade and a half from now, will come to realize just how precious this gift from Allah (swt) is, and cherish the revisiting of these iftars to our community," says former MSA President, Omar Shareef.

The passing of this Ramadan truly marks the end of an era. Future generations of our MSA will never really know or understand what they missed.

As Ramadan at Stony Brook MSA takes its place in the archives of our fond memories, future generations now have a unique challenge and opportunity ahead of them. It is important for them to realize that although they may not get the chance to experience exactly what we experienced, they do have the chance to try to create new experiences for the Muslim community that none of us may have seen or even thought of. As we look back on one epic chapter of our MSA's history, insha'Allah we can also look forward to other different memories waiting to be formed in the near future that can be just as amazing. :)

- Arslan Rahman

"You don't eat for 30 days?"

Coming back to begin my senior year at school, after a hectic but relaxing summer, was bittersweet. I wasn't expecting a lot of changes in my surroundings and Stony Brook stayed true to my expectations except for a brighter 2nd floor in the Union. But what did surprise me was a question a lot of my non-Muslim friends asked my opinion of. And the question was none other than, "What do you think about the Ground Zero mosque?" I don't know why I found it surprising. Did I think they did not watch the news or read the papers? Possibly! But the most probable reason is that I haven't had discussions with a lot of them on Islam or even religion in general.

The first time I was asked this question, I was surprised (as I mentioned earlier), the 2nd time I spewed the facts, the 3rd and following times I knew not just to make a case about the center but also to understand the questioner's ideas of Islam and in the process, broaden their knowledge on Islam. During these discussions over lunch or dinner, I've been asked questions such as, "You don't eat for 30 days? Don't you get hungry?" to "Does building a mosque mean establishing power and overtaking a country?" And, Alhamdulillah, I

must say through answers to their questions, the people I've talked to have gained a bit more knowledge about Muslims and my religion. SubhanAllah, it is indeed marvelous how He brings awareness and discussions about Islam to people who diligently avoid the topic of religion – especially during a time when Islam is receiving ample negative coverage in the press.

Personally, these experiences have helped me gain a deeper appreciation of the reality of being a Muslim in America and the necessity of conducting Dawah. The informal and personal style of Dawah appealed to me a lot more than manning Dawah tables. I found this satisfying since I could always follow up with them on any questions I couldn't answer in the first place or we could always bring up topics on Islam anytime we wanted to without having to question if it was the right place or time.

Alhamdulillah, in Stony Brook, we have all been blessed with friends who are open to discuss about religion and do not shy away from asking about an apparently "scary" religion. Talk to them. Answer their questions to the best of your knowledge. Find out more on topics you are unsure of and follow up with them

on that issue. I hope and pray that we can all be the best beacon of Islam for our non-Muslim friends to help them understand that Muslims are as normal as everyone else. At least through our efforts, even if they don't come up to us and ask about Islam, one day if they are ever faced with deciding between casting Muslims as good or evil they will have to think twice before jumping to a negative conclusion. I will end this with an incident one of my friends related to me during lunch.

"We went to a gathering in this predominantly white neighborhood in Rockland and one of the old ladies there was like, 'These Muslims should just be kicked out of America. How dare they build a mosque on Ground Zero? You don't know what they do in their mosques. They're all just mischief.' When my mom and I heard her, we were so angry... very, very angry. We went up to her and said, 'You know Ms. X, that mosque is not being built on Ground Zero. Just read the news carefully, it is built a few blocks AWAY from it. And I've worked with many Muslims. They're nothing like what you make them to be...'"

- Yousra Yusuf

Beyond the Halal and the Haram

By *Fawzia Syed*

When we take the first step towards God and make the firm resolve to be better Muslims, Shaitan's whispers commence: "There are so many rules... There's so many things that are **haraam**... I can't do anything anymore... How am I supposed to have fun... at the masjid... all day long?" Can we be blamed for asking such questions? The way of life we have before us in society is one in which every wish our heart desires is possible, and should be achieved. NOTHING should stop us from happiness. So society presents to us a goal: do all that you want to do to be happy. Our religion, on the other hand, presents us another goal: Please God and you shall achieve true happiness. The goal then for the Muslim is the pleasure of God and the path is Islam.

Following a path though must lead to an end- a desired location. Every path is taken in hopes that it will lead to an end. So there's a greater picture. What's the whole picture? The whole picture- the end- includes Jannah. God's pleasure manifests in Jannah. That is the desired location. It is not limited to this Earth. It is beyond this world and it is a heavenly goal. So the commands from God and the rules they lead to Jannah. And what is Jannah? Read the Quran and read the descriptions of what God has prepared for the believers who tread His path on this Earth. Search the ahadith and UNDERSTAND what your goal is in this world, on this path. Then you'll start asking yourself, "Why shouldn't the path to Jannah be difficult? And maybe that's why Islam isn't always the easiest path to tread upon in the face of society. Maybe it's supposed to be a bit difficult."

The rule of thumb seems to be that the harder it is to achieve a goal, the more beloved it is when it is achieved. Sacrifice tends to be greater in the beginning, but the happiness in the end is greater. I'm sure everyone who is on the premed track at Stony Brook (and I'm sure it's 99% of you all) can relate to the following:

Imagine how happy students that sacrifice their lives in medical school are when they are able to enter a hospital and are called "Dr. _____". The path of medicine is unbelievably difficult and long, but the end goal of being a physician is full of great reward and, InshAllah, happiness. If you want to buy your own car, you need to earn money. If you want a 4.0 GPA, you need to study, etc. *Anything that's worth having is worth struggling for.* We are able relate this simple notion with insignificant, materialistic desires and wishes. So in

comparison, why would we not have to put forth the same work and sacrifice for a place in Jannah – a place God has described as an abode that is indescribable to the human understanding of beauty and perfection. It is described as an abode which *no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no person has ever imagined or has been able to comprehend.*

For some adhering to the halal and haram is easier than it is for others. Why? Obviously there is no one answer to this question. But for some Islam is solely "HALAL/HARAM" and nothing else. If that's your Islam - simply haram and halal – then it is not a joyous religion. Simply focusing on halal and haram neglects us from delving into anything deeper than these two terms. Aisha (may God

"Reflect over the creation of this world: the perfection and order with which everything is placed. Contemplate over your purpose."

be pleased with her), tells us that the first verses to be revealed by God to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) were the verses describing Paradise and Hellfire. In the hadith, she continues to say that *if* the first verses commanded were: "*Do not drink alcohol*", the people would have said: "*We will never leave drinking alcohol!*" She confidently says that these people—SubhanAllah, people who would become the Sahaba and Sahaabiyat (companions of the Prophet)—people far better than us in every way, would REFUSE to follow the command of God. Why? For the simple fact that if you don't believe in something, why are you going to follow it? Why would you follow it? The first verses revealed in the Quran were not those of hijab or alcohol, but were verses describing the Day of Judgment, Jannah, the Hellfire, and most importantly God. Belief-strong, firm belief – in these tenets of Islam are the foundation to every action God has commanded us to perform.

Before we willingly follow the commands, the halaal and the haraam, it is critical to have complete and firm belief in everything God has asked us to believe. Reflect over the creation of this world: the perfection and order with which everything is placed. Contemplate over your purpose. In this world, you are one little and insignificant being in this world of

millions, but before each person God has placed a beginning and an end. Ask: When I die and I leave every possession I have on this Earth, where am I headed? Ask these questions. Ask questions and reflect. Strengthen your faith- your iman. Realize that Allah (swt) in all matters is the First and the Last. Humble yourself before Him, and you will realize that you are nothing and He is everything.

When we realize all this, eating halaal at all times is not too difficult. The thought of wearing hijab is not as nerve-racking or praying five times a day, *every day*, isn't impossible because now these things are done *with a purpose*. These actions *please* Allah (swt) and we say to ourselves: "I want nothing more than to please my Creator." Analogies are always great, so let us think about pleasing our parents. There are times when we do things that make our parents proud. For example, an amazing GPA or even the simplest of acts such as taking out the garbage. When our parents are proud, we can usually tell. Though some/most of us may not like to admit it, making our parents happy truly makes us happy. In the same exact manner, pleasing God will bring your heart happiness and pleasure. And isn't this what Islam is? Peace. We all know it: Islam comes from the same three letter Arabic root (seen laam meem) as 'salam'- peace. That's why you hear everyone shouting, especially nowadays, "Islam is peace! That's what Islam means- literally!" Peace of what though? It's peace of heart. It's peace of mind, body and soul. True peace – peace that stems from pleasing God.

If we map our life with the goal of Jannah and the Pleasure of God constantly and *always* in mind, we will find Islam is the path to happiness and contentment of heart. The "halal and the haram" are worth it; the struggle is worth it because there is no worthier goal.

May Allah give us the tawfeeq to worship Him the way He deserves to be worshipped. May He make it easy for us to obey Him and gain His pleasure amidst all the temptations we are faced with in this world. May He reward us for every struggle we endure on this path and may He make us among the steadfast. May he increase us in knowledge that is beneficial and that leads us to Him. May He protect us from ignorance *and* arrogance. May He forgive us for our shortcomings and make us among the repentant. May He grant us husn ul khatimah (a good end) and may He be pleased with us when we meet Him on that Day. Ameen, allahumma ameen.



Why can't you see things MY way?

By Omar and Mariam Shareef

"Mommy said she loves me more..."

As salaamu alaikum wa rahmatullah!

Alrighty then! This is the first of what I hope to be a continuing column that details two radically different perspectives on Stony Brook and the MSA- I kinda roped my little sister Mariam into it since I needed SOMEONE to write this with me, and for once in her cootie-infested life she finally seemed really enthusiastic! That's kinda surprising since I think she secretly loathes doing brother-sister stuff, but I'm pretty confident that she'll treat this project differently and really make it something enjoyable.

Salaam walaikum guys!!!

So because the Minaret is looking for new writers, I mindlessly agreed to writing for them and now I'm stuck doing a collaboration article EVERY issue with Omar, shoot me now. I just hope this weird column amuses you people. So Omar and I decided to start a monthly commentary in the Minaret about my boring daily life compared to his experiences here at Stony Brook and in the MSA. And yeah... if you didn't catch on... we're brother and sister.

You know, I always dreaded having her go to Stony Brook, since the thought of having a little sister CONSTANTLY harassing me in the MSA seemed like a nightmare. But it's actually not that bad, since it worked out that she entered as soon as I left, and having her there is like a little bit of a blessing, since It's almost like "re-experiencing" the MSA through her eyes, despite me no longer being there. Her stories about all the stuff she's discovering and all the classes and professors she's taking are really nostalgic for me, since I was in her spot not too long ago doing the same stuff. Sometimes I grab her schedule just to laugh at how terrible her professors are and how ridiculous her schedule looks like. Especially on Fridays.

Okay, let's be blunt- having an older brother who came and went through Stony Brook is kind of irritating, and of all brothers, it had to be Omar. Alhamdulillah he left just as I came in, I'm really blessed. But those random conversations that he'd force on me asking about the state of the MSA, the register ladies, and the food server guys just bothers me. Omar constantly stealing my schedule and asking about my classes and professors is really annoying, considering the guy JUST left. Not much of a life if you ask me.

I guess the most nostalgic blessing of having a younger sister at Stony Brook is being able to see her immerse herself and experi-

ence the MSA- being a former President usually fills you with a lot of worry and anxiety for how things are going to turn out once you leave, but having her there kinda feels like she's a super secret spy hired by me, since she tells me about the MSA and all the stuff they're doing there, without me having to bug any of the Board members about it. Best thing about it all- I really feel, based on what she's told me, that I did at least a somewhat decent job last year, and at times inspired people with my lighthearted and humorous approach to MSA work. 'Aint that so sweet of her?



The one thing that he won't shut up about is the MSA! I know Omar was the president, he should've realized that the first 50 million times he told me. He's right about one thing, I love the MSA so much, but there comes a point when you just get sick of hearing about "the good old days." He repeats the same lines over and over again, "You think I did a decent job?" "What's the Board up to?" "Any cool events going on?" How would I know? Do I LOOK like the President of the MSA? (I can't even make white sauce... no offense, Nabiha). I actually think that the MSA has become a lot better since he left... mostly because his horrible jokes and lame humor don't distract people anymore.

I guess if anything, the one thing I'd really want her to take from her time here at the MSA is to make lots of friends and build herself both academically as a student, and spiritually as a Muslimah. I hope she doesn't get caught up being associated with me all the time and builds a strong unique identity there for herself. People just gotta understand that she's **NOTHING** like me- we've got totally opposite temperaments- if I mistakenly hurt someone, I'd apologize like 10 times. If she physically hurt someone, she'd probably hit them harder with brass knuckles just to make sure they weren't faking.

I reunited with a lot of old friends and made a lot of new ones, Alhamdulillah! But there's a huge down side. I think I should legally change my name from "Mariam Shareef" to "Omar Shareef's little sister Shareef." It's more appropriate considering that's how EVERYONE knows me. If I had half of a penny for every time I was introduced as his little sister I could buy Oprah with a side order of Bill Gates. We're nothing alike personality-wise, he's too nice to people. And we don't even look alike... I don't look ANYTHING like Abraham Lincoln!

All in all, I was a bit apprehensive about having her stay at Stony Brook all by herself- but now that I think about it, insha'Allah I'm hoping she's really going to have a great time there experiencing what I experienced over the past 4 years- and maybe, juuuussttt maybe, one of these days she'll finally understand me better and for once start seeing things MY way.

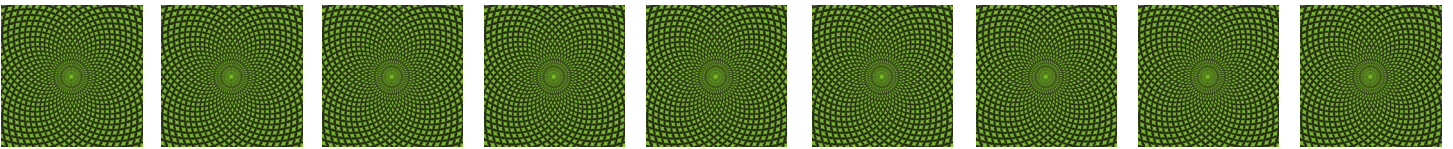
Well, it's not all that bad I guess. I'm enjoying my time here a lot, Alhamdulillah, and I'm looking forward to the upcoming semesters. I think Omar should stop worrying so much and just let me be. He just needs to understand me more and ease up on trying to "experience" Stony Brook with me all over again. I guess what I'm saying is that I need to get him to start seeing things MY way.

The Web

By Syed Zain Ali

Day in and day out we're living in this web
And we're blind
We're blind to the realization that this web has a thread that binds
And blind to the fact that it has swept us from behind.
We look around us and see those who have fallen dead
Victim to the oppression of this web's affinity
Having first grasped us, we have chosen to grasp it willingly,
Living our lives as though if they were a lie,
Belying the very essence that lies inside
Hiding the mind from a time that is sublime.
Trapped in this web, we discourage unity
We bicker and we fight and like to call that community
Tearing apart families as though if it were a mutiny
Robbing ourselves of the beauty
That we have been given, just take a look and see,
Because the sea would not be able to conceive,
the very fact that we don't perceive
that the words of such beauty are free
and it is our duty to be those who breathe
the Deen being that air that which we need
in and out- a duty for those who believe.
stuck to this web upon which we can't perceive
that there is a beast that simply just won't leave
I mean, he did say he would sit on Siratul Mustaqeem
who taunts us day in and day out, trying to pierce our chests

and yet we like to think, "they know less and are so oppressed"
Immune is he who thinks, "this is my opportunity"
Who sees the web and isn't fooled by its trickery
Who constantly seeks the pleasure of the One that is Greatest
The One who holds to keys to success- a sight at which we would be speechless
If we only knew how much they knew
And maybe we would be among them too
Among the righteous servants, the Saliheen
If only we had the nerve to follow this Deen
Then we would be those with hearts that are clean
And be able to return to our Lord, well pleased,
But for those who choose to stick to this web
And are among the ones who choose to disbelieve
They are the ones who are the losers and have not taken heed.
We must be those who don't lose this creed
Because it is the creed decreed by Ar-Rabbul 'Alameen.
And the promise of our Lord is what will truly give us glee
A promise for you and a promise for me.
As long as we stick to Islam completely.
For us there is a reward that is true and for eternity.
Let's wake up before our ability to see is taken away.
May Allah make us of those who stay on this straight way
And not of those who have chosen to go astray
This is the ultimate blessing for which we pray, day after day.



*"Have you reflected? That the transformation of sweetness to sourness or bitterness is possible from the standpoint of chemistry, but to some extent, the transformation of sourness or bitterness to sweetness is impossible. He Almighty alone possesses the perfect mastery of transforming things' nature and that is it! Hence, pray that Almighty God may **transform** our distance and separation from Him Almighty and from the secrets of His Almighty's Holy Names and His Almighty's Friends, to the **sweetness** of the Nearness of His Unique Being and the chaste-hearted companions. Amen then Amen. O! Cherisher of the Worlds. O! The Most Merciful of the merciful ones (Arham ur-Raahimeen). And that He may sooner make it available for His practicing and struggling pious ones to be united here. And that the Almighty may grant us and other friends the success to spread monotheism and expand justice to its ultimate level, based on principles of brotherhood and equality! Ameen."*

- Mawlana Faizani

Detached

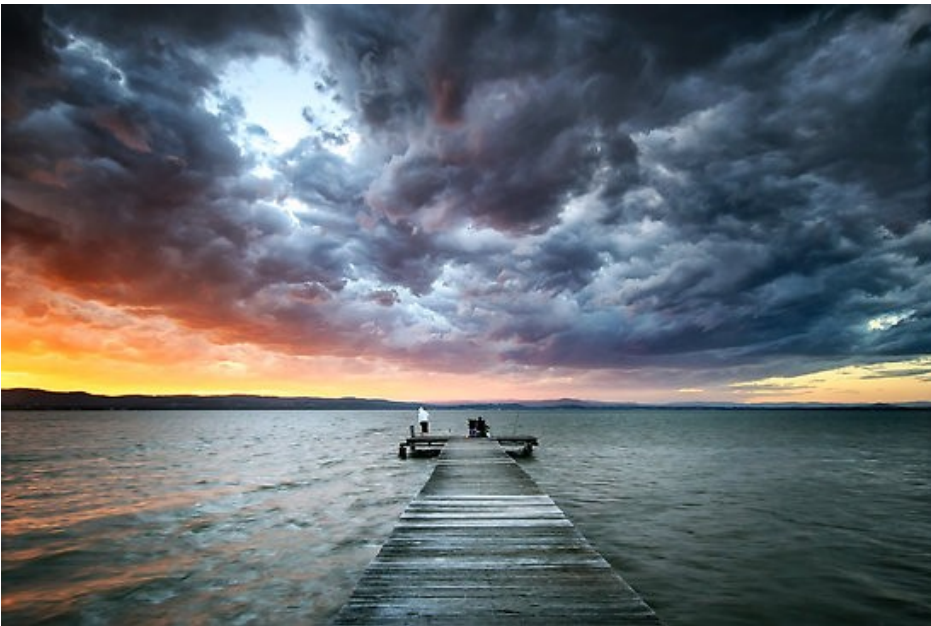
By Komal Magsi

Vast and never-ending, a constant blanket of different shades with no faults, cracks, or empty spaces. I've always found the sky to be a remarkable feature in this expanse of a universe. How strange then, that from that same majestic sky, the deadliest winds or monsoon rains can wipe out an entire species. This same sky beholds a beautiful sunset in Fiji, and yet on another occasion it may very well be on the verge of a deadly storm in Tokyo. With every up there is a down, and with every beginning there is an end. Our own lives, our purpose on earth testifies to this fleeting nature of life that makes up our existence. Even the sky above us testifies to the transient temperament of survival.

The one constant we were promised is an end in this life. Everything shows a glimpse of this end in one form or another. The Quraan speaks of this on several accounts, but man loses himself and seeks permanence in this world. Incredible aspects, among many, are the parables Allah (swt) presents in the Quraan in comparison with the life of this world. In Surah Al-Hadeed Allah (swt) tells us that the life of this world is simply nothing but 1) play 2) amusement & entertainment, 3) obsession with beauty, 4) pomp and mutual boasting, and 5) rivalry in respect to wealth and children. The parable we find are the sequential steps of life that fall perfectly in line with this ayah. As infants we desire 1) play and as adolescents we

long for all types of 2) entertainment. Next, as teenagers we become obsessed with our 3) looks and when these stages of our lives have passed we seek to 4) boast about our lives and 5) compete for wealth and buy our happiness. How incredible that Allah goes on to narrate a better competition, the competition for a time where forever will have no end and where the sky above us will be another garden underneath which rivers flow, until you reach the throne of Allah. How amazing is it that a horse will run under a tree for one hundred years and still be inescapable of the very shade of this tree? How remarkable that the more you memorize from the Quraan, the more luxurious your home will be in this garden called Paradise. Realizing the in-existence of permanence in this world is necessary for all those who seek light on yomal qiyama.

Detachment from this life does not mean that we cannot own things of the *dunya*. In fact many of the greatest companions were wealthy. Rather, detachment is that we view and interact with the *dunya* for what it really is: **just a means**. Detachment is when the *dunya* remains in our hands – not in our heart. As Ali (ra) expressed beautifully, "Detachment is not that you should own nothing, but that nothing should own you." It is this very concept that the Prophet spoke about so eloquently when he said: "What relationship do I have with this world? I am in this world like a rider who halts in the shade of a tree for a short time, and after taking some rest, resumes his journey leaving the tree behind." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi) May Allah make us of those who understood what is meant to be *in* the *dunya*, without being *of* it. Allahumma Ameen.



Bidah Police

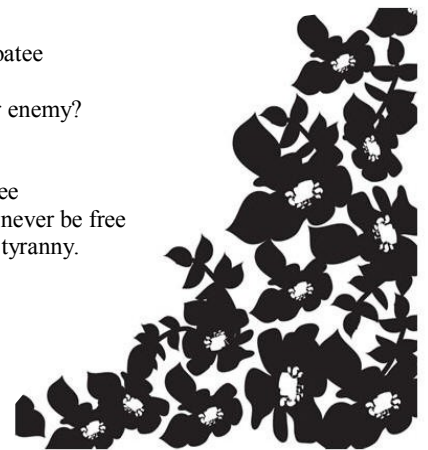
This is my plea
About something you'll sooner or later see
About those that walk the Masjid confidently
Convinced they're last real Muslim, the only true devotee
Thinking they're the right hand of the Mahdi
Ready to save the Ummah singlehandedly

And if any brother or sister dares to disagree
Saying Islam shouldn't be seen so narrowly
They question his or her Islam and insult their history
Treating them like dirt and debris

I got news for them maybe, just maybe
Shooting off takfirs and fatwa's blindly
Is building up deep hatred and enmity
And crumbling the Ummah degree by degree

So if that brother's a sufi, let him be
And treat a shia like you'd treat a sunni
Respect the brother without a beard or goatee
And the sister who's a non-hijabi
They say the shahadah, how're they your enemy?

Mark my words, this is my guarantee
If it causes division, it's not Allah's decree
And without tolerance, this Ummah will never be free
Shackled in self imposed extremism and tyranny.



Diary of a Mad Man

By Farooq Zafar

Monday, August 30th, 2010

Dear Diary,

It was just another first day of school. Okay, it was my fourth “first” day of school at Stony Brook University – technically my seventeenth “first” day of school, counting kindergarten, elementary, middle and high schools, but I digress. During the hour or so break between my abnormal psychology and biochemistry lectures, I decided to head over to the second floor balcony of the Union, that favorite hang-out spot where at least a dozen MSA brothers could be found any hour of the day. After spending three years on this campus, I felt a certain nostalgia as I walked from Javits to the Union, passing Humanities, Staller, the Library and about a thousand freshman faces along the way. Looking back now, it seemed like my collegiate life flashed before my eyes as I relived a variegated palette of experiences, emotions and events.

After I passed the lobby doors and made my way up the stairs to the second floor, I was taken aback and blindsided, literally, by the new lights installed on the ceiling, as well as the ballroom-esque wooden panels being installed in the “court view gallery”, as the lounge opposite the balcony is called. Golly, the Union is finally getting dolled up, I pondered, while turning left at the first set of steps before the prayer room. Once past the wall of mailboxes, I was greeted by a few familiar faces amongst my fellow upper-class brothers. I then proceeded to exchange handshakes, fist bumps, chest thumps and spirit dingle fingers with them, saving the patent-pending “Karachi Krab-walk” for a certain unnamed Tamoor. And then I met the freshmen.

Not just any new guy, mind you. This was a member of some prototypical caste, a half-Desi, half-robot hybrid, of unbridled potential and unequalled overachieving aspiration. The kind you’re not sure whether to love or loathe. So young, impressionable, precious; much like clay, he was ready to be molded. He was awkward, shy, and unassuming. Slowly, I made progress in making small talk, extracting his name, high school, hometown, ancestry, blood-type, and other essential-first-and-last-conversation bio-data. At the time of this printing, he is still single, sisters.

After discussing the nature of our student body, as well as the reputation that Stony Brook prides itself on, not that of a depressing-commuter-campus-by-day slash rabi-party-school-by-night, nor that of a fledgling-sports-program-with-comically-mythical-seawolf-mascot, but that of hard-science-middle-of-nowhere-everyone-and-their-mother-is-a-

premed* public research institution, and perhaps a slight touch of excessively-hyphenated-self-aware-journalism, I learned what I feared: he was one of them.

“So, what’s your schedule like?” I asked. “I’m taking 23 credits,” he replied instantly. Before my lungs could muster an exhausted sigh, before I could utter a single onomatopoeic “tsk”, let alone shake my head in that sort of smug, condescending disapproval that only wizened, been-around-the-block-thrice seniors can get away with, they were preceded by an epic, double-handed face-palm. “When should I take the MCAT?” he asked me, wide-eyed and hopeful. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I could not believe this was coming from a freshman, who seemed more like an overly ripened high school senior, on the very first day of school.



When did the paradigm shift? When did the preparation surpass the procrastination? When did the inmates overtake the asylum? I do not have those answers, my dear diary. After what seemed like an eternity of woefully staring off into the distance, I was interrupted by repeated interrogations of “well? what do you think?” from the freshmen. I told him not to worry about it, and that I would write about this chronicle soon. So here I am today, with my advice.

Enjoy your first semester, freshmen! Do not lose precious sleep over the MCAT, do not stress your GPA, do not overload your schedule, do not triple your sciences, and most importantly, and I cannot stress this enough, not even with bold, italic, underlined, size 72 font, but perhaps capitalization could attempt to try to sufficiently emphasize, DO NOT NOT ENJOY COLLEGE! Do not tamper with and unwittingly thwart your interpersonal lectures, your public recitations and your social examinations. In other words, never strive to be “that guy”, the one we all know—and if you don’t know that guy, you ARE that guy—with the BCPM GPA calculated to the nth digit, with the AMCAS completed before taking their math placement exam, and with the self-deluding prophecy that everything in life, whether sacred or secular, whether academic or extracurricular, whether on or off the exam, will fit in their

perfectly scripted plans for the straight As; the first ever 45T; the seat at Harvard Med; the residency in high-risk orthopedic trauma surgery at Mass Gen; the CEO corner office at a corporate HMO; and best of all, the rishtas [proposals] on camelback, promising domicile trophy wives hailing from the great, uncharted realms of exotic principalities in the Greater Caucasus... well, you get the picture. What kind of life is that, really? One with no room for surprises and no detail unaccounted for. Sadly, that’s also one with no excitement, I should think. It would be an automated existence requiring no on-your-feet thinking, no human response to stress. To be blunt, that is not college.

I will not bore you with clichés, but I will share a degree of the experiences on my journey to a degree. College is a novel, peculiar transitional period, similar to yet distinct from any other time span in life, one that knows no certainty, not that of job placement, graduate school admission, or even graduation! In order to get the flow of things, you have to go with the flow of things. So try a sport, a hobby, a language, an instrument, a major, a minor, a new look—with 99% of these looks involving a fleetingly-hip, infinitely-foolish hair-don’t of whose evidence you will regrettably untag on facebook yet inevitably lose in the empty recesses of your brain’s hippocampal hard drive—anything that is not “you”, or at least different in some meaningful way than the past and present “you” that you and yours know you as. This, my dear freshmen, is something only you can really know. Who knows, you might find your true calling. I am certain, however, that you will never know unless and until you find out. Take my advice; I’m a senior who can see his remaining college days as dwindling grains of sand in an hourglass.

Now if you will indulge me, I must return to my studies. That MCAT won’t ace itself, you know. 45T, here I come.

Ask me about my internship,
Farooq “Seawolf” Zafar

P.S. This entry is not meant to discourage those freshmen who consider themselves “premed” before anything and everything except being believers before God. To those sincere souls I offer my unyielding encouragement and the words of my favorite former premed: face them books!

*Like all labels, do not pride yourself on the term “premed”. It’s only a reminder of the price you sold your soul for. Honestly, it’s the past tense of the verb premed, from the Latin for “suffer”.

Prayer Times

Day	October	Hijri	Fajr	Sunrise	Dhuhr	Asr	Asr (H)	Maghrib	Isha
Fri	1	22/10	5:35	6:49	12:43	4:00	4:49	6:35	7:50
Sat	2	23/10	5:36	6:50	12:42	3:59	4:48	6:33	7:48
Sun	3	24/10	5:37	6:51	12:42	3:58	4:46	6:32	7:47
Mon	4	25/10	5:38	6:52	12:42	3:57	4:45	6:30	7:45
Tue	5	26/10	5:39	6:53	12:41	3:55	4:43	6:28	7:43
Wed	6	27/10	5:40	6:54	12:41	3:54	4:42	6:27	7:42
Thu	7	28/10	5:41	6:55	12:41	3:53	4:40	6:25	7:40
Fri	8	29/10	5:43	6:56	12:41	3:52	4:39	6:24	7:39
Sat	9	1/11	5:44	6:57	12:40	3:51	4:38	6:22	7:37
Sun	10	2/11	5:45	6:58	12:40	3:49	4:36	6:20	7:35
Mon	11	3/11	5:46	6:59	12:40	3:48	4:35	6:19	7:34
Tue	12	4/11	5:47	7:00	12:39	3:47	4:33	6:17	7:32
Wed	13	5/11	5:48	7:01	12:39	3:46	4:32	6:16	7:31
Thu	14	6/11	5:49	7:02	12:39	3:45	4:30	6:14	7:29
Fri	15	7/11	5:50	7:03	12:39	3:43	4:29	6:13	7:28
Sat	16	8/11	5:51	7:04	12:39	3:42	4:28	6:11	7:26
Sun	17	9/11	5:52	7:06	12:38	3:41	4:26	6:10	7:25
Mon	18	10/11	5:53	7:07	12:38	3:40	4:25	6:08	7:23
Tue	19	11/11	5:54	7:08	12:38	3:39	4:24	6:07	7:22
Wed	20	12/11	5:55	7:09	12:38	3:38	4:22	6:05	7:21
Thu	21	13/11	5:56	7:10	12:38	3:36	4:21	6:04	7:19
Fri	22	14/11	5:57	7:11	12:37	3:35	4:20	6:02	7:18
Sat	23	15/11	5:58	7:12	12:37	3:34	4:18	6:01	7:17
Sun	24	16/11	5:59	7:13	12:37	3:33	4:17	5:59	7:15
Mon	25	17/11	6:00	7:15	12:37	3:32	4:16	5:58	7:14
Tue	26	18/11	6:01	7:16	12:37	3:31	4:14	5:57	7:13
Wed	27	19/11	6:02	7:17	12:37	3:30	4:13	5:55	7:11
Thu	28	20/11	6:03	7:18	12:37	3:29	4:12	5:54	7:10
Fri	29	21/11	6:04	7:19	12:37	3:28	4:11	5:53	7:09
Sat	30	22/11	6:05	7:20	12:37	3:27	4:09	5:51	7:08
Sun	31	23/11	6:06	7:21	12:37	3:26	4:08	5:50	7:07

Interested in Writing for the Minaret?
 Email Submissions to minaret@gmail.com

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First 'Asr Time: *In the standard method (which is used by Imams Shaafii, Hanbali, and Maliki) the Asr prayer time starts when the shadow of an object is equivalent to its height.*

Second 'Asr Time: *This is used by Imam Abu Hanifa, where the Asr prayer time starts when the shadow of an object is twice its height.*

**Special thanks to all contributing writers, staff members, editors, Muslim Student Association and Sr. Sanaa for all your hard work and cooperation. Without your pens in hand, thoughts in line and open hearts, this would not have been possible. JazakAllah Khair!

- Khush =]

