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Conducting the National Model

Model Arab League Shaped My Life

by Sidney Jones

My entire adult life has been shaped by my participation in Model Arab League. Coming from a small town in North Carolina, many of my peers in my high school's graduating class were off to large universities to join sororities, tailgate at football games, and engage in other "normal" co-ed college activities. When I was a junior in

high school, my school's librarian knew that I had an interest in international relations, and because she had a younger sister attend Converse, she knew it was the place I needed to be. She sat me down one day and she said, "Go to Converse. Join the Model Arab League team. Allow Joe Dunn be your mentor, and you will thrive." I enrolled at

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Converse College the fall of 2013 and did exactly what my librarian told me to do.

The first practice session hopeful members of the delegation were allowed to watch was intimidating – to say the least. Strong, confident, poised, and well-spoken women were standing up, speaking at the speed of light and representing countries I couldn't even pronounce. I knew from that moment that I wanted to be just like them, no matter what it took. Ahead of try-outs, I was given various countries to represent – I was able to pronounce all of them, luckily, and I studied the ins and outs of their policies, previous engagements, and their style of government. I doubt that I had ever worked so hard in my life. I want-

ed this. On the day of tryouts, I put on my leopard print suit dress and black heels. I thought if nothing else, I will at least try to look like these women that I so desperately wanted to be. After making the team, I quickly realized that wearing the dress and the heels were not the only things I would have to do if I wanted to earn my place with this group.

While I've never been exactly shy, I have always been easily intimidated in a new environment. That is not the ideal trait of someone that wants to be successful at a Model Arab League conference. At my first conference in Boston, I let my nerves get the best of me and allowed myself to be intimidated by all of the smart, well-spoken delegates in my commit-

tee room. I had done the research, I had come prepared with resolution ideas, I even had on pantyhose, but it wasn't enough. To say I did poorly at that conference would be an understatement. I let my insecurities keep me from actively participating in debate.

After returning to Converse, the next week Dr. Dunn summoned me to his office, looked me in the eyes, and said, "You were a huge disappointment this weekend. I expected more from you." He was right, though. I had disappointed the team and myself. I apologized to Dr. Dunn, and I said to him, "I will never disappoint you again." From that moment on, I knew that I was going to have to learn to step outside of my shell, find my voice, and showcase my ideas to the committees the same way I watched every single woman on our team do. I knew I had the knowledge, and I knew I had the capabilities, but I needed that push to ensure that I not only met expectations, but that I exceeded them.

Participation in Model Arab League not only aids in your professional development but also your personal growth. I spent the next four years debating, chairing, taking on leadership positions, and mentoring those younger than me. During my time at Converse, I was able to travel to Morocco and

In Doha, Qatar



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intern in New York City through the Bard Globalization and International Affairs program – both of these would not have been possible without MAL.

My four years on the MAL team simply were not enough for me. I had fallen in love with this program, what it stands for, and how it helps its participants step out of their comfort zone and grow. Because of that, when a position opened at the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations in Washington, D.C. for a Student Programs Coordinator, I jumped at the opportunity. Model Arab League kickstarted my career in D.C. and working for NCUSAR allowed me to see the program from the inside out. I planned more than 30 MAL conferences during my time at NCUSAR, and each conference amazed me. I watched timid, young debaters start the weekend nervous and shy, and I also watched their confidence grow over the course of the 3-day debate. They had the same “ah ha” moment I had four years ago. These students were smart; they were capable. They just needed the opportunity to be uncomfortable and allow themselves to grow, and that is what Model Arab League did for me and countless other students.

During my time at NCUSAR, I had the pleasure of escorting a



Doha at night

delegation of students and professors to Doha, Qatar through a generous program funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Qatar. This trip was filled with meetings with diplomats, government officials, private sector organizations, and NGOs. I was able to confidently navigate my way through these meetings because of my prior experience with MAL. Because of MAL, I was able to speak with these individuals and listen to their country’s policies through their lens and rather than my Western lens through which so many of us view foreign policy.

During my time in Doha, I met a wonderful female diplomat who was working for the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Washington, D.C. She was our in-country escort. She and I worked directly

together ahead of the trip in order to procure visas for the students/faculty, plan the agenda, confirm travel plans, and handle other program details. It was an eye-opening, once in a lifetime experience in a very different country for me and for the students. I wanted the students to have the kind of opportunity that I had experienced as an undergrad in Morocco. Little did I know at the time that two years later that same diplomat would call me and ask me if I was interested in coming to work for her.

I began my position as a researcher for the Public Diplomacy Office at the Embassy of the State of Qatar in Washington D.C. in February 2020. Working at an Embassy was never on my radar, and it certainly wasn’t something I thought was obtainable for a small-town girl

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In the Moroccan desert



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from North Carolina. However, because of Model Arab League, I was able to have the experiences needed that shaped me and prepared me for my job in public diplomacy at the Embassy.

On my first day at the Embassy, I was given a ten-page proposal for funding for a program at an international NGO. My boss looked at me and said for me to be prepared to brief her on it as soon as possible. At a first glance, the proposal might as well have been in a different language. However, once I started actually reading through it, I was immediately taken back to a MAL conference. This proposal was so similar to one of the hundreds of draft resolutions I had written during my time as a delegate. I was able to understand what this proposal was asking and what this funding would be allocated for because of my experience in MAL. Additionally, I was able to read through this and understand it in a way that I could easily brief my boss on the main points – similarly to what one would do during authors’ rights during debate in their committees after introducing their draft resolution. This moment really felt “full circle” for me.

I am 25 years old now, and my time in D.C. has led to many professional highs and – of course – some lows. However, I know that

regardless of what comes next for me, I will be able to tackle it head on with strength, confidence, poise, and in a fabulous outfit – just like those women I watched during my first practice session when I was 18. Model Arab League opens doors for you that you can’t even image until it happens. I owe all of my success thus far to MAL and, more specifically, to Dr. Dunn. He challenged me in a way I had never been challenged before, and he believed in

me when I said that I would never disappoint him again.

This program helps women in college discover who they are during a time in your life when you are constantly wondering “what comes next?” I’ve always been a firm believer in focusing on what you are doing, working hard, being yourself, and what is meant for you will find you. Model Arab League found me, and in turn, I found myself.

Outstanding Award Senior Year of College



Model League and My World

by Chelsea Jaccard Kaufman

I'm often asked, how did I get into my line of work? I never have a good answer; it's complicated, long, and a little confusing. But I know how it began—with Joe Dunn and Model Arab League at Converse College that touched off a wanderlust that I still don't fully understand.

I have been a diplomat for the US Government for the last 11 years. Specifically, I'm a Foreign

Service Officer with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As a diplomat, I create and implement development policy and design and implement development programs that support countries to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people progress beyond assistance. I've lived in Ghana, Uganda, Yemen, DRC, and just moved to Mozambique to begin my next

four-year assignment. No one in my family had a passport and the concept of traveling outside of the US was a completely foreign concept to me in high school. So how did I get here?

In high school, I was certain I was going to be a lawyer because I loved to argue and I was on my high school law team. When I toured Converse, which I did merely as a favor by accompany-

Peace Corps: Teaching at Savelugu School for the Deaf



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ing my two friends who were seriously considering the women's college, I heard about an award-winning debate team and it piqued my interest. When Converse offered a good aid package, plus debate, plus the beautiful campus that was JUST far enough away from East Tennessee, I decided to risk the women's college thing and give it a try. I was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I'm forever grateful to have had four years of seeing women lead and becoming a leader myself. I doubt that there was another place that better could have developed the skills that have allowed me to succeed in life, both personal and professional.

In my first semester in Fall 1999, I opted for my freshman honors seminar in art rather than Dr. Dunn's honors politics course (I later graduated with a double major in art and politics). In those days, Dunn personally filled the limited number of freshmen slots on the MAL delegation primarily from his freshman honors course, so I wasn't selected for the team. That was his loss and I really loved that art book-making class! The next year, the program began open tryouts.

I made the team in my sophomore year and I watched in awe the upper-class women that could shrink an opponent with a few whips



Iraqi Kurdistan countryside

of verbal oration. I wanted to be them. I watched them, I modeled after them, I became them. What I find so special about MAL is that WE do this. A group of women from all over the college and the country dedicate ungodly hours of research, practice, and performance to win competitions. But it isn't about winning as much as about performance. We are awed by the legacy that came before us, we are inspired by what we see around us, and we are driven by what Dr. Dunn has built. How could we be the ones to taint it? We also have to train those who will follow us to maintain the traditions. The challenge is before us and we rise to the occasion. There is magic present, but it's a magic that is created and re-created annually with the amazing group of

women that participate every year.

Model League exposed me to the international world. It showed me there is so much more out there than the high school law team in Knoxville, Tennessee. At Converse, I used to wake up and read Lebanese newspapers before starting my day... what college kid in upstate South Carolina does that? Model programs also introduced me to the world. Between my junior and senior year, I went to Morocco to learn Arabic. I lived with a very poor family and it was hard. Arabic was/is hard, living away from home was hard, surrounded by poverty was hard. But I did it. And when I returned to campus I wanted to find a way to do it again. Morocco was beautiful. I loved exploring

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Uganda with Richard Kaufman (husband) on safari



Zongo Falls in the Democrat Republic of the Congo

and learning about new places. So when I graduated, I joined the Peace Corps and lived in Northern Ghana for two years, teaching art to deaf children (the only time I've employed my art degree!). I again lived at the level of the lo-

cals, seeing the reality of life for so many around the world and coming to terms with how it was so different from my experience growing up. While on a bus one day, a fellow volunteer looked me in the eyes and said "you're a lif-

er". I had no idea what she meant because I was super burned-out at the time and ready for something different. However, after a year at home, I started grad school at American University in DC, studying International Peace and Conflict Resolution with a focus on the Middle East. I planned to get back overseas and make a difference. I continued studying Arabic (*mashallah*, why?), and when I graduated I got a job in Northern Iraq directing a small consulting firm that worked to professionalize the Kurdistan Regional Government. In MAL I wrote resolutions about the Middle East; in this job I was implementing the very things in those resolutions. I played tennis with government ministers; I dined at famous politicians' houses. I was no longer modeling the Arab League; I was a part of it.

When I returned from Iraq, I applied to USAID thinking how cool it would be to be in the "grown-up Peace Corps". I didn't quite know what the job meant, but I applied anyway. For the last 11 years, I've been a Program Officer with USAID, which means a lot of things from managing budgets of millions of dollars, to designing new development programs, to enhancing organizational learning that improves program success; but the bottom line is that I keep people and offices running

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and maintaining the organization that allows our Agency to do our work of lifting people out of poverty, saving lives, and supporting democracy around the world. My first assignment was Uganda, and since that is an English-speaking country, they allowed me to finish learning Arabic at the language school for diplomats. So I spent five months perfecting my Modern Standard Arabic, something I've rarely ever used. Yes, I worked in Yemen... but everyone in the Embassy spoke English and we weren't allowed to go anywhere.

Nevertheless, I am so glad I pushed to complete the language program because I met my husband in the Arabic language classes. Yet another thing I can thank Converse for because if I hadn't started learning Arabic as an undergrad, why would I have ever learned Arabic before going to Uganda? I've since learned French and Portuguese for my work with USAID, which has almost completely overwritten the Arabic in my brain. But I'm still forever grateful for the language and what it taught me about myself and how it helped create my family.

Model League also taught me a few things about myself. I learned that when I set my mind to something and I put in the work and effort, I

am capable of achieving amazing things. One of my art professors provided me the Goethe quote (not an exact translation): "Be bold, be brilliant, and powerful forces will come to your aid." I continue to live my life by this quote as I pursue things that many others would think are beyond reach. As I keep moving forward assuming that whatever the final goal I have in mind is, everything else will fall in line (or powerful forces come

to my aid). Being a diplomat is a full lifestyle that has permitted me to see Armenia to Zanzibar and much between. It has allowed me to become a change-maker and facilitate change around the world. I am eternally grateful to the program that opened the door to the wider world and the professor that showed us what we were all capable of becoming. Model programs has changed lives for decades and the world has benefitted.

Recent Family Photo



MAL Took Me Beyond the Seas

by Chelsey Jeffers Boggs

I agreed to go to a scholar's recruitment day at Converse College in 2006 to placate my parents. I believed there was no way I would willingly attend an all-women's institution. That changed the moment I walked into Dr. Joe Dunn's office. In many ways it looked exactly as I had always pictured a professor's office would. There was a handsome desk and chair; degrees, awards, and plaques lined the walls; and numerous books could be seen covering almost every free surface. But, unusually, a line of gavels had been displayed with great reverence against the back wall. I recall proudly announcing that I had won quite a few such gavels myself. And with every ounce of misplaced arrogance accumulated in my eighteen years of life, I also informed him that I had no intention of coming to Converse. I was going to a place good enough to get me into one of the top graduate or law schools in the country. An amused and a bit annoyed Dr. Dunn smiled wryly, rattled off a number of Ivy League and other top institutions (including Georgetown University), and said, "I've sent students to all of these. Is that good enough for you?"

To the best of my memory, I have always excelled at public speak-

ing. I have refined the skill over the years, but it is one of the few qualities I possess that I consider truly inherent. I won numerous awards from primary through high school for my acumen in debate and ability to perform on stage. Indeed, I thought myself to be quite the orator. When Dr. Dunn explained that he led one of the best debate teams in the nation, comprised entirely of women from a small college in South Carolina, who were the people who had gone to the prestigious institutions he mentioned earlier, I felt the challenge to gain entrance to this elite group, this Model Arab League, and become one of the most legendary competitors to pass through Converse's doors. It has been 15 years and I still cringe at the audacity of my arrogance, but I'm also intensely grateful to my teenage persona for following through and accepting Converse's admissions offer. That day, my life started to change forever.

While the primary focus of this article will center on my experiences with the Model Programs, I would be remiss if I did not mention Converse's overall contribution to my personal and professional development. During my years at Converse, I was transformed from a girl overly eager

to prove herself into a thoughtful young woman engaged in world politics and dedicated to advocating for progressive change. This transformation did not come easily and was the direct result of an almost agapeic dedication on the part of the college's history and politics department as well as my other mentors on campus. These were men and women of quality, and it was my great fortune that they saw small shimmers of potential within me that they could fuel and mold into a person of worth. During my time at Converse, they provided me a wealth of information, and then gave me the tools to harness, organize, and interpret this knowledge. They took blunt potential and molded it into something sharp and polished, into someone who not only could speak well but could express original ideas of value. I will forever be grateful to these professors, and I still feel immensely honored that they felt me to be worth their time.

Now...back to Model League. My participation in the Model League program was challenging. Dr. Dunn was ever present to provide us with his extensive academic and personal knowledge, as well as the value of perspective that can only be earned



Chelsey in Bahrain

through time and experience, but he recognized how important it was that women learn how to excel from other women. These particular women were competitive, each the star of their hometowns or countries (several were inter-

national students of incredible abilities), and they did not tolerate mediocrity. I resented what initially I felt to be an unnecessary need to “break” and mold me, but that I later realized was their way of preparing me for life after Con-

verse. Each team member had been born to a world dominated by men. They already knew what I had yet to learn, that it was imperative to thoroughly understand the rules of the game so that we could utilize this knowledge to ef-

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fectively change them. The wisdom of our team's senior members had been passed down by the generations of women that came before, each new team fine tuning and honing these skills to adjust to the changing world around them. They were not trying to break me -- other than my inflated ego; they were giving me the tools I would need to break through.

My participation in the Model Arab League program took me around the country and beyond. It sparked within me a sincere interest in global affairs, and through Converse's generous travel programs, I was able to spend a summer in Yemen. It was an incredible experience that would lead to my first job after school with the National Council on U.S.-Arab

Relations (NCUSAR). NCUSAR is the organization that runs the Model Arab League program and I was offered a position as a Special Projects Assistant in large part due to my participation in the mock Arab Court of Justice as a part of the MAL program. I spent a little over two years with NCUSAR, and was able to travel the country and the Middle East. We provided

JAG LT Boggs



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briefings to members on the Hill educating them about Middle East policy and culture, spoke to students about the region, facilitated trips for members of CENTCOM and the military academies to the Middle East, and hosted a myriad of other events across the country. I met Helen Thomas, Tony Blair, Prince Turki Al Faisal and countless others. The experience completely changed my life, and I am grateful for it every day.

While working at NCUSAR I applied to law school and was fortunate enough to be accepted into Georgetown University Law Center where I focused on national security law and criminal justice. It was during law school that I began to truly understand the concept of service, of giving back to others. Through my travels I had seen firsthand the amount of suffering and misunderstanding in this world and I was determined to use my newfound skills to help alleviate this suffering. I eventually decided to apply to the Navy Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corp in honor of my grandfather's service. I wanted to help young sailors in need and to bring a different perspective to operations. I was fortunate enough to be accepted and it has been quite the whirlwind ever sense.

My first duty station was Japan, where I was provided legal as-

sistance and defense services to sailors on shore, worked briefly in trial, and went to sea on board the USS BONHOMME RICHARD and USS GEORGE WASHINGTON. I then became JAG for the Navy's fighting construction force, the Seabees, before traveling to Bahrain to be a defense attorney. It has been my great honor to serve those who serve - to be the voice for people who fight so that others may have a voice.

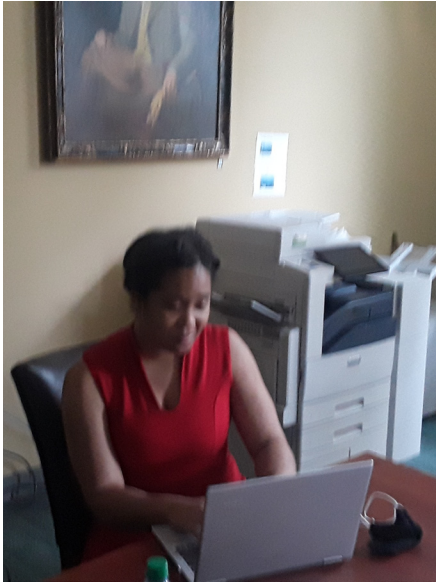
Sometimes I can hardly believe it all started with my disdainful visiting a small school in upstate South Carolina. I'd like to think I've grown so much from that young woman that had such a narrow understanding of reality, and I am grateful each day for the professors and young women who helped me to learn and develop. The world is what you make of it, and Converse was an excellent place to start exploring.

Onboard a Navy carrier helicopter



MAL in the Time of Covid

by Dr. Joe P. Dunn



Secretary General Kennedy Anderson runs SERMAL

With apologies to Gabriel García Márquez, many times during the

year I have bastardized the title of his classic novel, “Love in the Time of Cholera” to the title of this piece. In my 35 years in MAL, this has been the toughest one. Although our institution managed to be in-seat and Hy-Flex for the entire academic year, nothing was normal. All our competitions in both our programs—Model Arab League and International Model NATO—were virtual. We ran two of those from our location. Everything was stressful. A few of our delegation contracted the virus with a couple quite ill for an extended period of time. Many of our members were in and out of

quarantine from exposure from classmates, athletic teammates, family, etc., some multiple times. Students had more than full plates as they navigated courses shifting back and forth from online or in various other combinations. Zoom fatigue is real and all of us have had it.

The conferences in Washington, including Embassy visits, seeing friends from previous years, visiting the charms of the city, socializing, and all the rest are the joys of the Model. Even the long bus rides to and from DC and the crowding together four to a room



Chief Justice Emily Panhorst at NUMAL ACJ (on right)

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in the hotel are part of the bonding experience of a delegation. Over the years the lore of the bus rides and the tales of four women navigating the tight space in a small hotel room all trying to get ready each day to present themselves professionally in dress and appearance are the things that are remembered by veterans years later and the stories told at alumnae reunion weekends decades beyond. Online debate can only replicate a portion of that holistic experience. Our Sunday evening practice sessions are for many of our delegates a highlight of the week. But practices on zoom lacked the personal interaction and camaraderie. They became just one more pleasure sacrificed to more hours on zoom. Missing all the positive aspects of the Model experience kept our delegation in a continual funk.

Individuals become a member of our delegation through an intense competitive process. Normally we have a large number of individuals tryout for slots. We usually take on 8-12 new, mostly freshmen, members each year. This year only a handful of individuals tried out. We took four and two of them left the delegation soon afterwards. For freshmen, the stress of the Covid campus was too much to handle so they opted out of all kinds of things. We witnessed this across the board at the



Outstanding Award winning partners in NUMAL Special Council

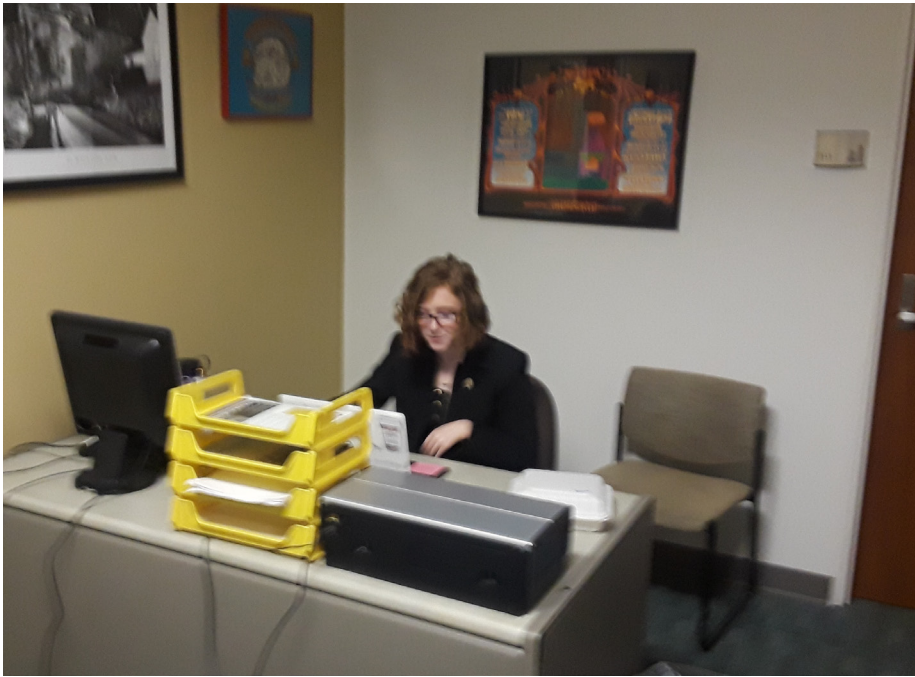
college, not just in Model. It will take a major effort to build back to our normative strength. With less than a thousand students, our institution is one of the smaller in the MAL program and we normally have one of the largest delegations, averaging more than 30 annually on the team.

We also are experiencing a cultural change on the delegation and at the institution. We changed the name to Converse University in Summer 2021, but more importantly, the 138 year old women's college is now coed at the undergraduate level; the graduate school has been coed from its

Outstanding Award winning partners in NUMAL Political Council



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Award-winner Erin Kitchenka in NUMAL Palestinian Committee

beginning some sixty years ago. Personally, I have spent 44 years dedicated to women's leadership, and I am very proud of the achievements in Model and other endeavors that we have accomplished. Introducing males into our brand for the first time this year was not an easy acceptance for me. Fortunately, our first male was well known to us as he came from a local community college whose team trained with us. He had chosen Converse specifically because of MAL. And he proved to be an award-winning delegate.



Courtney Dziewoir, Chair of NUMAL HOS

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Outstanding Award-winning partners in NUMAL Social Council

For all the challenges of the virtual model this year, our team continued to excel. At the Southeast Regional Model (SERMAL), run March 12-14 from the Converse campus, Converse filled the entire Secretariat, including all eight chairs. Kennedy Anderson, who helped the National Council design the virtual models as well as ran the International Model NATO with 29 delegations across ten time zones from Vancouver, Canada to the Czech Republic, served as Secretary General. Although several local schools, including most of the high schools who participate, opted out this year, the virtual format allowed three powerhouse delegations from across the country to join SER-

MAL this year. These included Northeastern University, University of Massachusetts-Lowell, and Brigham Young University. The Converse Morocco delegation finished first and the Converse Oman delegation finished second, just ahead of the three schools mentioned above. Madison Jerabek, a seasoned four-year debater, won the best chair award in her first time with the gavel. Sophomore Megan Booty, in her first time as chair, was the runner up—cited as the Distinguished Chair.

At the National University Model, held March 26-29, Converse (Morocco) shared the Outstanding Delegation Award with traditional rival Northeastern University

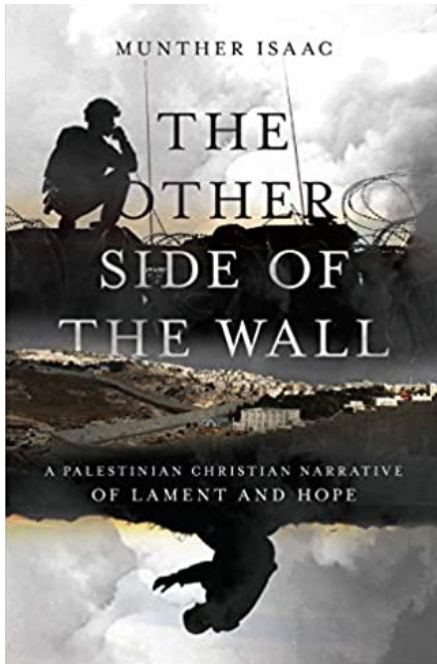
(Tunisia). Brigham Young University (Palestine) and new NUMAL participant the University of Wyoming (Egypt) were the two Distinguished Delegations. Kennedy Anderson served as Assistant Secretary General and Converse held four chair positions. Madison Jerabek was asked to switch from a debater to chair at the last minute, and she repeated her best chair citation as she had done at SERMAL.

MAL will survive the Covid crisis but we cannot wait to return to normal practices. Despite continued success, it would be an understatement to remark that it was a very hard year.

LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Munther Isaac, The Other Side of the Wall: A Palestinian Narrative of Lament and Hope

Reviewed by Dr. Joe P. Dunn, Converse University



Large and strong Christian communities existed in the Levant—in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine fifty years ago and to a smaller scale within the last two decades. Today, the number of Christians has fallen to small single-digit percentages in these countries. The plight of Christians is a sad and heroic saga as brave individuals maintain a vigil to keep the faith alive in its place of origin in the midst of hostile environments.

Nowhere is the story more poignant than in Palestine. Munther Isaac, the pastor of Christmas Evangelical Lutheran Church and

dean of Bethlehem Bible College, located in the birthplace of Jesus, provides a powerful perspective of Christians hidden behind the Israeli Wall that separates them from their fellow individuals in the faith. He captures the indignity, injustice, and frustration of the Palestine people caught in an unjust environment. But as he makes clear the problem is not merely Israeli policies, but the larger betrayal is by so-called Christian Zionist evangelicals. This book is a searing indictment of those whose misreading of Scripture, false eschatology, and narrow-minded perspectives undermine their Christian brethren. And Isaac sweeps aside the facile and pathetic attempts to dismiss the Palestinians' claim as descendants of the Canaanites or not within the Abrahamic lineage to delegitimize their original standing in the land.

Isaac, who works for interfaith dialogue between Christians, Jews, and Muslims through his directorship of the Christ at the Checkpoint and other forums, strives for a just peace in which all parties live together in respect and dignity. His interpretation of the long Biblical canard of the conflicting claims

to the land is creative and persuasive. And his definition of what is true Christianity as opposed to the faux variety of many evangelicals is inspiring. His condemnation of politicians such as Donald Trump and Netanyahu for their posturing is damning.

Isaac is better in Christian-Jewish relations than in dealing with the challenges of fundamentalist Muslims as is the book for which it is the updated version, Elias Chacour's classic *Blood Brothers*. The subtitle of a narrative of lament and hope is appropriate although Isaac's depicting of the lament is much stronger than his overly optimistic hope. Isaac envisions a future of a unitary state where all faiths walk hand in hand in full justice is not a political reality in any foreseeable future. While the two-state solution is probably already dead, and every passing year further demonstrates this, the Apartheid one-state vision of the present leadership of Israel is the likely reality.

This is a book which should be read as both a religious and a political treatise.