

Ahmed Elghazaly - 15:03

Interviewer - 0:00

In what churches or other religious organizations have you participated?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 0:05

I have participated in ICJC, otherwise known as Islamic Center of Johnson County.

Interviewer - 0:12

Where is it located? In Kansas City or Overland Park?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 0:19

It is located in Overland Park, 151st and Antioch.

Interviewer - 0:23

What dates were you active?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 0:26

I was active since second grade until present day.

Interviewer - 0:31

Can you tell us anything about the founding and early days of the organization?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 0:47

I believe the early days were actually when I moved here to Kansas, which was around second grade, it was around that time. Then we expanded the masjid a few years ago.

Interviewer - 1:02

How did you guys expand the masjid?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 1:04

There was a smaller masjid, and they invested a lot of money. So during Ramadan, the last few days, they would always do fundraisers to expand the masjid, and make it more influential, more community based.

Interviewer - 1:26

Why were people attracted to the religious body, or to the masjid?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 1:32

I believe it was very attractive because it is located in a nice place. Also, that's where a lot of the Muslims go and pray daily, so that's where they ended up going.

Interviewer - 1:44

How did you come to be involved in it?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 1:47

I became involved by just going to the masjid in the beginning, and by going there I was eventually involved.

Interviewer - 1:59

Were you raised by parents who were members of the masjid?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 2:03

Yeah, I would say so.

Interviewer - 2:06

Did books or other people influence you in your religious choice?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 2:13

I would say so. The Quran is definitely a very big influence, and also listening to a bunch of speeches on YouTube. Just to learn more about the religion caused me to want to participate more in it.

Interviewer - 2:41

What were the daily experiences in the religious body like?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 2:45

Daily expenses include going to the masjid to go and pray. Usually Muslims pray five times a day, so that was always the goal. Other experiences could include going to the masjid to read some Quran. Also, during Ramadan, people always go for sehur and iftar, and they would do events like that.

Interviewer - 3:14

How did your membership and participation affect your own private life outside the religious group?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 3:22

I believe my membership and participation made me who I am, made me a better Muslim I would say, a better person. It would make me in my daily life want to portray goodness and stay away from that which is bad.

Interviewer - 3:42

Has being a member changed you?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 3:44

Yeah, I would say so.

Interviewer - 3:48

Did you ever leave the group?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 3:51

No, never.

Interviewer - 3:53

What kind of practices were you involved in the group?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 3:56

Like I said earlier, we always pray together, read Quran. We'd also, during Ramadan again, meet up and eat together. Also, we used to play basketball, and a lot of sports there too.

Interviewer - 4:12

How did the people relate to each other?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 4:16

Obviously everybody there is Muslim, so that's one was people related. Also there was people in similar ages, so people would like to go there not only for religious, but just to interact with people who were similar minded.

Interviewer - 4:32

How did members of the religious group interact with other members of the general public?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 4:40

They interact like people. They would go out to the general public and talk, do good things to general people.

Interviewer - 4:51

Did food figure in your religious life? Were there any potlucks?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 5:01

Yeah, like sehur and iftar, every once in a while they would hold events there just so they can get the community together.

Interviewer - 5:10

What were the economic arrangements of the groups? How was money raised?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 5:21

Money was raised primarily during Ramadan at the last few days, but also there was always a box. So many times when people are just going to the masjid, they would put a little bit of money here and there.

Interviewer - 5:39

Who made the spending decisions?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 5:41

I believe it was somebody on the board. I can't remember the exact name of the brother, but he's a very good brother.

Interviewer - 5:51

Tell us more about how the leadership is structured in the mosque.

Ahmed Elghazaly - 6:04

Leadership, they always hosts things where everybody gets to put in their input. Eventually, I think, the leaders all get together and make the final decisions.

Interviewer - 6:27

What kind of issues involving person interactions were present? Did you have any issues with the religious group?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 6:37

No, everybody has been nice, everybody's good.

Interviewer - 6:41

Did the group own real estate? Did they have their own building?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 6:53

Yeah, they have their own building. They have two buildings actually now, and a lot of land.

Interviewer - 6:53

How were such holding paid for? Do you know how they were paid for?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 7:00

Yeah, just like I said, during the Ramadan.

Interviewer - 7:06

Did the group own any vehicles like school buses or vans?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 7:11

No, no school busses or vans.

Interviewer - 7:14

How were new members recruited?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 7:17

People just joined.

Interviewer - 7:20

So there was no process of joining?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 7:24

No, everybody's welcome to join.

Interviewer - 7:27

Were there rules or agreements regarding dress or other matters of style?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 7:34

It's best if people wore pants and clothes that were humble.

Interviewer - 7:42

What were relations with the surrounding culture like, the surroundings of the mosque?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 7:49

The relations were pretty good. The church next to us, we have good relationship with them.

The library in front of us, good relationships with them, and with the neighbors also. I would say good relationships.

Interviewer - 8:1

Was there a good parking place?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 8:4

At first the parking was not good. Sometimes we would have to park in the church nearby or at the library, but eventually, now, the parking is a lot better as they have expanded the masjid.

Interviewer - 8:17

What kind of relations did the group have with other religious organization?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 8:22

They had good relationships. I don't know the whole details.

Interviewer - 8:28

What were there were people like? Who were unforgettable figures or characters, people you met in the mosque that you can't forget?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 8:41

Many people such as the sheikh, all the sheikh that have been there, they're all really really nice people. Other unforgettable characters are people in the boards, like the guy with the mustache.

There are some brothers that are very tall. And a lot of people my age too. They're all some of my really good friends. That's actually where I met a lot of my friends too; a lot of the teachers there because they'd always organize Sunday schools and Summer schools and that sort of nature. So a lot of the times I met some of these teachers that I don't think I'll ever forget.

Interviewer - 9:25

How are children handle?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 9:27

Children were handle pretty good.

Interviewer - 9:33

Is there an educational program for children?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 9:35

Yeah, just like I said, children were given Sunday schools, were given Summer schools, also recently, they started Oasis program. There was also a youth group so that they actually had that for many years, and they changed the name to Oasis program. So now the youth are more and more involved as the time has gone.

Interviewer - 10:00

Is there any other activity for children?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 10:05

Children have a lot of activities. I think they also every once in a while they go and play outside together. Also another thing is that they have Quran classes where they go and learn about the Quran and stuff like that.

Interviewer - 10:19

Was there any education programs for adults?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 10:21

For adults, yeah.

Interviewer - 10:24

Other than like regular worship service?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 10:29

Yeah. So there was one where they used to always after the sunrise prayer, fajr prayer, they always go and they would learn how to make tajweed, and how to read the Quran. Also I believe it was usually after isha prayer and they would always also do a speech, and you can leave if you wanted, you can stay and learn something. Every once in a while they would bring people in, to do speeches, and they would learn from that too.

Interviewer - 11:03

What kinds of community service activities were undertaken?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 11:07

Oh, there was many. One time they went over to Kansas City and helped with, I forgot, Care I think was their organization, where you go to Kansas City and feed the homeless people. So we got a bunch of water and food and gave it to people there. And there was many other things.

Interviewer - 11:34

In Kansas City?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 11:36

Yeah, I cannot name you all the details.

Interviewer - 11:40

Is there any treatment programs for drug or alcohol abuse?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 11:46

I do not think so, no.

Interviewer - 11:50

Were there special interest groups, such as groups for singles or seniors?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 11:57

Not really, no.

Interviewer - 11:59

But there are common interest groups, right? You said there are like people play basketball?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 12:03

Yeah, there is. Actually, there are special interest groups. Sometimes, they would make halaqas for women, they would make stuff like that, so just the women would go and meet. Also, the youth group, they would do it just for the youth.

Interviewer - 12:29

What kinds of norms and expectations were there for sexual behavior?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 12:34

The norms are you don't really have those relationships. You're not really expected to do anything sexual inside the mosque.

Interviewer - 12:57

So are there any penalties for violating those rules?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 13:01

No, there's no penalties really that people can enforce upon you. I don't think so.

Interviewer - 13:10

Did you ever think about leaving?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 13:11

No, not really.

Interviewer - 13:14

Why?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 13:16

It's a really good place to be. You get to learn a lot, you get to follow your beliefs.

Interviewer - 13:26

How do you see the future of the group over the long haul?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 13:30

The future of the group I think is going to be very bright. It's been expanding a lot, and I think it's not going to stop anytime soon. May God bless them.

Interviewer - 13:40

Did it ever close?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 13:41

No.

Interviewer - 13:45

What were the best and worst things you remember about their experience?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 13:51

I think everything about it is good. I don't have any worse things I can say really. Maybe the worst thing is like sometimes their food. If you come late you don't always get the food, but that's something that very silly actually. So the benefits far outweigh the cons. Versus you get to worship, you get to meet people, you get to have fun activities with your friends, you get so many good things.

Interviewer - 14:26

Do you want to add anything else? Do you want to tell us about anything else?



Ahmed Elghazaly - 14:32

I would just want to say it's a beautiful place to be. I think that you guys should visit if you ever have the chance. Meet the people there and learn about Islam and about the Quran.

Interviewer - 14:50

Is there anyone else you think I should interview?

Ahmed Elghazaly - 14:54

It would be awesome if you could interview with the sheikh, Sheikh Dahee. He is a really nice guy.

Interviewer - 15:01

All right, thank you so much.