

Dr. Omar Khalidi (1953-2010) Librarian for Aga Khan Program @ MIT

A glimpse of his life: <http://bit.ly/fsN7Wn>

🕒 **A speech given by his daughter, Alia, at the MIT memorial service yesterday in his honor (Friday, Dec. 3, 2010)** 🕒



"People like us should and can act as bridges between different cultures." **Omar Khalidi**
image and quote courtesy <http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/CharminarConnection/message/363>
<http://www.csmonitor.com/specials/oneyearlater/images/khalidi.jpg>

On behalf of my family, I want to thank you all for coming here today. Thank you for your emails, phone calls, and all the other ways that you've shown that you care for my father and our family.

Being a part of the MIT community meant so much to my father. For 27 years, starting even before I was born, he devoted his life to academia and this intellectual community. He loved it so much that he wanted me to attend MIT for undergrad, and when I chose to attend Wellesley College instead, he would introduce it as "MIT's sister institution, Wellesley."

To put it simply, my father is my hero. Not only was he a wonderful father, husband, son, and brother, but he was an author, librarian, advisor, activist, organizer, and public speaker. For the longest time I never knew how to answer those who asked me what his occupation was because he was involved in so many projects and played so many different roles.

My father was everything I aspire to be. He was a great communicator. He could tell a story with just the right words and in just the right way. Every story had a silver lining or a humorous punch line. Though I was somewhat shy growing up, I never feared public speaking because I saw his great oratory skills week after week in one form or another.

He loved academia and being an intellectual. I always made fun of his corduroy jackets with the elbow patches because they gave the clearest indication that he was a liberal academic. One of the things I will miss most about our relationship is his perspective on world events and current affairs. Much of my

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understanding of world history came from long car rides with him where we would discuss anything from the history of the modern Middle East to the latest developments in American foreign policy. My friends know that I am obsessed with politics and I know that comes from him.

He loved connecting people. My father was the ultimate social networker. He might have joined Facebook at some point, but he definitely did not need it. When I interned in DC one summer, I remember receiving several invitations from his friends after he had notified them that I would be there. At one point my friends thought I was spending more time with his friends than with them. Even in college when I studied abroad in Morocco, he managed to find someone he had met once upon a time to connect with me upon my arrival. It didn't matter what corner of the world you went to, there was always someone my father knew there.

He loved traveling. My father loved discovering different cultures and different people. Whether it was to Germany or Afghanistan, or to visit his family in Kansas, my father loved meeting with various people and understanding firsthand the diversity our world has to offer.

He loved books. While most people came back from their travels abroad with suitcases filled with souvenirs, his were filled with interesting books he had found along his way. Often when we would check our suitcases at the airport ticket counter, they were 100 pounds over the limit because the books were so heavy. He and my mother both instilled in me a love of reading and the value that one can bring to the world through writing.

He taught me to be independent. Though I am sure he preferred that I stay at home after college, he encouraged me to follow my dreams to DC and learn to live on my own there. He would often ask me to do several things on my own, recognizing that one day he wouldn't be there to do things for me. It is partly because of this training that I know that we will be able to move on without him.

He taught me about the importance of family. He always showed me and my mother that we were the most important people in his life. He was ready to put aside whatever he was doing to help us or allay our fears. Whether it was editing my school papers or figuring out my life goals, he was always there for us. His five brothers and four sisters, most of whom were with us over the past few days, remember him as a unique individual.

He was also a wonderful son. He always treated my mother's parents as if they were his own, with the utmost respect and care. Even years after his parents passed, he devoted his life to them. He would visit India often, and the first thing he did upon reaching was visit his parents' graves. He always spoke about how important it was for him to care for his own mother. The first thing you see when you enter our home is a picture of my grandfather with the words, "My father, my hero." He spent years publishing my grandfather's works and maintaining his legacy.

My father's model of devotion to his parents is what keeps me strong through this difficult time. As many of you know personally, and will hear from others today, my father contributed so much to this world. I hope that you will join me in helping to keep his legacy alive. 🕒