



Archives and Special Collections Department,  
American University of Beirut  
Beirut, Lebanon  
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## **Ras Beirut Oral History Collection, 2013-2014**

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the University Libraries, AUB  
Prepared by Dalya Nouh

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## Descriptive Summary

**Call No. :** OH: 301

**Library Catalog ID:** [b22095238](#)

**Record Creator:** American University of Beirut Neighborhood Initiative interviews conducted by Dr. Maria Bashshur Abunnasr.

**Collection Title:** Ras Beirut Oral History Collection, 2013-2014.

**Collection Dates:** 2013-2014

**Physical Description:** 63 interviews

**Language(s):** English and Arabic

## Administrative Information

**Source:** The Neighborhood Initiative; Dr. Maria Bashshur Abunnasr.

**Access Restrictions:** The collection can be used within the premises of the Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Memorial Library, American University of Beirut.

**Preferred Citation:** Ras Beirut Oral History Collection, 2013-2014, OH: 301, name of interviewee, American University of Beirut/Library Archives

## Scope and Content

Dr. Abunnasr interviewed a group of Ras Beirutis, from different educational backgrounds and social statuses all known as the 'original' families of Ras Beirut. Some of the interviewees descend from families with historical connections to AUB; others are from significant national or ethnic groups; others are prominent or modest businessmen, professionals, and cultural leaders; all are longtime Ras Beirut residents along with some iconic neighbors. Open-ended interviews were conducted by Dr. Maria Abunnasr supported by Dr. Cynthia Minty, and Diana Richani, in the summer of 2014. The participants list includes 63 men and women over the age of seventy. Individuals of this age group would have entered adulthood before the Lebanese Civil War, and lived in Ras Beirut during its heyday. These interviews were compiled into a book to be published by AUB Press, "*The Ras Beirut Oral History Project: We are in this Together*".

<https://www.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Pages/rasbeirutoral.aspx>

The collection is important for researcher interested in sociology, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, urbanism, and socio-economic and cultural interaction.

## Arrangement

The Collection is arranged in four series:

- Series I:** AUB Alumni
- Series II:** AUB Faculty
- Series III:** AUB Staff
- Series IV:** AUB Neighbors

## **Background Information**

This oral history of Ras Beirut project grew out of one of the many projects sponsored by AUB's Neighborhood Initiative. To many individuals, Ras Beirut possesses a particularly strong sense of multilayered place with a diverse social fabric. The Ras Beirut neighborhood epitomizes what is called "ta'ayush" or coexistence and it is this diversity and spirit of tolerance that is considered special, and somehow different, from other neighborhoods of Beirut, Lebanon, and the region. Drawing on the theoretical framework of memory studies and the practice of oral history, this project documents these claims of Ras Beirut's uniqueness in stories that describe a distant, and in many cases, mourned, past. But far from being an older generation's futile longing for that past, these oral histories demonstrate how individuals and families created this special place. Furthermore, because Ras Beirut has undergone so much change since the end of the Lebanese Civil War, rendering some parts of Ras Beirut unrecognizable to its own inhabitants, it is all the more urgent to document the memory and testimony of Ras Beirut's eldest generation and to provide a multi-vocal record of Ras Beirut's past.

The interviewees were selected based on their religious and ethnic backgrounds and would include notable and less known members of the community. Moreover, interviewees included individuals selected from the 'original' families of Ras Beirut; members of families with historical connections to AUB; prominent business people, professionals, and cultural leaders; small business owners; other longtime residents; and others who were iconic neighbors of AUB (such as Ibrahim Takkoush and Abu Muhammad, the shoe shine man opposite the Main Gate of AUB).

The interview process began in November 2013 and continued through to August 2014. Dr. Maria Bashshur Abunnasr, a historian affiliated with AUB's Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES), conducted the 63 interviews. The interviews were conducted using the open-ended interview technique particular to life histories, yet they followed a rough sequence of questions under broad headings such as: personal/family history; life pathways (school, work, leisure); urban geography (landmarks, boundaries): and social geography (mixed communities). About 70% of the interviews were conducted in English and about 30% in Arabic. All interviews were digitally recorded by the interviewers. In 2014, the interviews were transcribed with the help of research assistants. AUB Press has approved the manuscript documenting this project and the book entitled *The Ras Beirut Oral History Project: We are in this Together* is slated for publication in late 2018. The digital recordings, the consent forms, and the transcripts were donated by the Neighborhood Initiative to AUB's Jafet Library's Department of Archives and Special Collections to become part of the permanent record of life in Ras Beirut for the purpose of research.

## Subject Headings

Autobiography.

Cities and towns -- Growth -- History.

Cultural pluralism -- Lebanon.

Exceptionalism -- Lebanon -- Ras Beirut.

American University of Beirut -- Buildings.

Hamra (Beirut, Lebanon).

Memory -- Social aspects -- Lebanon -- Ras Beirut.

Oral History – Middle East.

Sociolinguistics -- Lebanon -- Beirut.

Urban landscape architecture -- Lebanon -- Ras Beirut -- History -- 19th century.

Urbanization -- Lebanon -- Beirut.

الترجمة الذاتية.  
الجامعة الاميركية في بيروت -- الابنية.  
رأس بيروت (لبنان) -- تاريخ.  
الحمرا (بيروت، لبنان).  
التحضر -- لبنان -- بيروت.

## Container List

### Series I: AUB Alumni

- **Aniseh Rawda Najjar**, BA 1936,  
March 18, 2014 [1h. 44min.]
- **Antoine Maamari**,  
February 20; March 4, 2014 [1h. 39min.]
- **Emily Abi Rashid Nasrallah**, BA 1958,  
January 23, 2014 [62 min.]
- **Fadlo Bulus al-Khauil**, B.B.A. 1947,  
May 21, 2014 [2h. 2min.]
- **Khaled Daouk**, BA 1966,  
June 16, 2014 [1h. 14min.]
- **Khalil Nassar**, BS 1966,  
May 27, 2014 [1h. 39min.]
- **Leila Shahin Da Cruz**, BA 1947,  
December 5, 2013 [1h. 47min.]; January 16 [1h. 38min.], February 6, 2014 [1h. 16min.]
- **Najwa Shahin Haffar**, BA 1951,  
November 8, 2013 [2h. 20min.]
- **Malak Hussein Abdul-Rahman**, BA 1950,  
December 12, 2013 [54 min.]; January 17, 2014 [63 min.]
- **Sabbah al-Haj**, BS 1957, MS 1961,  
February 27, 2014 [1h. 21 min.]
- **Samia Hamadeh Musfy**,

May 5, 2014 [1h. 36min.]

## Series II: AUB Faculty

- **Adele Hamdan Takkieddine**, BA 1953; MA 1959; Instructor in Education 1957-60; Research Assistant in Medicine 1962-65; Ad Hoc Lecturer in Psychology in the school of Nursing 1968-70.  
March 5, 2014 [2h.]
- **Antoine Zahlan**, BA 1951, MA 1952; AUB Professor 1952-1976.  
November 6, 2013 [1h. 43min.]
- **Daad Khoury Rebeiz**, Pediatrician and Instructor at the Social Health Center 1960-62.  
April 23, 2014 [1h. 14min.]
- **George Abdallah Rebeiz**, BA 1949; M.D. 1953; Associate Professor of Internal Medicine (Cardiology) 1958-1998.  
April 23, 2014 [1h. 36min.]
- **Gregoire Serof**, Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Architecture and Design 1978-87; 2007-2017.  
January 27; 30; February 11, 2014 [3h. 18min.]
- **Jean-Marie Cook**, Lecturer/Assistant Professor 1966-1999.  
January 22, 2014 [1h. 52min.]
- **Munir Bashshur**, BA 1956, MA1958; AUB Professor 1957-2017  
August 31, 2014 [1h. 49 min.]
- **Nadim Cortas**, MD; Professor/Dean/Vice President 1973-2016  
May 11, 2014 [2h. 6min.]
- **Paul Khlaf**, Professor of Economics 1945-46  
March 19, 2014 [1h. 25min.]
- **Raja Afif Iliya**, BA; AUB Professor/Associate Dean 1954-2015  
January 23, 2013 [1h. 54min.]
- **Rosemary Sayigh**, Lecturer of the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES) 2012-2016.  
November 22, 2013 [53 min.]
- **Shereen Khairallah**, Assistant Professor Civilization Sequence Program 1965-1999  
February 18, 2014 [56 min.]
- **Suhail Boulos**, BA 1946, MD 1950; Associate Clinical Professor 1953-2011  
February 18, 2014 [66 min.]

## Series III: AUB Staff

- **Arminee Choukassizian**, Library Assistant, MA 1966,  
November 8, 2013 [1h. 19min.]; January 15, 2014
- **Asma Fathallah**, Librarian 1978-2003

- January 29, 2014 [2h. 10min.]
- **Leila Freiji**, Librarian 1966-1988  
December 13, 2013 [2h. 17min.]
- **Ziad Yamout**, Director of Physical Plant 1991-2003  
February 28, 2014 [1h 56min.]

#### **Series IV: AUB Neighbors**

- **Abu Khalil Yamout** (Wassim Tabet),  
December 17, 2013 [2h. 26min.]
- **Agnes Somerville Shama'a**,  
February 6, 2014 [1h.]
- **Ahmad al-Ashi and Fatima Zahiri al-Ashi**,  
March 14, 2014 [2h.1min.]
- **Ahmad Bedeir, Abu-Muhammad**, (Abu Taleb),  
June 2, 2014 [56 min.]
- **Amira (Im-Wahib) al-Hichi**,  
March 31, 2014 [64 min.]
- **Bahij Bekhazi**,  
December 19, 2013 [53 min.]
- **Bushra & Ghassan Rawda al-Kadi**,  
April 1, 2014 [1h. 47 min.]
- **David Hirst**,  
March 11, 2014 [1h. 16min.]
- **Fatima Farhan el-Kibbeh**,  
May 22, 2014 [1h. 46min.]
- **Heike Mardinian**,  
June 3, 2014 [3h.]
- **Hilda Nasri Kandalaft Khoury**,  
February 12, 2014 [1h. 13min.]
- **Ibrahim Takkoush**,  
November 24; December 8, 2013 [1h. 51min.]
- **Khadije and Naamet Labban**,  
February 25, 2014 [1h. 40min.]
- **Khadiji and Amira Shatila**,  
March 18, 2014 [2h. 15min.]
- **Madelaine Makinadjian Assilian**,  
February 26, 2014 [67 min.]
- **Mona Massouh Takla**,  
January 31, 2014 [49 min.]
- **Mona Saba Rahhal**,

- January 24, 2014 [2h. 23min.]
- **Nabil & Norma Abi-Chahine,**  
March 12, 2014 [1h.32 min.]
- **Neda Makdisi Maalouf,**  
April 9, 2014 [1h. 22min.]
- **Nuha Zakhem,**  
November 12, 2013 [1h. 39min.]
- **Philip Safar,**  
November 18 [2h.]; December 20, 2013 [43min.]
- **Rahif Tamim,**  
November 13 [2h. 26min.]; December 11, 2013 [1h. 27min.]
- **Richard Johnson,**  
October 7, 2013 [2h. 8min.]
- **Rida Nourreddine Nasser Al-Akel**  
April 24, 2014 [66 min.]
- **Saed Amin Nader,**  
February 13, 2014 [60min.]
- **Saed Ghalayini,**  
January 30, 2014 [1h. 46min.]
- **Samira Gharzuzi Berberi,**  
December 4, 2013 [1h. 12min.]
- **Samual D. Constan,**  
June 8, 2014 [1h 55min.]
- **Sarwad Labban,**  
June 17, 2014 [1h. 23min.]
- **Sharon Lee Labban,**  
May 16, 2014 [1h. 20min.]
- **Tuti Khoury,**  
December 10, 2013 [1h. 32min.]
- **Walid Bouheiry,**  
February 3, 2014 [1h. 12min.]
- **Yoland Duraffourd Buckley,**  
February 21, 2014 [1h. 50min.]
- **Zahra Barraaj Bissat,**  
December 2, 2013 [1h. 23 min.]
- **Zuhair Itani,**  
February 13, 2014 [1h. 12min.]

## Related Material

### AUB – The Neighborhood Initiative

- [Ras Beirut Oral History Project](#)
- [The Oral History and Memory of Ras Beirut: Exceptional Narratives of Co-existence](#)
- [AUB and Ras Beirut in 150 Years of Photographs](#)

### Books

- Abunnasr, M. (2018). *AUB and Ras Beirut in 150 years of photographs*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press. [CA 378.5692:A166a:c.1](#)
- Abunnasr, M. (2018). *46 Streets: AUB's Imprints on the Streets of Beirut*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press.
- Haffar, N. S. (2009). *We once were like that: A memoir*. Seattle: Ameera Publishing. [J 818.995:H138w:c.1](#)
- Haffar, N. S. (2012). *And then ... memoirs continued*. Seattle: Ameera Publishing LLC. [CA 818.995:H138a:c.1](#)
- Kāj, Z. (2015). *Ra's Bayrūt šundūq fī baħr, nār 'alā tallah: Riwāyah*. Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār Nilsun. [J 892.78:K137rA](#)
- Khalaf, S., & Kongstad, P. (1973). *Hamra of Beirut: A case of rapid urbanization*. Leiden: Brill. [J 301.363:K45h:c.1](#)
- Raj, D. (1957). *A sample survey of health and vital statistics (sample design)*. Beirut: American University of Beirut. [CAFAU 614.1:R16s:c.1](#)
- Thing, E., & Cardoso, B. (2015). *Integrating historical maps and photographs in geographic information systems: a case study of Hamra in Beirut*. [CA:F 910.285:T443i](#)
- Zennaro, M., & Københavns Universitet. (2004). *You have to read between the lines: An analysis sectarian discourses in middle-class Ras Beirut, Lebanon*. [Kbh.]: Institut for Antropologi, Københavns Universitet. [CA:F 305.242:Z54y](#)
- أبو جابر، فاروق سعد. (١٩٩٨). *ذكريات في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت*. عمان، الاردن : نادي خريجي الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت (الاردن) [J 378.5692:A11dA:c.1](#)
- ربيز، كمال جرجي. (١٩٨٦). *رزق الله عهديك الايام يا راس بيروت*. بيروت، لبنان: دار المطبوعات المصورة. [J 956.925:R279rA:c.1](#)
- ربيز، كمال جرجي. (١٩٩٦). *يوميات مختار*. بيروت: كمال جرجي ربيز [J 956.925:R279rbA:c.1](#)
- رفاعية، ياسين. (١٩٩٢). *رأس بيروت: رواية*. بيروت: دار المتنبي [J 892.78:R564rA:c.1](#)
- الخوري، سعيد توفيق، عقل، باسل أمين؛ نجم، محمد يوسف. (١٩٩٧). *حسيب صباغ: قصة في سيرة*. بيروت: دار صادر [J 956.94:S114hA:c.1](#)
- شماعة، منير. (٢٠٠٠). *اقلاع وهبوط: سيرة طبيب من رأس بيروت*. بيروت: رياض الرئيس [J 616.3:S528iA:c.1](#)
- فريحة، أنيس. (١٩٨٩). *قبل أن أنسى*. طرابلس، لبنان: جروس برس. [J 928.927:F847q2A:c.1](#)
- مكتبة رأس بيروت في خمسين عاما. (٢٠٠٤). *بيروت: مكتبة بيروت*. [J 381.45:M235mA:c.1](#)
- النويري، حياة لبنان. (٢٠٠٤). *رأس بيروت كما عرفتھا*. بيروت: الشركة العالمية للكتاب [J 892.78:N989rA:c.1](#)



- هانتل-فريزر، كريستينا. (١٩٩٩). شركة اتحاد المقاولين: عائلة من القيم، تراث الآباء في جهود الأبناء. بيروت: شركة اتحاد المقاولين. [J 624.06:H251cA:c.1](#)
- يموت، إبراهيم. (١٩٩٣). الحصاد المر: قصة تفتت قيادة حزب وتماسك عقيدة. بيروت: دار الركن للطباعة والنشر. [J 324.25692:Y19hA:c.1](#)

## DVD

- Hojeij, M. (2006). *Wish you were here*. Beirut: American University of Beirut. [SC DVD:AUB:2006\(03\):A](#); [NBMD DVD-A:26:c.1](#)

## Maps

- [Hamra, Ras Beirut and Verdun mini map. Lebanon: Geoprojects, 2011](#)

## Photos

- [Pictures from Ras Beirut Wellbeing Survey, 2011] [Ph:AUB:2011/10/12\(01\):1-3:89](#)
- [Farewell for the Ras Beirut Bookshop, 2008] [Ph:AUB:2008/12/19\(05\):1-4:85](#)
- [Projection of film Memories of Ras Beirut [graphic]: Wish You Were Here, 2005] [Ph:AUB:2006/01/19\(03\):1-3:81](#)
- [Seminar by Afamia Kaddour on Contesting Relative Deprivation [graphic]: The Ras Beirut Well Being Survey, 2009] [Ph:AUB:2009/10/26\(03\):01:86](#)

## Posters

- Memories of Ras Beirut [graphic]: Wish you were here. [SC Ps:AUB:2006/01/19:13](#)  
[SC Ps:AUB:2005/11/23\(02\):12](#)
- Generating Knowledge: The Ras Beirut well-being survey [SC Ps:AUB:2009/12/17\(01\):16](#)

## Theses

- [Abunnasr, M. \(2013\). \*The making of Ras Beirut: a landscape of memory for narratives of exceptionalism, 1870-1975.\*](#)
- Akl, N. F. (1980). *The effect of student behavior on Ras-Beirut private high school teachers' self-evaluations.* [T:2789](#)
- Al Zoughbi, A. M. (2004). *Oral histories of Ras Beirut: nostalgia, memory and the construction of history.* [T:4476:c.1](#)
- Atweh, M. G. (1949). *Architectural design of a recreational centre in Ras-Beirut with structural design of the balcony and the roof slab.* [EPsn:76](#)
- El Sabsabi, S. G. (2017). *Rethinking urban densification through a sustainable approach in gated-tower districts: the case of Sector 35, Ras Beirut, Lebanon.* [ET:6651](#)
- Katul, W. S. (1951). *Architectural design of a youth club on the beach near Ras Beirut.* [EPsn:108](#)

- Koleilat, S. W. (2013). *Promoting active transportation for school children in dense urban neighborhoods: the case study of Ras-Beirut*. [ET:5801](#)
- Merguerian, A. (1951). *Architectural design of a Y.M.C.A centre & beach in Ras Beirut*. [EPsn:100](#)
- Na'man, H. (1987). *"Media for communication" center, Ras Beirut [electronic resource]*. [EPsn:326](#)
- Rashti, T. H. (1974). *Traffic noise in Ras Beirut area of Beirut-Lebanon*. [ET:2050](#)
- Shiber, J. G. (1961). *A limited rat-flea survey of Ras-Beirut, Lebanon*. [T:388](#)
- Turk, H. G. (1983). *Moral judgment of Ras-Beirut male students in 1972 and 1982*. [T:3081](#)
- Yacoubian, V. S. (1955). *Comparative design and cost estimate of a one-pipe forced circulation hot water heating system vs forced warm air heating system of a residential building in Ras-Beirut*. [EPsn:181](#)
- Zahrudin, K. I. (1985). *Microtectonic analysis: application to the quaternary deposits of Ras Beirut*. [T:3238](#)