

Commencement Speech/GRAD

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We graduate today. It seems hard to believe now, looking back, that all those years passed by so fast. From anatomy to pathophysiology to patient care and duties, we made it through it all. Those late night library vigils and Saturdays spent taking exams were worth it. It got us all here, right now. Let us take a moment to revel in it.

This university, this medical center, has spent 4 years training us to be the physicians of the future. That was both a difficult and dangerous job to do, as patients' lives are on the line. And so, we wore our prim white coats and duly recognized the power and responsibility associated with them. Occasionally, we used them to show off on Bliss Street in front of young undergrads. Still, we knew what was at stake. Med school taught us that life is a precious thing that is worth fighting for, worth holding on to.

But when it came to our own life, we always had this impression that we were putting it on hold for medicine. In fact, most of us have just been waiting for our lives to start. In the meantime, AUB was our microcosm of the real world, the training wheels on the bicycle of life. That, in a sense, is true – just being on campus feels like your shelter from the storm and your favorite rainy day comfort food all wrapped up in one wondrous ecosystem. In retrospect, we were looking at it the wrong way.

The truth is – AUB is not the preamble of a great literary work. It is not the entree at a gourmet restaurant. It is the main dish and the dessert. This ceremony is called commencement, but the 'rest of our lives' does not start now, it started as soon as we walked through Main Gate. We had life, and we had it abundantly.

When it does come to the rest of our lives then, this is what we should aspire to. How could we settle for any less when we already started out with the very best? The only advice I will dispense is the most important lesson I have learned because of AUB. Do not ever settle – not

in your professional life, not in your personal life. Do not be just another physician, be a holistic healer and patient's advocate. Do not be just an acquaintance, be a friend. Do not be just a spouse, be a soul mate. Finally, do not settle by being an idle citizen, try to instill change wherever it is needed. If you will not do it, who else will?

Pablo Picasso once said, "When I was a child my mother said to me, 'If you become a soldier, you'll be a general. If you become a monk, you'll be the pope.' Instead I became a painter and wound up as Picasso." We all became AUB graduates today, and what we wind up as, what we will be known for, is completely up to us. After all, we have a strong foundation to build upon, and for that we should be very thankful. It is our responsibility then, to take all these competences earned and work hard to find our bliss. This is what AUB wants from its graduates. This is what we deserve.

I wish you all success, health and happiness. I wish that you will all acquire the means necessary to be able to give back to our Alma Mater. Help AUB keep on giving our youth the life they deserve and convincing them that they deserve it. It is the only way that we are going to move towards the community and country we dream of.