

## Commencement Exercises and Honorary Doctorates Ceremony 2014

### Graduate student speech by Jinane Abi Ramia

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to stand here, on this commencement, and reflect back on a wonderful journey at one of the best Universities in the region, a university that has become our second home.

I am confident I speak for all of us here when I say that AUB has endowed us with a learning experience that will accompany us for the rest of our lives. We have learnt to push for perfection when faced with tense standoffs and to expose our minds to new information and different perspectives. We have learnt that diversity is an asset we should celebrate, and dearly cherish. AUB has also taught us not to fear change or failure, and it is for these reasons that we proudly graduate today as nothing less than future pioneers in our fields.

This graduation is as much a celebration for us students, as it is for our parents and families. To all the parents here, I want to say: your sacrifices have paid off. Without your constant dedication and support, we would not be standing here today, degree in hand, ready to face the world and to affect it. We have shared this journey together, with every success and failure felt collectively. And this, we owe it all to you.

Allow me to take this chance to address my own family. I thank my mother, who gave her all to provide me with a secure future, one I will always owe to her. To my father, I hope you are watching me now from heaven, and I hope you have a smile of pride on your face- the one you used to have when I stood on stage at school. But you know what? Your little girl has grown up, and has actually turned into a university graduate!

In fact we all have. Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, after all the hard work, the exhausting all-nighters, the research, and the incessant intake of coffee, we can finally tell those who ask: yes, we have graduated and we have much to be proud of! The exemplary academic work and research undertaken by the students are the reasons why AUB is at the forefront of the region. Students' achievements go beyond the academic domain: they have pushed boundaries and opened up discussions and debates on crucial and sensitive subjects, ranging from the Lebanese civil war, to violence against women. In addition, the students have continuously placed high importance in community outreach. This is especially apparent in the efforts undertaken to confront the Syrian crisis, by addressing the rights and well being of a growing refugee population.

However, there is a special reason why I am so proud to represent the student body tonight. That is because although our youthful minds are always in the clouds, filled with ambition, dreams, and ideals; our feet never left the ground. Class of 2014, you have incessantly practiced your right to speak up, to hold a banner, and to denounce what you thought to be unjust. You lit the campus with your protests, your strikes and your camp-ins. From the top of your lungs, you shouted ! جامعة واحدة يد واحدة You stood indeed as one unified student body, and you fought. You fought for these higher values that you stand for. You fought for social justice, for transparency, and for accountability. And Class of 2014? You have succeeded. You managed to initiate a major reform process in the financial management system of AUB, and more importantly, you have taken your rightful position as involved and informed stakeholders in this university, showing the administration and the AUB community at large that the students are the heart of this university. For this, I salute you.

Our achievements this year are but the first step of a long journey, It is our responsibility to ensure that upcoming generations will hold these values high, and will engage in student initiatives and movements. For this, I call on all of you present today: It is your responsibility not to bend. It is your responsibility to show them that change can occur, and that you will not stop until change does occur. It is your duty to believe in this, and your duty to fight for it. So class of 2014, you have many battles that await you. Which is why I tell you now: leave, grow, fly and fight!

انه لمن دواعي فخري وسروري ان اتكلم اليوم امامكم في حفل التخرج هذا، في جامعتنا التي لم تبخل على مجتمعاتنا بخريجين يتمتعون ليس بأعلى المستويات الأكاديمية فحسب، بل بحس المسؤولية والمبادرة والتميز اينما حلوا.... اننا اليوم نعاهد هذه الجامعة على الإحتفاظ بما اكتسبناه فيها من قيم التنوع والانفتاح والعلمانية والإحتفاظ بالقيم الأخلاقية المهنية اينما عملنا. اننا اليوم وفي هذه اللحظة المهمة من حياتنا نقف شاكرين لهذا الصرح الأكاديمي بما اعدقنا به من علم و معرفة، و نبقى على ثقة ان روح هذه الجامعة ستظل تسكننا في كل محطات حياتنا ، تضيء عليها افكار التحرر و النضال، وتغذي ثورة الإصلاح الشامل بدءًا بالذات.

اعزائي الخريجين، كونوا اينما حلتم القدوة والمثال، فما اكتسبناه في جامعتنا من علم وفكر يكفيننا أن نكون دوماً في الطليعة ونكون القدوة والمثال للتغيير نحو الأفضل في كل زمان ومكان. اعزائي الخريجين، اصنعوا حياة لكم، حياة تناضلون من أجلها، فلا بديل عند النضال.

Thank you