

## Honorary Doctorates and Graduate Commencement Ceremony

### Acceptance Speech

**Nadine Labaki - Director, Screenwriter, Actor**

**May 27, 2016**

Thank you Dr Fadlo Khuri, not just for this beautiful honor, but for being so unconventional and bold. This institution is truly lucky to have you! Thank you Board of Trustees, thank you AUB.

I am deeply moved today to be receiving this honor from one the finest universities in our region, a university I unfortunately wasn't able to go to because... it wasn't and still isn't offering a cinema program! I don't know if this is your way of trying to tell me something Dr Khuri but if you are then let's do lunch soon!

To tell you the truth, I have been blessed lately. This year has been amazing to me! Four months ago I had a beautiful little girl, two weeks ago I was running for municipal elections with Beirut Madinati (Many of whom by the way are AUB alumni and Faculty, just to tell how great this institution is), two days ago, I wrote the most important two words of my next script: The END and now I'm here receiving this honor from the university I have so long been impressed by !

When did I become a doctor anyway? Last time I checked I was just a normal citizen!

I grew up knowing that my father had always wanted to be a filmmaker. Unfortunately he couldn't because he didn't have the financial means to make it.

His father, my grandfather, had an old cinema in our village in Baabdash. My father used to spend hours in that old poor cinema, alone in the darkness of the small projection room, watching films. I will never forget how he used to describe to me the smell of those film rolls. I wish I could have seen that theatre — destroyed long before my time — but it is the image of my father as a child sitting there in the darkness of this poor projection room, dreaming of a better life, expecting the world from those images playing in front of him that stayed with me. It was going to define my path.

Little did I know that, decades later, I was going to repeat the same scene, but in different circumstances. I always think back to the video store below my house when we were growing up. Like many others, my little sister and I were bored most of the times when we were kids, because of the war. A lot of times, we couldn't play outside, we couldn't go to school, confined to the walls of our house or to those of the shelter we were in. No matter where we were though, there was always a TV set and a video player. The video store below our house became our escape, our own cinema, our projection room and my first university. We used to rent the same films over and over again because the selection was limited. I must have seen Grease a thousand times. These films allowed me to escape the reality of my own life, the violence outside the walls of the cocoon created by my parents. So when I discovered that in order to create those other realities I had to be a filmmaker, I decided very early that I was going to become one. And when I told my father that one day I was going to make a film and go to Cannes, he didn't laugh at me, he didn't cynically tell me go do something serious with your life, he didn't tell me my dream was impossible because there is no film industry and no clear path ahead of me ! Instead, he looked at me with his beautiful big blue eyes and told me:



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Of course, do it for me! I was finally going to be able to achieve what he couldn't.

So Papito I made it through you and because of you!

This beautiful degree that i am so honored to receive I share with you, my sister, my mother, my husband and my two children (Walid and Mayroun) , the beautiful doctors of my life . You allow me to believe every day that anything is possible.