



**AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT**

2023 Commencement Exercise

**Suheil Muasher**

Beirut, Friday, June 9, 2023

I wish to thank President Fadlo Khuri and the Board of Trustees for granting me this huge honor. I look at the names of some previous awardees, such as Orhan Pamuk, Amin Maalouf, Ghassan Tueini, and Fayrouz and ask myself if I belong in this mix. I am more like any of the graduates today. I am a true son of AUB. Twenty-five members of my family graduated from AUB, starting with my father in 1942. Tens of thousands came from Jordan to study at AUB and several hundred graduated from the medical school. Many became ministers in Jordan, some deputy prime ministers like my brother Marwan and cousin Rajai, and few prime ministers like my roommate and lifelong friend Abdul Karim Kabariti.

I came to Beirut in the summer of 1966. That year, Charles Helou was President of the Republic, England beat West Germany to win the World Cup, and Fayrouz premiered in "Days of Fakhreddine" in Baalback. Beirut and Lebanon were different: they had the best scenery, food, fashion, movie theaters, and most importantly Fayrouz and the Rahbani Brothers. Above all, Lebanon had a free press, conducted parliamentary elections every four years, and back then elected a new President democratically and on time every six years. I spent ten years on the AUB campus. The student body was a true mosaic of people who came from all regions of Lebanon, every other Arab Country, and a lot of other countries including the United States. At AUB, there was an atmosphere of free thought and more importantly free expression. Many students were not used to that and many considered "free expression" as a privilege that only belonged to them. My ten years on campus were full of turmoil as a result of conflicts in the region. I graduated from medical school in June, 1976. Unfortunately, because of the war, my class of 52 were deprived of the opportunity to graduate on this field and were given their diplomas in the Dean's Office with the sounds of gunfire and bombs outside.

At AUB, we had a great liberal education. I do not remember much of what I studied in textbooks but I remember All of my teachers. In my opinion, AUB's most valued asset is not this beautiful campus nor its historic buildings but it is

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the teachers who inspire the students on a daily basis. The number one priority for this university is to protect and support its teachers so AUB can preserve its heritage and tradition as one of the best in the world.

After graduation, I chose the two noblest professions: Teaching and Medicine. The field of in vitro fertilization was just starting and I was privileged to work with my two mentors: Drs. Howard and Georgeanna Jones who were responsible for the first in vitro baby in the US in 1981. I have helped thousands of patients complete their families, and helped thousands more through education, research, and publications. To quote Robert Frost, the English teacher of my mentor at Amherst College in the 1920's:

"I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference."

To the graduates:

Remember this is the start of your life's journey.

Think outside the box. Do not be afraid to challenge any dogma or status quo.

Do not discriminate based on anything.

Be proud that you are a graduate of this great university. But also, be humble.

Be kind.

Be generous, within your means, to help others and especially AUB. A strong AUB will translate into a stronger Lebanon and Arab World, and a better world for everyone.

I congratulate you and hope your path will be successful and meaningful to society wherever you are.

Thank you again for this honor.