



**AMERICAN  
UNIVERSITY  
OF BEIRUT**

## **INTRODUCTIONS OF STUDENT SPEAKERS, HONORANDS, KEYNOTES COMMENCEMENT 2024**

Beirut, Friday, June 7, 2024

### **Introduction of Student Speakers**

President: It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce your two student speakers for this commencement.

THE FIRST IS **MR. ALAA ABOU CHAKRA**, CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN PUBLIC POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS.

A first lieutenant in the Internal Security Forces, having graduated top of his class from the Lebanese National Military Academy, whose director at the time was our own General Fadi Ghorayeb, Alaa received a Lebanese Armed Forces scholarship from AUB to pursue graduate studies. Highly industrious and profoundly motivated to develop his full potential, Alaa managed to excel at his full-time job while achieving high grades in his graduate courses as well as pursuing a third bachelor's degree in parallel, adding law to political science from the Lebanese University.

Alaa made sure to live a full university experience at AUB, joining the debate and chess clubs, and engaged enthusiastically with professors and colleagues in different departments, all of whom commended him for his unwavering commitment and passion to serve and for consistently seeking to leverage his academic knowledge to enhance the security sector.

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I WOULD NOW LIKE TO WELCOME TO THE PODIUM, **MS. LYNN KOBEISSI**, CANDIDATE FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

Lynn received her BS in biology with high distinction from AUB and took research and clinical electives in gastroenterology at distinguished universities such as Johns Hopkins and Duke.

The epitome of a servant leader, Lynn has volunteered countless hours to social engagement groups and initiatives. She co-founded with her classmates and became president of Care Clinic, a free clinic for underprivileged Lebanese communities, and was active with GOLD, a free clinic and intergenerational learning program for older adults. She is also an active volunteer with AUBMCares and the Women in Surgery Interest Group and is co-founder of the Point of Care Ultrasound Interest Group, among other initiatives committed to improving the health of disadvantaged people in our community.

The recipient of numerous awards, Lynn is known to be always ready to help and eagerly takes the initiative to find solutions to any challenges. Lynn's colleagues and supervisors describe her as an altruistic and dynamic student with a broad medical fund of knowledge, high emotional intelligence, and understated eloquence.

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### **Introduction of Honorary Doctorate Recipients and Keynote Speaker**

President: It is with great joy and privilege that I bestow the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, our university's highest accolade, upon three luminaries whose endeavors have meaningfully contributed to advancing the human condition.

This year, we honor the exceptional surgeon Ghassan Abu-Sittah, the visionary author Arundhati Roy, and the transformative philanthropic leader Darren Walker. Each has pioneered with courage, empathy, and an innovative spirit—qualities deeply ingrained in the ethos of the American University of Beirut.

Their separate but equally relentless pursuits of excellence and their deep commitment to societal betterment echo the core mission of our university. These individuals are more than leaders in their respective spheres. In an era crying out for genuine role models, they are paragons of inspiration, illuminating the path for generations to come with their dedication to creating a more just and compassionate world.

On behalf of the American University of Beirut, I extend a warm, celebratory welcome to these distinguished individuals as they enter into the esteemed circle of our university's honorary doctorate recipients. As we do so, we reaffirm our dedication to nurturing progressive thought, transformative action, and sustainable solutions that significantly impact the global stage.

**May I please ask the university provost, Professor Zaher Dawy, to join me on stage.**

**President: May I ask the world-renowned humanitarian and prominent war-surgeon, Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah to please step forward.**

**President:**

**Ghassan Abu-Sittah:** Multi-award-winning plastic and reconstructive surgeon and leader in the field of conflict medicine, whose courage and humanitarianism have made him a face of today's struggle for freedom and human rights. In addition to working as a surgeon in London and Lebanon, he taught at universities including AUB, where he was founding director of the Conflict Medicine Program at our Global Health Institute. A beacon of selfless courage, Dr. Abu-Sittah has treated countless injured patients in conflict zones in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Gaza, where he was besieged this fall for 43 days with patients and colleagues in the now destroyed al-Ahli and al-Shifa hospitals. A genuine hero whose courage has been witnessed the world over for the last decade and a half, he has never shied away from serving where the need is greatest and continues today with his firm stance for human rights, justice, and the freedom of Palestine. Inspired by his example, friends of Dr. Abu-Sittah, led by Dr. Nadine Haram, a surgeon, entrepreneur and innovator, have chosen to establish the American University of Beirut Chair in Conflict Medicine. Starting this summer, Dr. Abu Sittah will become the first occupant of this chair. May I ask Dr. Haram and Dr. Abu Sittah to stand and be recognized by the audience for this extraordinary gift of compassion and leadership? Thank you.

BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, I HEREBY CONFER UPON YOU, **GHASSAN ABU-SITTAH**, THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS, WITH ALL THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES PERTAINING THERETO.

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**President: May I ask president of the Ford Foundation, author, philanthropist, and transformative world figure, Darren Walker, to please step forward.**

**President:**

**Darren Charles Walker:** A prominent figure renowned for his dynamic leadership and unwavering commitment to fostering equality and innovation. His inspirational story started from rural poverty to corporate law and a career on Wall Street, to community organizing in Harlem, and his current leadership of a 16-billion-dollar philanthropic organization, an organization that has stood by AUB in good and bad times and worse ones. Renowned for his powerful and transformative impact in the fields of social equity and philanthropy, he has boldly shed light in his writings and policy work on global troubles, inspiring positive action worldwide with his visionary challenge to consider philanthropy as a tool for achieving economic, social, and political justice. The day after

the catastrophic August 4, 2020 Beirut port explosion, Dr. Walker reached out directly to me to ask how he and Ford could help. And help they manifestly did.

Founder and member of numerous prestigious organizations, multi-award-winner Darren Walker oversees a network of grants to promote various sectors, including education, arts, social justice, and philanthropy, emphasizing the importance of justice and inclusivity. Every day, he works to achieve better lives for those less fortunate.

BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, I HEREBY CONFER UPON YOU, **DARREN CHARLES WALKER**, THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS, WITH ALL THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES PERTAINING THERETO.

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**President: Our final honorary doctorate recipient, and your commencement speaker tonight, is the renowned author, thinker, architect and activist, Arundhati Roy. I invite you to please come forward.**

President:

Arundhati Roy, an emblem of intellectual courage and conviction, has left an indelible mark on both the literary world and the global socio-political landscape. Trained as an architect, her eclectic journey took her through the realms of cinema before she made a monumental entry into literature with her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, which garnered the prestigious Booker Prize. Through fiction and nonfiction, her writings blend poetic grace with rigorous advocacy, challenging social and political injustices while tirelessly championing the cause of the marginalized in her home country, India, and around the world. Her work calls to the very conscience of societies and governments, urging them to reconsider the narratives around divisive differences and to genuinely address national and global disparities. Her voice, clear, brave and resolute against oppression, inequalities, and exploitation, establishes her as a steadfast pillar of progressive thought and humanitarian action. This great lady has steadfastly fought and defeated injustice with the power of the pen, hatred with love. Please welcome to the podium the great Arundhati Roy!

President:

BY VIRTUE OF THE AUTHORITY VESTED IN ME BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, I HEREBY CONFER UPON YOU, **ARUNDHATI ROY**, THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF HUMANE LETTERS, WITH ALL THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES PERTAINING THERETO.

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