



GATE OF THE LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, BEIRUT.

LAU-MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders Newsletter

1/27/2014

IN THIS ISSUE

A Legacy Born

by The Editorial Team

Whether at LAU's Honor Society, LAU's Global Classrooms Model United Nations (MUN) and Model Arab League (MAL), LAU's delegation to the Harvard World MUN, LAU's Student Council or at one of the many Clubs; MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders are always present!

The ample contribution and the sincere involvement of Tomorrow's Leaders family at LAU has been truly enriching. The diversity of the student body, representing nine nationalities, has also added to LAU's sense of international identity.

That said, what better way is there to expose the news, activities and thoughts of LAU's MEPI TL students than through a newsletter? We, the Editorial Team, are proud to publish and present this second issue of the LAU MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders newsletter, representative of our scholarship program and indicative of our philosophies and beliefs.

In this issue, we have dedicated two new sections solely for our bright alumni and our enthusiastic newcomers.

While gathering and redacting the articles from our friends was no easy task, the

product of our work has made it all worthwhile; a newsletter delivered with a joyful sense of pride and in the spirit of tolerance. We have decided to share these overwhelming, yet heartily welcomed, feelings with a section dedicated to our own thoughts and experiences.

We would like to take this opportunity to extend our profound gratitude to Dr. Victor Khachan, our Student Life Coordinator, and Ms. Leen Aghabi, our Student Life Assistant Coordinator, for their direct supervision and insightful remarks. Our deep appreciation is also extended to our inspirational writers without whom this newsletter would not have seen the light.

Creating a legacy by carrying the torch comes with responsibility. We hope this publication provides a sufficiently thorough and stimulating image of the MEPI-TL experience at LAU. With utter pride, we present to you the 2nd issue of the LAU-MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders newsletter.



Debate Workshop

"Students were eager to participate, support a friend, counter argue one another, ask questions and propose new arguments. The simulation went very well; it was smooth and civilized," said Rami Masri.

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Welcoming the Newcomers

This year, the LAU-MEPI TL family was joined by a new cohort! Coming from Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Yemen and Bahrain, the newcomers are of added value to the program. Read more about their thoughts and reflections.

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Leadership is More Than Leading...

by Dr. Victor Khachan

When I first took the challenge of coordinating MEPI TL's Student Life at LAU, my main focus was to enrich Tlers' leadership edge. As a practitioner in argumentation and persuasion, I have always believed in the power of persuasion as a maker and shaper of leaders. All I anticipated was to see our Tlers draw a picture of persuasive leaders, leaders who argue and persuade for the sake of a better tomorrow.

Witnessing their leadership development gave me a profound sense of professional satisfaction, but the remarkable and unexpected twist was the energy swap and dynamics Tlers added to my understanding of leadership, a dimension that I doubted its potential realization.

To my surprise, I found myself at the receiving end; my share of learning into leadership was beyond my human expectations and experience. Our Tlers have opened the door of human dynamics in the wall of leadership, an opportunity into understanding and tolerance. I am indeed indebted to our Tlers for making leadership more than leading...

Well done Tlers for materializing leadership as a human act, a human contextualizing of "lead to follow and follow to lead".



DR. VICTOR KHACHAN

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My Leaders!

by Dr. Walid Touma

When nations say *enough*, leadership is no longer a choice. When grass root movements awaken, heeding the call of duty, the call of doing the right thing is *now or never!*

I am so proud of our leaders, *my leaders*, for they are part of this change to come, morphing in front of us over the life of the program.

My hope and wish is that *one* of my leaders will make a difference and lead the change for a better Arab World, a better World, a World with respect for human dignity, gender equality, democracy and, above all, personal integrity.

I know I am ready to serve each leader in his or her path to enlightenment, as the LAU-MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders program has become a cause for LAU and the program's administrative team. With this new year, I bid all my leaders the serenity to find their path, and the inner wisdom to do the right thing at the right time.

A PRODUCTIVE & FUN SUMMER!



Reaching The Philippines!

Abed el Karim Farroukh, a 3rd year LAU-MEPI TL student, leads the LAU team to the University Scholars Leadership Symposium in Manila, The Philippines.



Hello Uncle Sam!

In the summer of 2013, 21 MEPI-TLers attended Wayne State University (Detroit, USA) for a summer semester as part of their MEPI experience abroad. The above picture was taken at the Stony Creek Metropolitan Park, Michigan, accompanied by Ms. Lisa Kyle from the Study Abroad & Global Programs at Wayne State University.

FAST FACT

66%

Of LAU-MEPI TL students are females

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Tomorrow's Leaders website has a complete profile of all the students, news & events and the MEPI-TL Alumni.

ACCESS THE WEBSITE AT:
<http://mepitl.lau.edu.lb>



Students visiting the famous Cloud Gate, aka the Bean, in Chicago! Summer 2013

A Timeless Skyline

by Barik Mahadin

Crowded, colored, noisy and timeless, the adventure of New York City was a blast. Over the weekend, my friends and I flew to NYC to explore the lifestyle of this iconic city. To say the least, it has an astounding melody of life, of motion and of harmony.

Enjoying an innovative presence on the world map of trade, commerce, finance and media, New York City is indeed nourished by hard work and dedication; it is a city worthy of international respect and national pride. The scene of a mosaic population, with international visitors and local passersby, reminded us all of the significance and the essentiality for a city to be accepting and diverse of all walks of life. NYC truly represents the potential of human tolerance.



The landmarks the city has to offer are numerous. Taking the ferry down the blue Hudson River, passing by the colossal and symbolic Statue of Liberty and stopping at the Liberty Island, were among the first of our stops throughout the trip. Having felt the historic eminence of the Statue, our next stop took us to a more recent historical milestone for this country: the 9/11 memorial. Going up Broadway Street, other stops included the United States' financial market metonymy: Wall Street, as well as the famous, iridescent and vibrant Times Square.

At the heart of Manhattan stands Central Park- a most welcoming and inviting park.

For me, Central Park represents the city's love and appreciation of sport. With young, middle-aged and old people running and jogging tirelessly, exercise seems to be an essential part of the New York style of living. Just a few blocks down and we found ourselves at Columbia University; a place where enthusiastic, young students dream, hope and bring about change. An inspiring educational institution I wouldn't mind belonging to one day!

One thing I found interesting is New York's subway system. While almost all the subway stations and tunnels we came across looked old and tired, it is apparent that the citizens of New York City favored using the subway over driving their own cars. While limited parking spaces and expensive parking rates may substantially contribute to this lifestyle, it is

the city council's push to motivate people to use public transportation that seems to be doing the trick. A passenger on the subway informed me that even the mayor uses the subway to get around! Quite impressive.

Venturing out at night to hear a man playing the saxophone outside, to see a woman talking on her cellphone, to share the spirit with those sitting at an Irish pub, or to simply pass by a bar where original jazz is being played are all characteristics that set New York City apart. At a certain point, perhaps while watching the sun set and descend under the Williamsburg Bridge, it felt like we were part of a movie. Utterly beautiful.

Dignity for All

by Tala El-Issa

As part of UNRWA's "Dignity for All" project, 25 students from the Lebanese American University LAU MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders program and 12 students from Unite Lebanon Youth Project (ULYP: Palestinian university students beneficiaries of ULYP's Scholarships) visited the Burj Al-Barajneh camp on Saturday the 13th of April.

Initially, the students visited the UNRWA center in the camp where they were briefed with some general background information. There, Dr. Marwan Rowayheb from LAU noted that this visit to the camp happened to be on a very special date- that of the inception of the Lebanese civil war. By making this observation, he served to remind the students of the importance of a harmonious blend between all.

Students were introduced to Palestinian refugees who are studying at LAU. They were impressed by the refugees who, regardless of their difficult living conditions, were still motivated to pursue a university degree in engineering and pre-med at LAU. Many students wondered how the refugees were able to manage given their unfortunate conditions and the undeniable sharp social clash.

The students had an insightful visit that taught them to become better appreciators and sympathizers. One of the students said she was saddened by the terrible conditions of the camp from the narrow alleys and electric cables to the kids roaming within the shabby houses.

Another couldn't believe that inhabitants receive sea water half an hour every two days: "That was truly shocking and only had me reiterate in my mind: God bless our homes and families."

LAU's visit to Burj Al-Barajneh was an intriguing experience that clarified a reality the students weren't aware of. The "Dignity for All" project succeeded within this visit to creatively integrate two different communities who would otherwise never have met.



MEPI-TI Conquer!

by Nour Laswi

A new department came to birth as part of the Global Classroom Lebanese American University Model United Nations (GC LAU MUN) program under the name of Regional and International Affairs.

The newly-established division has two main responsibilities: promoting GC LAU MUN in the region and beyond as well as inviting and hosting international students to the 9th GC LAU MUN High School Conference and the 4th GC LAU MUN Middle School Conference in March.

The invitees are to participate as delegates and dais staff. Moreover, they are responsible for sending a delegation from the Secretariat to an international conference as part of our effort to present LAU abroad.

What is significant about this department is that out of its twelve members, eleven are MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders students, from the Assistant Under Secretary General to all of the International Ambassadors! In fact, only Mr. Ramzi Khoury, the Under Secretary-



General for Regional and International Affairs, is a non-MEPI student!

MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders extensive representation of different countries gave the department a window of opportunity to branch out to more countries and regions.

Even though this department has just been launched, the efforts portrayed as well as the enthusiasm and professionalism exhibited are clear indicators of the amazing ambassadors' personalities and potential for success in the future. This is just one of many ways in which MEPI Tomorrow's Leaders are excelling at LAU.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Check out the Lebanese American University Global Classrooms Model United Nations (LAU GC MUN) program at:

<http://www.gclaumun.org/>

The Infantilization of the Arabs

by Mohamed Gowhari

What is more dangerous than a corrupt political and social system? One that reduces the mentality of the public to that of a mere infant. If you consider Arab leaders' speeches both before and during the Arab Spring, the pattern is obvious. Mubarak used to call Egyptians "his sons". Ghaddafi used to be the "supreme leader", and the list goes on.

This was not something new in Arabic political history. I remember when former Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser resigned from power after Egyptian defeat in the 1967 war. The public reaction was to take to the streets, demanding his return to power.

Here, an analysis of public mentality is quite important. Although Nasser was without doubt both an influential and charismatic leader, the severity and magnitude of the 1967 defeat would tip the scales of public support against even the most popular of leaders- or so one would think.

Why then, did the opposite happen? Again, this is a classic example of when a leader manages to become the all-knowing and all-powerful figure in a society, at which point society begins to look upon him as someone who knows best; he essentially becomes a father figure.

There was simply no one else who knew what to do but Nasser, or at least this is what the public thought back then. Years later, we find a somewhat similar case recurring with Mubarak. While millions were in Tahrir Square demanding his trials, voices arose to let him go under the claim that "he's an old man", "he has done a lot for us", and the best of all, "we do not insult our elders."

They say if you lie enough times, it becomes a truth, for you at least. This is what has been happening in the Arab world over the years. We have grown to think of our

presidents not as political leaders, but as fathers and big brothers who would surely go out of their way to do what is best for us. The next logical step therefore, would be for them to tell us what to read, to control what we see in the media, and to take decisions concerning peace and war with



President Nasser of Egypt

little regard to public opinion (think of the Sadat – Ghaddafi war of 1977). And why not? After all, they know better than anybody else.

It is normal for some to fall into this propaganda of the all-knowing, all-powerful leader; the public is usually vulnerable to this kind of brainwashing. What is extraordinary however, is for the intellectual elite to think and believe in this way. If you read books written by highly respected intellectuals, you'll still find that they glorify the achievements of the dictator. What is even worse is the transcendence of this mentality from the political sphere to the social one, thus, bringing to surface many issues.

Is there hope? Well, the Arab Spring is certainly an encouraging sign. The new, highly-educated, aware and motivated youth seem not to be affected by this big brother mentality. They are the ones leading change, they are the hope.



The newly elected LAU-MEPI TL Students Representatives for the year 2013-2014: Mohamed Gowhary (left): 3rd year Business student
Shuhd Al-Sharki (right): 3rd year Political Science/ International Affairs student

Representatives' Note

by Shuhd Al-Sharki and Mohamed Gowhary

There may only be fifty of them, but they are everywhere! LAU-MEPI TL students are involved in so many different activities, both on and off campus. On campus, not only are MEPI TL students active in initiatives they have introduced and implemented such as the Donate to Educate campaign, they are also involved in all sorts of other programs, clubs and activities.

For instance, the LAU MUN Secretariat includes many MEPI TL students and the Rotaract club has several MEPI TL members. MEPI TL students are also part of the Student Council and some are very involved in the Rally Paper and the Orphan Fair.

Off campus, all MEPI TL students do internships, some civil society activists, while others are volunteers for non-governmental organizations such as the Migrant Workers Task Force.

The spirit of activism and leadership present among LAU-MEPI TL students truly makes us proud and grateful to be part of this program. Having been elected to represent these students this year makes us even prouder and more determined to deliver.

Skills Unleashed: Debate!

by Rami Masri

On the 22nd of November, the LAU MEPI-TL students engaged in a debate training workshop. The session -a first in a series of three- introduced students to the art of debate training in a rich and interactive manner.

The workshop began by introducing ourselves along with stating one thing that we stand for and another that we are against. Then, we moved on to define the term *debate* and the various aspects of the term. Along the way, Mr. Joe Haddad, who led the workshop, kept asking for points and opinions and made the workshop more exciting and synergetic.

As soon as we were all satisfied with the definitions given, we moved on to play an ice-breaking game that required us to take sides when given a certain statement. Since this activity was carried out outdoors, we were asked to move to one side of the terrace if we agreed with the statement and to the other if we disagreed.

We soon found ourselves migrating from one side to the other, joining some friends for some statements and facing them for others. This activity left many of us both surprised and shocked. We learned things we never knew about each other. Furthermore, we were very aggressive and stubborn when it came to our beliefs and we found ourselves mocking and teasing our peers on the other side of the terrace.

After reflecting on the first activity, we moved to a similar yet slightly different game: the barometer. This time we were asked to stand across a line depending on the percentage of approval towards the given statement.

The topic chosen for the statements was "gender and sexism". Although less aggressive than the first activity, tension still existed between disagreeing parties. A lot of us decided to go for extremes such as 100% or 0%, whereas some chose values in between.

We all thought that this activity gave us more insight about our peers and their decisions than the previous one, thus allowing us to have a better understanding of the general atmosphere.

We soon moved to an informal simulation of a debate, and chose Capital Punishment as a

topic. Students were eager to participate, support a friend, counter argue one another, ask questions and propose new arguments.

The simulation went very well; it was smooth and civilized. And after a long go at it, we were given two small exercises to differentiate between the different elements of a debate and to make sure that everything was clear to us.

Finally, we ended our long productive day by watching two debate speakers; we observed their style in public speaking, content of their speeches, and knowledge of the topic. And after a fertile training session, Mr. Joe Haddad concluded the first part of the workshop leaving us eagerly anticipating the coming sessions.

In essence, the vibrant nature of the workshop helped the students maintain the highest levels of engagement and focus. In parallel, the activities conducted unleashed important skills the students acquired: active listening and negotiation.

The most intriguing part of this workshop was the language used; the training and activities were all carried out in Arabic, with a few English words here and there, making it easier for students to express their opinions and speak right from the heart.

IN DEPTH



It's Deep!

A group of students engaged in a heated discussion with regard to the first activity; all presenting the finest of respect and understanding.



For or Against?

While enjoying the sunny day Byblos had to offer, the students carried out their first outdoor activity whereby they switched from one side to another according to their assent or dissent on a given statement.



Got a point?

Divided between two camps, the students argued for and against Capital Punishment. Theory aside, this activity provided the practical dimension of the workshop; students were able to exercise the techniques and skills learned during the workshop with utter focus.

A Geography Lesson...

by Amr O. Bazgifan

It was a beautiful Sunday morning when I woke up intending to continue reading my assignments. I got dressed, packed my laptop, a notebook and a pen in my bag. I was planning to go sit down in the park. Upon arrival, I saw two girls who had invited me to play volleyball with them two days earlier. I greeted them and headed to my destination- the bench. They were playing soccer. I sat down and started to read my book- a very informative book which has provided me the answers to the numerous questions that have boggled my mind since my feet stepped on Detroit soil.

After reading almost two chapters, I decided to cease reading and go socialize with the girls. I approached them and asked if I could join them. Surprisingly, they were welcoming. I sat with them on the grass and we chatted. They asked me about what country I come from. I said Yemen, a country that exists somewhere in the Middle East!



Picture Retrieved from:
<http://navigatingcultures.com/blog/wordpress-content/uploads/2011/10/tiny-multicolored-globes1.jpg>

To my surprise, neither of the two girls knew where Yemen is, nor what the Middle East is! Once I informed them that it is to the south of Saudi Arabia, they were able to visualize its location geographically. They proceeded to tell me what they knew about Saudi Arabia: a country in which women cannot drive and men are obsessed with sex.

Luckily, I had my laptop with me so I eagerly gave them a lesson in geography with, and somewhat ironically, the aid of the American-owned search engine Google. They expressed a very concerning sentiment which they appeared to believe wholeheartedly: that the United States is hated by the rest of the world. Although I do partially agree, I made it my mission to point out to them certain aspects that should be taken into consideration when tackling this very delicate topic and before assuming such a strong sentiment.

First, I noted that it is an overgeneralization to say all people hate a nation or a country. If I hated you, I would do my best to shun you and be away from you. Obviously, this is not the case for the United States, a country to which many people travel and migrate to in hope of enhancing their standards of living and residing in a more equal-opportunity environment.

Then there are the fundamentalists. Those who choose to avoid eating, wearing and dealing with anything American-owned or franchised. They are an extreme, but far from a majority. It is this group of people that exhibit all the traits of hatred, not those who exercise their freedom of speech and thought when they angrily express their disapproval of US intervention in their countries. There is a vast difference between the two, a clear difference which should be seen and acknowledged. Taking the actions of a few and labeling them as the opinions of all is unfortunate and breeds only greater misconceptions and false truths.

Secondly, I referred to Newton's third law of motion to strengthen my point: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. If American foreign policy involves intervention in another nation's affairs and/or violation of a state's sovereignty, then vicious reactions from the citizens of the concerned state can be expected. For example, signature drone strikes in Yemen – a means used by the United States to fight terrorism -backfired, generating hatred toward America.

I carefully clarified that although this is not, by any means, a justification for the current hostility toward the United States, the current American foreign policy has made such reactions common from the uneducated and, in many cases, illiterate few. The girls showed enthusiasm to learn more and discuss this topic in greater detail, thus leading me to conclude that this beautiful Sunday in the park, which started out with me working on my assignments and soon transcended to a geography lesson, was turning out to be a great day, a day of seemingly endless promise....

الفن والإنسانية بقلم نور الشيخ

- غنيت كثيرًا، حتى ملَّ الفنُّ صوتي.

- وما شأنك بالفن أنت؟ غنَّ للإنسانية.. وكفى.

- وليس الفن خادم قديم وفي للإنسانية؟

-ولكن الإنسانية لا تملك خدمًا أو عبيد، بل ملوك!

- ملوك؟ أعتقد أنه علينا أن نعيد النظر في مثابنتنا...

- ولم؟ ألا تؤمن بأن كل شيء إن لم يربِّ الإنسان في داخلنا ينبغي أن يموت قبل أن يعيش فينا؟

- أو من بأنه من المفترض أن يكون كذلك، ولكن ما أصبو إليه قد لا يمثل الواقع حقيقة.

- تقصد: بأن الفن ما عاد إنسانياً؟

- أنا لم ألت بحجة بعد، فقط أثرت التساؤلات حول ذلك.

- حسنًا، أعتقد أن الكثير من الفن لا يستحق هذه التسمية لأنه بدلاً من أن يوقظ فينا الإنسان، صار يخدره، صار ينيمه مغناطيسياً ليعرف كل ما يجول بخاطرته نحو الإنسان الآخر، ثم يقوم بمحو كل تفاصيل ذاكرته ويعيده لوعيه، بعد أن أفقده وعيه للأبد!

The Newcomers' Note; LAU-MEPI TL's 6th Cohort!

Zoubida Tadj

If I had to describe my experience in Lebanon in one word, I would choose 'challenging'. Somehow, I often find myself out of my comfort zone, not just academically speaking, but also in my everyday routine. Strangely enough, being in such a situation pleases me because I know that the experience will positively contribute to my personal and leadership growth. I believe that when facing the challenges inherent in any new situation, the only thing to do is take full advantage in its entirety- and that's exactly what I intend to do!

new light. I feel this scholarship is a valuable opportunity for me to be a vector of change, not only in my country, but in the whole Arab world.

Shams Shamsan

"Isn't it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back, everything is different..." – C.S. Lewis. I haven't realized until recently that moving to this university has been a turning point in my life. It's like turning pages in a new chapter of a book. LAU has given me a chance to open my eyes and explore the world around me, including myself. I have enjoyed, and still am enjoying, this experience of learning, both socially and academically. I feel blessed to have had this opportunity and fully intend on making it worth remembering.



Shadwa Mahmoud

Some portray life as a journey of continuous challenges that should be conquered. Being here, at LAU, is an ongoing incomparable challenge. It has introduced me to situations, concepts and circumstances that I've never known before. By the same token, I find myself in a position where I am absorbing and responding to these new, concrete surroundings. I'm sure the challenge I'm living now will contribute to the evolvement of a better me, a stronger me, a redefined me.

Maryam Chaabouni

It hasn't been long since I joined the LAU-MEPI TL family, but so far everything has been great. For those who don't share this sentiment, I may seem overly happy and bubbly about it. All I can say in my defense is that having left my family behind to embark on this journey, I have found a new family here at LAU. To be able to mingle with so many people from different backgrounds has been a wonderful thing. I'm still very new to the experience, but so far so good!

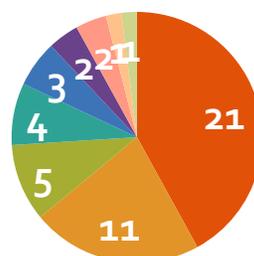
Emad Al-Sharaf

It's been two months since I started studying at LAU as a MEPI-TL student. During this time, I've gotten to know a lot of people and make good friends. The LAU staff members and the MEPI-TL's directors are and always have been of great help. At LAU, I have the opportunity to learn and engage in numerous extracurricular activities. I consider studying at LAU a great step forward in my life and I am expecting my upcoming years to be nothing short of wonderful.

Sami Chakroun

Discovering the LAU Byblos campus has, on my different levels, been a pleasant surprise! Having no expectations before I came, I can truly say that, thus far, I am indeed enjoying the journey. I have had the chance to meet amazing people as well as see myself in a

LAU-MEPI TL Student Body Nationalities



- Lebanon
- Jordan
- Egypt
- Yemen
- Tunisia
- Bahrain
- Kurdistan, Iraq
- Algeria
- Morocco

An Alumni Letter

by Gheed Amhaz

That's life! A single event can turn your life upside down. A single phone call can change the person you thought you would be forever.

After submitting my application to the LAU-MEPI TL scholarship program on the date of the deadline, I received the promising phone call confirming my acceptance. You could say I got lucky! I was overwhelmed with a feeling compared only to that you experience when tears flow involuntarily, when butterflies flutter wildly in your stomach, when your imagination wanders carelessly.

Summing up my three years in the LAU-MEPI TL program, I can simply say, and without any exaggeration, they were the most amazing three years of my 23 years of life. Independent I became. Social skills I developed. Communication capabilities I enhanced. Responsibility I learned. Perhaps, most importantly, confidence, strength, leadership and patience were all nurtured within me. Whilst I don't deny that I did, to a certain extent, possess these qualities before joining the program, I must also admit how much the program influenced their growth and development.

Being student representative for two consecutive years, student life coordinator for the last year, attending numerous workshops, planning and partaking in a number of events on and off campus, and meeting different people from various backgrounds have given me a sense of diversity I never expected; they turned me into a person I never thought of becoming.

The three years are over and now I am writing this with flashbacks of every single moment I had throughout the program. From organizing events, hanging out in my room (never an empty one!) and hearing the other students nagging about the workload to being there for those who needed a shoulder to cry on or were looking for a family away from home.

Remembering all this awakens emotions of belonging and brings tears of nostalgia. Yet, there is no need to cry; I am happy that it happened and I feel blessed to leave with a great many friends from all over the Arab world.

To the administration I say: I can't thank you enough. I salute all efforts exerted toward the success of the old cohorts and I hope that the future cohorts will make you even prouder.

My hope is that I will always be up to everybody's expectations. The LAU-MEPI TL students and the administration will always have a place in my heart. They did not only help me grow and mature, they also gave me an unforgettable experience; an experience I am never bored of sharing whole-heartedly, and with sparkling eyes, every time I am asked: "Do you know about the LAU-MEPI TL program?"

WHAT ARE OTHER ALUMNI DOING?

Say Cheese!

Casually meeting in Stockholm, Sweden where a number of our Alumni continue their postgraduate studies. From left to right:



Mehdi Mezouar (Morocco), Aseel Baidoun (Palestine), Hummam Wasfi (Iraq) and Ali Jammool (Lebanon).



Greeting!

Our Alumni Faris Halteh (Jordan) sends his greetings from Frankfurt, Germany where he visited some old friends. Faris is now pursuing a M.Sc. in Computer Science at Uppsala University, Sweden.

Realizing a New Train of Thought

by Chafic Najjar

Anthropologist Ralph Linton once said that the last thing a fish would ever notice in its habitat is the water. Likewise, the most obvious and powerful realities of the human culture also tend to go unrecognized by most people, who essentially fail to see the established principles and ideas that shape our perspectives of the world.

I find this analogy particularly interesting because, historically speaking, traditional institutions imposed values and beliefs on the individual, but the staggering influence of their doctrines remained unnoticed. However rationally insupportable absolute paternalism and divine rights of kings may have been, such irrational beliefs were once part of the social framework and could only be questioned at the risk of social alienation. In the current state of affairs, is it so different?

As we face the convergence of socioeconomic and environmental crises, there seems to be no real initiative from political institutions to address the issues at hand.

The pursuit of infinite growth on a finite planet will not last forever as vital natural resources such as clean water continue to grow scarce. An unsustainable economy can only lead to global warfare for the remaining resources, especially the fossil fuels that keep the economic engine running. Man passively engages in the economic game through the exchange of currency and maintains the dysfunctional system afloat.

Nature demands that we transition to a steady-state economy where mindless consumption is substituted with preservation, efficiency and dynamic equilibrium. Poverty, hunger and war are not the result of a political policy, institutional corruption or flaw of human nature. They are mere symptoms of an inherently flawed socioeconomic paradigm, naturally backed by a value system disorder.

Yet any attempt to criticize the status quo is met with contempt. Critics of the free market are seen as communists or conspiracy theorists, and visionaries who recognize the

liberating potential of technology are labeled as utopians. We need to build a new model, as Buckminster Fuller stated, that would render the current economic system obsolete: an economic model that is not decoupled from the fundamental processes of nature.

But first and foremost, a new value system must be established for a radical transition to occur. Decisions need to be taken using the scientific method, not through politics. Religious and cultural divisions need to be discarded for in reality we are one family sharing the same household. And finally, all information, tools and resources should be released to the world, as advocated by the Open Source philosophy.

As we observe slow but progressive upgrades in the collective consciousness, the democratization of knowledge made possible in the Information Age will lead to an unprecedented and massive global awareness. It's time to pour ink in the water for the fish to see.

LAU-MEPI
Tomorrow's
Leaders
Newsletter

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