



Diaspora Key to Job Creation in Lebanon

“It is our responsibility to provide opportunity to our youth,” exclaimed President Joseph G. Jabbara to a packed room at the LAU New York Headquarters and Academic Center in Midtown Manhattan on March 25, as he addressed the audience of an event titled “The Lebanese Diaspora, Remittances, and Economic Development: Engagement and Policy Reform.”

Combining a workshop format and a panel discussion, participants focused on how the diaspora can contribute more effectively to Lebanon’s economic development.

The first segment of the event was a roundtable that brought together nine experts, along with Mariem Malouche of the World Bank, who joined remotely from Tunisia, to present and exchange ideas. Facilitating the individual

presentations and discussion were co-organizers Lina Beydoun, academic executive director at LAU NY, and Majdi Ramadan, consul general of Lebanon in New York. The closed session resulted in 12 key recommendations that were presented to the public during an interactive panel discussion later that evening.

“Diaspora has its positive effects,” said Consul Ramadan, “but too much emigration comes at a cost. Some 80 percent of Lebanese graduates apply for visas to work abroad.”

The panelists’ observations covered an array of topics, ranging from defining Lebanon’s competitive edge within the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region, to establishing strategic projects to draw outside investors. Focusing on

the diaspora itself, panelists pointed to the challenge of assessing its size – whether it encompasses strictly the 600,000 passport holders, or whether it should include the approximately 14 million people worldwide with Lebanese ancestry. Regardless, they embraced the diaspora’s diversity, saying its political inclusion was critical, and raising the ongoing debate over the diaspora’s right to vote. Panelists also expressed unanimous support for remittances aimed at consumption and the extended family.

Experts underlined the importance of Lebanese Central Bank initiative Circular 331. Issued in 2013, it sets \$400 million aside to invest in, and thus help boost, local incubators, funds and startups.

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Student Profile: Joe Gosler



Joe Gosler doesn’t care much about conducting research in Arabic, or reading an Arabic newspaper. His primary motivation for taking Arabic classes at LAU’s New York Headquarters and Academic Center (LAU NY) is simply to talk to people, to connect with them in a meaningful way.

“There’s no urgency, no commercial reason, for me to learn this language, its just another way of touching and

being touched by life around you,” says the retired educator, who followed LAU Arabic instructor Rasha Arabi from NYU.

Gosler is among some 14 students who studied Arabic at LAU NY this semester, taking advantage of SINARC’s Levantine dialect course, a unique and desirable offering drawing those who want to use the language in an informal environment, for business or a career in law enforcement. At 70, Gosler has a few years on most of his classmates, but that doesn’t bother him.

Dutch by birth, he lived in Israel from 1949 to 1953 before immigrating to the United States, where he worked in private industry prior to establishing a successful career in education. “My wife and I also started our own preschool called Beginnings Nursery School on East 16th Street which is now in its 32nd year and doing phenomenally well,” says Gosler.

Beginnings is one of the leading preschools schools in the northeast of a teaching style called Reggio. The approach is based on the principles of respect, responsibility and community, and instills the principle of how to make one’s self useful in everyday life. It is perhaps the experience of being imbued with such a teaching style for so many years that Gosler approaches learning with the bright-eyed joy and fascination of a child.

“I’ve been casually studying the language for six years... I like the sound of it, there are lots of things I like about the culture, and the language is just one symbol of that,” he adds.

He finds the classrooms at LAU NY bright, pleasant and a “wonderful environment to learn in”. But as with any good class, the teacher is the real draw. “Rasha piques our curiosity,

challenges us and yet is not overwhelming. If it wasn’t fun, if it was stressful, I wouldn’t be here.”

Other than Israel, he’s never been to the Middle East, but plans to take his son in the next few years. In the meantime, he’s delighted to be able to understand a few words in movies about the Arab world, or to frequent Middle Eastern restaurants and strike up conversation with the staff. “Sometimes I make a fool of myself, but I’m not ashamed of doing that,” he says confidently. “As adults we continue to grow and change, and we need to continue to challenge ourselves.”

ON OUR WEBSITES

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LAU matters

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LAU academic center



(left) Dr. Jack Shaheen gives a riveting lecture at LAU NY. (right). Academic Executive Director Lina Beydoun, Dr. Shaheen and filmmaker Yossera Bouchtia.

The Arab-American Experience

How are Arabs portrayed in American cinema, on popular television shows and in U.S. popular culture? On April 8, Dr. Jack Shaheen, internationally acclaimed author, media critic and Hollywood film consultant, who is also a distinguished visiting scholar at New York University, visited LAU’s New York Headquarters and Academic Center to help answer these and other questions. Shaheen kicked off an exhibit and month-long series of events entitled “The Arab American Experience” aimed at dispelling stereotypes of Arabs and promoting cross-cultural understanding. The series was the result of a collaboration between LAU and the American University of Beirut (AUB).

The inaugural event featured a screening of Dr. Shaheen’s film “Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,” after which participants had an opportunity to visit the “A is for Arab: Stereotypes in U.S. Popular Culture” exhibit, a series of panels on display at LAU NY from April 8 to May 4. The exhibit featured anti-Arab and anti-Muslim depictions taken from books, movies, toys, games, cartoons, and television shows. Dr.

Shaheen then gave an impassioned lecture about his years of work exposing and dispelling negative Arab and Muslim stereotypes in the U.S. media.

Dr. Shaheen began this work in the mid-1970s when he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to teach communications at AUB. During his time in the Middle East, he traveled to Palestinian refugee camps, Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia, where he witnessed, for the first time, the humanity of devout Christians and Muslims that was almost never shown in American media.

“In April of 1975, I gave my first speech on stereotypes at the AUB Alumni House ... We had people from the American embassy there and the Lebanese Minister of Education. It was a wonderful experience,” he said. When Dr. Shaheen returned to the U.S., he decided to write about it. “I finished my article called ‘The TV Arab,’ but no one would publish it. I received 40 rejection letters over a period of three years.”

He continued to teach courses on media, but in the evenings he monitored televisions programs, documenting how

they depicted, and often vilified, Arabs. He reviewed 200 TV programs over eight years, and in 1984 his book “The TV Arab” was published.

“When the book came out, there wasn’t a tremendous interest, but gradually more and more people became aware of these issues and what I was doing,” he said. “Reel Bad Arabs” took Dr. Shaheen more than 20 years to produce, during which he saw and wrote about more than 1,200 films. “Forty years ago there was no literature on the subject, now there are numerous books and films contesting this stereotype. I am very happy to celebrate 40 years of work on this topic right back where it began, with friends and colleagues at AUB and LAU. It brings back warm memories.”

To see more photos from “The Arab American Experience” turn to page 8.

To learn more about Dr. Shaheen, please visit: neareaststudies.as.nyu.edu/object/kc.media.jackshaheen

For more information on upcoming events at the NYAC, please visit: nyac.lau.edu

New York Gala

The 4th Annual LAU NY Gala was held on May 11 at the New York Athletic Club overlooking Central Park, and benefitting LAU's Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World.

A cocktail reception in the Card Room was followed by an elegant dinner and program in the main ballroom, accompanied by music from the renown Alex Donner Orchestra.

Gala Chair Manal Saab welcomed the group and President Jabbra thanked attendees and donors for their support, after which MC Judge Jeanine Pirro moved the program along with her characteristic flair.

Guests were also treated to a surprise special performance by Lebanese Tenor Amine Hachem, who sang three numbers and brought the crowd to their feet with his stunning voice.

The Sarah Huntington Smith Award for Excellence was presented to three honorees: alumna Aminy Inati Audi, and Ambassador Gilbert and Rose-Marie Chagoury. Following the program, a cigar bar was enjoyed by many on the terrace, and dancing and drinks completed the very full evening.

We thank all of you who attended and hope to see many of you in next year's photos.



From top to bottom: 1) Rose-Marie Chagoury and family; 2) Honoree Aminy Audi accepts her award; 3) Amine wows the crowd with his amazing voice



Clockwise from top: 1) Dr. Jabbra is trapped by Eva and Manal; 2) VP Marla Rice-Evans and friends of LAU; 3) Young partiers on the terrace; 4) Diane Kaldany and Dr. James Mancuso; 5) Michael and Joe Audi visit with Bishop Gregory



LAU events

Clockwise from top:
1) The Chagourys accept their award; 2) Dancers hit the floor; 3) Hiba and Chady – all the way from Detroit; 4) Wendy, Linda and Brianna enjoying the view of Central Park



Clockwise from top: 1) Wa'el and Lina Chehab and friends; 2) Ghassan and Manal Saab, Bishop Gregory (Eparchy of St. Maron) and the Chagourys; 3) Judge Jeanine Pirro, Marcel Ghanem and Adib Kassis 4) A fun table of LAU friends; 5) Philip and Wadad Salem and friends



4th Annual *Gala*

LAU events

Arab American Experience Series



From top to bottom: 1) Raghida Dergham gives a lecture called “Daring to Differ” on April 23; 2) Violinist Hanna Khoury (L), Poet Nathalie Handal (third from left) and tabla player Hafez Kotain (R) join LAU’s Lina Beydoun and AUB’s Justin Tessler following a performance of music and poetry on April 30; 3) NYU film students in front of the panel exhibit at LAU NY on April 8.

Developing Community Through Dance in Lebanon



Dancers from LAU and Stockton University came together at LAU NY for a presentation and performance on May 28.

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 19: Houston Chapter to host LAU Pharmacy Students at the home of alumna, Tania Shaheen.

July 21-26: Alumni Homecoming - Beirut and Byblos

August: TGIF at the Met- New York/New Jersey Alumni Chapter

September 10-11: LAU Board of Trustees Meeting and Chairman’s Dinner - New York Headquarters and Academic Center

September 13: Family Picnic - Toronto Alumni Chapter

To Be Decided: Summer Picnic - New York/New Jersey Alumni Chapter

Watch your email for more information on upcoming events!

If your alumni chapter has an upcoming event, please notify:
Ed Shiner, Director of Alumni and Special Projects
(646) 255-1099, ed.shiner@lau.edu



Southern California

On March 14, the LAU Southern California Alumni Chapter enjoyed a potluck dinner at the home of Susan and Dr. Paul Qaqundah. Leila Blackstone co-chaired the gathering with Susan, and will host a similar gathering at her home in the fall.

Toronto



The Toronto Alumni Chapter gathered for a dinner at Mezza Garden Restaurant in Ajax, Ontario on March 21. More than 100 members and friends of the chapter raised money for the LAU Scholarship Fund. Guests also enjoyed dancing, arghila and a raffle.

Washington, D.C.



On April 16, LAU attended the American Task Force for Lebanon (ATFL) dinner in Washington, D.C. Seated: Ed Shiner, Director of Alumni and Special Projects, alumna Pascale Hayek, Marla Rice-Evans, Vice President of University Advancement; standing from left to right: Jay and Maria Ghazal, alumnus Anwar Aridi, Washington, D.C. Alumni Chapter Vice President Suzanne Nader Soubra, ATFL friend, Wissam Yafi, Mona Yacoubian (ASHA) and husband, John



Student Paul Hallak at the LAU Beirut campus.

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Without aid and assistance from generous donors, many students at LAU would not be able to access higher education. Donor support not only allows students to obtain a world-class education, it also provides them with an opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities that complement the skills they are learning in the classroom, and in doing so, to take on leadership roles.

Paul Hallak is a second year computer science major at LAU’s Beirut campus who currently receives financial assistance. Hallak is an active student leader on campus and has represented LAU in both the national Lebanese Collegiate Programming Contest and the Arab Collegiate Programming Contest. In addition, he’s been working on a

collaborative project between LAU and the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) aimed at reducing traffic in Beirut.

“Without financial aid, it would have been hard for me to participate in these activities and projects,” said Hallak. “Since I’m solely responsible for financing my education, coming up with the extra money to cover the rest of my tuition would have been nearly impossible.”

Hallak’s interest in computer science began in high school, when his father installed an Internet connection at home. “I was always interested in programming, algorithms and artificial intelligence. When I started reading and learning stuff on the web, – I got a basic idea of how computers and the Internet work. In the

11th grade, I started reading reference books on programming in multiple languages and frameworks.”

In addition to all the activities Paul is involved with, he is also participates in academic research through his student employment positions. “Student employment has been such an enjoyable experience that has added to my college education,” he said. “I get to work with the faculty and I have also acquired many skills needed in actual work settings, such as being punctual, managing time, prioritizing tasks and communicating well with others.”

To learn more about donating to LAU, please contact (212) 203-4333 or nydevelopment@lau.edu

Lebanese Diaspora

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“This is the most promising development since Lebanon’s civil war,” said Dr. Edgar Choueiri, director of Engineering Physics at Princeton University. With the intent of bolstering the economy, especially in the technological digital sector, Circular 331 targets Lebanese companies whose main activity takes place inside the country. “It’s a unique chance to recreate Lebanon,” added Roula Moussa, managing partner of Netways, an IT business solutions provider.

“For once, the government is doing something right,” added Habib Kairouz of Rho Capital Partners & Rho Ventures, a comment that resonated with laughter across the room.

The panelists were optimistic about the Lebanese economy’s prospect for growth, but several audience members questioned their ebullience. An almost inexistent rule of law, rising poverty levels, the burden of a million-plus Syrian refugees on the local job market, as well as the place of women in the Lebanese society, were all topics raised during the Q&A.

The enthusiasm from the public was such that the session was forced to end while a number of hands were still raised. “It was a dynamic discussion that gave the audience an opportunity to address various perspectives” said Alexandra Tarazi, a Lebanese-American working at The United Nations Global Compact.

The panel included **Dr. Edgar Choueiri**, director of Engineering Physics at Princeton University, **Dr. Philippe Fargues**, director, Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute, **Dr. Rand Ghayad**, associate, The Brattle Group, **Sergio Daniel Jalil**, executive director, Latin American Center for Lebanese Studies, **Habib Kairouz**, managing partner, Rho Capital Partners & Rho Ventures, **Roula Moussa**, managing partner, Netways, **Samuel Rizk**, senior programme advisor, United Nations Development Programme, **Dr. Nadim Shehadi**, director, Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies at Tufts University, **Dr. Paul Tabar**, director, Institute for Migration Studies, Lebanese American University.



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Mohamad **Yaghi**

Where do you live and what do you do?

My wife, Rowaida, our three children (Adam 7, Maya 9, and Sabeen 11) and I live in Mooresville, North Carolina. Mooresville is a small city about 30 miles north of Charlotte. I have been a dentist since 1998. I currently own and operate two dental offices in Charlotte. I left Lebanon to go the United States in 1988 after spending five semesters at LAU. The time I spent at LAU was short, but it was the period of my life that defined my whole future. As far as I remember, I always wanted to be a “doctor,” but where I come from that would have been a remote possibility.

How was your academic experience at LAU?

I joined LAU in 1987 with a promise of

paid tuition from a third party. When that fell through, I had no choice but to drop out. However, because of the persistence of the LAU staff and the generosity of LAU donors, I was able to continue my trek onto a great future. Simply put, my time at LAU was the best time of my life. That was the time when I saw the world as it is meant to be seen.

During the graduation of 1988, I saw the love of my life who, after 12 years, became my wife. Her sister happened to be engaged to my best friend. My wife later attended LAU and graduated in 1992.

How did you get involved with LAU in North America?

I got involved with the alumni network soon after I graduated dental school. I do

not consider what I give to LAU a “gift.” To me, it is a duty to give someone the same chance I got. I owe this institution my whole future. Giving back is the least I can do.

I consider myself an example of what financial support to LAU can do for a struggling student. There are many LAU students that are like me and we should support many more.

I am 49 years old and semi-retired in order to spend time with my family. I enjoy every minute with them. I also enjoy flying and building airplanes.