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Editor’s Notes

Challenging Tradition

When I first learned of Haifaa Al-Mansour ‘97, Saudi Arabia’s first female filmmaker, I thought she would make an interesting profile, as a pioneer who had crossed a new frontier. Then, when I read her interview “For the Love of Her Country” (page 28), I was impressed by her desire to bring about change in her homeland, while respecting and valuing its heritage and culture. In her films, Al-Mansour has focused on subjects related to women and their role in Saudi society. She has brought to the surface discussions on subjects considered taboo and dared to question tradition.

While Al-Mansour’s films focus on her country, the issues she discusses are relevant and timely to the rest of the region. The second Arab Human Development Report specifically highlights the empowerment of women as a prerequisite to development and economic growth, while each of the next two reports also mention gender equality. Moreover, the Millennium Development Goals — to which all Arab countries have pledged — call for ensuring universal access to primary education. All of these make it clear that a significant share of the advancement of the region will come at the hands of today’s women and girls.

Traditions that sometimes hold women hostage. What Al-Mansour and other Arab filmmakers have in common is their desire to bring about the needed changes in economic, social or cultural conditions and to question traditions that sometimes hold women hostage. What Al-Mansour and other Arab filmmakers have in common is their desire to bring about change in their society, while respecting and valuing its heritage and culture. In her films, Al-Mansour has focused on subjects related to women and their role in Saudi society. She has brought to the surface discussions on subjects considered taboo and dared to question tradition. While Al-Mansour’s films focus on her country, the issues she discusses are relevant and timely to the rest of the region. The second Arab Human Development Report specifically highlights the empowerment of women as a prerequisite to development and economic growth, while each of the next two reports also mention gender equality. Moreover, the Millennium Development Goals — to which all Arab countries have pledged — call for ensuring universal access to primary education. All of these make it clear that a significant share of the advancement of the region will come at the hands of today’s women and girls.

Millennium Development Goals in the Arab Region

The American University in Cairo is a nonprofit private institution devoted to education to serve Egypt and the Middle East.

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Al-AUCToday is published three times a year by the American University in Cairo.

We welcome all letters. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity. Please send all correspondence to AUCToday.

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For the Record

Taking retirement after 22 years at AUC that followed nine years as NBC News Cairo bureau chief — in all 31 very high profile years as a news correspondent in Cairo, has meant a flurry of profile pieces in Egyptian and regional media. But the one I enjoyed the most was the AUCToday Summer 2005 profile “Broadcasting Schleifer,” probably because it quoted so many great people saying such nice things and it ran my favorite photos, hanging out with Egyptian troops close to the Kuwaiti border on the eve of the 1991 Gulf War. My only regret is that I didn’t take advantage of the opportunity to put to rest an incredible rumor that has circulated on our campus for years — that shouldn’t surprise me because academic life can take on a cloistered hot-house atmosphere in which rumors, like extravagant untended weeds, do flourish. So let me do that now. There are two parts to this persistent rumor. The first was that NBC News missed the Sadat assassination in October 1981. That part of the rumor is true. After more than a decade of covering the military parade even when it had no news value precisely because the president was a sitting duck so-to-speak, we weren’t there that day. That’s because we were advancing a story we had scopped the region on the day before: how an Israeli sub stuck on a sandbar off Jeddah the day before almost sparked a new Arab-Israeli war, and we knew we had another scoop because the sub was off the sandbar and would be sailing through the Suez Canal the next day (parade day) on its way back to Israeli waters. So we counted on the TV news agencies to cover us, not realizing that while we and our direct competition were now using videotape, the agencies were still shooting film, which meant our cover really wasn’t a competitive cover.

The second part of the rumor is that I was fired because we technically missed the assassination. “Technically” because in the end it was NBC that broke story with a radio report from the bureau two minutes after the attack when everybody out at the parade ground couldn’t get to a phone line for many minutes more, and because we did end up with footage to screen (how we managed that is another story).

Because of the long forgotten submarine story, we had two correspondents in Cairo and myself as producer reporter to do follow up on Sadat’s assassination, while both CBS and ABC were out of pocket for reporters for at least 24 hours after the first stories ran (again that’s another story). So we piled on one follow-up report after another, and TV Guide judged that the best coverage of the assassination was the NBC News coverage, even though we missed the main event, which TV Guide never quite realized. As for myself, instead of being fired as the rumor goes, I continued to serve as bureau chief for nearly two years until I resigned to join the AUC faculty in September 1983, with full honors and a consultancy from NBC News. This is a quick sketch — the full story is both funny and fascinating, although it revolves around a terrible and tragic event; but that was typical of the times when foreign correspondents could still work at the edges of danger without being among the victims.

S. Abdallah Schleifer, professor emeritus in journalism, Cai on, Egypt

Reconnected

The summer 2005 issue featured Mennat Allah El Dorry’s 10 hours before graduation. Her father was featured also, and I was so happy to see him. He was one of my later father’s dear friends, and I lost total contact with him after my father died and immigrated to the United States. It would mean a lot to me to e-mail her or e-mail me in getting in touch with him. I am an AUC graduate, and currently I am an associate professor at Central State University of Ohio. My e-mail address is sselem1@aol.com.

Susie Khairy Seleem ’85
Ohio, United States

AUCToday welcomes letters from readers. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Please send to auctoday@aucegypt.edu or Editor, AUCToday Office of Communications and Marketing, 113 Kass El Arin Street, PO Box 2511, Cairo 11511.
Fall 2005

Imposing Aid

American, 14 percent European, 11 percent Middle Eastern, 5 percent graduate students, one-third are females, 53 percent, than males. Almost one-third of the entire class applied without having declared a major. Of those who did declare, electronics engineering was the most popular major in the sciences and engineering school; political science and psychology in the humanities and social sciences school; and business administration and journalism and mass communication in the business, economics and communication school.

Graduate admission figures are almost identical to last year’s, totalling 278 new students in addition to about 36 readmitted ones. Of all the undergraduate and graduate students, one-third are international, mostly study-abroad and Arabic Language Institute students. Of these, 64 percent are American, 14 percent European, 11 percent Middle Eastern, 5 percent are from the Far East and 4 percent are African.

Queen of Great Britain Honors Harrell-Bond

In recognition of her years of service to refugees worldwide, Barbara Harrell-Bond, distinguished visiting professor of Forced Migration and Refugee Studies (FMRS), was awarded the title of Officer of the Order of the British Empire in June 2005. Harrell-Bond began work at AUC five years ago, helping to set up the FMRS program and teaching refugee studies. Since she founded the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University in 1982, Harrell-Bond has been advocating the rights of refugees and has established legal aid programs internationally.

Her recently co-authored book, Rights in Exile, has just been published and holds both governmental and nongovernmental bodies accountable. “The book was an attempt to address the extent to which refugees enjoyed their rights in exile, but it became a catalog of violations,” she explained. Her previous book, Imposing Aid, is a critique of humanitarian work and an analysis of emergency relief. Through her work with the British-based charity organization AMERA, Harrell-Bond helped provide legal representation for refugees in Uganda, Sudan and Kenya. Currently, she is working on the establishment of refugee legal aid programs in Zambia, Turkey and Lebanon. “Legal aid is a right of a refugee,” she asserted.

AUC Professor and Students Receive United Nations Award for Excellence

This summer, the United Nations Information Center (UNIC) in Cairo awarded Nahl Fahmy, adjunct political science professor, and three of her top students for their comprehensive study of the United Nations in a course titled Seminar in International Organizations.

The students, Amr Fahmy ’05, Chotika Suwanwattana ’05 and Sarah El-Kazaz, a political science graduating senior, were recognized for their exceptionally high performance and Fahmy for her outstanding effort in teaching about UN organizations. The students were delighted to receive the awards after making their presentation of the study about UN organizations. "I am so proud of this award and of the students for showing such an eager desire to learn about and grasp the internal and external intricacies of such a complicated international organization as the United Nations," Fahmy said.

Former UNIC Director Dysane Dorani selected the course for the award after visiting last spring upon Fahmy’s invitation. He praised Fahmy for the emphasis placed on the study of internal issues, structures and problems of the United Nations. The core content of the course included the latest report of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, which was the focus of the Millennium Summit this September in the General Assembly. "The students were delighted to receive the awards after making their presentation of the study about UN organizations," Fahmy said.

The award means so much to me, especially after all the hard work," said Suwanwattana. "It reminds me that hard work and academic honesty are not always taken for granted or overlooked!"

Amr Fahmy shared his classmate’s sentiment. “The feeling of being awarded always pushes me to aim for more and appreciate the confidence I have in myself,” he said.
Senior U.S. Officials Discuss Development with LEAD Students

Karen Hughes, U.S. undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, and Dina Powell, assistant U.S. secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, held an informal gathering with students on the Main Campus. Meeting the challenges of connectivity for the new campus has required an innovative and flexible approach.

Members of the AUC community can now view progress on the new campus site without having to leave their computer screens. By logging onto ncd.auc.egypt.edu, users get an hourly image update of the construction work in New Cairo. Meeting the challenges of connectivity for the new campus has required an innovative and flexible approach.

Haroun Begins Term as Science Dean

After a rigorous international selection process, Medhat Haroun, holder of the AGIP endowed professorship in the construction engineering department, was chosen to serve as the new dean of the School of Sciences and Engineering. Haroun succeeds Fadel Ansalaby, who served as the school’s dean since 1999 and has now returned to teaching and heading AUC’s Science and Technology Research Center.

As dean, Haroun is responsible for overseeing the departments of biology, chemistry, computer science, construction engineering, mechanical engineering, electronics engineering, interdisciplinary engineering programs, mathematics and physics. “I would like all departments to actively participate in mapping what directions the school will take to further enhance its stature and programs. The final say will be up to the faculty,” Haroun said.

Haroun received his doctorate from the California Institute of Technology in 1979, after which he taught at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) for 20 years. He served for two terms as chair of the UCI civil and environmental engineering department and received the University Distinguished Professor Award for Teaching. He then became director of the University of California’s Education Abroad Center, overseeing the needs of study-abroad students.

Haroun joined AUC in 1999 as a construction engineering professor and chair of the engineering department, and in 2003, he received the AUC Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

Besides his teaching career, Haroun is a world-renowned expert in earthquake engineering, having conducted considerable research on seismic loading and structures’ response to earthquakes. He focused his research on buildings, bridges and particularly tanks, for which he received the Huber Civil Engineering Research Prize from the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Theater Design Director Wins State Incentive Award for AUC Play

Hazen Shebl, technical director in the performing and visual arts department, recently won the 2004 State Incentive Award in theater décor for the play Etmin fi Ela (Two in a Basket) performed in early 2003 on the Falaki Studio Theatre. The award, which consists of a certificate and cash, is the highest government honor given to young artists and is presented by the president of Egypt. The award committee cited Shebl’s innovative and ideal use of space as the main reason for winning the award. “I cherish this award because it is from my country. I feel recognized as an Egyptian artist,” he said.

Shebl has been working at AUC for the past 11 years. He has also worked at venues outside the university, including the Cairo Opera House and public theaters. He has recently returned from Canada where he took part in the World Stage Design international exhibition. In addition, Shebl is a member of the United States Institute for Theater Technology and the International Organization of Scenographers, Theatre Architects and Technicians, based in the Netherlands.

AuScenes

Web Camera Captures Hourly Snapshots of New Campus Progress

After looking into both satellite and terrestrial technology, Mahmoud El Akabawi, associate vice president for computing and professor of information systems, chose wireless radio frequency (RF) from the New Cairo site to its nearest telephone exchange and then via a terrestrial link from that exchange to the downtown campus. “We started testing in December 2004 with an experimental, wireless RF link between the downtown campus and the dormitories in Zamalek. We found it to be stable, economically viable, and to this day that link is still up and running,” said El Akabawi. Four months later, an operational link was created between the new campus and the nearby Kattanayaa telephone exchange. In a week’s time, “everything was ready for data exchange, telephony and the ability to transmit the Web cam pictures to the world,” he said.

“We have eliminated the distance between the city and the new campus,” said El Akabawi, adding that “there will be a complete high-tech environment that will enable the new campus site to be the most advanced learning space in the entire Middle East.”
A veteran journalist for the past 30 years, a media consultant to governments around the world and former editor of a major newspaper and Internet news site, Lawrence Pintak is the newly appointed director of the recently renamed Adham Center for Electronic Journalism. He comes to AUC from the University of Michigan, where he served as professor of journalism and public policy.

“I have a very long interest in the Middle East and the broader Muslim world,” Pintak said. “Cairo is a leading force in the Arab world, and it’s fascinating to work in a place that has such an impact on the development of young Arab journalists and the regional media they operate in.”

Reporting from four continents, Pintak served as the Middle East correspondent for CBS News and contributed to such leading U.S. networks as PBS and ABC. He covered the birth of modern radical terrorism in the 1980s and more recently reported on the rise of political Islam in Indonesia. He was nominated twice for an Emmy Award for his Middle East coverage and was awarded two Overseas Press Club citations on the Indonesian revolution and the rise of political Islam in Indonesia. He authored a book, "Flawed Middle East Policy Ignited the Jihad: Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens: Bush, Bin Laden and the War of Ideas," Pintak said. "It is an important book that is about what they’re doing, examine the options they have and choose the way they deem appropriate.”

He added that he expects the Adham center to help foster the evolution of Arab journalism, not in a way that is a recreation of the U.S. media, but by instilling a sense of professionalism that would help Arab journalists “think about what they’re doing, examine the options they have and choose the way they deem appropriate.”

Author of Seeds of Hate: How America’s Flawed Middle East Policy Ignited the Jihad and a forthcoming book, "Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens: Bush, Bin Laden and the War of Ideas," Pintak is highly critical of President George W. Bush’s post-9/11 policies. He’s even more critical of the way the U.S. and Arab media have handled the situation.

“The U.S. and Arab media were showing two different versions of the story,” Pintak said. “Americans were seeing it as a justified war and the Arabs were seeing it as an unfair and offending war. Americans didn’t see people dying, babies wounded and mothers crying, and Arabs were seeing just that.”

“The solution was to resume a dialogue and for reporters to be balanced,” Pintak asserted. “We need to consciously avoid allowing the extreme voices on both sides to drown out the mainstream. That way, we will begin to rebuild a conversation.”

By Dalia Al Nimr
“Projections to the year 2050 show that 66 countries, comprising about two-thirds of the world population, will face moderate to severe water scarcity. The consequences of these water shortages on economic and social development, political stability and preservation of life will be immense.”

Mahmoud Abu-Zeid
Egyptian Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation

Egypt is among these countries, as Abu-Zeid told Al Ahram Weekly upon his return from the second World Water Forum in Holland. In fact, if water in Egypt is not properly managed, the country may face a serious food and water crisis in the future.

“If Egypt’s population continues to grow and we keep using water at the same rate per person, the demand may exceed the supply and the government may have to resort to water rationing,” said Edward Smith, construction engineering professor at AUC, who specializes in water quality and wastewater treatment.

The situation is compounded along the banks of the Nile -- where each of the three principal Nile basin countries -- Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan -- wants to increase its share of water at the expense of the other two. With their populations expected to surge from 167 million to 264 million in 20 years’ time, the three countries are also faced with a grain shortage resulting from water deficits.

The problem in Egypt is not only the availability of water, but also in quality with sewage and garbage being dumped into agricultural drains and some irrigation canals, issues of water quality become all the more important.

Faculty members at AUC have researched water quality and quantity, coming up with answers that are not always black and white, but which nevertheless show that viable solutions are long overdue.

Will Water Run Out?
As we all go about swimming, taking regular showers, housing our cars and washing the dishes, it’s hard to think of water as anything but abundant and renewable. And with the Nile River flowing, people feel that water is here to stay.

“It’s not that you’ll open the tap one day and no water will come out,” said Emad Imam, construction engineering professor and consultant to the Egyptian Ministry of Irrigation. “But we need to utilize our supply more efficiently and manage our demand if we want to attain food security.”

Salih El Haggar, mechanical engineering professor who specializes in sources of water contamination, described the situation as a lack of appreciation of the finite supply of water and the need to manage it.

“People do not pay for water, so they have no sense of its value and use it wastefully,” he said.

The most effective way to control individual water consumption, El Haggar noted, is water pricing. Water meters should be installed in homes so that people pay for the amount of water they consume. Currently, in places where such meters are available, they are mostly out of order. “Pricing will make people think twice about the way they use water,” El Haggar said.

Agreeing, Smith noted, “You’re not going to think about how much water you use until it affects you financially.” He added that unaccounted for water in Cairo averages about 30 to 40 percent, one of the highest urban rates worldwide.

Even more problematic than municipal use is the area of agriculture. El Haggar pointed out.

Farmers in Egypt still use flood irrigation, a low-tech method by which water is poured onto the fields and allowed to flow along the ground among the crops. However, a lot of water is wasted because about one half of it does not reach the crops. A more efficient method, which saves water and is not something that will happen immediately, not even in a few years, but it will take good planning and hard decision making … If the problem of agriculture is not addressed, then we would be spending 90 percent of our resources on 10 percent of the problem,” he said.

Is Our Water Safe?
The key question on the minds of many is whether the water we drink is clean or has been polluted by bacteria. However, because water tanks on the roofs of buildings are not regularly maintained, it means that drinking water is not as clean as it should be. “Water is tapau, but it will take good planning and hard decision making … If the problem of agriculture is not addressed, then we would be spending 90 percent of our resources on 10 percent of the problem,” he said.

The problem, El Haggar explained, is convincing farmers to change their traditional methods of irrigation. He recounted how during his field visits to Egyptian villages when he was working on his co-authored book People and Pollution, farmers would tell him that flood irrigation is the way their ancestors used to water their land and that they don’t intend to change it. “It’s difficult to convince them that what their parents were doing was wrong,” El Haggar said.

Smith shares El Haggar’s notion that changing farming attitudes is not an easy task, but he believes that a solution must be pursued at both national and local levels. “It’s a long-term strategy and is not something that will happen immediately, not even in a few years, but it will take good planning and hard decision making … If the problem of agriculture is not addressed, then we would be spending 90 percent of our resources on 10 percent of the problem,” he said.

El Haggar also differentiated between water purity, water quality and water quantity. “For the most part,” Smith said, “tap water in Cairo meets Egyptian and international safety standards. But occasionally — and I say occasionally — there may be a level of organic substances that form compounds with chlorine, which could increase the risk of cancer if ingested over a long period of time.”

Imam shares Smith’s view that drinking water in Egypt is not hazardous. “All in all, the Nile River is in good condition except for some black spots that indicate high pollution areas,” he said. “We don’t expect the Nile to have clear or distilled water, but it should be in balance for all species to exist safely. Therefore, external pollution has to be limited.”

An expert on pollution, El Haggar confirms that tap water is generally free from bacteria. However, because water tanks on the roofs of buildings are not regularly maintained, it means that drinking water is not as clean as it should be. “Water is tapau, but it will take good planning and hard decision making … If the problem of agriculture is not addressed, then we would be spending 90 percent of our resources on 10 percent of the problem,” he said.

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industrial sector, where waste is not means that chemicals run into the garbage and solid wastes into the water to people’s lack of awareness. In the governorates. recalling how he was served a cup of water in villages is not safe,” he said, “People only think of what they can do with water,” El Haggar said. as high as 80 percent. The drinking canal in Giza a water sample from a Salah El Haggar taking El Haggar attributes water pollution “It all comes down to what people don’t think of how it impacts the whole community. Environmental awareness is a science — a crucial science — that needs to be become widespread here in Egypt.”

To Filter or Not To Filter
“Bottled water is an economic burden that may not be necessary. Water here is not that unsafe, with the exception of coastal areas and some northern cities where water purification systems are not very efficient,” Imam said. Nevertheless, he did acknowledge that having filters at home is a good way to remove impurities and a limited amount of dissolved pollutants. “Most filters will do some good,” he said.

Smith, who is currently in the midst of a four-year research project on residential water quality, said that most activated carbon units are good at removing organic substances as well as chlorine. Reverse osmosis units, some of which cost more than LE 2,000, are very effective in removing most of the substances in water, but they are expensive to purchase and regularly maintain. “They sometimes remove substances that wouldn’t hurt if they remain in the water,” Smith added.

El Haggar noted that although conventional filters generally remove suspended solids, they do not get rid of salts and chlorine. Chlorine is added during the purification process to disinfect water from bacteria and viruses, and that’s why it is unsafe to store filtered water in plastic bottles since chlorine may react with the plastic. “What’s more dangerous is the chlorine reacting with organic matter thrown in the water. That may cause cancer on the long term,” El Haggar said. “Reverse osmosis units, though expensive, are good because they remove chlorine and salts in the water.”

Are We in Danger?
Faculty experts agree that there is no immediate danger, but if water quality is not adequately addressed, there is a potential long-term threat. “Eighty percent of the diseases that have become widespread in Egypt — including cancer Hepatitis C, as well as liver and kidney failure — come from pollution in the water, air and soil,” El Haggar said, adding that chemical fertilizers and pesticides not only weaken the soil and land, they are also carcinogenic. He noted that a lot of money is spent treating patients when the real solution is to have an all-embracing system that would not allow pollution to happen in the first place. “Prevention is better than treatment,” he asserted.

Echoing the same sentiment, Smith said that people have to realize that “it’s more expensive to pollute than not to pollute. Violators have to be fined, and pre-treatment has to be done properly. We can avoid a lot of problems if we do things correctly from the start.”

Smith also pointed out that, besides the health risks, water contamination poses a threat to the quality of life that many have gotten used to. If coastal areas are polluted, going to the beach may no longer be an option in the summer. In addition, if there are bad years with little rainfall and snowmelts in the headwaters of the Nile, widespread conservation may be the only way out. “People might have to significantly alter their lifestyle, and if everyone insists on doing nothing, this could happen in a short time,” he said.

The Solution
Imam believes that the solution is multidisciplinary. “Water issues are closely tied to the whole fabric of society,” he said. “To address the problem of water, you need to address a host of other issues as well.” He noted that an integrated water resources management systems should be put in place. To operate effectively, this system should include a close monitoring of performance to reward those who abide by it and punish those who don’t. Rural sectors should be provided with better services, and the government should coordinate its efforts with nongovernmental organizations, local villagers and water experts to come up with a unified course of action.

“Our problem is not that we are poor or incapable of doing something; we just have an inefficient system,” Imam said. “Overpopulation could be viewed as a burden or as a repository of human resources. As long as you have a good system in place, things would work fine no matter how many people there are.”

Sharing the same viewpoint, El Haggar noted that strategic planning is the first step forward. The country needs a comprehensive agricultural scheme, with a clear vision and mission statement. The plan should provide villagers with a central location to dump their garbage and create adequate sewage collection and treatment facilities. “Fines should then be inflicted on those who don’t abide by the law,” he said, adding that the media could play a pivotal role in educating farmers about safe irrigation methods.

On a local level, small-scale organizations made up of village residents should be trained on matters such as waste disposal and recycling, making them accountable for the cleanliness of the village. Most importantly, each individual should be guided by a sense of responsibility toward his or her community. “Ancient Egyptians had to swear an oath that they did nothing to harm the Nile. Today, we do it without thinking because we are only considering what benefits us personally, no matter what the consequences are,” he said.

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Imam believes that the solution is multidisciplinary. “Water issues are closely tied to the whole fabric of society,” he said. “To address the problem of water, you need to address a host of other issues as well.” He noted that an integrated water resources management systems should be put in place. To operate effectively, this system should include a close monitoring of performance to reward those who abide by it and punish those who don’t. Rural sectors should be provided with better services, and the government should coordinate its efforts with nongovernmental organizations, local villagers and water experts to come up with a unified course of action.

“Our problem is not that we are poor or incapable of doing something; we just have an inefficient system,” Imam said. “Overpopulation could be viewed as a burden or as a repository of human resources. As long as you have a good system in place, things would work fine no matter how many people there are.”

Sharing the same viewpoint, El Haggar noted that strategic planning is the first step forward. The country needs a comprehensive agricultural scheme, with a clear vision and mission statement. The plan should provide villagers with a central location to dump their garbage and create adequate sewage collection and treatment facilities. “Fines should then be inflicted on those who don’t abide by the law,” he said, adding that the media could play a pivotal role in educating farmers about safe irrigation methods.

On a local level, small-scale organizations made up of village residents should be trained on matters such as waste disposal and recycling, making them accountable for the cleanliness of the village. Most importantly, each individual should be guided by a sense of responsibility toward his or her community. “Ancient Egyptians had to swear an oath that they did nothing to harm the Nile. Today, we do it without thinking because we are only considering what benefits us personally, no matter what the consequences are,” he said.

El Haggar likened human negligence toward the environment to ostriches burying their heads in the sand so as not to look at the enemy. Because the ostrich cannot see the enemy, it reckons that it is safe that way. “We have to stop acting like ostriches,” he said. “Because the impact of environmental degradation is not immediately visible, we are oblivious to any coming danger and keep harming it more and more.”

Also emphasizing that the solution has to come from within, Smith said that the lack of foresight and initiative, coupled with carelessness and greed, are the root causes of the problem. “We have to stop being shortsighted and not lean on the government to do everything for us; we all bear responsibility for our circumstances,” he said. “We should operate with the mindset that fresh water is finite and that we have to work hard to use what’s available in the best way possible so that we have something for ourselves and generations to come.”
Students come face-to-face with life in the real world through AUC’s summer internship program

For political science senior Dina Mourad, summer was not a relaxing time to sleep in, sit by the pool or travel with family and friends. For six weeks, she had to wake up at 7 am, dress in a suit and high heels borrowed from her mother’s wardrobe, tie her hair in a bun and set off to work at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There, she attended conferences and prepared reports.

“Although I had rough times dealing with some people, I now understand more about the dynamics of the work environment than I would have from just attending classes,” she said.

Mourad is among approximately 300 juniors and seniors who participated in internships last summer through AUC’s internship program. A major transition from the sheltered university walls into the prickly real world, the experience proved difficult for many.Yet at the end, most emerged with a new sense of self-worth and a more mature, realistic outlook on life.

For Sara Khafagy, a chemistry senior who worked as a nutritional analyst at Kraft Foods Egypt, the experience gave her a new foothold in her field. “In my very first lab experiment, I got an error message. I was frightened and frantically went wrong,” she said.

Khafagy discovered that since she hadn’t put enough solvent, the solution evaporated and the machine stopped. “If it was a lazy attitude, but the fact is that they were not doing their job,” said Azer. “I guess the engineer had to get tough with them so that others wouldn’t follow in their lead.” After that incident, all workers on site were more efficient in their work with Azer.

“Everybody was very accommodating, the most out of their stay at AUC.” It’s a real hierarchy,” he said. “The engineer is very strict and demands a lot of respect, and the worker has to obey. I sometimes felt that engineers were too harsh with workers.” It was only when Azer’s competence was challenged that he began to understand why engineers need to be so harsh.

Azer asked a group of workers on site to fix a piece of equipment, and when he found that his instructions were not followed, he had to keep repeating his request. After losing his temper and asking for the eighth time, the workers finally carried out his request. When Azer’s boss learned of the story, he reprimanded the workers and was fully supportive of Azer.

“I don’t know if they felt that I was too young to give them instructions or the politics of the work environment is very tricky. At first I was timid, but I gradually learned to speak out about what bothered me. That gave me a lot of self-confidence and always made me feel better.”

At the construction site of AUC’s new campus, Michael Azer, a construction engineering senior and an intern with Project Management International, also got a taste of the real world. As an assistant engineer, he spent the hot summer days on site and witnessed firsthand the relationship between engineers and workers in the field. “It’s a real hierarchy,” he said. “The engineer is very strict and demands a lot of respect, and the worker has to obey. I sometimes felt that engineers were too harsh with workers.” It was only when Azer’s competence was challenged that he began to understand why engineers need to be so harsh.

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By Dalia Al Nimr
Fear Under Fire

He said goodbye to his wife and three children and was flying into a war zone to cover an emergency story. Never having been there before, he had no real contacts or any tangible leads. But he had to figure out the lay of the land, getting to the right people at the right time and place to start the stories flowing.

Based in Abu Dhabi, Ashraf Hamdi ’82 has spent decades entering dangerous situations to dig for stories, meanwhile making sure he gets out alive. With 20 years behind him as a news correspondent with Reuters, Hamdi has reported from combat situations, natural disasters and peace talks in Washington, D.C.

During the most recent Iraq war, Hamdi was in charge of the southern border for Abu Dhabi TV, for which he still works. He had promised his wife it would be the last war he covers.

Leaving behind his family to cover yet another catastrophe, Hamdi has become no stranger to fear. “If you are not afraid, you won’t make it. It is not courage that keeps you going; it gets you wounded or worse. Your instincts help you survive. Knowing where you are is very important and this comes through being cautious. No story is worth your neck,” said Hamdi.

But this has to be put into practice on the ground. “The chaos in Iraq at the moment is terrible as it is taking place among civilians. The war itself was much safer than the aftermath,” said Hamdi. “During the war you were on one side or the other. The enemy is over there, and you can see the planes flying overhead; essentially you have an educated idea of where you are going. But now in Iraq, you can step outside your hotel and cross the road to get a bottle of water and find yourself dead. The killing is completely random, so it is just as dangerous for observers as it is for soldiers,” he explained.

In such an environment, keeping yourself safe is never going to be straightforward, said Hamdi, pointing to the increased number of deaths of members of the media in recent years. “CNN was the first to bring armed guards into a press vehicle; everyone covering events in Iraq now has armed security. There is a huge debate about whether this is inviting bullets in your direction,” said Hamdi. Recently, journalists have been required to take hostile environment awareness courses before entering dangerous war zones.

For Hamdi, these courses, which weren’t available when he started working, would have helped him deal with the emotional and psychological trauma he experienced after returning home. One of Hamdi’s first assignments as a young reporter was covering the famine camps in Darfur, Sudan. “I was asked to do the photography and had to come back with close-ups of all those children during the famine,” he recalled. “To this day, I cannot watch such scenes even on television. It gives me the shivers, and I can smell the death in my nostrils.” Hamdi continued to explain that he was unable to understand his feelings until recently when he learned of post-traumatic stress. “We simply didn’t know these things back then; we would come back after covering something and feel funny for a few days,” he said.

Though his wife doesn’t believe that he can stay away from covering another war and Hamdi himself suspects she may be right, he is adamant about the work he does being separate from who he is. He is resolve that any celebrity status is counterproductive in reporting the news. “Correspondents should not be the source of the news, which is becoming a trend; they should be reporting the news,” said Hamdi. “We are not important; what we do is important.”

By Wael Elazab
The architectural approach in this part of the world has to be designing the open spaces first, not solids. We designed open courtyards for definite space functions: some for movement, some for relaxation, some for spiritual rejuvenation,” said Mozhan Khadem, Boston Design Collaborative president and director of design, about AUC’s new campus landscaping.

AUC’s own Desert Development Center (DDC) is supplying the required plants and putting them into the new campus landscape. The landscaping – designed with a respect for nature and an awareness of the region’s climate – will contain numerous green areas that include nearly 150 different species and more than 8,000 trees. The plants will be a mixture of international and native Egyptian species. The campus is divided into zones, each employing a specific concept for the plants.

The most centrally located zone is referred to as the garden. It is in a depression and will be a formal, ornamental garden with pathways and fountains. There will be many flowering plants that provide fruit smells, aromas and colors. “We have a high number of citrus trees. These have aromatic flowers and are evergreens that bear fruit yearly,” said Yehia El Alaily, DDC new campus landscape project manager. This is in contrast to the perimeter zone, where the purpose is to create a “shelter belt to screen the campus from the surrounding area and also to serve as a wind breaker,” explained Richard Tutwiler, DDC director.

More than 350 date palms have been planted in what will become the AUC Park. “The idea of the park is to provide a connection between the university and the community and at the same time a transition; the concept is an oasis of palms,” Tutwiler said.

By Wael Elazab
Behind the controversial camera of Saudi Arabia’s first female filmmaker Haifaa Al-Mansour ’97

Haifaa Al-Mansour ’97 is not your typical Saudi woman. In a country where females only comprise 5 percent of the workforce, are limited to careers as teachers or nurses, are not allowed to drive and are generally confined to the private sphere, Al-Mansour stands out. Not only is she constantly on-the-go, she also holds a job in a field that is considered contentious in her country: filmmaking.

A graduate of AUC’s English and comparative literature department and the eighth of 12 siblings, Al-Mansour is Saudi Arabia’s first female filmmaker. Despite the fact that there are no cinemas in Saudi Arabia, Al-Mansour has managed to write, direct and showcase four short films dealing with controversial issues in Saudi society, making headlines in her country and abroad. Her films have been screened in numerous Arab and international film festivals, and she was chosen by the U.S. State Department in 2003 as one of seven Arab film directors invited to go to Hollywood on an international visit program. She has also recently joined Rotana production company as the first Saudi filmmaker.

In an interview with AUCToday, Al-Mansour talks about her upbringing, her struggles as a Saudi Arabian woman and her goals and ambitions as a female filmmaker.
You were born and raised in Saudi Arabia. How did that shape your character?
I don’t really know how it shaped my character, but it made me a real Saudi. I wasn’t alienated from my own culture. My views are always from within, and I have an insider’s view that a lot of non-natives don’t get even if they try.

How does that perspective as an insider move you?
It makes me feel that the mix up between tradition and religion has humiliated women and hindered their development for years. I strongly believe that Saudi women need a propeller for change. They need to see women in their society standing up for what they believe in and taking up careers other than teaching and nursing. Otherwise, it will be hard for them to change.

Is that why you decided to become a filmmaker?
Yes, because I believe that films are agents of change. Films are very poetic and human. Through films, you can change a lot of things around you. It’s nice and challenging to tell a story that engages others and at the same time sends a message to your community.

As a female filmmaker in Saudi Arabia, do you face opposition?
Of course I do, but I also find a lot of support. It seems like people in Saudi are very divided: either totally with me or totally against me. What is most important to me is the support of my family. I have always felt that my parents are very proud of me. They’ve always been open minded with my siblings and me about the choices we make in life. My sister chose to be a painter in the United States. One of my brothers is a music composer, and the other one an actor. My parents always trusted our judgment and never stood in our way.

Why did you decide to focus on the issue of the face veil in your first film, *The Only Way Out*?
I derive my ideas from things happening around me. People think that I like to talk about controversial topics for the sake of going against the grain. That’s not true. I like to talk about topics that I feel are essential to be tackled if my country is to advance. The face veil is definitely one of those topics. Two years ago, a rumor circulated around Saudi that a male serial killer was wearing the face veil to deceive his female victims. People were freaking out and closing their doors. Nobody knew who he was because he was completely cloaked in black. My aim was to highlight the security issue posed by such a dress.

What was the main message you were trying to convey in *The Only Way Out* by focusing on three Saudis stranded in the desert?
I wanted to show that in Saudi society nowadays there is a growing tension between liberal reformists and conservative Islamists, and that dialogue is the only way out. I wanted to present my message in a creative way, and that’s how I thought of the idea of three engineers — a liberal, a conservative and a moderate — stranded in the desert together. The film shows the clash of ideas in modern Saudi Arabia and the need for tolerance. It’s okay to be different, but we shouldn’t cancel each other out.

Women Without Shadows sparked a strong public reaction, ranging from outrage to praise. Did you expect such a reaction?
I didn’t expect it, even though I thought the film would trigger some opposition because it deals with sensitive topics in Saudi society such as male and female segregation and women having to wear the face veil. Somehow didn’t like the ideas the movie presented; others welcomed in new vision. I feel this controversy is a healthy sign if it is well directed. It makes people think and appreciate a lot of things that are taken for granted.

In this film, I spoke to elderly Saudi women who recall that 30 years ago, they were able to dress the way they like, move about freely and function normally in a mixed society. I wanted to show that traditions are not sacred. It’s very important to take an objective look at traditions, preserving what’s good and removing what’s bad — especially practices that demean women. We have reached a point where we have to be realistic and honest with ourselves.

The social restrictions on women in Saudi Arabia must affect your work. How do you cope with these limitations?
Social restrictions are there only if we want them to be. I am moving ahead with my career, and I have a lot of support. Much of what we think of as social restrictions are actually our fear of challenging the status quo and accepting what society forces on us. Unfortunately, women in the Arab world sometimes have a misconception that blindly following traditions and social customs will protect them and make them more virtuous. They end up losing themselves and their dreams to social norms that are very unfair.

How do you cope with the lack of a film industry in Saudi Arabia?
The lack of a film industry is surely an obstacle, but I manage. There are no movie theaters in Saudi, so I showcase my films in schools and other venues while promoting them on the Internet. *Women Without Shadows* was shown privately at the French Consulate in Jeddah — that was the only venue offered to me. With *The Only Way Out*, I had to shoot in the Emirates, where I used 16 millimeter cameras that aren’t available in Saudi. But I’ve realized that if I do something real and genuine, it will find its way to people. I find support for what I do because there are a lot of people out there interested in culture and art.

Why do you prefer to work in Saudi Arabia rather than London or the United States, for example?
I won’t add anything to the American or British filmmaking scene. I can’t pretend that I understand their culture fully or can compete with their technical skills. In Saudi, I can make films that are true about things I feel and live. Saudi culture is rich and diverse, and that doesn’t come across in the media. As a filmmaker, I have a chance to rectify stereotypes. I want to paint a true picture of my society because I believe that bring authentic to one’s culture is the key to success.

What are your future plans?
Landing a deal with Rotana is a dream for many people. I always used to shoot my films alone, but now I have a professional crew and specialized equipment. That will definitely change the quality and standard of my films. I am currently working on my first film with Rotana. It will open by the end of next year in theaters in the Gulf and Lebanon. But the thing I care about most is for my movies to have a real social, artistic and cultural value. I want to establish credibility with my viewers because that’s the only way to bring about social change.
Tackling Terrorism

By Dalia Al Nimr
Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr

“Terrorism, political science professor, believes that any terrorist act stems from political frustration. “Political problems are always at the heart of the matter,” he said. In his view, the Arab world is plagued with internal problems of leadership, corruption and curtailment of individual freedoms. In addition, there are mounting external pressures, most notably the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and post-war Iraq. “It’s a depressing situation that perpetuates misguided movements,” he said. What compounds the situation is the Middle East’s crumbling landscape.”

“Iraq and Afghanistan are symptoms, not the core. The core of the problem is that Western governments treat Arabs as inferior, as dependents.”

Ideology of Terror

Kathleen Myambo, associate professor of psychology, differentiated between three types of terrorism: the psychopath, who is usually a self-centered serial killer; the retributional, who seeks revenge for a specific individual or group; and the religious or politically driven, whose sole aim is to cause terror without discriminating targets.

The latter, Myambo explained, is driven by a solid ideology and a brainwashed loyalty for a particular group. “Anybody outside the group is considered an enemy. When people don’t feel society is giving them what they want as citizens, they fall prey to such groups,” Myambo said.

She noted that even though religious terrorists are primarily concerned with wrongdoing and political terrorists with wars and policymaking, both have an inflexible mentality and are set to accomplish their mission at any cost.

“They have a very rigid ideology and are so focused on achieving their goals that they don’t look left or right,” she said. “They feel that when they take matters into their own hands and attempt to change the existing system, they are building a new society.”

The Roots of Terror

Walid Kazziha, political science professor, believes that any terrorist act stems from political frustration. “Political problems are always at the heart of the matter,” he said. In his view, the Arab world is plagued with internal problems of leadership, corruption and curtailment of individual freedoms. In addition, there are mounting external pressures, most notably the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and post-war Iraq. “It’s a depressing situation that perpetuates misguided movements,” he said. What compounds the situation is the Middle East’s crumbling landscape.”

“When people don’t feel part of a nation state or when they feel that there is a lack of opportunities preventing them from reaching their dreams, they feel alienated. It’s not necessarily about being poor or uneducated; it’s a feeling that society is treating them unfairly,” she said, adding that some of the effective ways to counter terrorism are to stop occupation, help marginalized people integrate into society and give citizens more space to participate politically.

Rizzo added that social factors are not the only cause. “Different [terrorist] groups have different reasons in different contexts.” The Sharm incident, for example, could have been an attempt to destabilize the Egyptian government for a number of possible reasons: “either because it is considered too aligned with the West or too oppressive or too liberal,” she said.

Also commenting on the ramifications of the recent incident in Sharm El Sheikh, Myambo said, “When you hurt tourism, you hurt the economy and eventually hurt the regime in power.”

AUC professors examine a global phenomenon through its social, geopolitical and psychological dimensions, while offering possible solutions for the future

The scene on television screens has become all too familiar: rubble, debris, chaos and endless bloodshed amidst cries of pain from people who have lost their loved ones.

Members of the AUC community felt the recent wave of terrorism close to home when near-simultaneous explosions ripped through the Ghazala Gardens Hotel, the Old Market and a beachfront parking lot in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El Sheikh last summer.

The Sharm El Sheikh incident — like 9/11, the London bombings and countless other acts of terror — raises concerns about the roots of terrorism and how it can be subdued.

The situation has become even more critical, since statistics show that international terrorism is on the rise.

A recent NBC News analysis said that out of the approximately 2,929 terrorism-related deaths that occurred worldwide since the September 11 attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, 58 percent of them happened in 2004 alone.

To help understand this phenomenon, faculty members from various disciplines shared their thoughts with AUC Today on the causes of terrorism, who engages in it and what the motives are.

Tackling Terrorism

By Dalia Al Nimr
Photos by Ahmad El-Nemr

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As long as the West can’t understand that the real objective of people in the region is to be free from Western hegemony and to be treated as independent nations with their own sovereign power, terrorism will continue.”

“The shorthand media method where TV reporters have only one minute to tell a news story necessitates that journalists find a way to communicate with their audience simply and briefly.”

Kazziha believes that resorting to terror is a means of making one’s voice heard. “You can’t look at the Sharm incident as an isolated terrorist act. It’s not just about hitting a hotel or market, it’s about sending a strong political message.” That message, he explained, will continue to palliate as long as major political crises like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the situation in Iraq remain unresolved.

But Kazziha affirms that terrorism is not the correct path. “Though terrorists think they are advancing the cause of Iraqis and Palestinians, terrorism will continue.”

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“Real Remedies
The question that lingers in the minds of many is what can be done to counter terrorism. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, sociology professor and an expert on militant groups in Egypt, asserts that terrorist acts like the Sharm incident occur because of two factors: the dissatisfaction of marginalized groups and the radicalization of religion. He was quick to point out, however, that not all attacks should be labeled as terrorist. “Only when the disruption, violence and killing is aimed at innocent lives does it deserve the term ‘terrorism,’” he said. Explaining why some groups resort to violence, Ibrahim said that terrorist attacks are a common way for discontented groups in society to challenge authority after giving up on peaceful means of addressing their grievances. “When a terrorist incident occurs, it casts doubt on the legitimacy of the regime and its ability to maintain law and order,” he said.

As for the radicalization of religion, Ibrahim noted that a “culture of killing” has become predominant among a circle of extremist Muslim groups who divide the world into two sectors: friends and enemies. Anybody outside the group — whether women, children or even fellow Muslims — is considered an enemy worthy of being murdered. Contrary to the common wisdom of killing the terrorists outright, the solution in Ibrahim’s view is to converse with the terrorists.

“Dialogue is the way forward,” he said. “In order for terrorism to stop, we have got to talk to the people who commit such crimes, understand their needs and wants and help assimilate them into the mainstream,” he said. Sharing the same viewpoint, Pintak noted that the media have a pivotal role to play in that respect. “Journalists need to talk to the terrorists and understand the motivating factors behind their actions. If we don’t understand why people do such horrific acts, they are never going to stop.”

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seven years ago at a friend’s barbecue, Wael Amin ’93 and Rana El Kaliouby ’98, ’00 first met. Amidst the laughter and noise of the crowd, Amin and El Kaliouby found themselves drawn into a conversation that lasted for hours. Each had discovered in the other a reflection of their true self. “It was a matter of the right chemistry,” Amin said.

What seems to have brought Amin and El Kaliouby together is a shared desire to realize a dream. Undaunted by life’s thorny circumstances, both set goals for themselves and were determined to reach them, despite any setbacks or obstacles along the way.

At a rented apartment in Hel disputed the links and noise of the world, each had borrowed LE 20,000 from his father to establish a software company called Microtabs. The company was off to a great start, and the three computer scientists felt that the money would soon be pouring in. After a few months, however, expenses started to add up and far exceeded revenues. Employee salaries could not be paid, and the company folded within a year. “We did everything wrong because we didn’t understand the business side of things, but it was a great learning experience,” said Amin.

Graduating top of his class, Amin was determined to start over. In 1994, he founded ITWorx, determined to build on what he learned from his first failed venture. Today, Amin is the chief executive officer of one of the leading software development companies in Egypt. Contrary to the shrink-wrapped software applications that his initial company was set to sell to the Arab world, ITWorx focused on client-based services for North American markets. “The demand for software services in North America was huge at the time. It was good timing,” he said.

Throughout the years, Amin worked on building a strong base for ITWorx with his partner Yossary Helmy, who is now chairman of the company. They learned about management, software processes and recruitment. “We wanted to build a resilient organization, and the key was to hire good people,” he said, adding that almost 50 percent of ITWorx employees are AUC graduates. “In any service business, success is based on the caliber of the people rather than the technology.”

That caliber is evident, with the company attracting top-notch clients, from Panasonic and Boeing to Microsoft and Vodafone. “We put in every effort to make our customers happy, and that’s why most of our business comes through referrals. The key is to focus on doing a good job and letting your work speak for itself.”

While her husband-to-be was exploring his entrepreneurial flair, El Kaliouby was working to realize her own dream on the research end of the same computer-driven technology. Recipient of the 1998 President’s Cup, El Kaliouby pursued a master’s degree in computer science at AUC, while simultaneously applying to doctoral programs abroad. Still a newlywed, El Kaliouby received her eagerly awaited acceptance to the University of Cambridge. Torn to be leaving her new husband, but unwavering in her desire to achieve her dream, she packed her bags and headed to England. “Living alone for almost four years in a foreign country, things weren’t always easy for El Kaliouby. Less than a year into her program, El Kaliouby discovered she was pregnant. “It was one of the happiest and most difficult moments of my life,” she said as she played cubes with 3-year-old Jana.

El Kaliouby’s goal now became twofold: to continue toward completion of her doctorate and to be a devoted mother. Overcoming her feelings of guilt, El Kaliouby sent Jana to daycare at an early age. “I would put her in daycare at the morning and hurriedly come back home to work on my research. I would not eat or think about anything except finishing my work so that when it was time for Jana to come home, I would give her care and attention.”

In addition to her doctoral research, El Kaliouby volunteered with Women@Cl, a UK-led initiative that aims to promote women’s role in technology. An organizing committee member, she contacted successful women in the field of computer science and organized seminars in which women spoke about the difficulties they faced in such a male-dominated field. “I was the only Muslim and Arab woman there. I felt that by playing an active role in this initiative, I would prevent a positive image of women in our region and inspire many women in Egypt and abroad.”

El Kaliouby continued with Women@Cl throughout her college years and finished her doctorate in intelligent user interfaces with honors. Her dissertation was nominated for the British Computer Society Distinguished Dissertation Award. Tackling a field untapped by many, El Kaliouby’s thesis in affective computing examines ways in which technology can be used to read moods and adapt accordingly. “If the computer detects that you are in a bad mood, it wouldn’t pop up virus alerts all the time, or if it infers that you are sleepy while driving, it would alert you to step up.” It’s a nice combination of computer science and psychology and a way to make computers emotionally intelligent,” El Kaliouby explained.

As for Jana, El Kaliouby smiles when she remembers their time in England. “We suffered together, but enjoyed every bit of it,” she said cuddling her toddler.

Sweet Success: byte-by-byte

He founded one of Egypt’s leading software companies. She is working to make computers more emotionally intelligent. IT power couple Wael Amin ’93 and Rana El Kaliouby ’98, ’00 share their story
While on vacation in Egypt with her father, Amra Bukvic began looking at studying in Cairo during February 2004. She is no stranger to international travel, having spent time in numerous foreign countries including three years in Indonesia prior to returning to her native Bosnia to complete high school.

At 17, Bukvic moved to Cairo with high hopes and a little apprehension about how she might fare as a woman. Her fears were mainly rooted in previous experiences in other developing countries. “When my father and I came to Egypt we stayed in a hotel in Zamalek. It was our second night there, and I was propositioned by an older man,” said Bukvic, recalling how this made her question whether she had made the right choice.

After being in Egypt for more than a year, Bukvic has become accustomed to ignoring similar advances and is confident she made the right decision to come to Cairo and AUC for her degree in business administration. Bukvic is one of a rapidly growing number of female international degree-seeking students who choose AUC for their undergraduate or graduate degree. Opting to spend as many as four years in Egypt, they develop an appreciation and understanding of the country and culture that can only come from being an insider. While such a complete immersion in Egyptian life has required special adjustments and compromises, each of the women expects to leave Cairo with not just a degree, but a new perspective.

Adjusting to the country’s social and cultural customs was one of the most difficult tasks. “In Bosnia, everybody buys their groceries from the same places, goes out to the same cafés at night and meets people who might be richer or poorer than them without even realizing it,” said Bukvic, citing the apparent differences in social classes in Cairo. “We also all dress more or less the same way so that these differences in class are not that noticeable. The society is compiled of mostly a big middle class with subtle differences.”

For Mariko Kobayashi, who came to AUC after high school in Japan, the more relaxed attitude toward time is one of the most difficult aspects of life in Egypt. “I get very frustrated by people’s sense of time and inability to keep appointments,” she said. She also confessed to her own naivety about living in Cairo. “Part of my problem when I arrived was that I did not know what it would be like. I had no idea crossing the road could be so frightening; I was in shock for days.”

Beyond social class differences and concepts of time, male-female relationships were especially complicated. In addition to facing harassment on the street, Yulia Akinfieva ’05, a Russian, is...
Mirette Mabrouk ‘89, ’90 at the helm of the Daily Star

It’s 2 am and there’s just been a late breaking story. You wish you had it written in advance, but you had not received any credible confirmation. The printing press sits there awaiting the final copy. Any thought of this 16-hour day ending is vanquished as the phone lines light up. Another story, on a story, on a story… It’s your crunch everyday; we bring in cake, we bring in coffee, we bring in cake, we bring in coffee. "I started off doing television journalism, and I didn’t like it very much. You don’t really get to go very much in depth unless you’re doing a documentary. The traditional three-minute news story doesn’t leave much time for analysis, so I moved into print. Even the shortest story, which is seven, eight or nine hundred words, will pack more explanation than a three-minute story where you have maybe a page of script and the picture is king," she said.

Of all the possible formats available in print journalism, Mabrouk chose to move from a monthly magazine to a daily newspaper, searching, she said, for the challenge. "Pace, pace, pace: This is a daily newspaper that runs six days a week; so I have no life left. Typically, Mabrouk starts her day mid-morning, rarely finishing by the time the next day begins. Usually, Mabrouk rises at 6 am and is at her desk by 7 am. She works until 2 am, and rarely finishes by the time the next day begins.

Despite the lack of separation between her career and her life, Mabrouk remains grateful for her busy lifestyle. "I’m very lucky to be doing this now, and I am massively excited by the challenges it presents. It’s very much a work in progress," she said. "I feel privileged because I have gotten to do so many things that I wouldn’t have been able to otherwise."
Hussein Ibrahim: A Life Full of Optimism

A t 95, Hussein Ibrahim is a walking history book, with a lifetime that has spanned two world wars, three Arab-Israeli wars, the 1952 military coup in Egypt and the reign of two kings and three presidents. Sitting in his wheelchair in a home for senior citizens in Dokki, Ibrahim recalls days that are long gone: “Working and being active were the source of my comfort and happiness,” he said. “I used to see youth my age sitting in coffee shops doing nothing and I felt sorry for them. To me, work was my life, and I used to enjoy every minute of what I did.”

Having crisscrossed almost half the globe in his 90s, Ibrahim was always eager to see more and know more. On a typical day, the graduate of Cairo University’s agriculture department would go to his work in the morning, tending cotton-cropped agricultural land. In the evenings, he would take art and language classes at Egypt’s cultural schools including the Lycée Francais and the Leonardo da Vinci School of Fine Arts. He also enrolled himself for two years at AUC as a nondegree student studying sociology and psychology.

“I loved knowledge and wanted to know about different fields. Courses at the time cost LE 20 a year, and professors came from the United States. It was a golden opportunity.” His courses came in handy, as he shifted careers from agriculture to tourism. Working as a public relations specialist, Ibrahim found that his background in psychology and sociology, as well as his English proficiency, were assets. “Being at AUC made me another person,” he said, adding that he also took courses in French, Italian and Russian to complement his English. “Thank you, merçi, grazie, spása, danke, gracias,” he said, showcasing his ability to say thank you in six languages.

A sports amateur who practiced tennis, swimming, rowing, shooting and long-distance walking, Ibrahim took on a new sport at the age of 50: judo. At the age of 60, he was credited with instigating karate at the Alby Club in the 1970s.

Always a pioneer, he takes pride in being “the first to introduce color photography to Egypt” and remembers with a smile that when he lost retirement, instead of staying at home, he traveled to Libya to work as a photographer. “Photography was the lens through which I saw the world, and I always liked to look at the world from the bright side,” he said. “It is you who can make yourself happy and you who can see the world through dark spectacles. The key is to love what you do and to do what you love.”

Just before going to print, AUCToday published his book, A Kenapa Al Amma, Almaa, after 12 years of hard working collect Arabic idioms spoken on the streets and in the cafés of Egypt. It is full of stories, jokes and information, and is available at www.alhara.com.

Youssel Hafez has been transferred to an international assignment with Escom/Mobile Europe based in Brussels, Belgium. He is married and has a 3-year-old son Han.

‘94 Dina Gohar (MA ’97) is a freelance video editor in Beirut, Lebanon.

‘97 Walid Khater is currently the recruiting manager for the East Mediterranean and East Africa Geomarket at Schlumberger Egypt. He started as a field engineer in 1998.

‘99 Amira Abdel-Wanas was a reservoir evaluation wireline field engineer for Schlumberger Oilfield Services until August 2004. She was stationed for two years in the field in Indonesia, spending most of the time on land rigs in the jungles. Then she worked for another two years on offshore rigs in Songkla on the Gulf of Thailand. She has also worked in Syria and Kuwait, as well as the Western Desert, Mansoura and Damietta in Egypt.

‘00 Sherif Hafez and Alia Ibrahim have been blessed with a baby girl, Malak, in November 2004.

‘02 Mohamed Abdel-Latif is working as the general manager and senior business and migration consultant at the Australian Immigration and Citizenship Services, Cairo office. He is currently pursuing a master’s in public administration at AUC.

‘04 Ekundaya Abdulrazaq Shittu (MS) won a prestigious award in May 2005 from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (UMASS) for a research proposal that bridges science, engineering and management. It is a $10,000 award to be implemented over this academic year. Shittu works as a research assistant at UMASS while he earns a doctorate in industrial engineering and operations research.

Safaan Kanji (MA) has been covering the Israeli disengagement plan in Gaza. She has published many articles on the subject in Arabic, English and French newspapers and online. She will also cover the transfer of the evacuated area to the Palestinian authority. Her articles can be found at www.middle-east-online.com/palestine/?id=32830.

Special Programms

Amy Wilson (SABI ’04) will be attending the University of Bristol, England to pursue a master’s in Mediterranean archaeology. She has been awarded the Richard Bradford McConnell Master of Arts Studentship in Mediterranean Archaeology.

Stefan Winkler (ALU) is the program director of the Goethe Institute (German Cultural Institute) in Alexandria.

In Memoriam


Iro Valaskakis ’86 died on September 18, 2004. She was a choreographer, dancer and dance historian at the University of Quebec. Her book, Dancing in Montreal: Seeds of a Choreographic History, received the 1996 award for outstanding scholarly publication by the Congress on Dance in Canada and is considered an expert in the field. She was born in Cairo and is survived by her brother Kionon Valaskakis ’61, her sister Khia Amelon and her daughter Tamar Tenedek.


Class Notes

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Political Participation at AUC: Catalysts of Change

In the past couple of years, AUC has been one of the most vocal educational institutions in Egypt and in the region as a whole. Whereas there is a nationally conceived image of AUCians as pampered upper class youth who are not interested in political affairs, the number of demonstrations and politically related student activities serves to dismissed this fallacious stereotype. Political events in the region, such as the second intifada, the invasion of Iraq and the assassination of Sheikh Yassin, are some of the many events that have spurred a strong response from the AUC student body.

However, the one factor that seems missing from this equation is the true level of political awareness present within the students, especially when it comes to issues of internal politics. In light of the amendment of Article 76 of the Egyptian constitution, the first multiparty elections and the uprising of the new political opposition on the horizon, it is now seen as a critical time for youth to have heightened political awareness.

The Cairo International Model Arab League Awareness Program (MALAP) is a committee specialized in creating a medium in which political participation and political awareness in general can be encouraged. In an interactive attempt to bring political awareness to the scene at AUC, MALAP launched its yearly awareness campaign titled “Why Vote Now?” by creating a booth on the Greek Campus where mock elections for both the next parliament and presidential race were being held. Realizing the lack of knowledge AUCians have about the campaign platforms of the different political parties in Egypt, explanatory pamphlets on the parties were distributed to students before voting. The information given through the pamphlets and the process of simulating the experience of casting ballots had a strong positive effect among many students at AUC.

During the five days, 345 students voted for the parliamentary and presidential elections together, which clearly signifies the willingness of AUC students to participate politically. The results of the elections also portrayed the political directions of AUC students. In the parliamentary elections, both the Al-Ghad and the National Democratic Party tied for first place with 26 percent of the votes each. The presidential elections brought former Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, who was listed as an independent runner, a landslide victory with 42 percent of the total votes. Following the former foreign minister, Gamal Mubarak came in second with 17.5 percent. Ayman Nour came in third place with 11 percent of the votes.

This campaign was an attempt to engage all AUC students on the issues of internal politics, whether or not they have a special liking to politics or are participating in politically oriented student activities. At a time when we are at the brink of such political change, students at AUC should constantly make the effort to propagate the importance of political awareness on campus to ensure the prominence role of these students as both political leaders and the citizens of future generations. Only then can we truly become the catalysts of change in Egyptian society.

Heba Rabie, mechanical engineering senior, is head of the Model Arab League’s awareness program.

Akher Kalam

Akher Kalam is an open forum for members of the AUC community. We invite you to share your thoughts on any topic of your choice. Submissions should be sent to auctoday@aucegypt.edu and may be edited for length and clarity.