

**AUCian Mother's Perspective of AUC today compared to the
Eighties**

Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Aya Abdel Raouf

Narrator: Maya El Attar

Date: 20/ 2/2012

Place: Narrator's home

University: American University in Cairo

Professor: Dr. Kim Fox

Feb 20, 2012

Persons present: Aya Abdel Raouf
Maya El Attar

Aya: Name?

Maya: Maya El Attar

Aya: Title?

Maya: I'm an assisting manager and an office director to Bupa International and that's a medical insurance company

Aya: Age?

Maya: I'm 45 years old

Aya: When did you graduate from AUC?

Maya: I graduated in 1989 having my BA, and then in 1998 having my Master's degree in Journalism

Aya: From what you remember, please describe to me your life as an AUC student?

Maya: Well, I was a really happy AUC student and uhh a very devoted Mass Communication student too and I used to write in the Caravan that's the of course as you know the AUC magazine and I've written so many articles during the courses the writing courses that I've taken. Overall, I just enjoyed going to AUC everyday and I was really happy attending these classes and seeing my friends everyday going to parties and it was really the best period of my life.

Aya: How was the Mass Com major back in the 80's?

Maya: Well uhh it was very broad and we used to have a mixture of Mass Communication courses like advertising, public relations uhhh, journalism, writing courses, and the courses of Mass Communication was really not that much we had the electives much more in the Mass Com department so its not like now.

Aya: What do you think of the new division in the Mass Com department, with the CMA, IMC, Journalism, which they stand for Communication and Media Arts, Integrated Marketing Communications and Journalism, do you think its more effective that way, the separation and division?

Maya: Actually these are new terms for me I didn't know them when I heard about these terms from my daughters I was really surprised and I had to ask them what each division specializes in and I was really happy because you get to learn more about Mass Communication and be more specialized in different fields, such as advertising, marketing and journalism, rather than just studying Mass Communication in general like we used to do back then.

Aya: You hear a lot of stories from your daughters about current AUC student life, can you try and imagine the difference between now and back then?

Maya: Uhhh well I was in the eighties in AUC and the AUC community wasn't that big as nowadays, we used to know each other even if we don't know the names but when we met outside AUC we usually recognize each other and twenty years have passed believe me, even if I see now one of my colleagues or my students, my friends I just...we just know each other even if we don't know the names, but we remember

that ya we've seen each other back in the eighties and of course we changed I mean our looks changed but still we can recognize each other and personally the close circle of AUC community was the best aspect of it, it gave us a sense of closeness and warmth.

Aya: Are you still in touch with your AUC friends?

Maya: Uhhh sometimes I call some of my friends, uhh well not frequently but every now and then and sometimes I meet with them or I see them at the Employment Fair that is usually twice a year and sometimes I meet them in AUC Alumni gatherings and we just stand together and we share our memories and what we used to do where we used to hang out like the Greek Campus it was my favorite, just sitting there and drinking cappuccino in the cafeteria, we really enjoyed it.

Aya: Do you think people have always studied at AUC because of its good brand name, or because of its educational system?

Maya: Both actually, I think it's a bit of both of course. AUC has the best educational system, had and still does. Uhh but in addition it has a brand name for attracting a certain class, I think.

Aya: A drastic changed that occurred is the increase in tuition fees, and families are complaining and students are striking, what do you think of that as a parent?

Maya: Uhh, well to tell you the truth it's a disaster for me I have two students at AUC and another one in CAC so it's taking much of our income. So its getting really high especially with the economic situation in Egypt , we find difficulty in paying such high amounts of money and even its just for educating them I mean not to mention other expenses, life expenses going out, clothing and all that stuff so basically all of our money is just going to AUC, I mean the education in general, even the financial aid department they don't give us much discount for students I think its only like 5 percent a year.

Aya: Do you think both your daughters are getting an exceptional education, with the amount of tuition fees they now pay?

Maya: Well I honestly thought with the new campus and the new courses that were added my daughters would have received more knowledge that is equivalent to other competitive universities like abroad for example. And uhh after I finished my, after I earned my Master's degree I was intending to have my PhD and I though when, and when I asked there they told me that maybe with the new campus opening they might offer the PhD courses but unfortunately when they had the new campus I had to go and ask they told me that still AUC doesn't offer the doctorate degree, and I was surprised because I expected the level of education would improve. But anyways my daughters' knowledge is still exceptionally intellectual, but it needs I think to be challenged with the amount of money we pay.

Aya: You mentioned you earned a post-graduate degree from AUC. What was it?
What was your thesis?

Maya: I earned my Master's degree in Journalism and my thesis was about a case study of Rosa -al Youssef magazine I think everybody knows it, uhh at sometime they consider it as yellow pages or uhhh yellow journalism and that I mean my thesis I compared and investigative reporting in different eras starting from King Farouk's era to Mubarak's and it was basically about how the government restricted reporting under different reigns and controlled how to report news in each era. Which was really different.

Aya: After earning your BA when did it come to your mind to earn a post-graduate degree?

Maya: I always wanted to earn a post graduate degree but because of course I got married and I had my children it was really difficult to pursue that at the time so I had to postpone it until my kids were old enough and that took me like 10 years, after my Bachelor's degree.

Aya: Since you specialized in journalism, did you report any interesting stories?

Maya: What do you mean by interesting stories, like what?

Aya: I mean like stories unique or stories you cant seem to forget..

Maya: Yes I remember writing about the same topic twice as an undergraduate and during my Master's degree. One of the courses I used to take in my Master's it was about writing a case study, uhh and I remember that topic I used to write about, and it was in my sociology course so it came to my mind why not repeat it again and I chose a topic about women killing their husbands, and I had to have permission from legal authorities because it was really difficult to go and just visit prisoners and I went to Anater prison where I interviewed 5 women who murdered their husbands. It was really interesting.

Aya: How did it feel being up close and personal interviewing a criminal?

Maya: Uhh it was really scary I remember having nightmares the night before visiting the prison and I remember one of the women confessed that she was happy to kill her husband four of them actually denied it, they said no they just died we didn't kill them, but one of them she actually described the gruesome murder scene and how she stabbed her husband several times because he cheated on her, and she was really happy I don't know why. And I (laughs) cant seem to forget her facial expressions while she was recalling that story because she was laughing when she was talking and she had this huge smirk on her face. Its one of those stories (laughs) that I'll never forget.

Aya: After graduating and before getting married did you work, and in the media field?

Maya: Yes, I worked during my senior year I was introduced to Moustafa Amin the late journalist of Al Akhbar Al Youm and I stayed for some time even after I graduated but it wasn't that long because I got married and I really didn't have that time I mean so.. But I really enjoyed working with him for that brief time and I really managed to learn a lot from that person, he's such a respectable man. Also after that I remember working for Animation Advertising Agency owned by Ihab Gohar and I think he's the owner of Selections Magazine too. But again I didn't stay for long because afterwards I got married I stayed just for three or four months.

Aya: Can you give me some examples of your work in Al Akhbar Al Youm? And what did you actually do in the Animation Advertising Agency?

Maya: In Al Akhbar Al Youm we used to gather with seven or eight people we used to be a team in a separate section for charity called Lasta Wahdak, means You Are Not Alone, we used to gather with Moustafa Amin and where they received, we used to receive letters from poor people and ill people they needed just money and help, so everybody had to investigate, I mean the team we had to go and investigate their cases and each Tuesday we wrote a report for Moustafa Amin and I would say this for example he needs like two hundred pounds a month for a year for example. And other cases by the way we just new that they were forgery and fraud and so you can tell, I mean you can tell.

Aya: Now you're an office/project manager at Bupa International? A health care insurance company. A job that has nothing to do with Journalism, what made that career shift?

Maya: Well, uhh because I stayed for a lot of many years at home not working to be honest I forgot everything about journalism, writing and that style because everything was different than the eighties and you know the writing styles are different they keep changing so it was difficult for me to remember what I learned back then so when I started to have a job I joined the alumni CAPS the department at AUC which offers jobs and that was one of the jobs that was offered to me and I got accepted uhhh, first I started as a personal assistant to the CEO and then it took me two to three months to be promoted to be office manager and I had to do both jobs at the same time.

Aya: Do you have any regrets for not working after earning your degrees?

Maya: Well no, I don't regret giving my children all of my time because they were my priority then and till now and uhh I gained a lot of knowledge and AUC has broadened my perspective in many things in life and till this day my education is what I have left and what I'm really thankful for. And that's why up till now where I decide to work uhh I always look for work where I have fixed hours because I still don't want to leave them that much long.

Aya: Overall, are you happy being an AUCian?

Maya: Yes of course I am. And by the way I forgot to tell you that even when I was staying at home during the years that I didn't work I had another certificate in HR and they told me it's a growing field interesting so I said why not just go and learn maybe I hit that road but anyway I learned and I finished the certificate in a year and that's added by the way to my other certificates.

Aya: Thank you very much

Maya: You're welcome

