

Founders' Day

Haigazian University

Monday, October 12, 2009, 12 Noon

PRESIDENT'S WORD

Year after year, many faces change, other faces age on campus.

The institution too changes and ages. But there is one thing that will not change. The founders! (Just as you cannot change the date and place of your birth).

No matter what we do and how we do it differently, the fact remains that in 1955 a small college was founded on Mexique Street called Haigazian so that it may prepare teachers, and social workers and pastors for the community. The fact remains that the Armenian Missionary Association of America and the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East partnered together and were supported by visionary individuals from Philadelphia and Phoenix, Stephen Philibisoan and Steven Mehagian who funded the project and led its board. The fact remains that this institution was born in the name of a martyr called Armenag Haigazian, so that in part it may revolt against the evil of the Genocide. The fact remains that Haigazian was born in a land of freedom, where education, creativity and the rich exchange of culture and knowledge were encouraged.

Of course, Haigazian grew and diversified its ways and majors. It became part of the educational life and heart of Beirut. In this change, however, the focus on truth freedom and service remained and continues to unfold. It is often said that Haigazian University aims at preparing servant leaders in their fields and communities, and this has actually happened in a number of domains.

My translation of the "Truth, Freedom, Service" motto of the university this year is as follows: If we want to be prepared as servant leaders where we are (in schools, markets, social organizations or governmental offices), three ingredients need to be remembered: *a big heart, a creative mind, and a trained hand*. The heart stands for Truth, the mind stands for Freedom, the hand stands for Service.

Our ideal for all students and indeed for all of Lebanon is to prepare givers. Even though Lebanon is often seen as a receiving entity, recipient of funds and goods and political decisions, we need to know that we are called to and have the potential to give qualitatively to all people around the globe. Our human capital needs to be nourished in such a way that the person is not seen as a prisoner of his/her time, or a prisoner of his/her opinions, or the prisoner of his/her belonging, or the prisoner of his/her address, or the prisoner of his/her problems.

Every institution has a value system. It is known that the service of society and humanity at Haigazian University are regarded as central and also seen as a service to God.

Today, we are glad to highlight one such effort in Lebanese society which truly represents the value system we want to promote. It is the work of our dear guest. A drama therapist, an actress, a constant learner who seeks creative ways to help the ones who society may want to forget, a person who has a calling to see a human opportunity where most others would see a dead end, or a risky endeavor. She is not here today because she is at the final stages of her MA degree at Haigazian University, but because she presents the ideals of our university in real and uncomfortable ways. As I present her to you for a keynote word, I would like to applaud her for a God-given life of talent and passion for turning realities of hopelessness, isolation and imprisonment to actions of love, development and teamwork. Ideals are turned to actions through her: Zeina Daccache.

Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.

President