

Meeting or Misunderstanding the Month of Muslims' Mourning - 'Muharram'?

BY FATIMA IBRAHEEM



AUK students who hosted the event.

Continued on 2

Leaked!

BY ISHA SADIQ HAIDER

The day is not far, when all our candid and most private 'dirty-little-secrets' will be out there for the entire world to peruse. Many among us still believe we live in a world cushioned by so-called 'rights.' Waking up from that dream and facing the nightmare, I am quite unsure as to whether the prominent 'right to privacy' still has any foundation (leaving alone the crust).

If you're reading this, it is quite probable that you might be among those of who gasped in terror and utter shock, when WikiLeaks 'leaked' the classified US diplomatic cables on November 28th, 2010. For me, that was truly the case (with an addition to absolute horror) for I am sure you would agree if you read the disclosures that the cables revealed, it is much more than we all could have ever anticipated or even wanted to know.

For those of you who feel alien to what I am writing about, it's time for you to wake up! What actually happened was that a cache of a quarter million private American diplomatic cables were made available to the world by WikiLeaks, the not-for-profit organization born in 2007, devoted to revealing top-secret information.

According to their website (main mirror), www.wikileaks.ch, "WikiLeaks is dedicated to bringing important news and information to the public. We provide an innovative, secure and anonymous way for independent sources around the world to leak information to our journalists. We publish material of ethical, political and historical significance while keeping the identity of our sources anonymous, thus providing a universal way for the revealing of suppressed and censored injustices. We have sustained and triumphed against legal

Continued on 7

SGA Achievements

BY DHARI AL-MONAYEA



SGA flyer for 300 and 400-level summer courses.

Continued on 3

Texting and Social Networking Woes

BY FARAH AL-SHAMALI

I worry about my generation, more so about the one following it. Technology has really permeated greatly into society in the last decade or so, landing in the hands of people of younger age groups who do not comprehend its true function. I myself have been struggling to be as isolated as possible but end up reactivating my Facebook account in a month's time (my newest record). But I, at least, have the sense to realize that such things as texting and social networking are not what they are cracked up to be.

Continued on 8

A Reminiscent Journey to the Past

BY HUDA AL- RASHID

You may have heard of the overused, cheesy phrase, "old is gold." However, have you ever stopped to think if this phrase really applies to your own perception of the world? I'm sure you've all had a moment in time where you tend to want to visit your "childhood" in order to live the "good old days" even if it's only just for a few moments. For me, this escapist journey was carried out in a series of actions: listening to old 90's music from the Backstreet Boys and

Continued on 7

SGA Hosts Members of Kuwait National Football Team

BY FARAH AL-SHAMALI

Continued on 3

Go Wolfpack!

BY FATMA AL-FADHLI, AUK ALUM '10

Studying in AUK and experiencing life at it is a different experience that we all, as students, live. Looking at other universities in Kuwait and talking with its students, I always felt privileged. AUK is a special place for its students. Throughout my four academic years, I spent more than 7 hours daily on campus. Sometimes I spent 12 hours from 8 am till 8 pm. I even joked with my friends telling them I would bring my bed with me to campus. However, and here the big question comes: are we considered part of the family after

Continued on 7

Less is More

BY FATIMA IBRAHEEM



Continued on 8

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

BY NADA EL-BADRY

The Perks of Being a Wallflower is definitely not your average novel. Not only is the writing style unique in the form of the main character who goes by the alias of Charlie narrating events in his life through letters written to an anonymous pen pal, but the novel itself is not one you'd typically find in any bookshelf.

It tells the story of Charlie, who isn't exactly your typical teenager; he's the wallflower of the school, roaming the halls pretty much unnoticed for the first part of the novel. Not only that, but his mind works in quite an unconventional way. Through the novel, you follow his life as he makes new friends, experiences his first crush on an

Continued on 5

AUK Opens Computer Engineering Laboratories

BY FARAH AL-SHAMALI



Left to Right:

President Winfred Thompson and Dean Nizar Hamzeh cutting the ribbon. Photo taken by PR/Marketing.
Dr. Issam Damaj explaining the equipment. Photo taken by PR/Marketing.
A view of one of the laboratories. Photo taken by PR/Marketing.



Once again, AUK takes great strides and proves to be a worthy contender on the regional level with yet another development. After huge efforts and a good amount of time in preparation from different parties at AUK, the computer engineering laboratories were proudly unveiled and deemed ready for use on December 21st. An invitation was extended to the AUK community via mass email to attend this exciting ceremony. The laboratories are located on the first floor of the Liberal Arts building, are across from each other and boast state-of-the-art devices and computer engineering software. This propels the respective program at AUK as well as the university into high standards

as our young institution furthers its commitment to the provision of the best of services to its students. Outside of the laboratories, refreshments were made available as AUK faculty came to the inauguration ceremony. It was also attended by President Winfred Thompson and Dr. Nizar Hamzeh, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, who both cut the ribbon. They each expressed their gratitude for every individual who was an instrumental component in materializing this advancement and recognized it as a step forward for AUK.

The laboratories themselves are professionally designed and equipped with impressive, world-class technologies that lined the

periphery and corners while the middle was occupied by tables and chairs. Dr. Issam Damaj is the Computer Engineering Program Lead and designer and Project Manager of the laboratories and he took some time to explain them and how they will be widely beneficial to computer engineering students at AUK. The set-up of the laboratories was done in such a way that will facilitate teaching when classes are eventually conducted in them. My major is nowhere near Computer Science but I was still overwhelmed by the work put into these laboratories and was very appreciative of it. I would certainly recommend all students, faculty and staff to take some time to visit them and marvel for themselves.

Meeting or Misunderstanding the Month of Muslims' Mourning - 'Muharram'?

BY FATIMA IBRAHEEM

"We're going to be wrapping the black garment around the polls late at night for tomorrow before we go home today."

What makes a group of youth stay all night preparing for their significant event? What makes the same group of youth resist the windiest and dustiest day of the week to practice volunteer work? What makes them smile out of contentedness and relief, yet their faces speak of tiredness as they passionately draw a path of success for their event? What makes them sacrifice their time out of their busy day, running from class to their booth and vice versa with indescribable dedication and commitment? What makes them robust enough to encounter all sorts of criticisms? What makes them confident of not attending a day of university for the most valid reason, while they know that they will be missing work, studies and maybe even tests?

Putting in mind that all of their modest actions expect nothing in return; meaning that nothing of this will be of personal interest. It naturally makes any normal human being question these practices with optimal curiosity, that there must be a latent driving force; a spiritual matter packed with faith and is able to overpower any materialistic capacity, whatsoever. It is because these youth have understood the fact that the service they're offering is for someone deserving, someone who sacrificed the most valuable aspect ever - his life - to save societies on a verge of breakdown, more than 1400 years ago. This ultimate sacrifice has been described by Charles Dickens, "If Hussain had fought to quench his worldly desires, then I do not understand why his sister, wife, and children accompanied him. It stands to reason therefore, that he sacrificed purely for Islam."

Thus, these youth do not want to simply discard an opportunity that they would like to share with a mature world; an opportunity that has been described as "if the Hussain is one of us, we would've deployed a banner in every land possible, and we would've established a platform in every land possible, and let people into Christianity in the name of the Hussain" by Antoine Bara, a Christian priest. An opportunity that calls to all dimensions of human rights, absolute freedom, one being the master of his/her own choices, consciousness and awareness, tolerance, the elevation of the role of women, the exhibition of the most unique characters history can narrate, what it means to be a true Muslim, and most crucially, being able to re-define victory by utilizing non-materialistic factoring tools in an asymmetric battle.

On the seventh day of Muharram coinciding with Monday December 13, 2010 the common colors to be seen at AUK were black and green, which was self-explanatory since the month of Muharram is a month of mourning for Muslims who valued and respected Prophet Mohammed's grandson, Imam Hussain (PBUH). With three tables side-by-side, these passionate students voluntarily offered

drinks that varied from Vimto and hot milk and succulent lentils soup drawing smoke out of the cup as people drank them. Students, as well as some members of staff and faculty, passed by and were eager to drink. It wasn't unusual to observe some who questioned the reason behind such an act which encouraged the group to actively explain and elaborate, applying the values of AUK such as spreading awareness and knowledge. They proved that knowledge isn't restricted to words and writing only, but can be powerfully evoked through colors and symbols. They represented themselves to be not only the students of a university, but also the students of Islam, as they used non-materialistic tools to voice what can't be delivered through materialistic means, highlighting the very values bolstered by the month of Muharram and its hero, Imam Hussain.

The revival of this incident is to voice values that are timeless because righteousness and justice do not know ethnicity, religion, culture or nationality... they only know genuine revolutionaries. Hence they transcendently survey all religions, cultures and societies regardless of differences in beliefs and customs. As admitted by foreigners who are not Muslims, they state that "Imam Hussain's (PBUH) sacrifice is for all groups and communities, an example of the path of righteousness." *However, we have to say that this incident hasn't been given enough attention by everyone. It's an incident that is aimed at unifying common humanitarian values. If we only give it a small, fair thought, we shall conclude that reviving such an incident is not to raise any sectarian differences as misunderstood, but to give a chance of equity to those who simply don't know. After all, who are we talking about here...isn't he the Prophet's grandson?* As a Muslim community, we shall be proud of translating a 1400-years-old unique incident into a 2010 generation if someone like Tamlus Tundun (a Hindu and former President of the Conference of the Indian National) is, as he explicitly states, "these sacrifices by Imam Hussain have elevated the level of human thinking, and an incident equivalent to this one should be preserved and remembered forever and celebrated as an anniversary forever." It has been quoted by a Westerner, "I congratulate Muslims that from among them, Imam Hussain (PBUH), a great human being was born, who is reverted and honoured totally by all communities." *Besides, if we realize, some societies attempt to build sculptures and statues of their heroes in order to solidify their eternal remembrance, this incident does not need any type of sculpture or statue for revival...why? Because it is beyond materialism, and beyond what pens can write and words can describe.*

"We're going to be taking care of removing the cloth off the polls, even though we have class in a few minutes." They confidently said this with tired, dedicated faces, brave, red pairs of eyes, but with the gentlest smiles of relief, pride, dignity and hope.

THE VOICE OF AUK

Our Mission

The Voice of AUK is a student-run, monthly newspaper that seeks to foster active communication among the entire campus community and keep it abreast of diverse and relevant issues by providing high-quality news and information in an academic context. Through this, The Voice also strives to heighten awareness of rights and responsibilities of membership in the AUK community. The Voice also espouses a commitment to philanthropy.

The Editorial Board

Fatima Ibraheem
Amal Behbehani
Salma Tayeh
Nada El-Badry
Farah Al-Shamali

Layout Production Team

Yusuf Maimoon
Zahra Al-Abdeen
Dalal Marafie

Photography Team

Sarah Khalaf
Humam Shabani
Abdulkadir Al-Machhour

The Voice of AUK welcomes contributions from all registered students, faculty and staff members of the American University of Kuwait. Submissions should be emailed to voice@auk.edu.kw. All submissions must be approved by the Editorial Board, in accordance with the Editorial Policy. **The Voice of AUK** offers no guarantee that any submission will be published. To be considered for publication in the Voice, submissions for a given issue must be received on or before the published deadline for that issue. The views expressed in opinion columns represent strictly the views of the author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the **Voice of AUK**, nor those of the American University of Kuwait. All submissions become property of the **Voice of AUK**. The Editorial Board reserves the

right to edit all submissions, including for grammar, spelling, style, and clarity. Writers have the right to withdraw submissions at any time prior to publication. The Voice of AUK is published in ten monthly issues from September through October, and in a single issue for the months of July and August. Special non-news supplements may be published from time to time. For advertising information, send email to voice@auk.edu.kw. Advertisements for a given issue must be received on or before the published deadline for that issue. The Editorial Board reserves the right to accept or reject any advertisement. Opinions and/or attitudes expressed in advertisements do not necessarily reflect those of the Voice of AUK nor those of the American University of Kuwait.

Copyright ©2010 The Voice of AUK

SGA Achievements

BY DHARI AL-MONAYEA

During the month of December, the Student Government Association at the American University of Kuwait hosted an event that brought together members of the AUK community as well as provided services to students. On December 2nd and 5th, the Gulf Cup Event was underway in which the SGA secured venues on campus where Kuwait matches during the Gulf Cup were displayed from projectors for viewing pleasure. The attendance was approximately 450 students with over 50 who were either sitting on the floor or standing by the side. The SGA gave away Kuwait flags as gifts and there was also face painting available. Because some students may not have been able to watch the matches due to their classes, the SGA especially requested professors to cancel classes taking place between 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The SGA also created 'Membership 5=1,' a committee to help them become better leaders.

Hajj season also meant that some students would be away for as long as 10 days; the SGA

accommodated to them by making amendments to due dates, assignments, and exams having them postponed. The SGA assisted students to leave for Hajj early and have their grades postponed. This was made evident in the calendar posted on the AUK website. Regarding problems with opening upper-division courses in the summer block semesters, the SGA spoke to Professor Mohsen Bagnied to create 300 and 400-level courses during the summer and hire more adjunct professors should the need arise. To coincide with this request, the SGA held a booth to encourage students to sign their names for providing these courses. For the university prayer rooms, the SGA provided more Qurans, made an official time for each prayer, painted the walls, and changed the carpets. Out on the campus grounds, benches were made next to the soccer field which are available to students so that they may be able to enjoy the pleasant weather. Umbrellas will also be added to these benches when the sun is out.



SGA flyer for Gulf Cup Event.

SGA Hosts Members of Kuwait National Football Team

BY FARAH AL-SHAMALI



SGA members along with members of the Kuwait national football team.

The night of December 5th was one to remember in Kuwait; I, for one, did not intentionally step outside into the endless traffic jam because I wanted to but I ended up enjoying every second of being stuck on the streets. For twelve years, we've been deprived of the happiness of bringing home a trophy for winning a soccer tournament and the last few years have been fraught with consecutive failures and it never really made sense because our team were equipped with the very best of facilitates, coaches,

and services. But all that was forgotten and paid off really when the Kuwait national football team reached the final of the 20th Gulf Cup held in Yemen. The Kuwaiti people have always stood beside the team through thick and thin and that night was certainly no exception. Translating Arabic to English is almost always a laughing matter but as Kuwaiti sports analysts would say, bringing the trophy home was truly a *soccer wedding*.

There was definitely an urge to want to see, meet, and congratulate the players and the

SGA went to work to bring them to AUK and give students that opportunity. The event was held at the Auditorium and was attended by a countless number of students all hoping to meet with the players and listen to their individual experiences as they shared them to the crowd. The players in attendance were Bader Al-Mutawa, Jarah Al-Ateeqi, Hussein Fadhil, Yousef Nasser and AUK student, Abdulaziz Al-Mashaan and they all guaranteed the fact that such a big win is definitely a source of motivation to achieve

even bigger things and secure even more prominent trophies. Once the formal part of the event was over, students made their way to the players, congratulating and taking memorable pictures with them. The SGA awarded the players by presenting them with plaques on behalf of the AUK community. With the Asia Cup around the corner, we hope that the Kuwait national football team is prepared to go all the way and ignite the streets of Kuwait once more.



SGA member, Dhari Al-Monayea, awarding Bader Al-Mutawa. Photo taken by PR/Marketing.



Members of the Kuwait national football team speaking on their big victory. Photo taken by PR/Marketing.

Le Petit Orchestre Swing de France Thrills AUK Audience

BY NUR SOLIMAN



Gilles Parodi on rhythm guitar.



Laurent Bajata on guitar.

In one recording of “Minor Swing” by the Quintette du Hot Club de France, you can hear someone, maybe Charles Delaunay or Hugues Panassie, cheering at particular phrases. If Django Reinhardt or Stéphane Grappelli had been listening to Le Petit Orchestre Swing de France at a performance in AUK on the 8th of November, one could imagine they would have cheered just as loudly.

On a tour of the Gulf, from Saudi Arabia to the UAE and Bahrain, Le Petit Orchestre Swing de France performed at AUK, hosted by the Music Program in partnership with the French Embassy. President of AUK Dr. Winfred Thompson made introductory remarks, saying the event exemplified the exchange of French and American culture over the decades. Cultural Counselor of the French Embassy M. Julian Clec’h echoed these sentiments, saying it was a “great pleasure” for the French Embassy to present the Orchestre.

The Orchestre played for nearly two hours to an audience which comprised of students, faculty, staff, and their families, but also members of Kuwait’s francophone population as well as jazz and music fans. With Laurent Zeller on the violin, Laurent Bajata on lead guitar, and Gilles Parodi on rhythm guitar, Le Petit Orchestre delighted their audience with what was surely a brilliant end to their Gulf tour.

Le Petit Orchestre played a wide range of songs, from Trénet classics to American jazz standards and Django favourites, infusing keenness and energy to every piece. They begun with “C’est Magnifique,” which introduced Bajata’s exceptionally fine guitar and Zeller’s virtuosic violin as he played the sweet melody, Parodi’s “pompe” holding it all together with an infectious tap. Ella Fitzgerald’s version has a cheery, dancing rhythm, and the Orchestre played it up to a joyously jumping tempo that showcased the brilliant meshing together of the group, their catching spirit really bringing Django to the auditorium.

Another piece of note was “C’est Si Bon” popularized by Louis Armstrong. Parodi set the tone with an upbeat rhythm which Bajata reinforced with tickling ragtime improvisations, the bright sound of the violin bringing to mind the frenetic energy of Armstrong’s trumpet. “J’attendrai,” a Django classic, is a poetic, romantic piece, with gentle but playful, Joe Pass-like strums and contemplative improvisation from Bajata, the violin also playing a similarly dreamy melody that recalled faintly



Laurent Zeller on violin.

the soft Latin sounds of Paquito D’Rivera or Antony Carlos Jobim.

“Daphné” is perhaps not among the top ten in the hypothetical Django canon, but ought to be. It has such a infectiously tap and upbeat tune that invites its listeners to get up and dance as they please with playful turns of the melody from the violin. Zeller’s interpretation of the piece reflected much of Grappelli’s fluid, natural improvisation, but had an exaggerated dynamic that accentuated the playfulness as he and Bajata went back and forth brilliantly.

“Que Reste-t-il De Nos Amours,” by the famous Charles Trénet, was introduced by Zeller as the song that comes to mind when one is alone at home, watching the sunset. Their performance gave justice to this rather poetic introduction, the violin replacing Trénet’s voice with a warm, caressing tone, complemented by the meditative, evocative strums from the guitars, Zeller punctuating the daydreaming tone with quite classical strains as the piece progressed.

They also played a medley which combined “La Foule” popularized by Edith Piaf and recently by Wynton Marsalis, and “Brazil,” ending with a lovely performance of “Sweet Georgia Brown,” featuring sympathetic dynamics from the guitars against Zeller’s Venuti-like melody. The audience was also treated to an unusual, shimmering solo from Bajata, his fast, fluid strums and taps not unlike John Pizzarelli’s while he sung soulfully to the melody of “Sweet Georgia Brown” in catchy, raspy French, even scatting a few phrases with easy brilliance.

To end their performance, Le Petit Orchestre invited to the stage Dr. Francis Alfred Gamil, an Egyptian musician who teaches at PAAET (Public Authority for Applied Education and Training). He

infused their piece with Oriental, minor quarter-notes, Zeller blending his Grappelli sound with Eastern strains that reflected his collaboration with Georgian musicians, all demonstrating how impromptu jam sessions can produce surprisingly good results.

Although there are sometimes bass guitars, drums, clarinets, even trumpets in French Swing groups, generally they are all-string ensembles, the violin and lead guitar become the melodic instruments, and the rhythm guitar or “pompe” replaces the whole rhythm section, like the drums and double bass. Together they create a unique sound that is all jazz, but as Parodi said in a short interview with the writer, *jazz manouche* has an amalgam of influences, encompassing Romani gypsy music of France and Europe, French and Italian musical heritage, American tunes, even the waltz.

During the interview, Parodi explained that while jazz is more popular in the West, the group was surprised to find that many of the people they met across the Middle East were also passionate fans of jazz and were “excellent” musicians. Indeed the same music that was played half a century ago in smoky underground bars in Paris, sparkling dance-halls and hotels in Cairo, Zagreb, Istanbul, or crowded ballrooms in New York, even dim restaurants in Tokyo, had a kind of universal appeal that not only represents the spirit of its time but also has an aesthetic attraction to younger listeners.

This was also evident when the Orchestre visited PAAET to conduct a master-class. According to the musicians and the diplomatic staff from the Embassy, the Orchestre was welcomed warmly, and interacted closely with the music students who were eager to learn about Zeller’s and Alfred’s styles. Kuwait was the Orchestre’s last stop, and the most touching and memorable, as evidenced by the positive response from the musicians themselves, thanks to their “incredible” audiences and impressions of the country within a few days.

There’s always something special about the way an audience interacts with a jazz group, and the relationship they form together. It was clear that AUK’s audience was more accustomed to polite applause between pieces and avoiding clapping between movements, instead of bursting into spontaneous applause between solos as one does at most jazz performances. Nevertheless, there was still an uninhibited, joyous response that one could sense quite easily. The energy and enthusiasm of their applause could only reflect how the music resonated with something in them, where the music evoked images of a living, watercolour Paris, or a faded, sepia-toned Paris, “poétique et pathétique” but also full of an upbeat playfulness and joyful celebration.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: A Darker World of Magic

BY AMAL N. BEHBEHANI



This is not a kid’s movie. Harry Potter is getting darker, scarier, and more magical than ever. The seventh part of the story, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, continues with Harry, Hermione and Ron on their journey to find the last pieces of Voldemort’s horcrux and destroy them. Their journey is filled with death and battle and testing’s each of their ability to embark in a world outside of Hogwarts. It is the beginning of the final battle, to once and all defeat the Dark Lord.

Long gone are the days of peaceful train rides to Hogwarts and exciting Quidditch games. We don’t get to see Hogwarts much - or at all - in this movie. Most of the scenes take place in forests and natural landscapes as Harry, Hermione and Ron escape from Voldemort’s clutches. An interesting scene is when they are in the Ministry of Magic, though I wouldn’t use the same kind of entrance they used to get into the ministry (I’d rather warp than go down the toilet).

Unlike the last two movies in which we see how Dumbledore and Sirius Black both died, this time, when one of the characters die (not telling who), we’re not shown their death but are only told of it, which puts a chilling note on the scene. The characters have grown and

matured, accepting death as part of the path they are on; except Harry, who faces some doubts of his own.

We only get a spark of the growing love interest between Ginny and Harry while Ron and Hermione’s relationship took over the film, and seemed strained most times. However, Harry and Hermione’s friendship deepens and we get to see how truly they are the bests of friends.

If you’re a fan of the dark side, don’t worry, you’ll get to see Snape and Draco slithering around somewhere between the scenes. Being a Snape fan myself, I would rather have liked to have seen him more in the film but I know he’ll play a great deal more in the second part, coming out in July 15, 2011.

Make sure to watch the previous movies or read the books before watching the movie, or you’ll be lost in this new dark world of Harry Potter. Also, if you really don’t like big snakes, it wouldn’t be a wise plan to watch Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

P.S. The Deathly Hallows – what is this really? It’s explained in the film, and since they did such a good job in the storytelling of what it is, I won’t tell you since you need to hear it from them firsthand.

“P.S. The Deathly Hallows – what is this really? It’s explained in the film, and since they did such a good job in the storytelling of what it is, I won’t tell you since you need to hear it from them firsthand.”

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

BY NADA EL-BADRY

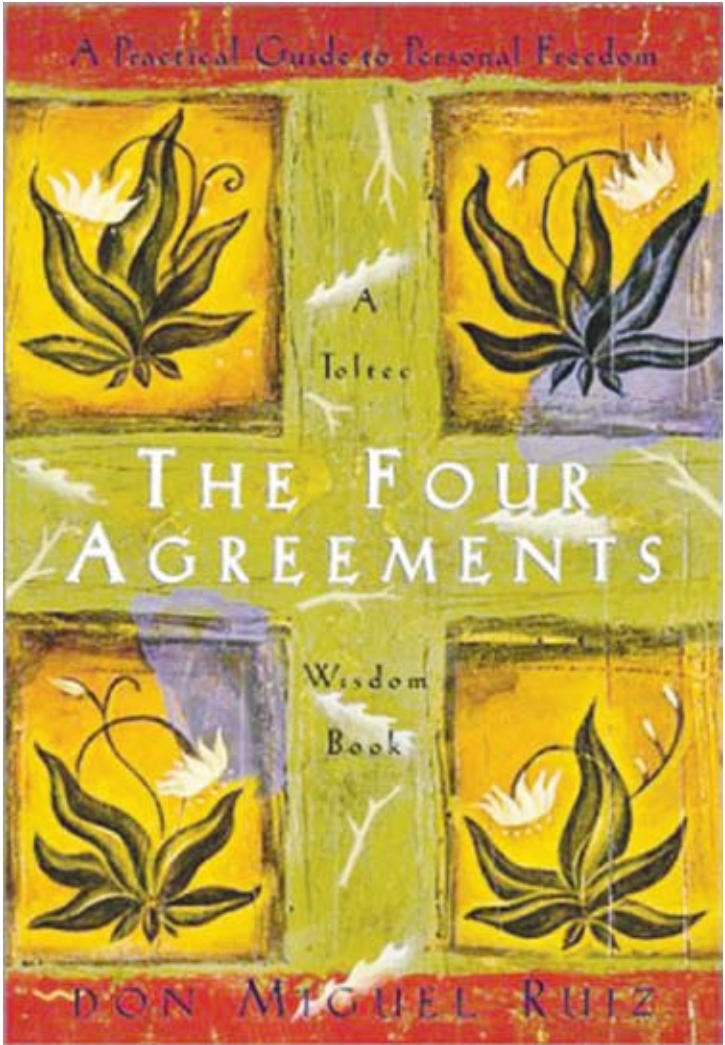


older girl, Sam, and finds himself thrown into a variety of difficult situations that he perceives and describes to his pen pal in various, unique ways that cause you to sympathize with him every step of the way. This novel is definitely not for the light-hearted, nor the immature, and has quite a few dark themes. It is a very realistic depiction of many of the hardships that teenagers today face, and the novel is all at once humorous and heart-wrenching, with quite a few jaw-dropping scenes. There are also dozens of remarkable lines that can

be deemed quotable, as well as one poem that Charlie himself wrote that touched my heart and brought tears to my eyes. I easily found myself immersed in this novel and, to be completely honest, when I first started reading, I simply could not let it go and ended up finishing it in only a few days. I strongly advise anyone and everyone to read this novel; you definitely won't regret it. A movie adaptation of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is also in the works, starring Logan Lerman and Emma Watson. I can only hope they do the book justice.

The Four Agreements

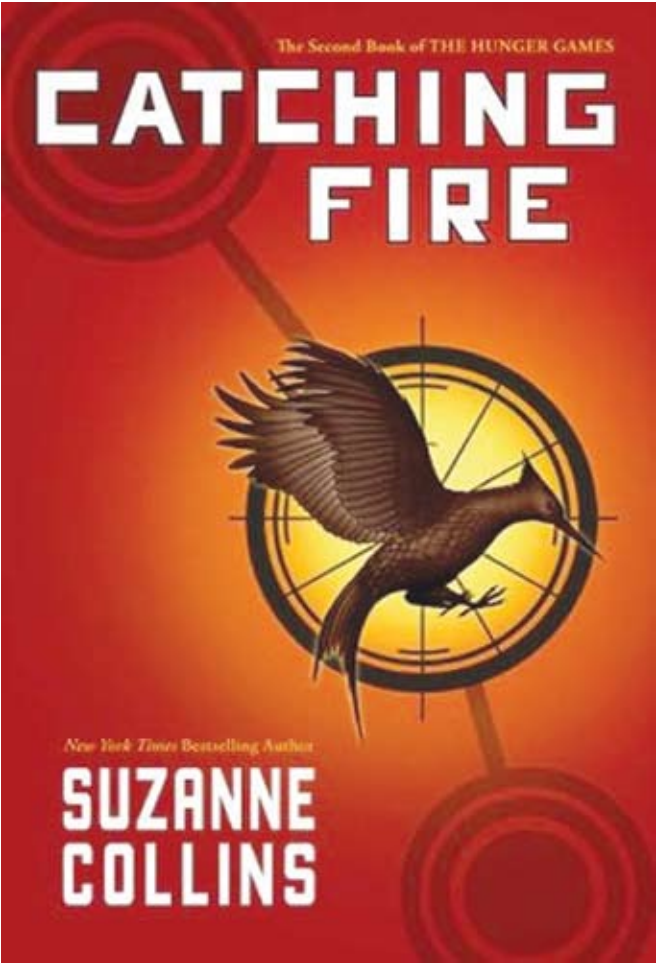
BY MAY OMRAN



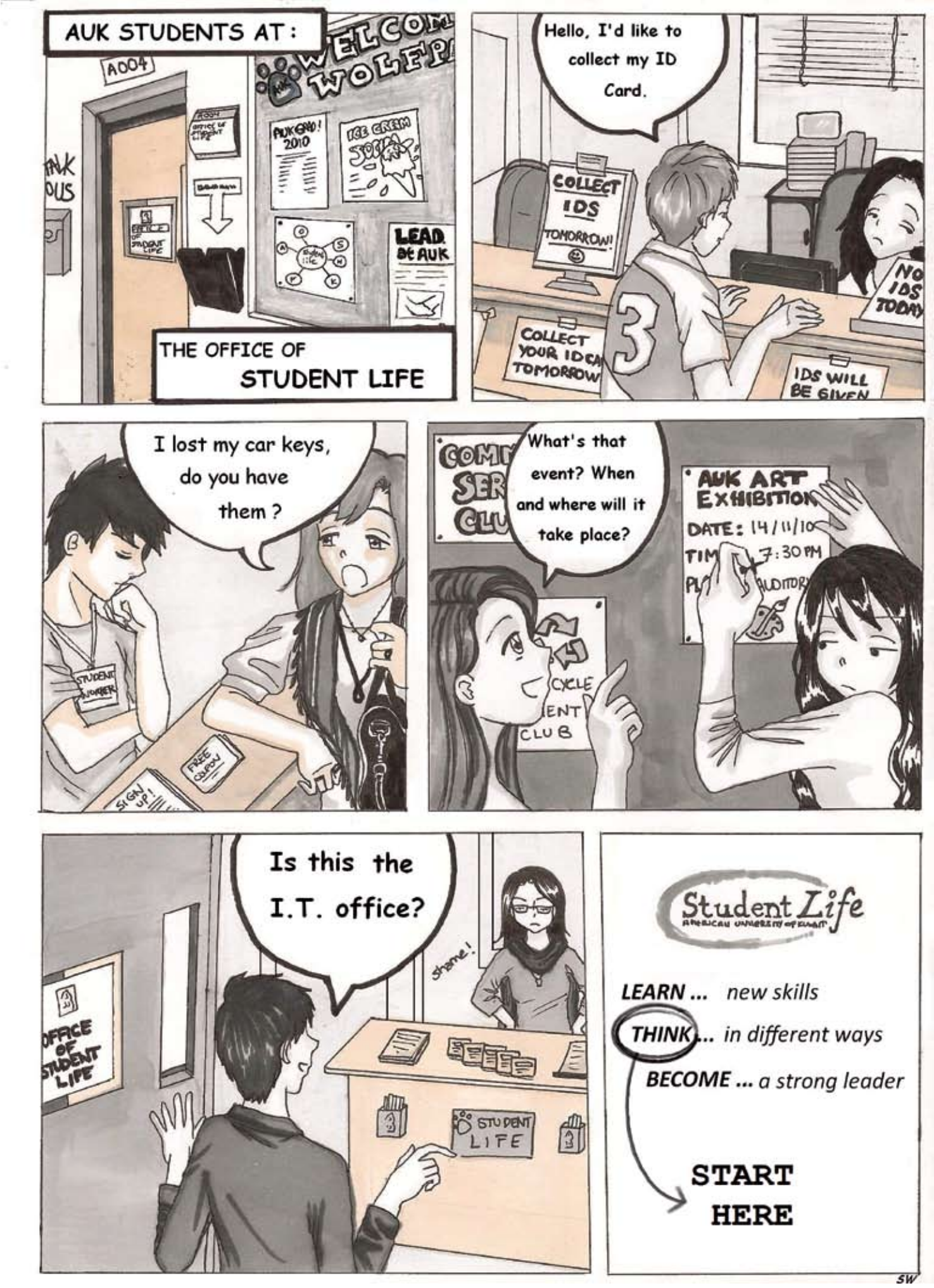
Based on the Mexican Toltec's spiritual knowledge, *The Four Agreements* uses an idea of four "laws" to abide by in order to live life as a more positive being: 1) Be impeccable with your word, 2) Don't take anything personally, 3) Don't make assumptions, and 4) Always do your best. "When you accept an opinion, it becomes an agreement." Our mind lives in a world of its own and when we agree to the opinions of others, we tend to take what they say personally and live by it. Adjusting to opinions we hear from others can affect our lives, especially negative ones. *The Four Agreements* is a self-help book aimed to strengthen a person's own thoughts and diminish vulnerability of accepting others' negative opinions as their own. Emphasized with love, this empowers the four agreements teaching a person to live a positive life, full of love.

Catching Fire

BY CHARAH RAJI



The second novel in Suzanne Collins' *Hunger Games* Trilogy, *Catching Fire*, is not for the faint-hearted. It is a book of betrayal, death, sadness, and endings, as well as war and suffering. It takes place in the post-apocalyptic ruins of what we know as North America, and what the future knows as the Nation of Panem. In the first installment of the series, *The Hunger Games*, we learn that sixteen-year-olds Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark have defied the Capitol by winning the Hunger Games, a brutal death match of 24 children. She has set off a spark and started rebellions in 12 districts, threatening to overthrow the power of the Capitol. This lands her in deep trouble, and she is number 1 on the Capitol's hit list. Reading the second installment of the *Hunger Games* trilogy made me think of how Panem is similar to - if not an exaggeration of - the way our world is run. For example, President Snow can be seen as the human form of Free Masonry: both dream of the so-called 'new world order.' They both control all major media outlets, companies, programming, and every other tiny aspect of our lives. The parallels of our world and Panem are uncanny, and almost Collins' way of telling the world to think and act freely, or we will suffer extreme consequences. On the other hand, upon re-reading the excellently written novel, I also feel that Collins is telling us that love is what holds us together: love of life, love of family, love of friends, love of joy, pure love, etc. I have seen this recurring theme in so many of today's popular fiction series (Harry Potter, Twilight, A Series of Unfortunate Events, etc.), and I can't help but wonder if we, as people, will ever encounter any publication that does not contain a secret message. It does make one think about, once again, how our world is similar to Panem, and we are not left to think for ourselves anymore. Political secrets aside, I thoroughly enjoyed *Catching Fire*. My stomach plummeted a few times throughout the book, and I am eagerly awaiting the release of the third and final installment, *Mockingjay*.



POST CARD

COMMUNICATION

ADDRESSES ONLY

**New Year's Day**

The most celebrated holiday around the world.

January 1, 1892

England was connected to Ellis Island in New York Harbor opened. Over 20 million new arrivals to America were processed until its closing in 1954.

January 1, 1959

Fidel Castro seized power in Cuba after leading a revolution that drove out Dictator Fulgencio Batista. Castro then established a Communist dictatorship.

January 1, 1999

Eleven European nations began using a new single European currency, the Euro, for electronic financial and business transactions. Participating countries included: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

January 3, 1924

British Egyptologist Howard Carter found the sarcophagus of Tutankhamen in the Valley of the Kings near Luxor after several years of searching.

January 8, 1918

Amid the ongoing World War in Europe, President Woodrow Wilson proposed his Fourteen Points, calling for a reduction of arms, self determination for governments, and the creation of a League of Nations, all intended to serve as a basis for resolving the conflict and establishing a lasting peace in Europe.

January 12, 1991

Congress authorized President George Bush to use military force against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.

**January 16, 1979**

The Shah of Iran departed his country amid mass demonstrations and the revolt of Islamic fundamentalists led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The Shah had ruled Iran since 1941 and had unsuccessfully attempted to westernize its culture.

January 21, 1793

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, King Louis XVI of France was guillotined on the charge of conspiring with foreign countries for the invasion of France. During the Revolution, the King had attempted to flee to Austria for assistance. Ten months later, his wife, Queen Marie Antoinette, was also guillotined.

January 24, 1848

The California gold rush began with the accidental discovery of the precious metal near Coloma during construction of a Sutter's sawmill. An announcement by President Polk later in the year caused a national sensation and resulted in a flood of 'Forty-niners' seeking wealth.

January 30, 1933

Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany by President Paul von Hindenburg. Hitler went on to become the sole leader of Nazi Germany. He then waged a war of expansion in Europe, precipitating the deaths of an estimated 50 million persons through military conflict and through the Holocaust in which the Nazis attempted to exterminate the entire Jewish population of Europe.

**January 30, 1948**

Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi, India, by a religious fanatic. Gandhi had ended British rule in India through nonviolent resistance. Non-violence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our very being, he had stated in 1926.

January 30, 1972

In Londonderry, Northern Ireland, 13 Roman Catholics were killed by British troops during a banned civil rights march. The event became known as Bloody Sunday.

January 1, 1877

Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India.

January 3, 1959

Alaska was admitted as the 49th U.S. state with a land mass almost one-fifth the size of the lower 48 states together.

January 9, 1960

With the first blast of dynamite, construction work began on the Aswan High Dam across the Nile River in southern Egypt. One third of the project's billion-dollar cost was underwritten by Soviet Russia. The dam created Lake Nasser, one of the world's largest reservoirs, at nearly 2,000 square miles and irrigated over 100,000 acres of surrounding desert. The dam was opened in January of 1971 by President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and President Nikolai Podgorny of the Soviet Union.

**January 10, 1912**

The flying boat airplane, invented by Glenn Curtiss, made its first flight at Hammondsport, New York.

January 15, 1539

Elizabeth Tudor, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, was crowned as Elizabeth I in Westminster Abbey.

January 19, 1966

Indira Gandhi was elected prime minister of India in succession to Lal Shastri who had died eight days earlier. She served until 1975 and later from 1980 to 1984, when she was assassinated by her own bodyguards as she walked to her office. Her only surviving son, Rajiv, became the next prime minister. In 1991, he was assassinated while campaigning for reelection.

January 20, 1945

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated to an unprecedented fourth term as president of the United States. He had served since 1933.

January 21, 1976

The Concorde supersonic jet began passenger service with flights from London to Bahrain and Paris to Rio de Janeiro, cruising at twice the speed of sound (Mach 2) at an altitude up to 60,000 feet.

January 22, 1973

Abortion became legal in the U.S. as the Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of Roe vs. Wade striking down local state laws restricting abortions in the first six months of pregnancy. In more recent rulings (1989 and 1992) the Court upheld the power of individual states to impose some restrictions.



Leaked!

BY ISHA SADIQ HAIDER



and political attacks designed to silence us.”

The released cables, being from the past three years, provide an unprecedented view of the blunt assessments of nuclear and terrorist threats, brutally candid views of foreign leaders, and the back-room bargaining by several embassies all around the world!

When this was revealed to me, it was quite exciting, or, rather, instinctive, to read the cables and pretty much rob myself of my ignorance. During the read,

it was almost like someone gossiping about someone else familiar to you, but at the same time, it was more accurate, more shocking, and detrimentally real.

The massive disclosures seem like an event of historic recognition, if not of seismic value. This is because the repercussions of the disclosed cables have and will continue to send shudders through the diplomatic establishment, impact relationships between countries,

influencing international affairs in ways that are impossible to comprehend by anyone—neither WikiLeaks nor the U.S. government.

Governments are apparently rushing to secure their data and hold it more firmly than ever before; but, unfortunately, the bull is loose. If a government as sophisticated and professional as the U.S.’s can suffer such an enormous breach, then who is safe? It is time we all wake up and stay awake even while we

sleep!

Diplomacy has changed indefinitely. The conception that governments, diplomats or officials will be able to conduct secret business seems like an illusion. Diplomats and officials have realized that they are standing 24/7 in the court of law and that “anything they say or do can be used against them.” Thanks to WikiLeaks, ‘we’, ourselves, have globalized. Expect the day where all of our private, hypocritical conversations will be on display for the entire world to scrutinize and, most probably, enjoy.

We need to be ready for this, and make sure that our public declarations match our private dealings closely, if not perfectly. For companies and individuals, along with governments, deeds should match words. If they don’t, then expect ‘your’ customized WikiLeaks crisis, for it is from hypocrisy, where WikiLeaks sucks its energy at present, and will continue to in the future. It is time we face the reality and forget Thomas Grey’s maxim, “Where ignorance is bliss, it’s folly to be wise.”

Go Wolfpack!

BY FATMA AL-FADHLI, AUK ALUM ’10

graduation? Am I, the writer of this article, considered a member of the Wolfpack?

What you hear after graduation is that you will be a part of the family as you were before and still a member who helped, in one way or in another, in building and shaping AUK’s community. But, families sometimes became harsh to you, ignore, and even alienate you. The more you approach them, the more they give you their backs. The more you try to talk to them, the more they silence you. And that is the reality that we, or at least I, faced after graduation.

You visit the campus and the first question they ask, before saying hi, is “why are you here?”

You pass by some students, who, once upon a time, were your friends, and they pretend

to not see you.

You think yourself smart enough to establish your academic life as a writer so you ask for help and all you get is no response.

All these incidents led me to ask myself: are we really part of the family?

I remember what my sister said after her marriage: “Marriage detached me from my family. I feel myself a stranger as if it was my family.” And this is precisely what I feel, as if it was my family and that I no longer belong to it.

Reality dictates that universities are academic places determined to build the future and personalities of their students. After graduation, it’s the alums’ role to complete their lives while remembering the role of the family that taught them how to survive in life.

A Reminiscent Journey to the Past

BY HUDA AL- RASHID

N’Sync, watching old shows such as Sabrina the Teenage Witch and Full House, and skimming through old pictures from my childhood. Whenever we do that, there always seems to be a following sigh and a phrase like, “ahh....ayam zaman” (“the good old days” in Arabic). But, have you ever stopped to think about the true meaning behind this phrase; is today really as bad as we categorize it to be?

This question actually came from a conversation I overheard between my parents. My father pointed out some facts regarding how the present is actually much better than the past. He pointed out that in his “young days,” products in the supermarket were very limited, and hard to obtain. But nowadays, you can get bananas from fifteen different countries! Also, he mentioned that life in Kuwait is much more luxurious, and most importantly, safe. There isn’t any threat of wars in our region, or any other hazardous events that we have to worry about, as civilians. Now that you think about it, isn’t this very true? And I bet you can come up with many other issues to add to this list. So, if this is the case, why do we tend to praise the past endlessly and always look at the present in such a pessimistic vision?

I am not a psychologist or a theoretical expert, but I do have some possible explanations for this kind of existing perception. When we say the “past”, for each person, it will most likely refer to their childhood. And if you think about it, the moments in your life that are most jovial, fun, and carefree will most often be from your childhood

years; these years are free of (or somewhat limited in terms of) responsibilities, personal choices, or pressures in life. So, naturally, you would look at those days in a positive light. If you think about it, there were wars, and conflict swarming around when you were a kid, but you tend to be oblivious to this because it didn’t matter to you at such a young age; you were most likely interested in catching up on the next episode of Power Rangers, rather than paying attention to world events. Now, your grown self is naturally tamed to be aware of economic, social, and governmental aspects of the world; and let’s face it, politics, or any of these “serious” topics are most often depressing!

People may argue that Kuwait was more “luminous” in the past in reference to certain areas. For instance, when I look back at Kuwaiti football history, it was certainly filled with many victories such as participating in the World Cup, or winning the Asia Cup. But, look at our football team now, “Al-Azrag” certainly seems to be stepping up the ladder again, as we saw in the Gulf Cup recently, and inshalla (if God wills it), they will continue this winning streak in the 2011 Asia Cup. So, we should really be optimistic about the world and have faith in restoring these certain qualities that made the past so “golden,” while at the same time appreciate what gifts God has given us in the present. As a final thought, always keep in mind the common Arabic quote, “tafa’alu bil khairi, tajidooh” (If you hope for the best, you will find it waiting at your doorstep!)

The Harry Potter Era

BY CHARAH RAJI



seduced by books. I personally learned to read using a Harry Potter novel at the age of 4. It was truly a beautiful thing: the entire world is absorbed in literature. By 2007, the entire series had been released, and literally over 1,000,000,000+ people were in love with the series. Midnight release parties and queues for movies and books, annual conventions, re-makings of movies, inspiring a new genre of music called wizard rock, the infamous ‘A Very Harry Musical’- a musical rendition of all 7 books, pod-casts, shows, and the infamous invention of fan fiction (short stories about characters in a copyrighted work) all resulted from it. It even has its own theme park in Florida as an extension of the renowned Disney Land: The Wizarding World of Harry Potter.

One thing I do appreciate about Harry Potter above all else is that it secretly taught readers literary themes,

conventions of good writing, and grammatical skills. Readers also acquired a more extensive vocabulary thanks to Rowling’s professional writing style. Harry Potter not only changed pop culture as a whole, but it also improved language skills in millions of people, as well as broadening the horizons of many. Harry Potter can easily be linked to our own society in many ways, and deals with social issues such as prejudice, racism, discrimination, abuse of power, and injustice. Harry Potter is a well-developed story that has become a part of many people’s lives. Readers have grown with the protagonists of the series, naturally forging attachments. The series covers every imaginable themes thought never deviating from the most dominant: good versus evil. We have all learned acceptance, tolerance, patience, humanity, and the importance of love from the franchise, and we will not forget these lessons easily.

Harry Potter has changed the world positively. It has reached a level of such fame and respect that it is almost indecent to speak ill of or criticize the franchise. It is original and cannot easily be topped. An online article by T. A. Northburg posits that “most of all, the Harry Potter series is a social phenomenon. It’s not mainly about the books. It’s about kids - and often adults - sharing a common reading experience.”



In the article entitled ‘Cooperation Club Hosts Lecture on Science and Faith’ published in the December 2010 issue, an inaccurate piece of information was written: In terms of chronology, the Quran gave us such fundamental information by 632 B.C., long before the Greek philosophers, Democritus and Leucippus, posited that all matter was made up of indivisible particles. That is almost a 1000 year difference. The correction is as follows: In terms of chronology, the Quran gave us such fundamental information by 632 A.D., long before the Greek philosophers, Democritus and Leucippus, posited that all matter was made up of indivisible particles. That is almost a 1000 year difference.

“If you hope for the best, you will find it waiting at your doorstep!”

The Diet Wars

BY FARAH AL-SHAMALI



Suit up and brace yourself for full-outwar. With the element of coercion, very rarely are words more potent than brawn and its difficult to think otherwise. There is much to consider such as immediacy of consequence and just how much of it there is (i.e. death tolls and damaging national resources). This line of reasoning made perfect sense; that is, until consumerism accelerated around the turn of the 20th century, bad eating habits emerged, and (written with a heavy sigh) the fad diet was born. Diet companies are the most notorious, ineffective excuses for big business that have sprung on the face of our planet. Like flocks of sheep grazing on their pastures, we have been blinded into believing that they can unlock secrets to a healthier lifestyle.

The truth is that humanity isn't waiting on miracles simply because there are none. We have been cheated, deceived, and put on some wild goose chase that led us right back where we started. What's even more

saddening is that victims who subscribe to these diets know full well their uselessness but choose to have that realization hover somewhere on the margins of their subconscious because the overwhelming feeling of satisfaction with themselves that these programs implant is just too powerful to overcome. These corporations sell their services and products with a smile but they're much more likely to have us express every other color of emotion, darker ones especially.

Weight loss is simple and we've only complicated it in recent decades. There is nothing wrong with what's otherwise known as the poor-man's diet: eating healthily and exercising regularly. When consumers began to catch on to fabrications, an even darker reality came into being: the scientifically-proven fad diet. Woe to humankind. At this point, making an argument is synonymous with making a death wish, really. With the seal of approval from credible health

organizations, the war was over before it even began. Just when the would-be superheroes were about to soar up high, there came the kryptonite: doctors were beginning to recommend these lifestyles. If you were to put together a list of these diets and skimmed over their requirements, chances are you'll begin to feel like a dunce because some of them don't even sound like they're lowering calorie intake. What kind of diet has you eat absolutely anything? Then, you have your imaginative diets. Are liquid diets even practical? The questions are endless. Ask them enough and there you have it; you'll deconstruct them in no time. Kudos to Socrates.

In the infinite world of cyberspace, so many opinions go unnoticed, especially the least popular ones. This is why I'm choosing to select one such disregarded opinion to share with you, let alone a highly trustworthy one. Dr. Vincent Bellonzi, a personal trainer, cycling and running coach,

and nutritionist, posted a video called 'The Truth About Diet and Weight Loss' on YouTube to set things straight about weight loss and he begins the 8-minute talk by saying that "diets don't work." He identified the problem (weight gain and, eventually, obesity), gave a bunch of related facts and statistics, and proceeded with the much-overlooked solution. In relation to fad diets, he mentions a study that put together some of the more popular ones among the masses and the staggering result that they found was a 10-pound weight loss on average for all of them.

He ends by giving viewers effortless, affordable solutions. Now pay attention to how easy this is. To lose weight, have a substantial breakfast, count out fattening foods, sleep when the moon's out, and engage in physical activity. That's it. No, really. Dieting should never make you feel deprived. You're not starving but saving yourself. Stock up on incentives, surround yourself with encouraging people, and take it slow. This isn't a race and there's no cash prize to look forward to. There is, however, health and an opportunity to prolong your existence. Don't make a list of what you've been eating, don't count your calories, don't stress too much about portion sizes, don't limit your options with an eating schedule, and don't make it seem like you're on death row. Happy dieting!

I greatly recommend watching Dr. Bellonzi's video. You'll be nodding your head to every word. Here's the url address: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wubyw2Wq4x4&feature=channel>.

Texting and Social Networking Woes

BY FARAH AL-SHAMALI



I have a cousin who, at the age of five, had a wireless connection in his room and, although did not have one, was introduced to the idea of a mobile phone and uses one frequently. I would not be surprised if, one day, I saw him in a business suit making frantic calls, and he is only eight. Aside from the fact that I was completely jealous that he had all these luxuries so early on in life, I also worried about him and still do. I actually think he should be envious of me because, unlike him, I got to live out a normal childhood. So why is getting caught up in all this technological hype deficient? For a very good reason: it can and will negatively affect your health.

Hyper-texting, spending hours upon hours texting and networking furiously, can end up having its users suffer from unhealthy behaviors and mental health problems according to a study conducted by the Case Western Reserve School of Medicine located in Cleveland, Ohio in the United States. The study was based on research conducted upon high school students and the findings were quite staggering, nearly 20 percent of the participants were "hyper-texters." Some of the negative behavioral changes that these hyper-texters might undergo range from eating disorders all the way up to getting into physical brawls. Why, you may ask?

It has also been proven that excessive amounts spent on hyper-texting can lead to bouts of depression, stress, poor sleep, poor academics, and even suicide. These are dangerous results for indulgences the youth take for granted. I am completely certain that there is not one hyper-texter out there who one day felt he or she has had enough. But every time they try to step away, they keep getting pulled back in (not trying to make a Godfather reference) and the vicious cycle continues with no hope for alleviation or even an end to it. I know that last suggestion must have been offensive to some readers but I do not mean to border on blasphemy and suggest that texting and social networking be removed entirely. People like you and me just need to use it in moderation and not give it more than it is actually worth. There is no harm in staying connected but give yourself time to be alone. Sometimes, that is all the company you need.

Less is More

BY FATIMA IBRAHEEM

Recent scientific research and study suggests stunning information, that deaf people have stronger eye-sight vision than normal people, who haven't lost their hearing sense. The explanation behind this is that there are two kinds of extraordinary sight that many congenitally deaf people inhabit: "Expanded peripheral vision and the ability to detect motion imperceptible to the hearing."

Stephen Lomber, an Associate Professor and researcher with the Centre for Brain and Mind at the University of Western Ontario demonstrates this through an example he mentions, "when people with normal hearing stand at a clock's centre and stare at the 12, they probably can see the 10 and 2. But those with congenital deafness typically can also detect the 9 and 3."

In addition to that, deaf people have the ability to differentiate whether an object is still or is in fact moving at an extremely slow pace, which isn't necessarily the case with people who have their normal hearing sense. "These are abilities that most of us as humans – or most animals – don't have," Lomber adds.

Despite the fact that there seems to be some kind of logical and scientific explanation to this study, the result is still not absolute. However, according to research published in *Nature Neuroscience*, Lomber and his team found that people who are born deaf or who lost their hearing early in life "tap a brain area called the auditory cortex. That swath of gray matter, meant to process sound, is

rewired to boost sight."

With a hypothesis like this, scientific research requires an experiment, in return, to prove the testing results. Hence, scientists used cats for the experiment; a portion born deaf, and a portion with full hearing. Afterwards, the results have been established for confirmation through several interviews conducted with deaf people.

Using LED screens (light-emitting diode screens), scientists evaluated and compared the cats' peripheral vision and motion detection. To check their interpretations, the scientists deliberately shut off the deaf cats' auditory cortices. As a result, the super sight vision exhibited by the deaf cats disappeared suddenly. "They lost the super part," Lomber commented.

These amazing findings go back to the brain and its ability to re-make itself. Thus, Lomber theorised that there is a possibility that congenitally deaf people also have "keener senses of touch and smell." "The brain is a pretty efficient structure," he said. "It's not going to let processing capacity go to waste. If it's not going to use it on sound, it's going to use it on something else."

Congenitally deaf people might not hear like you...but they can see a lot better than you do. So are the deaf people really deaf, or are the non-deaf partially blind? It is all backed-up by the brain, this amazing part of us, the blessing of which cannot be fully understood despite continued research that exposes its significance and indescribable traits.

Did-You-Know Facts, A Must Read!

BY FATIMA IBRAHEEM

1. On average, you blink 15,000 times a day. Women blink twice as much as men.
2. The term "biology" was coined in 1805 by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck.
3. On average, you breathe 23,000 times a day, and the heart beats about 100,000 times each day. Actually, your system of blood vessels is over 60,000 miles long. That's long enough to go around the world more than twice!
4. Over the last 150 years the average height of people in industrialised nations increased by 10 cm (4 in).
5. Mexico City sinks about 10 inches a year.
6. It is impossible to sneeze and keep one's eyes open at the same time; or else they'll burst.
7. 55% of people yawn within 5 minutes of seeing someone else yawn.
8. All the chemicals in the human body have a combined value of approximately £4.00.
9. Leonardo Da Vinci invented the scissors.
10. Air becomes liquid at about minus 190 degrees Celsius. (Liquid air looks like water with a bluish tint).
11. Unless food is mixed with saliva you cannot taste it.
12. On average a hiccup lasts 5 minutes.
13. Your thumbnail grows the slowest; the middle nail grows the fastest.
14. A newborn baby's head accounts for one-quarter of its weight.
15. The bones in your body are not white – they range in color from beige to light brown. The bones you see in museums are white because they have been boiled and cleaned.
16. Our eyes are always the same size from birth.
17. Every person has a unique tongue print.
18. In 10 minutes, a hurricane releases more energy than all of the world's nuclear weapons combined.
19. A person can live without food for about a month, but only about a week without water. And if the amount of water in your body is reduced by just 1%, you'll feel thirsty.
20. The average person falls asleep in seven minutes.

The Ultimate Winter Guide

BY SAHAR TANWEER



“If you’ve had a rough year or you’re planning to make a change in your lifestyle, the beginning of the year is the perfect time to plan ahead for the new year.”

With a new year kicking in and the previous month being filled with festivities, events and endless parties that marked Christmas and New Years, it is exciting times with the beginning of a new year and the end of yet another fabulous one. However, with so much happening, we tend to lose track; so here’s a quick guide to winter.

Keep warm. Keeping warm is really crucial especially in this changing season where everyone seems to be getting the flu. So, stock up on teas such as chamomile or even lavender. Chamomile and lavender tea are great for reducing stress; and with the holiday season and so much to do, these wonderful teas are bound to help. Reduce caffeine intake as caffeine increases stress levels; so keep your caffeine intake to a bare minimum with no more than two cups per day.

Embrace the weather. The weather is amazing so instead of doing indoor activities, go out and enjoy the winter breeze! Go out paddling, fishing, cycling, or running. Not only is it going to keep you in shape for the

holiday season, but studies have shown that outdoor activities alleviate long term health problems and a tad dose of oxygen does good to the brain and will keep you energized and alert throughout the day! Check out the local health clubs and studios that are offering outdoor classes such as yoga, pilates and even fitness training.

Give your credit card a breather. Here’s a rule! Give your credit card a breather for a few weeks and save up for the holiday season. Winter is that time of year for ‘giving.’ So collect cash and buy your loved ones a gift as a token of appreciation and to show how much you care. We tend to spend the whole year buying endless amounts of things for ourselves, so giving to others not only keeps your ‘personal spending’ intact, but it makes the people you love know how much you care.

Start planning. If you’ve had a rough year or you’re planning to make a change in your lifestyle, The beginning of the year is the perfect time to plan ahead for the new year.

A lot of the time with so much happening around us, we tend to lose focus of our lives and the aims we have. Sit down and plan out the accomplishments you are willing to achieve in the coming year. Personally, I carry along a planner with a list of things I need to do every day. Then at the end of the year, every December, I list down the 10 goals, aims and changes I want for the coming year. This helps a whole lot keeping everything in perspective.

Winter is one of those blessed times of year where the notion of family, giving and unity are re-established. Every other month, we seem to be constantly on the go and running, trying to get things done. But winter is one of those seasons (along with the months it corresponds with) with its charms of having a powerful impact of bringing everyone together! So embrace this fantastic time of year and enjoy yourself to the full excess. However, that doesn’t mean losing track of your life and important duties and events. Stay safe! LIVE LOVE LAUGH!

“Winter is one of those blessed times of year where the notion of family, giving and unity are re-established.”

My Time at the Writing Center

BY ABDULRAHMAN AL-FARHAN

“At the end of each day, I go to sleep satisfied and content with the work I have done and the time and effort put into helping others.”



Many have called me “crazy” and my experience at the writing center “useless” claiming that I might have loose screws somewhere in my head. They often questioned why I would want to voluntarily give up my time and breaks between classes to actually do more work, but this time for the benefit of other students. What they don’t see is that in my two semesters working with staff and students at the Writing Center, I have actually come to realize exactly what I want to do with my future. I currently work as an Arabic writing consultant, helping students with any questions they might have when it comes to writing in Arabic. I sincerely love what I do, and I can’t begin to express the joy I feel when I help a fellow student out.

Despite the six to ten hours per week, the time I spend is certainly worthwhile and I still haven’t complained. I’m unable to put into words the love and appreciation I have for the

Writing Center’s personnel; they have now become my second family considering I have spent merely two semesters there. I regret not opening the Arabic center earlier. One of my minors at university is Arabic Literature which I hope to complete my masters in, a realization that occurred to me in the two semesters I spent. Due to the time I have spent working alongside struggling students, I have come to learn that I have a talent and passion for the Arabic language and helping peers.

Working at the Writing Center did not only provide me with an opportunity to learn and help others learn about my field of passion but it also increased my confidence. It made me realize that I am surrounded with friendly and helpful students, that I feel dedicated to aid every time they come for help. At the end of each day, I go to sleep satisfied and content with the work I have done and the time and effort put into helping others.

An incident that I can’t forget is one regarding a graphic design student who came in to see me seeking help regarding her final project where translation was needed. Despite this being not my field of work and although knowing that translation was indeed a lot of work, I didn’t have it in me to turn her down. She later came after her exhibition and informed that she won first place and thanked me for helping her.

The act of giving back is not done to get thanks but is rather a mandatory and crucial part of being human. However, when someone comes back and thanks you, there are no words to describe the joy of knowing that your work has paid off. Now that my final semester at AUK has come to an end, I would like to dedicate the most memorable years of my life to those who helped me become who I am today.

“What they don’t see is that in my two semesters working with staff and students at the Writing Center, I have actually come to realize exactly what I want to do with my future.”

From Karbala'a: A Call to Humanity...Freedom Revived and Victory Re-defined

Who is Hussain Bin Ali (Imam Hussain PBUH)?

The grandson of the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Mohammed, and son of Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law (also author of *The Peak of Eloquence*), and Fatima Zahra'a, the Prophet's daughter, one of Islam's prominent female figures. He is significant to Muslims because he is a member of the Prophet's Household (Ahlulbayt) as the Prophet was reported to have stated that: "Hussain is from me and I am from him. God loves whomever loves Hussain...who loves him has loved me and who hates him, has hated me" and "Hussain is the luminous torch of guidance and the rescue ship"

A Brief Outlook on the Incident of Karbala'a:

The incident of Karbala and the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Imam Hussain, sparks universal ideas and values, not restricted to the Islamic religion. It is the memory of a hero who rejected tyranny, blind submission and the unjust rule, and who exhibited the message of freedom to the entire universe through his words and actions. He called out not only to that army that had queued to battle him but to the entire humanity that, "if you have no faith (religion), at best, live freely," demanding every human being in this divergent world to live a free man's life with free choices without blind submission, casting aside all types of prejudice and bigotry. Mourning him today, as a sequel to the ceaseless mourning during the past thousand years after his martyrdom, is merely a sign indicative of the fact that his memory is as alive and thriving as the day he was gone and that his martyrdom was indeed the victory of his truth and beliefs.

Excerpts of Imam Hussain's Sermons on his Way to the Battlefield and on the Eve of the Battle:

- "Those who could not gain guidance from 63 years of preaching will not be influenced by my words. You are blinded by the worthless rewards..."
- "This movement of mine is not on account of stubbornness, rebellion, worldly passions or instigation by Satan...The only thing which invites me to this great movement is that I should reform the affairs of the followers of my grandfather, eradicate corruption, undertake enjoining to do good and restraining from evil..."
- "...indeed, a believer does not wish anything but to meet his Lord. Indeed, I do not see death (for freedom) as but happiness, and life with unjust people as nothing but grief"
- "People, listen to what I have to say and do not rush me, that I may admonish you your duties toward me and explain to you the reason why I came to you. If you accept my explanation, verify my truthfulness and deal with me with justice. Perhaps then you will attain prosperity rather than pursue me"
- "...Have you not noticed that the right is ignored and the evil is not forbidden? People are certainly the slaves of this world; religion is but a slaver on their tongues. They turn it wherever their livelihood demands. If they are examined by misfortunes, the truly religious ones will be but a few"

Some of What Has Been Said About the Incident and Imam Hussain (PBUH)...by Non-Muslims:

- Swami Shankaracharya: "It is Hussain's sacrifice that has kept Islam alive or else in this world there would be no one left to take Islam's name."
- Thomas Carlyle (Scottish historian and essayist): "The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Hussain and his companions were rigid believers in God. They illustrated that the numerical superiority does not count when it comes to the truth and the falsehood. The victory of Hussain, despite his minority, marvels me!"
- Antoine Bara (Lebanese writer): "No battle in the modern and past history of mankind has earned more sympathy and admiration as well as provided more lessons than the martyrdom of Husayn..." (*Husayn in Christian Ideology*)
- Ignaz Goldziher (Hungarian Orientalist): "Weeping and lamentation over the evils and persecutions suffered by the [Prophet's] family, and mourning for its martyrs: these are things from which loyal supporters of the cause cannot cease." (*Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*)
- Dr. Rajendra Prasad: "The sacrifice of Imam Hussain (PBUH) is not limited to one country, or nation, but it is the hereditary state of the brotherhood of all mankind."
- Edward Gibbon (English historian and MP): "In a distant age and climate, the tragic scene of the death of Hussain will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader." (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*)



Background Designed By AUK Student, Khalid Al-Buzid

بقلم الطالب: علي نواب

هو سيد الشهداء، جده رسول الله وأبوه علي المرتضى وأمه فاطمة الزهراء. ولد في المدينة في الثالث من شعبان سنة أربعة للهجرة واستشهد في كربلاء في العاشر من محرم سنة واحد وستون للهجرة. اشتهر الحسين بكرمه وتواضعه وشجاعته وحلمه وفصاحته. وضرب أروع مثال للتضحية، فضحى بنفسه وأهله وأصحابه من أجل إحياء كلمة لا إله إلا الله. حُبر بين الحياة والموت. فرأى أن الشهادة هي السبيل الوحيد لبقاء الإسلام...

عاشوراء.. يوم انتصار الدم على السيف.. عاشوراء.. درس تأصلت جذوره في أعماق الدهر. فأنمر عن قيم ومبادئ صارت نبراساً يضيء الطريق لدروب الأحرار...

فمولانا الحسين عليه السلام لم يخرج أشراً ولا بطراً، ولا ظالماً ولا مفسداً، وإنما خرج لطلب الإصلاح في أمة جده رسول الله صلى الله عليه وآله، بعدما حاول الأعداء بثتني ما في حوزتهم أن يستروا الإسلام بحسب ما تشتهي أنفسهم في محاولة واهية باءت بالفشل. فوقف أبو الأحرار صارخاً في وجوههم: ((لا والله، لا أعطيكم بيدي إعطاء الذليل، ولا أفر فرار العبيد)).

تلك هي الكلمات التي دكت عروش الجبابرة والظالمين عرشاً تلو الآخر...

أما كربلاء.. فهي نبع ترتوي منه خطى حياتنا.. إنها قصة تاريخية ترجمها الزمان لتكون درساً.. لتكون عبرة.. لتكون عظة يتعظ بها كل منصف... لقد رويت هذه الأرض المقدسة شراباً، فاكست حلة الكرامة، وأنبئت ثمار العزة.. إنه لشراب طاهر.. فيه ما فيه من صفاء وكمال ونقاء.. إنه دم الحسين.. ذلك الدم الذي لا زال مصباح هدى خلق الله.. ذلك الدم الذي لم يلامس وجه الأرض إلا للحق.. ولم يسفك إلا في سبيل رب الأرباب...

حسين.. اسم يبقى له دوي يدور في خلد كل محب.. في خلد كل مؤمن. كان بطلاً حامى عن شرع الله وعن دين جده فقُتل ظامناً بجنب الشريعة.. لم يُرضخ و لم يُذل.. كان أخوف ما يخاف عليه أن يودي الطغاة بأمة محمد صلى الله عليه وآله في هاوية جهنم.. فصبر وجاهد وقتل.. لا للمنصب.. ولا للكرسي.. بل حباً في الله.. و حرصاً على دينه.. وهو يصيح ((هيهات متاً الذلة.. هيهات متاً الذلة)). كلمات نبعت من وجود أبي عبد الله الحسين.. فترجمتها شفتاه كدرس حُطّ على فؤاد الدهر ليبقى بصمة حسينية يلثمها كل ثائر لينتصر.. وليت شعري أما علموا أي دم يسفكون؟؟ دم أمير.. دم سيد يرجو كل عاقل أن يكون تحت إمرته.. إنه وأخوه عليهما السلام سيدا شباب أهل الجنة.

ماذا قال الغرب في الحسين عليه السلام؟

لو كان الحسين منا لنشرنا له في كل أرض راية، ولأقمنا له في كل أرض منبر. ولدعونا الناس إلى المسيحية باسم الحسين. (قسيس مسيحي)

وهل ثمة قلب لا يغشاه الحزن والألم حين يسمع حديثاً عن كربلاء؟ وحتى غير المسلمين لا يسعهم إنكار طهارة الروح التي وقعت هذه المعركة في ظلها. (المستشرق الإنجليزي إدوارد براون)

إن كان الإمام الحسين قد حارب من أجل أهداف دنيوية، فإنني لا أدرك لماذا اصطحب معه النساء والصبية والأطفال؟ إذن فالعقل يحكم أنه ضحى فقط لأجل الإسلام. (الكاتب الإنجليزي تشارلز ديكنز)

هذه التضحيات الكبرى من قبيل شهادة الإمام الحسين رفعت مستوى الفكر البشري، وخلق بهذه الذكرى أن تبقى إلى الأبد. وتذكر على الدوام. (النائب الهنديوسي السابق تاملاس توندون)

لقد طالعت بدقة حياة الإمام الحسين، شهيد الإسلام الكبير. ودققت النظر في صفحات كربلاء واتضح لي أن الهند إذا أرادت إحراز النصر فلا بد لها من اقتفاء سيرة الحسين. (غاندي)

على الرغم من أن القساوسة لدينا يؤثرون على مشاعر الناس عبر ذكر مصائب المسيح، إلا أنك لا تجد لدى أتباع المسيح ذلك الحماس والانفعال الذي جده لدى أتباع الإمام الحسين. لا تمثل إلا قشّة أمام طود عظيم. (توماس ماسجارك)



قصيدة بعنوان إلى

شعره/ مريم فضل

قرأت هذه القصيدة في أحد أمسياتي الشعرية في الجامعة الأميركية، وظلت أصداءها بين الكثير فتعلقت بقلوبهم ونشر هنا لعيونهم:

إلى من يسألني سؤالاً شديداً
عن أصلي و ذاتي و كل الأحاسيس
إني امرأة خلقها الرب
عربية هاشمية
تدرس في جامعةٍ أميركية
تصادقت مع الأحلام و الفكرة العظيمة
خربشت على وجه القصائد أعواماً طويلة
إلى من يسألني سؤالاً شديداً
عن أصلي و ذاتي و كل الأحاسيس
قد قلت ما قلت
و الأهم مما أسلفت
أن التواضع من سماتي
و المساواة أمر هام في حياتي
تركت عادة الجاهلية من تفاخر بأنسابٍ و أجسامٍ جميلة
ماذا عن أشعاري؟
ما قررت أن أكون شاعرة
قرار الشعر بيد الذات و الأعماق
فلا تهول الأمر يا قارئ
هذا الشعر لا يخرج عن الأوراق
ودع عنك الأشعار و الخربشات
إن الشعراء قالوا و ما فعلوا؟
كتبوا أنهم حزنوا؟
أنهم ما حزنوا
كتبوا أنهم ضحكوا؟
أن التناقض فنٌ به اتخذوا