Archives and Special Collections Department,
American University of Beirut
Beirut, Lebanon
2018

Ras Beirut Oral History Collection, 2013-2014

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the University Libraries, AUB
Prepared by Dalya Nouh

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Webpage:
http://web.aub.edu.lb/libraries/asc/Pages/index.aspx
Descriptive Summary

Bib. Record: b22095238
Call No.: OH: 301
Record Creator: American University of Beirut Neighborhood Initiative interviews conducted by Dr. Maria Bashshur Abunnasr.
Collection Title: Ras Beirut Oral History Collection, 2013-2014
Collection Dates: 2013-2014
Physical Description: 63 interviews
Language(s): English and Arabic

Administrative Information

Source: The Neighborhood Initiative; Dr. Maria Bashshur Abunnasr.
Access Restrictions: The collection can be used within the premises of the Archives and Special Collections Department, Jafet Memorial Library, American University of Beirut.
Preferred Citation: Ras Beirut Oral History Collection, 2013-2014, American University of Beirut/Library Archives, OH: 301, name of interviewee.
Compiled by: Dalya Nouh

Scope and Content

Dr. Abunnasr interviewed a group of Ras Beirutis, from different educational backgrounds and social statuses all known as the ‘original’ families of Ras Beirut. Some of the interviewees descend from families with historical connections to AUB; others are from significant national or ethnic groups; others are prominent or modest businessmen, professionals, and cultural leaders; all are longtime Ras Beirut residents along with some iconic neighbors. Open-ended interviews were conducted by Dr. Maria Abunnasr supported by Dr. Cynthia Minty, and Diana Richani, in the summer of 2014. The participants list includes 63 men and women over the age of seventy. Individuals of this age group would have entered adulthood before the Lebanese Civil War, and lived in Ras Beirut during its heyday. These interviews were compiled into a book to be published by AUB Press, "The Ras Beirut Oral History Project: We are in this Together ".
https://website.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Pages/RasBeirutOralhistory.aspx

The collection is important for researcher interested in sociology, anthropology, ethnology, psychology, urbanism, and socio-economic and cultural interaction.
Arrangement

The Collection is arranged in four series:

- Series I: AUB Alumni
- Series II: AUB Faculty
- Series III: AUB Staff
- Series IV: AUB Neighbors

Background

This oral history of Ras Beirut project grew out of one of the many projects sponsored by AUB’s Neighborhood Initiative. To many individuals, Ras Beirut possesses a particularly strong sense of multilayered place with a diverse social fabric. The Ras Beirut neighborhood epitomizes what is called “ta’ayush” or coexistence and it is this diversity and spirit of tolerance that is considered special, and somehow different, from other neighborhoods of Beirut, Lebanon, and the region. Drawing on the theoretical framework of memory studies and the practice of oral history, this project documents these claims of Ras Beirut’s uniqueness in stories that describe a distant, and in many cases, mourned, past. But far from being an older generation’s futile longing for that past, these oral histories demonstrate how individuals and families created this special place. Furthermore, because Ras Beirut has undergone so much change since the end of the Lebanese Civil War, rendering some parts of Ras Beirut unrecognizable to its own inhabitants, it is all the more urgent to document the memory and testimony of Ras Beirut’s eldest generation and to provide a multi-vocal record of Ras Beirut’s past.

The interviewees were selected based on their religious and ethnic backgrounds and would include notable and less known members of the community. Moreover, interviewees included individuals selected from the ‘original’ families of Ras Beirut; members of families with historical connections to AUB; prominent business people, professionals, and cultural leaders; small business owners; other longtime residents; and others who were iconic neighbors of AUB (such as Ibrahim Takkoush and Abu Muhammad, the shoe shine man opposite the Main Gate of AUB).

The interview process began in November 2013 and continued through to August 2014. Dr. Maria Bashshur Abunnasr, a historian affiliated with AUB’s Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES), conducted the 63 interviews. The interviews were conducted using the open-ended interview technique particular to life histories, yet they followed a rough sequence of questions under broad headings such as: personal/family history; life pathways (school, work, leisure); urban geography (landmarks, boundaries); and social geography (mixed communities). About 70% of the interviews were conducted in English and about 30% in Arabic. All interviews were digitally recorded by the interviewers. In 2014, the interviews were transcribed with the help of research assistants. AUB Press has approved the manuscript documenting this project and the book entitled *The Ras Beirut Oral History Project: We are in this Together* is slated for publication in late 2018.
The digital recordings, the consent forms, and the transcripts were donated by the Neighborhood Initiative to AUB’s Jafet Library’s Department of Archives and Special Collections to become part of the permanent record of life in Ras Beirut for the purpose of research.

**Subject Headings**

Autobiography.
Cities and towns -- Growth -- History.
Cultural pluralism -- Lebanon.
Exceptionalism -- Lebanon -- Ras Beirut.
Hamra (Beirut, Lebanon)
Memory -- Social aspects -- Lebanon -- Ras Beirut.
Oral History – Middle East.
Sociolinguistics -- Lebanon -- Beirut.
Urban landscape architecture -- Lebanon -- Ras Beirut -- History -- 19th century.
Urbanization -- Lebanon -- Beirut.

**Container List**

**Series I: AUB Alumni**

- **Aniseh Rawda Najjar**, BA 1936,
  March 18, 2014 [1h. 44min.]
- **Antoine Maamari**, 
  February 20; March 4, 2014 [1h. 39min.]
- **Emily Abi Rashid Nasrallah**, BA 1958, 
  January 23, 2014 [62 min.]
- **Fadlo Bulus al-Khaulil**, B.B.A. 1947, 
  May 21, 2014 [2h. 2min.]
- **Khaled Daouk**, BA 1966, 
  June 16, 2014 [1h. 14min.]
- **Khalil Nassar**, BS 1966, 
  May 27, 2014 [1h. 39min.]
- **Leila Shahin Da Cruz**, BA 1947, 
  December 5, 2013 [1h. 47min.]; January 16 [1h. 38min.], February 6, 2014 [1h. 16min.]
- **Najwa Shahin Haffar**, BA 1951, 
  November 8, 2013 [2h. 20min.]
- **Malak Husein Abdul-Rahman**, BA 1950,
December 12, 2013 [54 min.]; January 17, 2014 [63 min.]

- **Sabbah al-Haj**, BS 1957, MS 1961,
  February 27, 2014 [1h. 21 min.]
- **Samia Hamadeh Musfy**,
  May 5, 2014 [1h. 36min.]

**Series II: AUB Faculty**

- **Adele Hamdan Takkieddine**, BA 1953; MA 1959; Instructor in Education 1957-60; Research Assistant in Medicine 1962-65; Ad Hoc Lecturer in Psychology in the school of Nursing 1968-70.
  March 5, 2014 [2h.]
- **Antoine Zahlan**, BA 1951, MA 1952; AUB Professor 1952-1976.
  November 6, 2013 [1h. 43min.]
- **Daad Khoury Rbeiz**, Pediatrician and Instructor at the Social Health Center 1960-62.
  April 23, 2014 [1h. 14min.]
- **George Abdallah Rubeiz**, BA 1949; M.D. 1953; Associate Professor of Internal Medicine (Cardiology) 1958-1998.
  April 23, 2014 [1h. 36min.]
  January 27; 30; February 11, 2014 [3h. 18min.]
- **Jean-Marie Cook**, Lecturer/Assistant Professor 1966-1999.
  January 22, 2014 [1h. 52min.]
- **Munir Bashshur**, BA 1956, MA1958; AUB Professor 1957-2017
  August 31, 2014 [1h. 49 min.]
- **Nadim Cortas**, MD; Professor/Dean/Vice President 1973-2016
  May 11, 2014 [2h. 6min.]
- **Paul Khat**, Professor of Economics 1945-46
  March 19, 2014 [1h. 25min.]
- **Raja Afif Iliya**, BA; AUB Professor/Associate Dean 1954-2015
  January 23, 2013 [1h. 54min.]
- **Rosemary Sayigh**, Lecturer of the Center for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (CAMES) 2012-2016.
  November 22, 2013 [53 min.]
- **Shereen Khairallah**, Assistant Professor Civilization Sequence Program 1965-1999
  February 18, 2014 [56 min.]
- **Suhail Boulos**, BA 1946, MD 1950; Associate Clinical Professor 1953-2011
  February 18, 2014 [66 min.]
Series III: AUB Staff

- **Arminee Choukassizian**, Library Assistant, MA 1966,
  November 8, 2013 [1h. 19min.]; January 15, 2014
- **Asma Fathallah**, Librarian 1978-2003
  January 29, 2014 [2h. 10min.]
- **Leila Freiji**, Librarian 1966-1988
  December 13, 2013 [2h. 17min.]
- **Ziad Yamout**, Director of Physical Plant 1991-2003
  February 28, 2014 [1h 56min.]

Series IV: AUB Neighbors

- **Abu Khalil Yamut** (Wassim Tabet),
  December 17, 2013 [2h. 26min.]
- **Agnes Somerville Shama'a**, 
  February 6, 2014 [1h.]
- **Ahmad al-Ashi and Fatima Zahiri al-Ashi**, 
  March 14, 2014 [2h.1min.]
- **Ahmad Bedeir, Abu-Muhammad**, (Abu Taleb), 
  June 2, 2014 [56 min.]
- **Amira (Im-Wahib) al-Hichi**, 
  March 31, 2014 [64 min.]
- **Bahij Bekhazi**, 
  December 19, 2013 [53 min.]
- **Bushra & Ghassan Rawda al-Kadi**, 
  April 1, 2014 [1h. 47 min.]
- **David Hirst**, 
  March 11, 2014 [1h. 16min.]
- **Fatima Farhan el-Kibbeh**, 
  May 22, 2014 [1h. 46min.]
- **Heike Mardinian**, 
  June 3, 2014 [3h.]
- **Hilda Nasri Kandalaft Khoury**, 
  February 12, 2014 [1h. 13min.]
- **Ibrahim Takkoush**, 
  November 24; December 8, 2013 [1h. 51min.]
- **Khadije and Naamet Labban**, 
  February 25, 2014 [1h. 40min.]
• Khadiji and Amira Shatila,
  March 18, 2014 [2h. 15min.]
• Madelaine Makinadjian Assilian,
  February 26, 2014 [67 min.]
• Mona Massouh Takla,
  January 31, 2014 [49 min.]
• Mona Saba Rahhal,
  January 24, 2014 [2h. 23min.]
• Nabil & Norma Abi-Chahine,
  March 12, 2014 [1h.32 min.]
• Neda Makdisi Maalouf,
  April 9, 2014 [1h. 22min.]
• Nuha Zakhem,
  November 12, 2013 [1h. 39min.]
• Philip Safar,
  November 18 [2h.]; December 20, 2013 [43min.]
• Rahif Tamim,
  November 13 [2h. 26min.]; December 11, 2013 [1h. 27min.]
• Richard Johnson,
  October 7, 2013 [2h. 8min.]
• Rida Nourreddine Nasser Al-Akel
  April 24, 2014 [66 min.]
• Saed Amin Nader,
  February 13, 2014 [60min.]
• Saed Ghalayini,
  January 30, 2014 [1h. 46min.]
• Samira Gharzuzi Berberi.
  December 4, 2013 [1h. 12min.]
• Samual D. Constan
  June 8, 2014 [1h 55min.]
• Sarwad Labban,
  June 17, 2014 [1h. 23min.]
• Sharon Lee Labban,
  May 16, 2014 [1h. 20min.]
• Tuti Khoury,
  December 10, 2013 [1h. 32min.]
• Walid Bouheiry,
  February 3, 2014 [1h. 12min.]
• Yoland Duraffourd Buckley,
February 21, 2014 [1h. 50min.]
- Zahra Barraj Bissat,
  December 2, 2013 [1h. 23 min.]
- Zuhair Itani,
  February 13, 2014 [1h. 12min.]

Related Material

AUB – The Neighborhood Initiative
- Ras Beirut Oral History Project
  https://website.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Pages/RasBeirutOralhistory.aspx
- The Oral History and Memory of Ras Beirut: Exceptional Narratives of Co-existence
  http://website.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Documents/Published%20articles/MESA%20Paper%202014.pdf
- AUB and Ras Beirut in 150 Years of Photographs
  http://website.aub.edu.lb/Neighborhood/Pages/AUBandRasBeirutin150YearsofPhotographs.aspx

Books
- Zennaro, M., & Københavns Universitet. (2004). You have to read between the lines: An analysis sectarian discourses in middle-class Ras Beirut, Lebanon. [Kbh.]: Institut for Antropologi, Københavns Universitet.
- Haffar, N. S. (2009). We once were like that: A memoir. Seattle: Ameera Publishing.
- Haffar, N. S. (2012). And then ... memoirs continued. Seattle: Ameera Publishing LLC.

DVD
  http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1370066~S1
Maps

- Hamra, Ras Beirut and Verdun mini map. Lebanon: Geoprojects, 2011
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1461405~S1]

Photos

- [Pictures from Ras Beirut Wellbeing Survey, 2011]
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1754970~S1]
- [Farewell for the Ras Beirut Bookshop, 2008]
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1415968~S1]
- [Projection of film Memories of Ras Beirut [graphic]: Wish You Were Here, 2005]
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1371575~S1]
- [Seminar by Afamia Kaddour on Contesting Relative Deprivation [graphic]: The Ras Beirut Well Being Survey, 2009] [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1439804~S1]

Posters

- Memories of Ras Beirut [graphic]: Wish you were here.
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1375805~S1]
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1368873~S1]
- Generating Knowledge: The Ras Beirut well-being survey
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1451501~S1]

Theses

  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1041217~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1041217~S1)
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1042069~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1042069~S1)
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1753285~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1753285~S1)
- Yacoubian, V. S. (1955). *Comparative design and cost estimate of a one-pipe forced circulation hot water heating system vs forced warm air heating system of a residential building in Ras-Beirut.*
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373551~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373551~S1)
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373470~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373470~S1)
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373478~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373478~S1)
- Atweh, M. G. (1949). *Architectural design of a recreational centre in Ras-Beirut with structural design of the balcony and the roof slab.*
  [http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373446~S1](http://library.aub.edu.lb/record=b1373446~S1)