

LERC extends Acknowledgement Award to Antonio Trabulse Kaim and Youssef Beydoun

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Reported by Elie Nabhan, Basma Abdul Khalek, Elias Sfeir

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University held a ceremony to acknowledge the outstanding service of two people, Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim who served the Lebanese community in Mexico and Mr. Youssef Beydoun who served the Lebanese community in Dearborn, Michigan, in the United States of America.



Mr. Elie Nabhan



Ms. Guita Hourani



Ms. Basma Abdul Khalek



Fr. Walid Moussa

The event was attended by H. E. Mr. Jorge Alvarez, Ambassador of Mexico; H. E. Mr. Thomas Daughton, the Chargé d'affaires at the United States Embassy; Mrs. Amanda Cranmer, Political Officer at the US Embassy; Fr. Walid Moussa, President of NDU; Dr. Ameen Rihani, Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Assaad Eid, NDU Vice President for Sponsored Research and Development; Dr. Michel Nehme, Director of the University International Affairs Office at NDU; Ms. Claudia Maroun of the Cultural Section of the Embassy of Mexico; Dr. George Hayek, President of the Lebanese-Mexican Friendship Association; Dr. Elias Maroun, and friends and family members of those honored; LERC Adjunct Researcher Dr. Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous; Mr. Amin

Nehme, LERC Program Developer; Mr. Roberto Khatlab, LERC's Latin American Liaison Officer; LERC Director Ms Guita Hourani, and friends and staff of LERC.



A view of the audience at the Acknowledgement Award ceremony (Dec 2009).

Following a warm welcome extended to the visitors by Director Hourani, Ms. Basma Abdul Khalek LERC Project Manager gave brief biographical sketches of the two being honored. Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim, she said, was born in 1947, in a family originating from Kfarhouneh in South Lebanon. After studying arts in the Cinematography, Theater and Radio and Television Institute of the National Association of Actors in Mexico, he completed his graduate studies in the same field. Mr. Trabulse Kaim took to the stage in such productions as *Las Cosas simples*, *Muertos sin sepultura*, *El roce quemante*, y *Los enemigos no mandan flores* and participated in the filming of several works under the direction of the renowned Mexican director Miguel Zacarias, also of Lebanese origin.

In 1966, Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim founded and was the Director of the Lebanese Folklore Ballet of Mexico. In the 1980s, Mr. Trabulse moderated the radio program *La Hora Libanesa* in Mexico. Further on, in 1987 he co-founded the Mexican-Lebanese Cultural Institute of which he is the director.

Mr. Trabulse is the author of several books, among them *DOS PUEBLOS... UN ESPIRITU*, *Libaneses en México* in which he relates the history of both the Mexicans of Lebanese descent and the Centro Libanes. His book *YO SOY LIBANO*, describes the history of Lebanon, its geography, religious communities, languages, traditions, music, and dances from the Phoenician era till today.

Mr. Trabulse is also a poet having composed a famous poem about peace in Lebanon entitled *Poema por la paz en Líbano*.

In continuation, Ms. Abdel Khalek introduced LERC's second honoree.

Mr. Youssef Beydoun was born in Bint Jbeil, Lebanon in 1962 and holds an MBA in Strategic Management from Davenport University in Dearborn, Michigan. In addition to his professional experience in the field of education as teacher and training consultant, Mr. Beydoun served as the Deputy Mayor of Dearborn, Michigan, from 1998 to 2007 where he acted as the Project Director of several facility and infrastructure construction projects.

While in this position, he worked closely with community-based organizations and stakeholders to resolve issues pertaining to development of City projects and delivery of City services. He served as a liaison between the City of Dearborn and its citizens. Mr. Beydoun has successfully organized and implemented several humanitarian aid missions throughout the Middle East on behalf of the City of Dearborn and the State of Michigan.

Ms Abdul Khalek noted that Mr. Beydoun was devoted to serving the Lebanese community in Dearborn, as well as other Middle Eastern communities and others. He contributed to the organization of many philanthropic missions and charitable programs between USA and Lebanon, such as the campaign of *Wheelchairs for Peace*, providing medical aid and medical equipment through the World Medical Relief Foundation.

His other notable achievements included the organization of the twinning between Qana, South Lebanon, and Dearborn, Michigan USA, the twinning agreement between Beirut, Lebanon and Los Angeles, California USA, and the twinning agreement between Bint Jbeil, South Lebanon and Sydney, Australia.

Mr. Youssef Beydoun arrived from Dubai to receive his award. He is currently a Senior Development Manager at Dubai Airports, and works as Adjunct professor at the American University in Dubai.

With the introductions complete, Fr. Walid Moussa, was then invited up to the podium to present the awards.

The Acknowledgement Award, he said, was instituted by LERC in 2005 to recognize a person's services to Lebanese communities abroad and/or work on Lebanese migration subjects. He noted that it was exceptional for two awards to be presented concurrently but taking into consideration the ever-increasing number of migrants living abroad, working hard in the service of their communities, these efforts required recognition. The President suggested increasing the number of recognitions for those working in the interest of their Lebanese brothers.



H. E. Mr. Jorge Alvarez (left) receiving the award on behalf of Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim from NDU President Fr. Walid Moussa (Dec 2009).

Mr. Trabulse Kaim and Mr. Beydoun are the fourth and fifth recipients of the award. Mr. Roberto Khatlab received the first award in 2005, Mr. Victor A. Shehade the second in 2008, and Mr. Mohammed-Ali Fadlallah the third in April 2009. The President hoped that such fine examples would spur many to emulate those honored.



Mr. Youssef Beydoun receives the LERC Acknowledgement Award from NDU President Fr. Walid Moussa (Dec 2009).

After receiving his award Mr. Beydoun presented a book to Fr. Moussa

Mr. Trabulse Kaim unfortunately not being able to attend the event, he did, however, send his own words in a special message read out on his behalf by Ms. Claudia Maroun, a staff member at the Mexican Embassy (see full letter at the end of the report).

The message relayed thanked H. E. Jorge Alvarez, Ambassador of Mexico, for accepting the award on his behalf. Mr. Trabulse Kaim stated his admiration for both Lebanon and Mexico and hoped the award would further strengthen the relationship he has Lebanon. Although he breathed Mexican air, he said, it was Lebanon that continued to pump through his veins. He also thanked his close friend Mr. George Hayek for his presence and help.

Speaking in turn H. E. Alvarez said he was honored to receive the award on behalf of Mr. Trabulse Kaim, reiterating his endeavors to strengthen the relationship between Mexico and Lebanon especially at a cultural level. This can be seen in the Mexican Lebanese Cultural Institute that Mr. Trabulse Kaim co-founded with his brother Emilio over twenty years ago.



H. E. Mr. Jorge Alvarez speaks warmly of the efforts made by Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim in improving Mexican Lebanese relations (Dec.2009).

Mr. Trabulse, he said, was “one of the driving forces nurturing Lebanese Culture and Mexican culture.” In forming relations, he said, “Mr. Trabulse was 100% Mexican and 100% Lebanese.”

An example of what Mr. Trabulse Kaim has been doing over the last four decades was the game *LibanTourama: El viaje del Conocimiento en el vehículo de la Diversión* (Lebanon Tour: A Trip into Knowledge and a Vehicle to Entertainment) designed by Antonio Trabulse and his brother Emilio with Eduardo Jacobo in 1962, and published by the Mexican Lebanese Cultural Institute in Mexico.

This game conceived on the same idea as Monopoly, with its maps, photos and general questions, was to allow young Mexicans whether of Lebanese origin or not, “to participate in the promotion of Lebanese culture” by expanding their knowledge of Lebanon and Mexico while nurturing relations at the same time.

H. E. Alvarez promised to deliver the LERC Recognition Award to Mr. Trabulse personally on his next visit to Mexico. Appreciating the varied material that LERC collects for its museum, H. E. Alvarez donated Mr. Trabulse Kaim’s game to LERC. He congratulated Mr. Beydoun, knowing that Mr. Trabulse would have been proud of being honored with him at the same time.

Mr. Beydoun was then invited to the podium, where he delivered a few words of thanks to LERC for their kind hospitality, noting the efforts of Mr. Elias Maroun in putting him in touch with Ms. Guita Hourani.

He went on to say that he had never worked with any reward in mind though always for the common good, but one feels valued when one is appreciated and recognized for his efforts.

Mr. Beydoun went on to recall a touching story from the past about a young boy 9 years old growing up fast on the streets of Beirut, selling gum and missing school when war raged around. Three years later this young boy started making shoes to become the youngest shoemaker in Lebanon only to see his father shot before his eyes in unfortunate circumstances.

This young man emigrated to the United States, decided on education, met the right people as mentors, realized and worked on his leadership potentials knowing that one day, and in some capacity, he would contribute back to his country, Lebanon. This young boy was the man himself, Mr. Youssef Beydoun.



H.E. Mr. Thomas Daughton congratulates Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim and Mr. Youssef Beydoun (Dec 2009).

Invited to say a few words, His Excellency Mr. Thomas Daughton expressed his pleasure in being at LERC and in seeing both Mr. Trabulse and Mr. Beydoun honored. Lebanese immigrants to the United States, he said, play an important role, as do those in Mexico. Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese fill up roles that range all the way into national level. The roles played by these people, he said, do not gain much attention. Since Americans accept all immigrants as Americans, he continued, they do not see the bond between the Lebanese, a special bond shared that ordinary Americans fail to understand or appreciate.



Souvenir photo at the Awards ceremony: (from left to right) Dr. Assaad Eid, H. E. Mr. Jorge Alvarez, Fr. Walid Moussa, Mr. Youssef Beydoun, H. E. Mr. Thomas Daughton, Dr. Ameen Rihani and Ms. Guita Hourani (Dec 2009).

Ms. Hourani closed the event by thanking all those present for their attendance and invited all to refreshments. The Lebanon and Migration Museum at NDU was also open for those interested in seeing LERC's nucleus museum and many of the guests took the opportunity to do so.



Mingling at the cocktail: Fr. Walid Moussa expresses a point to H. E. Thomas Daughton (Dec 2009).



Mr. Youssef Beydoun surrounded by family and friends proudly displays his award (Dec 2009).



This photo of Mr. Antonio Trabulse Kaim was taken in September 2004 when he lectured at LERC on “The Lebanese Community of Mexico: Its Structure and Relations with Lebanon.”

Messieurs les responsables du Centre Libanais de Recherche pour l'Emigration.

J'aurai aimé être parmi vous en ce jour, au lieu de rester à Mexico, mais malheureusement des raisons indépendantes de ma volonté m'empêchent d'être aujourd'hui dans la patrie de mes ancêtres du Pays du Cèdre.

Mon frère et ami, son Excellence Mr Jorge Alvarez, Ambassadeur du Mexique au Liban sera honoré de recevoir avec reconnaissance et fierté cette distinction qui m'a été décernée et dont je suis très flatté.

Ce geste noble me touche dans mon fort intérieur et m'incite à être encore plus fier de mes racines.

L'amour du mon pays habite mon cœur et mon esprit et mes deux yeux regardent avec admiration et émotion le Mexique et le Liban à la fois.

Mes racines libanaises sont ancrées dans mes veines, mon nom et mon visage trahissent mon identité libanaise.

Ma joie et ma reconnaissance sont immenses aujourd'hui, au Centre de Recherche pour l'Emigration et à ses membres actifs, surtout mon amie Guita Hourani, ainsi qu'à l'Ambassadeur Jorge Alvarez et mon ami le Dr Georges Hayek Président de l'Association Amitié Liban Mexique, auxquels je rend hommage.

Je veux surtout exprimer à mes parents vivant au Liban que j'appartiens à cette race de missionnaires grisés par son amour et son attachement à la mère patrie.

J'espère que dans un proche avenir, je reviendrai dans mon pays pour respirer dans mes poumons mexicains de l'air de ma mère patrie.

Merci

(Word by Mr. Antonio Trabulsi Kaim at the honoring ceremony at NDU (Dec 11, 2009))

In his own words: Thank you note penned by Mr. Antonio Trabulsi Kaim and read on his behalf by Ms. Claudia Maroun (Dec 2009).