

AUD GRADUATION CLASS OF 2020

Held on October 16, 2021

Mr. Badr Ward | Founder and CEO of Lamsa
Speech

My father recently sent me a video of an inspirational speech, while my DAUGHTER, who's 14 years old, was sitting next to me.

A minute or so into the video she turned to me and said:

"BABA I can't take any more of these inspirational speeches, they're all the same".

I looked back at her and said: "JOORY then what inspires you?"

she said "a story" and so today, I am taking Joory's advice and telling you a story...

Let me give you a little background about my children:

JOORY is a curious young lady who constantly questions EVERYTHING and let me admit, I RARELY have the answers to those questions.

This exact CURIOSITY and critical thinking is shaping her into a STRONG, ARTICULATE woman, filled with convictions and opinions on INJUSTICE, gender EQUALITY and other big struggles to fight for in life.

ADAM on the other hand, is a creative young man who LOVES to build things.

On his last birthday, I got him a DRILL as his present, and I've NEVER seen him happier channelling his creativity into real life creations.

Adam dreams of going to space and wants to build his own transport to get there.

They are EXTREMELY different, yet both share the SAME incredible spirit:

they are DREAMERS.

I'm CERTAIN that my dreamers, coupled with their strength of CHARACTER, hard work, and PERSEVERANCE WILL achieve their goals and beyond.

My belief in their aspirations is important.

My support is CONSTANT and most importantly, I work very hard to make them understand that THEIR belief in themselves, their CONSTANT quest for KNOWLEDGE and PERSEVERANCE, will ultimately make their dreams a REALITY.

You see, my parents played the part of being UNCONDITIONALLY supportive parents very well.

From my teenage years they CHALLENGED me and we openly discussed all my choices.

They always stood by my side as I decided to pan out my own path from an early age, including temporarily and for a short period leaving school during my teen years.

Most importantly, once I finished high school, they then supported my choice to attend the American University in Dubai.

When I got here, I was young, AMBITIOUS and had dreams.

AUD was also young, AMBITIOUS, and had dreams.

So we fell in love.

We fell in LOVE with the VISIONARY leader who not only had ENORMOUS dreams, but included all of us in his dreams, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who use to show up to our classes and share his dreams.

His Highness encouraged us to have even bigger and bigger dreams, with his incredibly INSPIRING and thought provoking “why not!”.

So YES, from early on, I was privileged and blessed, much like my kids, surrounded by people who didn't question my ambition and journey, but rather encouraged me throughout every difficult and unconventional decision I took.

I draw my personal inspiration from my parents, Youssef and Amira.

My father, born in a refugee camp, nurtured his passion for maths and numbers, always relating them to the world around us.

Against all odds, he ended up becoming a top leader at IBM shaping the tech landscape in the region.

My mother, orphaned at a very young age, grew up with the mission to always give back to her community and children through education and volunteer work.

She went on to become one of the first Montessori teachers in the region, teaching thousands of students, including myself.

Mum and Dad, were sitting here, like you, parents of the graduating class of 2020, eagerly waiting for your children to walk across this stage, not so long ago.

Little did they know that day, little did we all know that day, as we walked down this stage to pick up our graduation certificates, like you are today, what the future held for us.

And let me tell you, you're in for an exciting, thrilling, and adventurous ride.

My AUD classmates and I embarked on very different journeys, with different ambitions, but with the same drive for achievement, excellence and success.

Each one of us, in our own way and within our chosen industries left a footprint and have given back to this incredible city country and even continue to impact different parts of the world.

Your AUD degree is your passport to the world, your passport to global success.

Whether you are an aspiring architect, engineer, journalist, or an entrepreneur, the education you have received inside and outside of these classroom walls, have prepared you to thrive and become the best version of yourself.

Today I confidently tell you, you have all it takes to channel your interests, passions, knowledge, and strengths into living and achieving your dreams.

The one thing that will get you there from this moment onwards, is your unquestionable belief in your own success.

Your AUD education and journey are much more than a fancy piece of paper.

They represent a powerful new chapter in your life, filled with lifelong friendships and endless possibilities.

I like to think of my life, as an abstract piece of art, and so should you.

Every experience I went through here, every student I interacted with, every professor I studied with, every one of those experiences were strokes of paint on my canvas, making my life a unique and rich piece of art.

Did I know when I was a student at AUD that I will end up working and collaborating with the top scientists, academics, and creatives from around the world to harness the power of technology to innovate and deliver Education to millions of children around the world?

Not really!

But when I reflect on my journey, I now realize that our dreams are either limited or expanded based on environments and the people we surround ourselves with.

AUD's creative and innovative environment which you and I spent years immersed in, empowered me with skills that go way beyond academic knowledge.

Skills that I still use every day of my life and pass on to my teams and the people I work with... creative thinking, analytical skills, problem solving, communication skills, compassion and empathy.

These skills and many more, might not be printed on your certificates, but believe me, along with the academic and industry knowledge you have gained, the soft skills you have been taught here at AUD, will empower you in ways you have never imagined in your journey towards greatness, excellence, value creation, and impact.

Of course, the path to achievement comes with lots of hurdles and challenges, but your character and work ethic will be your compass and get you back on track.

What some of you may not yet appreciate walking out of AUD into the world is how this incredibly diverse community expands your universe.

Sharing world views and cultures, human values, tolerance, and well-being.

AUD gave me a lifelong network of likeminded people, an asset that you can only appreciate with time.

Today, I can tell you with full confidence that I dream of enabling every child on this planet with the education they need to reach their full potential, and I believe I will, having the right support and partnerships along the way.

Through my digital learning app Lamsa, I have already empowered over 17 million students worldwide, including over quarter of a million refugees, with access to education.

But I continue to ask myself why stop there?

Success and impact are infinite.

AUD class of 2020, you have been through a lot, you have already pushed boundaries and shown us how resilient and adaptable you are in this crazy world.

Today I am here to tell you that you have everything to write your own success story, you are the artist of your masterpiece.

But from today onwards it's all you: your drive, your ambition, your grit, and your dreams.

And so, I leave you with one question:

How big of a dream will you dare to dream?