



Hello BBS Alums!

The Alumni Highlight is a monthly newsletter that aims to highlight the philanthropic, academic, entrepreneurial and professional achievements made by our thriving BBS Alumni community.

Dr. AlAnoud AlSharekh would have graduated from BBS in 1992 but couldn't do so due to the Invasion of Kuwait. She went on to pursue an undergraduate degree in English Literature from Kings College followed by a Masters in Applied Linguistics and a PhD in Comparative Feminism and Literature from SOAS, University of London.

What fueled your passion to pursue a career in Academia and why did you tailor it to concentrate on women's issues?

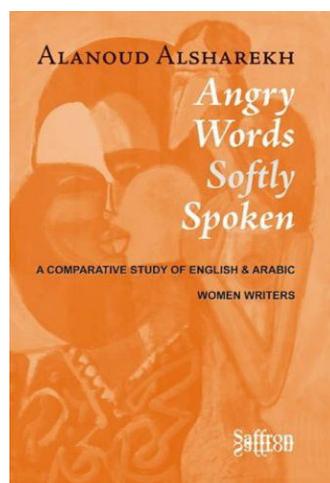
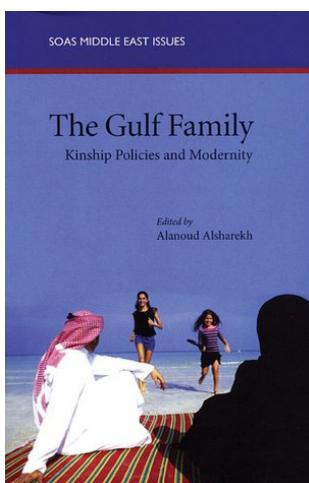
I had always been a bookworm, and to an extent that was also facilitated by Al-Bayan School's focus on book fairs and the library and it's exemplary librarians when I was a primary school student.

After completing my BA in English Literature and Paleography from King's College, London I received a scholarship from Kuwait University to pursue an MA in Applied Linguistics and English-Arabic translation and that gave me my start in an academic career. I discovered that I enjoyed teaching, academic research and multi-disciplinary approaches to language and culture. I returned to Kuwait pregnant with my daughter Jude just as the momentum for suffrage was building around the Amiri decree granting women their full political rights in 1999 and become involved in the movement. When we lost that round in parliament I switched the focus of my PhD to comparative feminism so that I can understand the sociopolitical undercurrents of this resistance to female inclusion.



You have dedicated a number of your publications on the intersection of culture and women, can you shed some light on that?

My first post-doctoral post was at Uppsala University in Sweden and there was so much interest in the literature and social trajectory in the Gulf. I felt that most of the academic research had been focused on terrorism and petrodollars and ignored the myriad social and demographic changes that were taking place and their implications. I started working on a series of conferences on cultural and political progressions in the GCC at SOAS and publishing their proceeds. The first one I convened in 2004 naturally focused on women, and the latest one in 2014 focused on economic and social demographic developments and youth initiatives. I feel like we are living through something of a cultural renaissance, re-examining identity narratives and our spatial and historical relationships with our surroundings and that deserves documentation and analysis.



As an active feminist, how would you currently assess the role of women in Kuwait?

The role women play in any society is reflective of the social, political and economic progression of their surroundings. Empowered women are essential to the continued development of this country, and to its reform movement especially. Women have yet to be included in the judiciary and in other key leadership positions in spite of their proven competence.



Women in politics have faced several setbacks since gaining their rights ten years ago, and the negative media influence has had a large role in that. It's not a level playing field, and I am in favor of quota systems and similar safeguards to ensure equal opportunities for women. We have come a long way since 2005 but there are still many legislations that discriminate purely on gender, and glass ceilings in place that prevent female careers from flourishing, but I am optimistic that we are moving in the right direction as a community.

Kuwaiti women are able to determine what aspects of inherited traditions and family values to retain and which restrictions to shed in order to serve themselves and their communities better, and its natural that every change will be met with some resistance

We're on social media, tag along!

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