

For Immediate Release



## AUB students merge design and social consciousness to create effective anti-littering campaign

Beirut, Lebanon- 02/02/2012 - Inspired by one of their design courses and incensed by the sight of people littering, three AUB students have come up with an ingenious anti-littering campaign that is spreading awareness all over the country and beyond.

Nayla Razzouk, Lama Shehadeh, and Mohamed Olaymi, all third-year graphic design students, would often see people throwing garbage as they walked along Bliss Street, just outside the campus gates, and they decided to do something about it.

Having taken the "Design in the Community" graphic design course which taught them how to raise awareness about a social problem through graphic design, they had all the tools needed to come up with the right initiative.

"We were very inspired by that course," said Razzouk, "and we got to thinking, how can we get people to notice trash and pick it up?"

"Since people nowadays are immune to flyers, we thought of creating something irresistible that no one can overlook," the team explain through their Facebook page. "So what can be irresistible to every individual on this planet...That's when it hit us like a lightning bolt! MONEY, MONEY, MONEY!"

So the three photographed a LL10,000 bill and slightly altered the colors and design so that their project "would not be mistaken for forgery." On one side, their "flyer" looked almost exactly like a yellow LL10,000 bill, on the other it had the simple message in Lebanese Arabic: "Just as you picked this one up, pick up the trash from the street."

Then they folded the fake bills so they would look like they were in someone's pocket and went around Hamra Street, throwing a few here and there, then waited around to watch how people would react, documenting everything on camera or film.

And that's how their campaign *Metel Ma Shelta* (Just as you picked this one up) was born. A Facebook page was then created and by the end of the first day, they had 1000 "Likes." Barely two weeks after the start of their campaign at the end of January 2012, more than 4,000 people have liked their page, and more than 2500 are "talking about it," or are interacting with it on Facebook. Messages of support and praise fill up their page, and what's remarkable is that a number of people would like to replicate the initiative in their own neighborhoods or countries.

"It's been amazing how people are interacting with the campaign," said Shehadeh. "We've

been contacted by people from Syria, Tunisia, Jordan, and Palestine, wishing to replicate the initiative.”

“People’s reactions have been just priceless,” said Olaymi. “Just by virtue of experiencing the act of bending down to pick up trash, people have been moved to change their perspectives.”

What are the next steps?

“We are pushing for placing more bins along pedestrian streets and also calling for a law that would fine people who litter,” said Razzouk, noting that many people complained that the shortage of trash cans along pedestrian streets is compounding the littering problem.

ENDS

PHOTO CAPTIONS: 1- Razzouk, Shehadeh, and Olaymi; 2- A photo of the fake LL10,000 bill/flyer and the message on the reverse side; 3- A bagful of flyer-bills; 4- A man picks up one of the flyer-bills off Hamra Street

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Note to Editors

#### **About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor’s, master’s, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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