



American Hellenic Institute Foundation

Presents the
Annual Conference
on
**The Future
of Hellenism
in America**

**American Hellenic Institute Foundation
Annual Conferences on
The Future of Hellenism in America
2002-2018**

AHIF Press Releases & Articles from the Greek American Media

1. 1st Annual Conference – October 18-19, 2002, Washington, DC -
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15. 15th Annual Conference – November 18 and 19, 2016, Elizabeth, New Jersey
16. 16th Annual Conference – November 17-18, 2017, Wilmington, Delaware
17. 17th Annual Conference – November 9-10, 2018, Dallas, Texas

Website Links to AHIF Press Releases on the AHIF Annual “Future of Hellenism Conference”

1. **1st Annual Conference – October 18-19, 2002, Washington, DC -**
<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2002.html>
2. **2nd Annual Conference – October 18, 2003, Washington, DC**
<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2003.html>
3. **3rd Annual Conference – October 16, 2004, Washington, DC**
<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2004.html>
4. **4th Annual Conference – November 18-19, 2005, New York City, NY**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2005/784-ahif-4th-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america.html>
5. **5th Annual Conference – October 28, 2006, San Francisco, California**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2006/922-ahif-hosts-successful-5th-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america-in-san-francisco.html>
6. **6th Annual Conference – November 10, 2007, Chicago, Illinois**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2007/984-ahif-hosts-6th-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america.html>
7. **7th Annual Conference – November 22, 2008, Boston, Massachusetts**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2008/1061-ahif-hosts-7th-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america.html>
8. **8th Annual Conference – November 23, 2009, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2009/1144-eighth-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference-hosted-by-ahif-.html>
9. **9th Annual Conference – November 19-20, 2010, Los Angeles, California**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2010/1348-ahif-hosts-ninth-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>
10. **10th Annual Conference –November 18-19, 2011, Washington, DC**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2011/1549-ahif-hosts-tenth-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>

11. **11th Annual Conference – November 16-17, 2012, Atlanta, Georgia**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2012/1701-ahif-hosts-11th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>
12. **12th Annual Conference – November 22-23, 2013, Miami, Florida**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2013/1817-ahif-hosts-12th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>
13. **13th Annual Conference – November 21-22, 2014, Houston, Texas**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2014/1928-ahif-hosts-13th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>
14. **14th Annual Conference– November 20-21, 2015, Baltimore, Maryland**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2015/2022-ahif-hosts-14th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>
15. **15th Annual Conference – November 18 and 19, 2016, Elizabeth, New Jersey**
<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2016/2112-ahif-hosts-15th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>
16. **16th Annual Conference – November 17-18, 2017, Wilmington, Delaware**
<https://www.aheworld.org/press-releases-1/2017/12/27/ahif-hosts-16th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference?rq=AHIF%20Future%20of%20Hellenism%20in%20America>
17. **17th Annual Conference – November 9-10, 2018, Dallas, Texas**
<https://www.aheworld.org/press-releases-1/2018/12/4/ahif-hosts-17th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference?rq=AHIF%20Future%20of%20Hellenism%20in%20America>

American Hellenic Institute Foundation
Annual Conferences on The Future of Hellenism in America
AHIF 1st Annual Conference

October 18-19, 2002

<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2002.html>

AHIF Conference Identifies Crucial Challenges, Some Areas Of Success For The Future Of Hellenism In The U.S.

WASHINGTON, DC — Arriving at a critical turning point, the American Hellenic Institute Foundation's (AHIF) first annual conference on ***The Future of Hellenism in the United States*** addressed a number of key themes, challenges and crises facing the Greek American community today. The conference, which took place October 18-19, 2002, at the Capital Hilton, featured more than 20 expert speakers and hosted a full audience of more than 150 attendees from all over the country.

The conference opened on Friday, October 18 with a dinner event, featuring presentation of AHI's Hellenic Heritage Lifetime Achievement Award to author and publisher Christopher G. Janus by AHIF President Gene Rossides, and the keynote address delivered by famed military and Greek American sociologist, Professor Charles Moskos of Northwestern University. The dinner proceedings set the foundation for the seven targeted conference sessions and concluding remarks on Saturday.

Conference chairman James Marketos' opening remarks to dinner attendees centered on a number of basic questions which conveyed the essence of the conference. Mr. Marketos noted that, while Greek immigrants' direct links with Greece and its language, its culture, its religion made it easier to become loyal Americans without losing sight of their Hellenic roots, the challenge is far more formidable for their descendants:

[Descendants'] ties to the Greek language, culture and religion inevitably become more and more tenuous as time passes. How will they preserve and pass on those ineffable qualities that amount to Hellenism? If they have no immediate or recent connections with Greece, if they don't travel there frequently, if they don't speak the language, if they don't marry another Greek American, if they don't attend a Greek Orthodox Church, then what will be their resources for affirming their Hellenic roots?

Mr. Marketos also issued an important challenge to the audience, stating:

Beyond what Hellenism can do for us -- to paraphrase JFK -- we, those descendants of the early generations, should be asking ourselves what we can do for Hellenism. What can we do to ensure that Hellenism and Hellenic ideals can continue to have a clear identity and prominent role in the U.S. of the future?

In answering these and many other related questions, Saturday's conference sessions addressed the following crucial themes:

- The Future of Greek American Organizations
- The Role of the Greek American Media
- Greek Language Education in the U.S.
- The Role of the Greek Orthodox Church in Promoting Hellenism in the U.S.
- The Role of the Greek American Lobby: What Does the Future Hold?
- Promoting Hellenism and Hellenic Culture in the U.S.
- The Role of Greek American Professionals in the Promotion of Hellenism in the U.S.

Delivering the luncheon keynote address, titled "Defining Hellenism", was Professor of Hellenism Dr. David Weinberg. Closing remarks were presented by Dr. Constantine Papadakis, President of Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In the quest to uncover the future of Hellenism in the U.S., several major conclusions were apparent throughout the majority of the themes addressed by each of the sessions. Among the highest priorities mentioned was the need to find more effective methods with which to involve younger generations in learning about and, hence, preserving their Hellenic identity. Direct involvement of the youth in learning about their culture -- through study abroad, through cultural exchanges, through effective language learning -- were some of the ideas suggested which had met with a degree of success.

Also stressed by many of the speakers was the need for more cohesive and coordinated leadership. The importance of working together on agreed themes and policies with many voices was stated as vital to achieving progress in getting Greek American interests to resonate in the wider community in the interests of the U.S. Related to this, greater involvement by Greek Americans at-large in their communities -- in political, educational, charitable, religious, and other organizations -- was also necessary to maintain and perpetuate Hellenic identity.

One of the methods highlighted by several of the speakers in promoting Hellenic culture in the U.S. was that Greek American community leaders should stress the universality of Hellenic values, as the foundation of Western civilization and particularly American society. Hellenic values are present throughout America and, therefore, are easily understood and applied to daily life.

To achieve all of these goals, conference participants and attendees cited the need for a yearly conference regarding Hellenism to take place in Washington, D.C., complemented by smaller, more focused yet related conferences throughout the country and especially where Greek American communities exist.

Dr. Papadakis, in his concluding remarks, stated:

I challenge this audience and the American Hellenic Institute to identify a vehicle where a strategic plan can be laid out and a platform be established for the success of Hellenism in the U.S. for years to come.

At the close of AHIF's conference, Executive Director of AHIF Nick Larigakis said, "AHIF stands ready to help sponsor similar conferences throughout the country with the support of local communities."

Benefactors who helped make the AHIF's conference possible include: The Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA); Nicholas Bouras (Summit, NJ); Elias Gyftopoulos (Lincoln, MA); James and Nike Lagos (Springfield, OH); George Panagiotou (Camarillo, CA); James Pedas (Washington, DC); Theodore Pedas (Washington, DC); Eugene T. Rossides (Washington, DC); Savvas Savopoulos (Hyattsville, MD); Ted Spyropoulos (Chicago, IL); and Stephen G. Yeonas (McLean, VA).

Summary of AHIF Conference Proceedings

The Future of Hellenism in the United States

Friday, October 18, 2002 Conference Dinner and Keynote Address Awarding of the AHI Hellenic Heritage Achievement Award



Upon receiving his award, Christopher G. Janus (right) is congratulated by the Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. George Savvaides. (on 10/18/2002, photo credit: Bill Petros)

A highlight of AHIF's conference dinner was the presentation of the AHI Hellenic Heritage Lifetime Achievement Award to Christopher G. Janus by AHI founder Gene Rossides. Mr. Janus, throughout his prestigious career, has authored seven books and was a writer for several movies, including the award-winning Disney Premiere Film *Goodbye, Miss 4th of July*.

Christopher Janus was congratulated particularly for his leadership during World War II in Greek war relief. Serving as an economic assistant at the U.S. State Department (1943-1944) and later as the Chief of the Greek Desk in the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA) in Cairo and Athens (1944-1945), he formulated the economic and relief needs of Greece following the German withdrawal.

Upon receiving his award, Mr. Janus noted with reference to Greece's valiant efforts against the Axis forces during World War II:

We don't have to be proud just because of what the ancient Greeks did because modern Greece and modern Greeks have also committed acts of greatness. And I was there. I refer to what Greeks did during World War II [in rejecting the Italian ultimatum]. That *omicron;chi;iota*; that no, was a

sound that was heard around the world. And that was as great a thing as what happened at Thermopylae 2000 years ago.

In concluding his remarks, Mr. Janus offered his view of what is in store for the future of Hellenism in the U.S.:

Whether you're listening to me as a scholar or as a dilettante, my message is: We were brought up on myths and we must believe in myths. Maybe the whole idea of the ancient Greeks being in us is a bit of a myth, but we still have to believe it and I urge you to have your sons and daughters believe it. Because as William James the philosopher said, 'Believing helps make it so.' And what a wonderful future for the Greeks and for all of us if indeed that is true."

Keynote Address Analyzes the Changing Face of Greek Americans

Following Mr. Janus' remarks, Dr. Charles Moskos delivered the conference keynote address, titled "The Changing Face of Greek Americans." Dr. Moskos is professor of sociology at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois where he holds the Anderson Chair in the College of Arts and Sciences. The keynote offered an overview of the historical presence of Greek Americans in the United States and highlighted the group's struggles and successes in adapting to American society while striving to maintain their Hellenic identity.

Pointing to both "good news and bad news," Dr. Moskos discussed the inherent demographic challenges that face any immigrant group and its descendants in struggling to maintain their cultural identity. After three waves of Greek immigration to the U.S. (1890-1924, post-WWII to 1965, and 1966-1980), immigration has tapered off significantly to levels of around 1,000-1,200 people per year, fertility rates are down, the immigrant population is aging, and intermarriage has become the rule rather than the exception.

Despite these challenges, Dr. Moskos affirmed that Hellenic culture can be preserved as a natural companion to American ideals, offering a number of suggestions:

The focus should be on a vibrant core of affiliated and organized Greek Americans who draw upon themselves and find themselves either or both spiritually hungry and communally hungry. And that includes people with a partial Greek ancestry as well as those with no Greek ancestry. By becoming more Greek in a secular sense, people will find themselves more in tune with the Greek Orthodox Church in a sacred sense. And by opening up to the broader community, the Church itself will bring more people into contact with Greek ethnicity. Otherwise, I think we'll end up in a situation where our children are neither Greek nor Orthodox.

Prominent guests attending the AHIF conference dinner were the Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. George Savvaides; Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Cyprus, Achilleas Antoniadis; Dr. Constantine Papadakis, President of Drexel University; Supreme President of the Order of AHEPA Dr. James Dimitriou; former Supreme Presidents of the Order of AHEPA Dr. Spiro Macris and Mr. John Pappas; and former Maine Congressman Peter Kyros.

Saturday, October 19, 2002 Conference Proceedings: Highlights and General Conclusions

The AHIF's *Future of Hellenism* seven conference sessions were conducted consecutively on Saturday, October 19, 2002. Following opening remarks from Mr. Marketos, **Session A** turned attention to the future of Greek American organizations, moderated by Nick Larigakis.

The first panelist, Dr. James Dimitriou, Supreme President of the Order of AHEPA, discussed the past, present and future realities confronting Greek American organizations. Using the Order of AHEPA as his example, he described the various challenges that the organization has confronted since its inception in 1922.

Dr. Dimitriou's strongest piece of advice was that, "As time goes on, organizations have to continue to change. In the present day, the Order of AHEPA is continuing to look at those changes," noting also the danger of organizations looking inward. Further, he cautioned that, "unless we can continue to redefine ourselves, redevote ourselves, analyze what the problems are, none of us will grow."

The session's other panelists, Nina Peropoulos (President, Pan-Macedonian Association) and James G. Saklas (Second Vice President, Pan-Cretan Association), discussed the problems facing Greek regional societies. According to both speakers, the most urgent matter for both of their organizations was generating and maintaining involvement on the part of younger members. Mr. Saklas cautioned that, "There are the typical youth programs, [such as] scholarships. Scholarships don't work." Instead, the Pan-Cretan Association focuses efforts on getting young members back to Crete. This method has proven successful as it establishes a direct and personal connection between the youth and Greece. After all, according to Mr. Saklas, "Being Cretan [or Greek] is not a matter of the blood. It's a matter of the heart and mind."

Session B, examining the role of the Greek American media, was moderated by Dean C. Lomis, Ph.D. (former Director of the International Center, University of Delaware), with panelists including Antonis Diamataris (publisher, *The National Herald*) and George Chryssis (publisher, *The Hellenic Voice*).

Both panelists cited the crucial function of the Greek American media in supporting the bonds of the Greek American community and allowing it to perpetuate itself in the U.S. Mr. Diamataris echoed these thoughts stating, "That is the fundamental role of the press: In a society as large and as diverse as ours the need for specialized newspapers has always been great, and is even greater today, in the age of social segmentation."

According to Mr. Chryssis, both traditional and new media forms (newspaper, radio, television and the Internet), "have kept the Greek Americans informed and connected to their community" and exert "immense influence and impact in the lives, habits and decisions of the Greek American people."

Session C highlighted the urgent crisis facing Greek language education in the U.S., especially at the K through 12 grade levels. The moderator for the session was Professor John Iatrides, Executive Director of the Modern Greek Studies Association (MGSA). The session was broken into three points of focus.

First, Professor Peter Bien, President of MGSA and Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Dartmouth College, argued for the tremendous need for change in K-12 Greek language school programs. As co-author of the report submitted by Archbishop Spyridon's Commission on Greek Language and Hellenic Culture (known also as the Rassias Report), he presented a list of sobering results regarding this situation. Pointing to shortfalls in the

Archdiocese's Office of Education, and pervasive demoralization on the part of teachers, students and parents, Professor Bien and the Rassias Report concluded that:

There is indeed a need for change, an urgent one. [The report] warns that 'the Greek language is rapidly eroding. Unless significant remedial action be taken immediately, Hellenism's survival in the American diaspora will be at risk.' The Commission's most dire prediction, based on the evidence it accumulated, was that 'Greek identity may well be lost in less than a generation.'

The second portion of Session C, titled "K-12 Private Greek School Programs: Are They Viable?" offered mixed results. Using the Hellenic American Academy (HAA) in Potomac, Maryland as her model, panelist Elaine Lailas, Ph.D. described the astounding success of this private independent Greek Orthodox American school. While her conclusion was that this type of school is indeed possible, one of the major challenges that ultimately forced the closing of HAA was funding at the local community level.

A more optimistic picture of the state of Greek language education at the university level in the U.S. was given by Professor Vassilios Lambropoulos (C. P. Cavafy Professor of Modern Greek at the University of Michigan), who focused on the importance of increasing Modern Greek Studies (MGS) programs at the university level. Citing national trends, he noted that while enrollments in all foreign languages have been falling, "Greek has been very steady, even increasing, across the board." To perpetuate this trend, Dr. Lambropoulos suggested that Greek Americans and philhellenes might "go to a college we know, we respect, and say 'How about another course that integrates antiquity and modernity, Europe and America?' And that's modern Greek."

The final session of the morning's activities was **Session D**, "The Role of the Greek Orthodox Church in Promoting Hellenism in the U.S.," moderated by James H. Lagos, Esq., President of Bushnell Investment Co., Inc. and Partner at Lagos & Lagos.

Describing the intricate and longstanding relationship between Hellenism and Orthodoxy was Rev. Dr. Demetios J. Constantelos, Charles Cooper Townsend Senior Distinguished Professor Emeritus of History and Religion, and Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. His conclusion was that "Hellenism and Christianity cannot be separated for linguistic, for historical, for cultural reasons. The task of the Orthodox in the United States is to maintain the continuity of Orthodox Christian belief and ethos. Respect the close relationship between faith and inheritance." In this way, the Church can also advocate for Hellenism.

Shedding light on the current status of the Greek Orthodox Church and faith in the U.S. in the face of the numerous demographic challenges outlined by Professor Moskos at the outset of the conference was Dr. Nick Pappas, Vice President of the Orthodox Christian Laity. The picture painted was one of a Church in tremendous need of redefinition in order to meet with the changing needs and character of the Greek Orthodox community:

Our Greek Orthodox Church in America today is in a downward spiral. Awareness of Hellenic background is in rapid decline. We're losing market share in a business sense in terms of losing people. And in that business sense, we are on our way to bankruptcy, translating into fewer and fewer Greek Orthodox Christians.

If these challenges are addressed squarely and realistically, then the Greek Orthodox Church can be a powerful voice in promoting Hellenism. But Dr. Pappas cautioned that, "if we cannot first keep

our youth attached in practicing the Orthodox faith, then the chances of having them preserve their Hellenic and ethnic backgrounds is slim. [O]ur ability to convey those [Hellenic] values I think goes down enormously."

Luncheon Keynote Address: Defining Hellenism

Chaired by Theodora Hancock, co-founder of the Hellenic American Women's Council (HAWC), the AHIF conference luncheon provided thought-provoking and inspirational commentary on the past, present and future role of Hellenism in permeating the fundamental values of our society today. David R. Weinberg, Professor of Hellenism, described various examples of this theme during his address to the luncheon audience and concluded that:

Hellenism is not a relic of the past to which we periodically pay verbal homage on occasions such as this one. It is, rather, the foundation of civilization upon which we continually build. It is a living, breathing, vital contemporary component of our lives. It permeates our thoughts, influences our ethics, shapes our art, structures our literature, strengthens our democratic institutions, reforms our education and advances our science and technology.

Afternoon Sessions Advocate Promotion of Hellenic Ideals at the Individual Level

Immediately following the luncheon, conference attendees proceeded to the fifth of the seven conference sessions, titled "The Role of the Greek American Lobby: What Does the Future Hold?" and moderated by Maria Stamoulas, Esq. (Partner, Facer & Stamoulas, P.C.).

The first panelist, Gene Rossides, underscored some of the key challenges to Hellenism in the U.S., noting that the "flourishing of Hellenism in the twenty-first century in the U.S. depends on an active Greek American community on at least two fronts." The first front cited was the need for stronger lobbying efforts in public policy matters dealing with the four areas of power in the U.S. — the Congress, the Executive Branch, the media and the academic community.

The second front cited by Mr. Rossides which requires a greater degree of involvement was in educational policy. Emphasized was the need to strengthen and spread Greek language studies in grades K through 12, and the study of modern and classical Greece at the university level. By working collectively on both of these fronts — government and education — the Greek American community can better promote Hellenism in the U.S. He called for the establishment of 100 endowed chairs in ancient and modern Greek studies and \$100 million from the Greek American community to be matched by \$100 million from the universities.

Nick Karambelas, Partner at Sfikas & Karambelas, LLP, provided an instructional and informative overview regarding the problem with foreign Hellenic organizations lobbying in the U.S. Precisely because foreign agents and organizations lobbying U.S. voters is perceived negatively, efforts to promote Greek American issues are best advocated at the grassroots level. Community members must become more involved in contacting their Congressperson and Senator, and "educat[ing] at the grassroots level, not just your Representatives and Senators, but their staffs."

The most extensive session of the day, moderated by Konstandinos Alexakis (CEO, Public Sector Solutions) addressed the topic of "Promoting Hellenism and the Hellenic Culture in the U.S." as seen through various vantage points.

Achilleas Antoniadis, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Cyprus, provided a number of examples through which the Republic of Cyprus promotes Hellenism in the U.S. These include a recent exhibition on Cypriot antiquities at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, a one-day seminar at the Smithsonian Institution themed "The wonders of ancient Cyprus: Land of Aphrodite," and other similar cultural, educational and public outreach programs.

The Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. George Savvaides outlined Greece's role, emphasizing especially the importance of "close, cordial and constructive relations between the U.S. and Greece both on the bilateral and multilateral field," and a need for "better understanding between the people of Greece and Hellenes in America."

Offering perhaps the most fundamental piece of advice to Greek Americans seeking to promote Greek culture in the U.S., Ambassador Loucas Tsilas (Executive Director, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), Inc.) noted:

Through this work [at the Onassis Foundation] I touched upon the universal value, the universal nature of Hellenic civilization. It's so much easier for somebody who promotes Hellenic civilizations to do it when we really underline the true nature of Hellenic civilization. This nature is that it is an integral part of Western and human civilization.

Marilyn Rouvelas, through her study and promotion of Greek customs and traditions in the diaspora, echoed Ambassador Tsilas's sentiments. She stressed the universal appeal of Hellenism which has attracted and maintained the dedication of Hellenes and philhellenes throughout history. This is evidenced through the Greek customs and traditions that these communities keep alive today which are documented in her best-selling book, *A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America* (Attica Press 2002).

Offering poignant concluding remarks to the session was renowned author Harry Mark Petrakis. As he reflected on growing up Greek American, Mr. Petrakis concluded, "I do not know whether Hellenism will prevail. Great civilizations have perished. I do say I am grateful for that legacy myself, and I have sought through the years I have worked and written to instill it in my books. A small particle of that living, breathing greatness." In this way, every Greek American has the ability and opportunity to promote Hellenism in his or her own particular way.

The final session of the day focused on the role of Greek American professionals in the promotion of Hellenism in the U.S., moderated by James Marketos. Reflecting the words of Mr. Petrakis, George Veras (President and Founder, Veras Communications International) affirmed that Greek American professionals can promote the culture by carrying its values and ideals into the workplace. Of his own experience in the media world, Mr. Veras pointed out that, "I spoke up about my roots and my culture, wore it on my sleeve in the corporate television world at CBS where many others were most eager to fit into the corporate culture." By doing so, he was targeted as the ideal producer for "Yanni Live at the Acropolis," and hence many subsequent Hellenic-themed programs, including "Greek Americans" on public television, that promote Greek culture in an even more direct manner.

Concluding Remarks -- Looking Beyond: What is the Future of Hellenism in the U.S.?

Dr. Constantine Papadakis, President of Drexel University, concluded the AHIF's conference on *The Future of Hellenism in the U.S.* with a challenge set forth to attendees: "free your imagination to visualize with me the Greek American nirvana, possible to achieve in the U.S. of tomorrow." Painting a portrait of America where Hellenic values resonated throughout the daily lives of Greek Americans, he urged the audience to actively strive towards this vision. As inspirational final thoughts on his vision, Dr. Papadakis asserted:

If you wonder how all this can be done by the Greeks in America, you must remember what 100,000 Greeks in Athens accomplished 2,500 years ago. They invented democracy, banking, theatre, medicine, science and mathematics. Because the only way I know how to transform vision to reality is through planning, I challenge this audience and the American Hellenic Institute to identify a vehicle where a strategic plan can be laid out and a platform be established for the success of Hellenism in the U.S. for years to come.



Dr. Constantine Papadakis delivering closing remarks. (on 10/19/2002, photo credit: Bill Petros)

American Hellenic Institute Foundation
Annual Conferences on The Future of Hellenism in America
AHIF 2nd Annual Conference

October 18, 2003

<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2003.html>

AHIF 2nd Annual Conference on *The Future of Hellenism in America* calls for more active engagement of Greek Americans in the Community

WASHINGTON, DC — On October 18, 2003, the American Hellenic Institute Foundation held its 2nd Annual Conference on "The Future of Hellenism in America" at the J.W. Marriott Hotel. The conference featured prominent speakers from the fields of the academia, journalism and the private sector, who identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today.

The speakers were: Dr. Dan Georgakas, Director of the Greek American Studies Project at the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College, John Metaxas, Esq., Producer at the CNBC, Aristotelis A. Chronis, Esq., Business Development Director of Special Counsel, Inc., and Co-founder of DC Greeks.com, Gene Rossides, President of the American Hellenic Institute Foundation and Emmanuel "Manny" Rouvelas, Esq., Chairman of Preston Gates Ellis & Rouvelas Meeds LLP. The panel was chaired by James Marketos, Esq., Chairman of the American Hellenic Institute. The Conference ended with the luncheon address by Dr. John Brademas, President Emeritus of New York University.

Dr. Dan Georgakas gave a very insightful presentation of the situation of the Modern Greek studies programs in the U.S. and identified the challenges that the Greek American academic community is currently facing. Dr. Georgakas identified Greek American scholarship as "motherless discipline" that depends on the area of specialization of each instructor and stressed that there is not "a functioning Greek American academic community but there are only freelancers." Dr. Georgakas addressed the central question of where do Greek Americans fit in Hellenism and elaborated on the relationship between Greeks and Greek Americans. He concluded his presentation with a positive acknowledgement of the powerful position that many Greek-Americans are in and urged them to strengthen their Hellenic side.

Mr. John Metaxas touched on the importance of engaging the American media and presented the issue from his standpoint as a Greek American journalist. Mr. Metaxas shared some of the dilemmas he faced during his career and mentioned examples where he tried to maintain his objectivity as a journalist but at the same time honor his Hellenic heritage. He reiterated the importance of shaping public consciousness through reference to historical events and stressed the importance of knowing well Greek history in order to promote Hellenism. Mr. Metaxas concluded his speech by naming the American Hellenic Institute as a leading organization in dealing with the issues facing the Greek American community today.

Mr. Aristotelis Chronis focused on the importance of engaging the youth to be active participants of Hellenism and spoke from personal experience as a Greek American who went through all major fora for socialization into Hellenism, such as Greek school, church and college. Mr. Chronis stressed the need for engaging the youth not out of obligation but of genuine Hellenic interest. With this in mind, he talked about the creation of the DC Greeks.com, an internet community that he co-founded with his brother Themis, whose main purpose is to engage Greek youth in Hellenism.

Mr. Gene Rossides stressed the need for more active involvement of the Greek American community in American politics, through more active participation in the political process with elected officials and candidates and through financial contributions to candidates and political parties. Mr. Rossides reiterated the American Hellenic Institute's role in strengthening U.S. relations with Greece and Cyprus and support of the rule of law and human rights in foreign policy decisions as in the best interests of the U.S.

Mr. Manny Rouvelas, in his speech "Engaging Greek American Professionals," identified the problem of social disengagement from the community as a broader social phenomenon but he stressed that Hellenic identity can provide the solution, "due to its variety and richness." Mr. Rouvelas stressed that "we define Hellenism very narrowly; we confine it with everything being Greek" while the idea of Hellenism is much broader and represents a certain process of thinking that involves the notion of choice to engage in the community. Thus the key issue is to provide the incentives for professionals to engage, not do it out of obligation.

During the discussion period the audience had the opportunity to ask questions which ranged in scope from the relationship between Greek Americans and Greece to the role of the Greek Orthodox Church.

During his luncheon address, Dr. John Brademas provided an overview of the achievements that Greek Americans have accomplished in various areas of the American political, economic and social spheres and made insightful suggestions of how to enhance the educational ties between the U.S. and Greece. He suggested the advancement of programs on Hellenic Studies in various universities, support more cultural events that promote Greek artists and the establishment of endowments and chairs on Hellenic Studies in prominent universities.

Benefactors who helped make the AHIF's conference possible include: Peter G. Angelos (Baltimore, MD); Nicholas Bouras (Summit, NJ); Dr. James Faller (Wilmington, DE), Elias P. Gyftopoulos (Lincoln, MA); James and Nike Lagos (Springfield, OH); James S. Nicholas (East Grand Rapids, MI); James Pedas (Washington, DC); Theodore Pedas (Washington, DC); Gene Rossides (Washington, DC).

American Hellenic Institute Foundation Annual Conferences on The Future of Hellenism in America 3rd Annual Conference

October 16, 2004

<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2004.html>



Ambassador Lucas Tsilas, Executive Director of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, giving his speech during the luncheon.

On October 16, 2004, the American Hellenic Institute Foundation held its third annual conference on "The Future of Hellenism in America" in Washington, D.C. The conference featured prominent speakers from the fields of education, law, and the private sector, who identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today.

Opening the conference was James Marketos, Esq., Chairman of AHI. The moderator for the morning session was Dr. Dean C. Lomis, Director Emeritus for the International Center at the University of Delaware. The morning session speakers included: Gene Rossides, President of the American Hellenic Institute Foundation, Ted G. Spyropoulos, President of the Hellenic American National Council, Hercules Mousiades, Professor at the Anatolia College and Managing Principal for Praxi Management Consultants, and Professor Leonidas Polopolus, Co-Director for the Center for Greek Studies at University of Florida. The luncheon speaker was Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, Executive Director for the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, Inc.

The moderator for the afternoon session was Nick Larigakis, Executive Director of the American Hellenic Institute. The afternoon panel speakers included: Thanos Basdekis, Esq., Partner, Reagan, Halperin & Long, Alexander Kitroeff, Professor of History at Haverford College, and Father Charles Joanides, Ph.D.

Panelists spoke on the following topics:

- The Role of the Greek American Community and the Future of Hellenism
- Establishing Greek Charter Schools: How You Would Begin and Why They Are Important to the Future of the Community

- Educating Greek Americans in Greece and How an American University in Greece Can Contribute to Hellenism in America
- The Importance of Establishing Greek Chairs at American Universities
- The Relevance of Hellenic Heritage
- The Importance of Young Professionals Being Active Participants in Promoting Hellenism
- Athens 2004 and Its Meaning for Hellenism in America
- The Impact of Interfaith Marriage on the Future of Hellenism

The conference organizer Nick Larigakis stated, "This conference, initiated by AHI three years ago, serves to provide a forum whereby a discussion on the future of Hellenism can ensue. The important thing is to continue to educate ourselves on these very important issues regarding our community. In doing so, it will assist us to provide a critical analysis and realistic recommendations regarding the future needs of Greek Americans. I wish to especially thank the participants, speakers, and benefactors who contributed to a successful 3rd Annual AHIF Conference."

Washington, D.C. – On October 17, 2004, the American Hellenic Institute Foundation held its 3rd Annual Conference on "The Future of Hellenism in America" at the Capital Hilton Hotel. The conference featured prominent speakers from the fields of education, law, and the private sector, who identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today. Opening the conference was James Marketos, Esq., Chairman of the American Hellenic Institute. The moderator for the morning session was Dr. Dean C. Lomis, Director Emeritus for the International Center at the University of Delaware. The morning session speakers included: Gene Rossides, President of the American Hellenic Institute Foundation, Ted G. Spyropoulos, President of the Hellenic American National Council, Hercules Mousiades, Professor at the Anatolia College and Managing Principal for Praxi Management Consultants, and Professor Leonidas Polopolus, Co-Director for the Center for Greek Studies at University of Florida. The luncheon speaker was Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, Executive Director for the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, Inc.

The moderator for the afternoon session was Nick Larigakis, Executive Director of the American Hellenic Institute. The afternoon panel speakers included: Thanos Basdekis, Esq., Partner, Reagan, Halperin & Long, Alexander Kitroeff, Professor of History at Haverford College, and Father Charles Joanides, Ph.D.

Mr. Marketos opening remarks included an outline of the themes of the conference, "education, professionalism, the impact of Greece's changing identity on Hellenism, the continuing relevancy of our Hellenic heritage, our community's goals, its role in the future of Hellenism, and the impact of interfaith marriage." Also, Mr. Marketos touched on the challenges of maintaining Hellenism in America and introduced the topics of the morning panel speakers.

Mr. Rossides gave a presentation on "The Role of the Greek American Community and the Future of Hellenism." His thesis is that the Greek American community has an important role to play (1) in the preservation and strengthening of Hellenism in the U.S. and (2) explaining to our fellow Americans the influence of Ancient Greece and Hellenism on American democracy. To accomplish this, Mr. Rossides suggested a three-fold approach for Greek Americans: (1) active participation in

the political arena; (2) an active effort with the U.S. media—TV, radio, newspapers, journals; and (3) an active effort with the academic community and think tanks.

Mr. Spyropoulos spoke on “Establishing Greek Charter Schools: How you would begin and Why They are Important to the Future of the Community.” In his speech, he emphasized the significance of the Greek language to the future of Greek American youth, as well as the challenges to achieving this goal. He then went into specifics on particular Greek American Charter Schools, their academic standards and future plans. Additionally, Mr. Spyropoulos spoke about the methods of teaching at Charter Schools, through the use of both English and Greek.

Mr. Mousiades gave his presentation on “Educating Greek Americans in Greece and How an American University in Greece can Contribute to Hellenism in America.” He discussed the challenges of preserving our Hellenic identity while remaining integrated in American society. He also explained how identity, defined by religion, heritage, history, culture, customs, and language plays a key role in determining Hellenism. Mr. Mousiades said, “We must take pride in our identity as Hellenes or we will tend to hide it, to blend it in. To have pride we must know and understand our identity or we will be molded by others’ perceptions.” Mr. Mousiades then went into detail about the American College of Thessaloniki, Anatolia College, and how it facilitates the promotion of Hellenism.

Mr. Polopolus, in his speech “The Importance of Establishing Greek Chairs at American Universities,” stressed the significance of exploring Hellenic roots and Greek studies through leadership and institutions. He offered the basic guiding principles in establishing Greek chairs and programs by comparing these to his own experience at the University of Florida. Mr. Polopolus said, “Most of our Hellenic civilization courses are filled to room capacity.” This success is due to the excellence of the faculty with their “international reputations and specialties which attract a following.” Additionally, Mr. Polopolus spoke on how the Greek American community needs to continue to generate pride in Greek ancestry. In conclusion, Mr. Polopolus quoting from Dionysios Solomos stated, “Embrace Greece in your soul; and you will know grandeur.”

During the luncheon, Ambassador Tsilas spoke on, “The relevance of Hellenic Heritage.” “The Hellenic Heritage with its universal and diachronic values and principles, namely representative government, individual freedom, the right to define oneself according to one’s conscience, and the quest for truth and beauty, has had, and continues to have, a decisive impact on every kind of human endeavour, everything from philosophy to politics, from medicine to pharmacy, and from architecture to literature. Therefore, asking whether Hellenism is relevant today is like asking if blood is relevant to the body, if food is relevant to hunger, and if salt is relevant to taste,” said Ambassador Loucas Tsilas.

In the afternoon panel discussion, Thanos Basdekis spoke about, “The Importance of Young Professionals Being Active Participants in Promoting Hellenism.” In this presentation, he emphasized two main points, (1) what it means to promote Hellenism, and (2) what are the benefits to promoting Hellenism for young professionals. Mr. Basdekis gave his own unique definition of Hellenism “not just through the lens of words, but through the lens of action” by examining Pericles and Alexander. His concluding analysis was that, “Hellenism requires a commitment to

public service and the engagement of others.” As for the second point, Mr. Basdekis advises that the experience of engaging with others in “those encounters will train you and open your mind in ways that you could not otherwise have known.”

In Professor Kitroeff’s speech about, “Athens 2004 and its Meaning for Hellenism in America.” The success and pride of the Athens 2004 Olympics for Greeks and Greek Americans alike was highlighted. He spoke about this extraordinary accomplishment for such a small country as Greece, and how it needs to be emphasized now more than ever before as a new modern face. Mr. Kitroeff pointed out that this period is the emergence of a new Greece and a new attitude of the Greeks.

Father Charles Joanides, Ph.D. discussed “The Impact of Interfaith Marriage on the Future of Hellenism.” In his presentation, Father Charles provided a brief overview of the research he has conducted on this subject and discussed some implications as they apply to the promotion of Hellenism. In particular, Father Charles observes that most intermarried couples view their differences from a positive perspective that can potentially enrich their lives. He also indicated that these couples encounter certain challenges related to their religious and cultural differences.

The Conference organizer Nick Larigakis stated, “This Conference, initiated by AHI three years ago, serves to provide a forum whereby a discussion on the Future of Hellenism can ensue. The important thing is to continue to educate ourselves on these very important issues regarding our community. In doing so, it will assist us to provide a critical analysis and realistic recommendations regarding the future needs of Greek Americans. I wish to especially thank the participants, speakers, and benefactors who contributed to a successful 3rd Annual AHIF Conference.”

Benefactors who helped make the AHIF’s conference possible include: Nicholas J. Bouras, Summit, New Jersey; Dr. James Faller, Willmington, Delaware; James and Nike Lagos, Springfield, Ohio; Ted Leonsis, Washington, DC; Dr. Spiro Macris, Wilmington, North Carolina; Ted, Lea, Jim and Wanda Pedas, Washington, DC; Gene and Aphrodite Rossides, Washington, DC; Savvas Savopoulos, Washington, DC; Ted G. Spyropoulos, Chicago, Illinois; and George Marcus, San Francisco, California.

American Hellenic Institute Foundation Annual Conferences on The Future of Hellenism in America 4th Annual Conference

November 18-19, 2005

<http://www.pahh.com/ahif/press-releases/conference-2005.html>

Washington, DC — On November 18-19, 2005 the American Hellenic Institute Foundation held its 4th Annual Conference on *The Future of Hellenism in America* at Columbia University in New York City. The conference featured prominent speakers from the fields of education, law, and the private sector, who identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today.

The sponsors of this event include the Program in Hellenic Studies at Columbia University, the Foundation for Hellenic Studies, the Hellenic American National Council and the Federation of Hellenic Societies of Greater New York.

In attendance were His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, as well as Greek Parliamentarian Anastasios I. Spiliopoulos, Consul General of Greece Catherine Boura and Consul General of Cyprus Martha Mavromati.

On Friday, November 18, 2005, the events commenced with a guided tour of the Ancient Greek and Byzantine art galleries, and the Onassis Library of Greek and Roman Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. This was followed by cocktails at the Atrium Café of the Olympic Tower sponsored by Ambassador Loucas Tsilas and the Onassis Foundation.

Opening the conference on Saturday, November 19, 2005, was Professor Vangelis Calotychos, Acting Director of the Program in Hellenic Studies in the Department of Classics at Columbia University who also helped to organize this event. This was followed by a greeting and introduction of the keynote speaker by Col. Antonios Neroulis, AHI- New York Chapter President. The keynote speaker was Professor Charles Moskos, Professor of Sociology at Northwestern University.

The moderator for the morning session **Panel A** was Professor John O. Iatrides, Professor Emeritus of International Politics at Connecticut State University and former Executive Director of the Modern Greek Studies Association. The Panel A speakers included: Charles Capetanakis, Chairman of the Hellenic Classical Charter School, Christos P. Ioannides, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College, CUNY, Professor S. Victor Papacosma, Executive Director of the Modern Greek Studies Association and Director of the Lemnitzer Center for NATO and European Union Studies at Kent State University in Ohio and Nick Karambelas, Esq., Sfikas and Karambelas, LLP.

Following the luncheon, the moderator for the afternoon session **Panel B** was Professor Van Coufoudakis, Rector of Intercollege, Cyprus. The Panel B speakers included: Dr. Helen C. Evans, Curator for Early Christian and Byzantine Art, The Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters of

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, Executive Director of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation and Eleni Gage, author.

The moderator for the afternoon session **Panel C** was Stylianos S. Zavvos, Chairman of Continental American Capital. The Panel C speakers included: John Metaxas, Anchor and Reporter for WCBS News Radio, Rev. Eugene N. Pappas, Three Hierarchs Church in New York, and Gene Rossides, Esq., President of the American Hellenic Institute.

Mr. Vangelis Calotychos began the conference by welcoming the participants and giving an introduction to the conference discussion on the future of Hellenism in America. He also spoke of the progress in establishing Greek studies programs in Universities throughout the country and the importance of this to Hellenism.

Professor Charles Moskos spoke on *"The Changing Face of Greek Americans."* In this discussion, Prof. Moskos described the three waves of Greek immigration to the U.S. as well as the changing demographics of the Greek population in America and the impact of these on the shrinking of this community. As a solution to this problem, Prof. Moskos said that the Orthodox Church should accept non-Greeks into the community to ensure a continuation of the Greek population. He also spoke about opening the broader Greek American community to become more inclusive of "the best of both worlds."

Mr. Charles Capetanakis gave a presentation on *"Establishing Greek Charter Schools."* He offered his own experiences of establishing the Hellenic Classical Charter School in Brooklyn, NY, which opened this past September and mandates the Greek language and Classics in the educational instruction of the school. He spoke on the importance of establishing Greek charter schools to the spread of Hellenism as well as the challenges that come into play with such endeavors. Mr. Capetanakis said in reference to the future of Hellenism and the importance of Greek charter schools, "I am convinced that one day some child in that school who is a non-Greek will do something pro-Hellenistic simply because he or she went to that school and knows Greek."

Dr. Christos Ioannides spoke on *"The Development & Status of Modern Greek Studies Programs in the U.S."* Dr. Ioannides discussed the history of establishing modern Greek studies programs in the U.S. as well as the special characteristics of these programs. He then touched on the forthcoming challenges in developing these types of programs towards a new generation of Greek Americans within the changing dynamics of this community. He concluded by stating, "Modern Greek studies should and can advance within the spirit of an enlightened Hellenism; a Hellenism that is inclusive and tolerant, a Hellenism that cherishes diversity and gives and receives from other peoples and cultures without losing its core values."

Professor S. Victor Papacosmas presented his remarks on *"The Importance of Increasing Modern Greek Studies Programs and Expanding the Curriculum."* Mr. Papacosmas said in his discussion, "Today, a shallower Greek identity prevails, which is often characterized by what I choose to call the 'moussaka, bouzouki, syrtaki syndrome'...The former greater homogeneity of those earlier generations has yielded to a situation that is more heterogeneous in its identities and linkages with

things Greek—constituting a relative mosaic.” He continued, “Essentially, modern Greek studies have to be increased quantitatively and qualitatively to maintain appreciation and awareness of modern Greece and Cyprus and Greeks everywhere—and to promote their interests and confront the challenges to them.”

Mr. Nick Karambelas, in his remarks on *“Education and Political Activism,”* spoke on “the nuts and bolts of campaigning and becoming a candidate.” He suggested the creation of a program, the purpose of which would be to train Greek Americans on fundraising and the elements of candidacy and campaigning, as well as knowledge on U.S. policy issues regarding Greece, Cyprus and Turkey.

Following lunch, Panel B commenced with Dr. Helen C. Evans speaking on *“The Importance of Artistic Exchange in Encouraging Cultural Understanding.”* In this discussion, Dr. Evans emphasized a need to engage with an artistic object such as that of Byzantium in order to encourage and move the cultural understanding of people. As an example, she spoke of the “Glory of Byzantium” exhibit and how it changed the views of Byzantium.

Following, Ambassador Loucas Tsilas spoke on *“The Power of Culture: The Case of Hellenic Heritage.”* He spoke about how culture leads to understanding beyond borders and how it is an important aspect of national power because it also comprises a record of history, of which countries attach significance. Ambassador Tsilas said, “Do not forget that when we speak about our heritage, we speak of something that is timeless, universal and part of the life of everybody who lives on the earth. As such let us feel a certain responsibility in propagating and maintaining it as something that will help humanity preserve a very important part.”

The last speaker on Panel B was Ms. Eleni Gage on *“Connecting with our Past: A Personal Experience.”* Ms. Gage spoke of her personal experiences in retracing her own roots and rebuilding her grandparent’s home in Lia. In this journey, Ms. Gage said that she discovered her roots and developed her own relationship to her village. She also spoke of the challenges of a Greek American being caught between two countries.

Mr. John Metaxas was the first speaker on Panel C and his presentation was on *“The Importance of Engaging the American Media.”* In this discussion, Mr. Metaxas spoke on the struggles of reporting on Greek American issues due to the lack of interest by the American public and therefore the difficulties of getting these issues reported on regular media including print, television and radio. However, he also stated that things are changing in the last decade in these regards and through the advancement of technology and the use of the internet. He said that it is now possible to find news items on any subject, including Greek American issues, with the click of a button.

Reverend Eugene N. Pappas spoke on *“Orthodoxy & Hellenism”* and who we are and where we are going as Hellenes of America. Reverend Pappas stated that the influence of Hellenism in the U.S. is in decline due to lower Greek immigration into the U.S. and evident in Greek schools and parishes, as well as the demise of Greek language media. He made the point that the present day main Greek identity is through family name and family events as remnants of traditions. He also said that the new cycle of Greeks in America can still adhere to the church even if they do not speak Greek.

Mr. Gene Rossides gave a presentation on *"The Role of the Greek American Community."* In this discussion, he spoke about the role of the Greek American community and the challenge to become an integral part of the foreign policy process by (1) increasing our effectiveness with the Congress, (2) becoming effective with the Executive Branch, (3) the media, (4) the academic community and think tanks and (5) to develop an effective grass roots lobbying effort. Mr. Rossides said, "When people's power is being felt around the world, let us show what we the people can do in the interests of the United States in support of the rule of law and fundamental American values which are based on our Hellenic heritage."



His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios at the podium

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios attended the entire afternoon conference. He addressed the speakers and audience and gave his insights into the discussion. He offered relevant comments on each of the speakers along with some with interesting stories. He also spoke about the essence of the Greek culture, civilization and its achievements.

The conference organizer Nick Larigakis stated, "We are very pleased to have sponsored this conference in cooperation with the Program in Hellenic Studies at Columbia University and Professor Calotychos. This is the first time, since we initiated this conference four years ago, that it has taken place at a venue outside of Washington, D.C. We are pleased with the outcome and hope to take this conference to different cities throughout the U.S. annually so that the message on the future of Hellenism in America can continue to educate our communities."

Benefactors who helped make the AHF's conference possible include: Nicholas J. Bouras, Summit, New Jersey; Nicholas E. Chimicles, Haverford, Pennsylvania; KYMA Management Inc., Miami, Florida; James and Nike Lagos, Springfield, Ohio; Mathew Mirones, New York, New York; James and Ted Pedas, Washington, DC; Gene Rossides, Washington, DC; Ted G. Spyropoulos, Chicago, Illinois; Theodore Vakrinos, Alexandria, Virginia; Dr. Anthony Vasilas, Manhasset, New York and Stylianos S. Zavvos, New York, New York.

<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/ahif-hosts-5th-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america/>

AHIF Hosts 5th Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America

Washington, D.C.- On October 28, 2006 the American Hellenic Institute Foundation in cooperation with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation held its 5th Annual Conference on "The Future of Hellenism in America" at The Westin St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, California. The conference featured prominent speakers from the fields of education, law and the private sector, who identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today. The co-sponsors of this event included the ELIOS Society, the Foundation for Hellenic Studies, the Hellenic American National Council, the Hellenic Federation of Northern California and the American Hellenic Council of California.

The weekend conference began with a Friday night dinner for the speakers and other invited guests hosted by George and Judy Marcus and Dr. Kenny and Angie Frangadakis at the critically acclaimed Kokkari Restaurant in San Francisco.

Opening the conference on Saturday, October 28, 2006 was the Conference Chairman George Marcus, Chairman of Marcus & Millichap. The keynote speaker was Professor Dan Georgakas, Director of the Greek American Studies Project at the Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies at Queens College-CUNY.

The moderator for the morning session panel A was Nick Larigakis, AHI Executive Director. The panel A speakers included: James Dimitriou, Ph.D., Past Supreme President of the Order of AHEPA and Emmanuel E. Velivasakis, President of the Pan Cretan Association.

The moderator for the morning session panel B was The Honorable Ted Laliotis, President of the Hellenic Federation of Northern California. The panel B speakers included: Professor Martha Klironomos, Professor & Director at the Center for Modern Greek Studies at San Francisco State University, Eva Prionas, Ph.D., Chair of the Special Language Program at Stanford University and Professor George Kafkoulis Chairman, Co-Founder & President of the Archimedean Academy in Miami, Florida.

The luncheon chairman was Dr. Kenny Frangadakis and the luncheon speaker was Ambassador Alexandros Mallias, Ambassador of Greece to the United States.

Following lunch, the moderator for the afternoon session panel C was Fanis Economidis, Vice President of Metropolis Council, Metropolis of San Francisco. The panel C speakers included: Reverend Stephen Kyriacou, Annunciation Cathedral in San Francisco, Vicki Liviakis, Anchor of KRON TV News, Marylin Rouvelas, author and Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, Executive Director of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), Inc.

The moderator for the afternoon session panel D was Professor Van Coufoudakis, Dean Emeritus, School of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne, IN. The panel D speakers included: Kyriakos Tsakopoulos, President & CEO of KT Communities, Nick Karambelas, Esq. Partner at Sfikas & Karambelas, LLP, George Marcus, Chairman of Marcus and Millichap and Gene Rossides, President of the American Hellenic Institute Foundation.

Following the panels, a round table discussion took place with the audience. Professor Van Coufoudakis was the moderator. The participants included AHI Board Member Kostas Alexakis, James Dimitriou, Ph.D., Professor Martha Klironomos, and Gene Rossides.

Mr. George Marcus began the conference by welcoming the participants and giving an introduction to the conference discussion on the Future of Hellenism in America. Mr. Marcus stated, "We believed in the early era of what I would call the melting pot. And the melting pot really just disintegrates the heritage that all Europeans had and other people from around the world. So many of us are third and fourth generation descendents of intermarried couples, in some cases, not all cases. And so it is very probable that we could be one generation away from disappearing as an ethnic group in the United States. And there are two thoughts about that. There is one that says we are a melting pot and we will sort of melt away. The other one is that America is a stew of people who can stick together for the benefit of America and for the benefit of Greek Americans, for the benefit of our relationships with one another, and the benefit of Greece. We have something you can't buy, you can't join- we were born into a special club. Our heritage is something that was granted to us by God and our parents. The importance of this club I think can be exemplified by understanding how important maintaining our relationships has been and will be. And the real question is, can we create institutions today that will maintain a reason for our children and their children to maintain roots within our society?"

The Keynote Speaker, Professor Dan Georgakas spoke on "The Now and Future of Greek America." He said, "I think what we have to have is a model that I call a transnational Greekness or bi-national Greekness, bi-cultural Greekness in which Hellenism is not bound by a geographical state. It becomes a culture which effects you in whatever country you are in and obviously Greece will be the center of that...It will be a two way street, not a one way street. They don't feed us Greek and we don't feed them modernism, but we go back and forth...I think we have to revive the language. We really have to understand modern Greek culture, modern Greek history as well...We have to be connected to that, we have to understand our own culture and then we have to embrace these new technologies and move forward. And I think if we do that, that maybe fifty years from now people will gather in a room like this and they will say, gee we've got some problems today, but thank goodness for those people fifty years ago, they passed us the torch."

The morning session A discussion was on "The Future of Greek American Organizations." On this topic, James Dimitriou stated, "We need to expand the 'E' in AHEPA. It's time to expand our educational efforts...We're in a crisis in America in our public schools where Western civilization has been diminished and almost extinguished. In most of our schools and most states you study Greece for a mere two week unit in the 6th grade, and if you're lucky you get a week and a half to two weeks in the 9th and 10th grades. That's all. Multiculturalism has many advantages, but one of them is not the study of the classics and Western civilization. We need to expand these programs, we need to promote programs. We need to do a much better job for our children in public schools.

We need to teach Hellenic traditions in America...We need to create a national week of Greek letters...and more than anything else we need to provide new youth programs, programs that take students to Greece.”

Mr. Emmanuel E. Velivasakis said, “Why is it our young adults are not part of our organization?...Why can’t we have a cultural center that we can teach our children to learn how to dance? Why can’t we have a school to teach them the language? Why can’t we have something that is here? Why can’t we have a program in Crete where we send our kids in the summer where they can truly intermingle with the local population? Why can’t we have those programs that help us. We are still of the mentality that we have to help them [Greeks in Greece]? It’s not us and them, it is us that are in danger...We need to think about ourselves. We are in danger. These are the initiatives that we have to start thinking about.”

The second panel of the morning session was on “Greek Studies Programs in America.”

Professor Martha Klironomos gave a presentation on “The Importance of Increasing Modern Greek Studies Programs and Expanding the Curriculum.” She stated, “When we say Hellenism, we mean the academic disciplines and knowledges that have contributed to our understanding of Greek peoples’ cultures and paideia from antiquity to modern times...The obvious place of course where the ideal of a democratic paideia can be explored are courses in political science and political theory or a course that we offer at San Francisco State that looks at Ancient and Modern Athens and models of democracy that are typical to those societies comparing them to republican and liberal models here in America. Another application is also looking at the Greek-American community and its history for it offers many narratives of discrimination, of the benefits of social activism, and of the benefits of citizenship.”

Eva Prionas, Ph.D. spoke on “Greek Language Programs: Is There a Need for Change?” She said, “Demand for languages and offerings are often based on the national needs, strategic needs of the United States, on research and career needs of the students and on programmatic need, which requires mastering a language...we have to offer to students incentives; we have to motivate them...They must receive a credential in the language...We see higher enrollments when we offer Greek courses that cut across disciplines... It is not important to offer the typical beginning, intermediate level class anymore, but we have to make it a language course that is content based...so we develop specific themes with current events like economics, politics, film, etc.”

Professor George Kafkoulis presented his remarks on “Establishing Greek Charter Schools: How do You Begin and Why They are Important to the Future of the Community.” He stated, “I wanted to make a conservatory of Mathematics and the Greek language...We must be as proud as we are for Aeschylus and Sophocles as we must be for Archimedes and Euclid and Apollonius...We decided to build a school that is going to be attractive as an institution of learning to the mainstream of American society. So what we are suggesting is this—to bring Greek curricula to enhance standard American curricula and to give the children a reason to study Greek...The students are learning language through content and the content area that this school decided to use is mathematics.”

The luncheon speaker, Ambassador Alexandros Mallias, gave a captivating presentation to the standing room crowd. In part he stated, “In this country there are three fundamental elements for success- impact, outreach and what is very often said before the elections– politics is local. If we

want to influence one or the other party, if we want to increase our impact in the one or the other administrations, if we want to have a greater impact on the Senate and House...we must start from the grass roots, local activity...you must try with persuasion, with arguments and with reason.”

Also at the luncheon, Conference Chairman George Marcus was presented the AHI Hellenic Heritage Award by Gene Rossides and Nick Larigakis for his “tireless dedication and support in the promotion of Hellenism.”

Following the luncheon, the afternoon session panel C began with remarks from Reverend Stephen Kyriacou on “Issues Facing the Church in America”. He said, “Hellenism is part and parcel of the Orthodox in general and of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in particular—its ethos, its character, its theology, and its history are all telling of this legacy...It has been fostered these twenty centuries by the Church and the Church as a major Greek-American institution has enormous resources to contribute in order to partner, if you will, to teach in response to the great commission, and not only at the university level, about which we here much, but also at the level where most people and especially the young are impacted, at the parish level in the schools and schools such as the ones you have been describing. Let me conclude by saying that our biggest hurdle for the twenty-first century, as I see it, in a nutshell, is to be Greek Orthodox in a culture of choice.”

Ms. Vicki Liviakis spoke on “The Importance of Engaging the American Media.” She said, “After some twenty years as a member of the American press, I have had good moments when I’ve felt I’ve made a difference and less stellar moments, but I have always chased the truth and I have tried to be fair...We provide a public service that’s not always pleasant and you can’t always be right, but you should be held accountable.”

Ms. Marilyn Rouvelas gave her presentation on “Greek Customs and Traditions: Are We Keeping them Alive?” She said, “We must always remember Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy exist in a third context—the culture of contemporary America which prizes choice. Most Greek-Americans think of themselves as Americans first and then choose their own depth of identification and involvement. Some Americans immerse themselves solely in the Church focusing on Orthodoxy. Some may be members of the Orthodox Church and choose to devote themselves to Hellenic cultural activities. But most enjoy participating in both. They also care deeply about being successful Americans who present themselves to the rest of society as model citizens in keeping with the unchanging ideals of the golden age of classical Greece and the tenets of Christianity. These diverse individual approaches may ultimately provide the most effective overall preservation strategies.”

Ambassador Loucas Tsilas then spoke on “The Importance of Promoting Greek Culture: The Role of the Greek American Community.” He said, “Our special duty is not just to feel the heavy responsibility of being the descendents of the creators of a great civilization but to feel also...that this is a relay race—that we have a torch in our hands. Our civilization, any civilization, especially the Hellenic civilization is a torch that shines and brightens our life for centuries and for centuries to come and this is the special duty that we have, a special pleasure that we have to hold high this torch, to feel proud because our forefathers created it, to feel humbled because that doesn’t belong anymore to us. It belongs to everybody and especially it belongs to this great nation, the United States and to feel as Americans of Greek descent—that we have a special duty to hold this torch high and give it to somebody else—to the next generation.”

Panel D began with Kyriakos Taskopoulos speaking on “How do we Engage our Youth to be Active Participants of Hellenism?” He said, “Our younger generations need to be increasingly engaged in higher education and the political life of the United States. We need to lead our young people not only into higher academic posts at colleges and universities, we need to push and encourage them to become involved in colleges and universities at the administration level as deans, as provosts, as college presidents, trustees, etc., that is, we need to push our younger generation even more, though we have many notable successes in this sector, to be leaders and dominant players in higher education.”

George Marcus gave his remarks on “The Importance of Engaging Greek American Professionals to be Pro Active in the Community.” He said, “If we don’t engage the professional, we have no community...We need to give more value to the current meaning of being an American Hellene...The current generation needs to connect the dots...We have to connect with the professionals because they’re all going to be professionals.”

Following, Nick Karambelas gave his presentation on “Perspectives and Participation in the U.S. Political Process.” He said, “There are two ways that we participate in the political process. We either seek office or we influence those who are seeking office and one of the things that I think is missing in our community is a good institutional, educational resource that can train our young people to do both.”

And lastly Gene Rossides spoke on “The Role of the Greek American Community in Support for U.S. Relations with Greece and Cyprus and Why this is important to the Future of Hellenism in America.” He said, “Unless we become involved as a community in these issues, we risk losing our identity...To become part of the mainstream of American foreign policy development process, we must build a public policy base in each of the four hundred and thirty five congressional districts in this country and with the one hundred senators in the fifty states. If we don’t we will be considered a weak, ineffectual, ethnic community of little consequence and the result will be a weakened Hellenism in America.”

Concluding the conference, a round table discussion took place with the audience. Panel participants offered their opening remarks.

Martha Klironomos said, “We have a dire need of empirical data. We have not adequately collected photographs, oral histories, testimonies...There is a vast pool of resources that many of us simply didn’t realize was out there and it’s virtually untapped...Only you can provide such data—the stories, the experiences, the photographs, the memorabilia that your families hold for us are essential to provide to researchers to investigate and look through and eventually help recover this history.”

James Dimitriou, Ph.D. stated, “Why don’t we create a Hellenic heritage week and let’s commit our organizations together...We have in our schools today 14 million students in North America who are getting three and a half four weeks total, sixth grade and tenth grade, of anything to do with Hellenic heritage...Let’s recapture Western Civilization. Let’s bring it back into our curriculum. Let’s bring it back to the American public school.”

Kostas Alexakis said, “What are we doing ourselves? What does each one of us do to promote Hellenism? And isn’t Hellenism all about language? Without the language, I think Hellenism is

going to become another intellectual exercise...We all know that Hellenism has played a huge role in Western Democracy. However, we find ourselves, we of Greek descent, having children that don't speak the language, having wives that don't speak the language, having husbands who don't speak the language—we don't have the tools and we don't have the perseverance to make those close to us become aware of the basics of Greekness...I want to challenge you to ask yourselves about the practical aspects."

Gene Rossides stated, "The role of the Church is not political...That does not mean that the church leadership or priests abrogate their first amendment rights to be active politically, to speak out politically as individuals and it does not mean that the Church does not have a very important political role. That role is not as a leader, either on the national level or the church level. But that role means that every priest should be pressing his congregation, the lay leadership, to be active in politics...The Church can play a great role in politics by pushing the lay community to be active."

The conference organizer Nick Larigakis stated, "We are extremely pleased with this conference. It is one of the finest we have had in the five years that we been hosting this themed conference. San Francisco proved to be a very good choice this year. The participation was very good and the audience came well prepared and very eager to engage the speakers in constructive dialogue. We look forward to continuing to take this conference to cities around the U.S. I want to also thank all our sponsors and benefactors who made this possible, and especially Mr. and Mrs. George Marcus and the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation. Without their support, this would not have been possible."

Benefactors who helped make the AHIF's conference possible include: Dr. Kenny and Angie Frangadakis, San Francisco, California, Aris Anagnos, Los Angeles, California, Nicholas J. Bouras, Summit, New Jersey, Commissioner Demetri and Mika Boutris and Family, New York, New York, Elias Gyftopoulos, Lincoln, Massachusetts, Nicholas G. Karambelas, Washington, DC, James and Nike Lagos, Springfield, Ohio, Meta Media-M magazine, Toronto, Canada, Jim Pedas, Washington, DC, Ted Pedas, Washington, DC, Gene Rossides, Washington, DC, Manny and Marilyn Rouvelas, Washington, DC, Ted G. Spyropoulos, Chicago, Illinois, Angelo and Sofia Tsakopoulos and family, Sacramento, California, Emmanuel E. Velivasakis, New York, New York and Stylianos S. Zavvos, New York, New York.

AHIF Hosts 6th Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America

Washington, DC – The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its Sixth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America on November 10, 2007, this year in Chicago at the Hilton Chicago Hotel. Held in cooperation with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation and the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (S.A.E.) U.S.A. Region, each year the conference organizers make a stop in a different U.S. city in order to spread conference ideas and gather input from the local Greek American community on the various challenges facing Hellenism in America. The conference featured prominent speakers from the fields of education, law, academia and the private sector who identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today, as well as opportunities for progress. To kick-off the weekend's activities and welcome guests, a reception was hosted by Greek America Magazine on Friday evening at the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in the heart of Chicago's historic Greektown. Conference attendees returned the next morning for an outstanding line-up of expert panelists, keynote speakers, and a closing roundtable discussion with the audience. The conference covered the following topics:

- The Now and Future of Greek America (Opening Keynote)
- The Future of Greek American Organizations (Session A)
- The Importance of Being Active in the Political Process (Session B)
- The Changing Face of Greek Americans (Luncheon Presentation)
- The Image of Hellenism: Hellenic Culture, Religious Identity, and the Media (Session C)
- Greek Education in America (Session D)
- A Perspective from Young Greek Americans (Session E)

Also a highlight of the conference was the presentation of the Modern Greek Studies Association's (MGSA) Recognition of Excellence Award by Dan Georgakas to celebrated Greek American novelist and short story writer Harry Mark Petrakis. Throughout his career, Petrakis has written 20 novels and was twice a finalist for the National Book Award in Fiction. He has honorary degrees from the University of Illinois, Roosevelt University, Hellenic College, and Governors State University. In 2006, he received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from Indiana University Northwest.

In summarizing the overall mission and role of AHIF's annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism, AHI Executive Director Nick Larigakis pointed out that, "Eventually, we are leaving a seed behind in each community that we visit with this conference. It's now up to you in your communities to continue and put these ideas and issues to action."

The conference was sponsored by The Behrakis Foundation, and co-sponsored by the Hellenic American National Council (HANC), the Foundation for Hellenic Studies, the Pancretan Association of America and by Greek America Magazine. Other key supporters included John P. Calamos, Sr.,

conference chairman and chairman and CEO of Calamos Investments, as well as Ted G. Spyropoulos, president of T.G.S. Petroleum and president of SAE/USA's Regional Coordinating Council.

The conference keynote address was delivered by Professor Dan Georgakas, director of the Greek American Studies Project at Queens College-CUNY's Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. In his address, Georgakas presented current statistics on the status of the Greek American community, which is estimated to number close to 1.2 million. While he pointed out that preservation of the Hellenic culture in America is facing mounting challenges as generations become further removed from their immigrant roots, there is also "a new preservationist movement. We are seeing a lot of activity at the grassroots level which as to do with being Greek." But in order to preserve Hellenism, Georgakas recommended that a focus be placed on the second wave of immigrants and their children, saying that "This is the core group if we're going to revive Greek. If we lose them, then the chances of the community surviving is slim."

The Future of Greek American Organizations

Panelists for the first session on the future of Greek American organizations noted some successes but also a number of obstacles in these organizations' ability to gather and retain participation, particularly from young adults in the community. HANC President Emmanuel Velivasakis stressed the importance of harnessing young professionals who are dedicated to Hellenic ideals, and pointed out that "The leadership of many organizations is not willing to let go... We must offer our youth opportunities for leadership," citing the successes of the Pancretan Association of America in engaging its youth population.

Ted Spyropoulos of SAE/USA and John Galanis, representing the Order of AHEPA, echoed these sentiments and also added that Greek American organizations must better communicate and coordinate with each other. This was cited as one of the largest challenges that dilute the community's overall effectiveness. The moderator for the panel was AHI Executive Director Nick Larigakis.

The Importance of Being Active in the Political Process

Moderated by Professor Van Coufoudakis, Rector Emeritus at the University of Nicosia in Cyprus, the session featured U.S. Congressman Zack Space (D-OH), Illinois State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, Chairman of the Pericles Fellowship Foundation Endy Zemenides, and AHI President Gene Rossides. Each speaker underscored the importance of greater political participation by the Greek American community at both the grassroots level and in leadership roles.

While the community is well-perceived overall, Giannoulias pointed out that "We need more than anything to be better organized" and "get more people involved in the political process to get issues heard." To help do this, Zemenides recommended that "We have to welcome non-Greek spouses and friends, because they are force multipliers. We need to adapt our message for a U.S. audience, and we have to get people to register to vote and also know where they are voting" in order to more effectively mobilize them on important issues.

According to Rossides, "It is not too much to say that the future of our community is at risk because we are not consulted on U.S. foreign policy, and we have been marginalized by the Turkish lobby and the Executive Branch, the White House, State and Defense Departments and the

National Security Council. We must do what Alex Giannoulis and Endy Zemenides stated: get active in politics.”

The Changing Face of Greek Americans

In addition to the presentation of the AHI Lifetime Achievement Award to Harry Mark Petrakis, the new U.S. Ambassador to Greece Daniel Speckhard offered greetings to the audience and noted that he looked forward to future cooperation with the Greek American community.

During his presentation, Charles Moskos, who is professor of sociology at Northwestern University, provided an overview of the demographic status and changes in the Greek American community today. He also offered a number of recommendations aimed at helping to perpetuate Hellenism in America. These included both sacred and secular outreach strategies. With the rising popularity of Orthodoxy in some places, the religion can be a way to introduce non-Greeks into the Greek American community.

On the secular side, Moskos suggested that “We should really rethink the scholarships that we give to Greek American students and focus this money instead on study abroad.” Again echoing the prevalent sentiment that young people of the community must be a focus of efforts, Moskos mentioned the “Next Generation Initiative” as a positive development which helps to bring in young people by offering networking and professional development opportunities, and linking them to successful, established Greek American professionals.

In concluding, Moskos emphasized that “Our future must include the Philhellenes as much as the children of Greek immigrants.”

The Image of Hellenism

Moderated by Chris P. Tomaras, Chairman of the PanHellenic Scholarship Fund, the session looked at the image of Hellenism from three different angles: culture, religion, and media. Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, who is executive director of the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), discussed the role of the Greek American community in promoting Greek culture in the U.S. Underscoring that America has been heavily influenced by Hellenic values, which are also universal values, Ambassador Tsilas noted that Greek culture is familiar to Americans and thereby translates well. It is incumbent upon Greek Americans to promote the best elements of the Hellenic culture in the U.S., which is “a heavy responsibility.”

His Grace Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos from the Holy Metropolis of Chicago discussed the challenges facing the Greek Orthodox Church in America. The fundamental challenge he cited is the preservation of ethnic and cultural identity. To address this and other challenges, Bishop Demetrios noted that “Our efforts should be to bring awareness of our culture to others” and that the church must accept and open itself up to non-Greeks as well.

Discussing the Greek American print media, Gregory Pappas emphasized the key role that it has played not only in informing the community of events and issues, but also in strengthening the community’s ties. At the same time, Pappas cited the many obstacles that prevent the print media from effectively doing their job and why these obstacles must be addressed and overcome:

“We’re not going to go anywhere as a community if we don’t sit down and figure out how to communicate all of these wonderful ideas and all of these wonderful things that are going on,” said

Pappas. “We’re lacking in communication. I’m not here to solve that problem. I’m only here to comment on it and to tell you what a dismal condition we are in as a community with regards to communicating with each other.”

Greek Education in America

The afternoon session on Greek Education in America, moderated by Eleni Katsarou, Ph.D. of the University of Illinois’ (Chicago) College of Education, offered ideas into how learning of the Greek language in America can be more effectively conducted and promoted. On a positive note, Katsarou pointed out that “there is such a thing as co-existence of two languages and cultures,” and that therefore the American and Greek languages and cultures are not mutually exclusive of each other.

Vassiliki Rapti, Ph.D. discussed the importance of increasing modern Greek studies programs and expanding the curriculum to be integrated into the mainstream curriculum. Rapti is a lecturer on modern Greek language and literature at the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, and assistant teaching professor in modern Greek language and literature at the University of Missouri – St. Louis.

Focusing on the interpersonal level, Harry Karahalios provided ideas on how Greek language could more effectively be taught through the use of audio visual materials including film, as well as other cultural forms. According to Karahalios, who is the director of the Chicago Greek Film Festival and a doctoral candidate at the University of Notre Dame, “The trick is to keep [students] on their toes,” and audiovisual materials can play a key role in connecting language to culture.

The final two speakers on the panel discussion focused on Greek language education at the primary and secondary school levels. Voula Sellountos, head of schools at the Hellenic American Academy in Chicago, focused on the role of Greek American education – meaning Greek American day schools – in forming Greek American identity. Dr. Michael Bakalis, who is president and CEO of American Quality Schools, discussed how Greek Charter Schools can be established, and why they are important to the future of the community.

According to Bakalis, “We have an opportunity through the charter school movement to convey our [Greek] language and culture not only to Greeks, but to Americans and nationwide.... There are many opportunities” in this area that can help perpetuate Hellenism in America.

A Perspective from Young Greek Americans

The final panel discussion involved four young Greek Americans: George D. Logothetis, who is an assurance associate at PriceWaterhouse Coopers, was the moderator for the session. The speakers were Mariyana Spyropoulos, Esq., who owns her own legal practice; Patricia Kakridas, an anchor for WAND-TV NBC 17 in Decatur, Illinois; and Argeri Lagos, a law student at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. Each speaker underscored the important role that their Greek heritage plays in their lives, both professional and personal. Spyropoulos suggested that in the attempts to reach out to young people in the Greek American community, community leaders should “ask the young people what they want,” to explore the concept of online social networking as a means to effectively connect Greeks of all ages around the world, and to promote scholarships for study abroad opportunities in Greece.

<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/the-ahifs-fourteenth-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america/>

AHI's Future of Hellenism Conference

New York.- By Vicki James Yiannias

Michael Aktipis, a speaker at the Seventh Annual Conference on The Future of Hellenism, in the session titled, A Perspective from Young Greek Americans, highlighted what can be said to be the most basic consideration in the future of Hellenism: "The future of the Greek American community has to look to the next generation. I think we all have to recognize that. We really have to direct our energies towards creating opportunities for the next generation of Greek Americans to get to know each other better, to know what each is thinking, to network, to help find our way and redefine Greek Americanism." The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosts the Future of Hellenism conferences, an invaluable forum for addressing exactly those issues. This year's conference, held in cooperation with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, The Behrakis Foundation, and co-sponsored by the Hellenic American National Council, and *The Hellenic Voice*, was held in Boston, Massachusetts on November 22, 2008.

The session, A Perspective from Young Greek Americans, moderated by Tina Papadopoulos, Area Director of Development for Massachusetts, American Cancer Society, President of the AHI New England Chapter, addressed the ways and means of encouraging the passing on of the torch of Greek heritage to the new generation of Greek Americans.

The three speakers tackling this weighty subject were George Papadopoulos (22), Political Science and Geography student at DePaul University; Alexandra Karambelas (20), a Classics major at Tufts University; and Michael Aktipis (25), J.D. Candidate at Harvard Law School (Ph.D. in International Relations from the London School of Economics, and B.A. from Northwestern University).

The topic of young Greek America was approached from unusually thoughtful and interesting vantage points by these speakers, who also come from interestingly varied backgrounds. George Papadopoulos's parents are both from Greece, Michael Aktipis's father is from Greece and his mother is Austrian. Alexandra Karambelas's mother also is not of Greek heritage, while her paternal grandparents are from Greece.

Speaking with The Greek News, Mr. Papadopoulos, Ms. Karambelas, and Dr. Aktipis, all extremely responsive to elaborating on some of the ideas they presented at the conference, took on the following questions: What are the ways in which your generation can come up with a definition of Hellenism that can be put to use in their everyday lives? What do you think are the biggest challenges facing Greek American youth today? What

do you think are the first steps toward solving some of those challenges by parents and by the youth themselves?

Alexandra Karambelas spoke of the necessity of redefining Hellenism and the means for doing so, suggesting that, "My generation can come to a new definition of Hellenism by employing the advice of Socrates and examining lives. It may be clichéd, but there is a lot of truth in his quote, 'the unexamined life is not worth living.' I don't know what our new definition of Hellenism will be, but I think the only way we will find it is by emulating the Socratic philosophers and questioning the world around us... by questioning the status quo, by trying out new ideas and thinking about new things we can become a new generation of philosophers. Maybe in all our searching we will come up with a new definition of Hellenism, or maybe our search rather than our discovery will define it."

Addressing the question of challenges, she went on to say, "I think that the biggest challenges facing young Greek Americans are roughly the same as those facing all Americans. Am I going to get into a good college? Am I going to have enough money for college? Are my grades good enough? Will I be able to find a job after college? In my experience, these are the sorts of questions that are on the minds of all young people, regardless of nationality... I think the best thing that both parents and children can do in these times is just be supportive of each other".

Her advice: "Young people, try to make life a little easier for your parents by helping out in little ways. Parents, try to take some of the stress off of your kids; there are times to push them to do better but there are also times to tell them it's okay to get a B every so often".

George Papadopoulos feels that the biggest challenge facing Greek American today is to sustain the level of personal drive shown by the first immigrants from Greece. "Education, the power of the 21st century", must be emphasized, said Papadopoulos, who is beginning to notice, that the Greek youth appear to "not really take University seriously because they feel their parents will take care of them forever no matter what".

Also, knowing about contemporary issues in Greece such as problems with its neighbors, social unrest, and the financial crisis is paramount, as Greek-American youth can play a big part in shaping American public opinion favorably toward Greece. "The image of Greece being a country which is liked by everyone and has no problems has to be erased from the Greek youth.... they must become educated about 21st Century Greece and how they may help their homeland politically... not just by visiting papou and yiayia every summer for a month," said Papadopoulos, "I recommend pundits coming to the major Greek clubs in various American Universities and lecturing the Greek youth about the present status of Greece on the international theater, because as we all know, there is more to Greece than nice beaches and bouzoukia".

As long as the Greek-American youth don't see their ancestral homeland as just a place to relax and party in the summer, said Papadopoulos they will be able to hold onto their strong heritage and be quintessentially American at the same time.

"The Greek-American youth must be united in every way possible through social groups, professional societies, and more. It is networking and unification, which will lead to the next Greek-American generation prospering. If we allow the bond to that kept previous generations strong and successful to dissolve we are bound to falter."

As solution, Papadopoulos would "urge the presidents of the Greek clubs of American universities to invite a pundit to discuss issues affecting Greece today instead of hosting a solely social 'frappe night'. These discussions can initiate the writing of letters to congressmen/women and/or senators urging resolutions to be passed in favor of Greece".

Papadopoulos cited an example of his own successful action: "I went to the Chief of Staff of Senator Dick Durbin (Illinois) and urged him to co-sponsor a resolution favoring Greece instead of one of its belligerent neighbors, explaining that the large constituency of Greek-Americans would be very unhappy if Senator Dick Durbin did not co-sponsor the resolution. Two weeks later I received an e-mail stating that Durbin had co-sponsored the resolution... a simple 20-minute conference got the ideas across and they were heard. More actions like this must be done by the Greek-American youth".

Michael Aktipis took on the subject of the challenges facing Greek American youth today saying, "I think one of the biggest challenges facing Greek American youth today is defining what their Greek heritage and Greek culture means to them. This is by no means a new challenge — Greek Americans and other ethnic groups have long sought to reconcile their ethnic identities and American identities — but in many ways this challenge has become more pronounced as the Greek community has become increasingly diffuse and diverse".

Aktipis spoke of the strong Greek orientation of his own life, "I am myself the product of three cultures: I grew up in the U.S. as the son of a Greek father and an Austrian mother. Yet I spent the first two years of my life in Greece and spent over a month living in Athens every summer growing up. My non-Greek mother learned fluent Greek, cooked Greek food at home and celebrated Greek holidays. So in some ways, although I am only half-Greek, I have had a stronger connection to my Greek heritage and identity than many second-generation Greek Americans of 'pure' Greek ancestry".

Mixed heritage and the influences of modern society are uniquely challenging today, according to Aktipis who said, "The important point is that Greek Americans no longer come from the same background and are exposed to a wide-variety of cultural influences. This makes the definition of Greek American youth identity more complex, but even more essential. I think the first steps towards addressing this challenge of defining a modern,

diverse, and robust Greek American identity require action by both parents and Greek American youth themselves”.

Aktipis made important observations of parent/youth perceptions of Hellenic identity, saying that, “Parents can begin by recognizing that Greek American identity is dynamic — not static — and this character is a source of strength, not weakness. This means that they shouldn’t expect their children’s relationship with their Greek identity to be identical to their own. Greek American youth can address this challenge by discovering for themselves what it means to be a Greek American in the 21st century. They are so many sources of strength and resilience in Greek American culture that have maintained the cohesiveness of our community for over a century—it is now up to the Greek American youth to discover what new sources of cultural identity and strength will keep the community together for the next century”.

http://www.neomagazine.com/2010_01_january/28.html

The Future of Hellenism in America Conference



From left, Dr. Spiro Spireas, Nick Larigakis, AHI Chairman, and Dr. Dan Georgakas on the podium.

The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted with success its Eighth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America. After first taking the conference on the road to different cities around the country in 2004, this year it was held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the Four Seasons Hotel.

Featuring over 20 prominent speakers drawn from the Greek American community nationwide, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic culture through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted into the future through these various channels.

AHI Executive Director Nick Larigakis opened the conference with an overview of the Future of Hellenism in America Conference's history and overall mission to "exist as a forum for discussion that we hope plants the seed for attendees to take forth these ideas and spread them to their local communities."

Conference Chair Spiros Spireas, Ph.D., who is Chairman and CEO of conference sponsor Sigmapharm Laboratories, LLC in Bensalem, Penn., welcomed attendees to the event. To provide context for the event's significance, Spireas pointed out that "This conference is of tremendous value and a tremendous initiative... It should be used as a way to lead and maintain our tradition of Hellenism in the world and here locally."

The opening keynote address on "The Now and Future of Greek America" was delivered by Professor Dan Georgakas, Director of Greek American Studies at Queens College-CUNY's Center

for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies. Georgakas provided an overview of both positive and negative trends and statistics regarding the strength of the Greek American community's identification with its Hellenic roots. While marriage outside the community has increased and the instances of Greek language spoken in the home has virtually disappeared except among immigrants and their children, Georgakas asserted that, "there are dynamic new factors in progress" that provide a counter-push.

Cyberspace has provided a medium through which Greek Americans can connect and reconnect with their culture through ever-increasing methods, for instance. Online social networks are proliferating, bringing people in touch with each other and with news from the homeland, irrespective of geographic location and on a real-time basis. These elements have inspired "Neo-Hellenism," according to Georgakas, in which Hellenism is based more on cultural identification rather than geographic location.

"In some ways, I'm closer [to Greece] than my parents were," pointed out Georgakas, himself a child of immigrants. He added that, "many people who came earlier had a gap in connection [with Greece]. This no longer exists, so new immigrants are closer and can remain closer to their families."



Ted Spyropoulos,
President of SAE-USA

Theodore G. Spyropoulos, President of SAE-USA, provided an overview of the organization's mission to represent and unite the nearly seven million Greeks abroad who are dispersed over seven regions around the world. Underscoring that Greek American youth is a focal point of the organization, SAE launched the SAE USA Youth Network with the goal of reaching out to young Greek Americans and getting them more involved in the community. "The only way our youth can be baptized [into the Hellenic culture] is to visit Greece... because Greece offers a tremendous wealth of knowledge." Greek American organizations also "need to revise who they are and what they do. We [at SAE] are here to help," Spyropoulos concluded.

Nick Karambelas, of Sfikas & Karambelas, overviewed "The Fundamentals of Participating in the U.S. Political Process". The two components of political participation are strategy and tactics. As a community, "we have to have clearly defined objectives," advised Karambelas. On the tactics component, he said "what we must emphasize now are the three W's – wealth, work and wisdom."

Congressman Gus Bilirakis overviewed how Greek American issues are currently represented in U.S. Congress, and by whom. Currently, there are four Greek Americans in Congress with 141 members in the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues in the 110th Congress.

Gene Rossides, founder of AHI, spoke on "The Role of the Greek American Community in Support for U.S. Relations with Greece and Cyprus and Why This Is Important". According to Rossides, "the



Nick Karambelas
of Sfikas & Karambelas



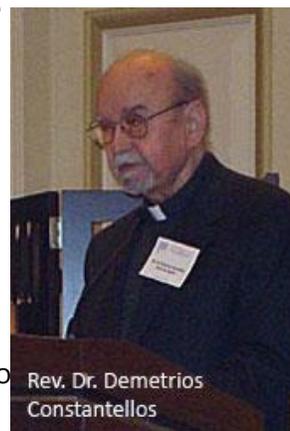
AHI Founder Gene Rossides

future of our community depends on how involved we are in the political process” as it applies to foreign policy and decisions made about Greece and Cyprus. Rossides concluded by stating that, “our relations with Greece and Cyprus are important to the U.S., and to that extent, we [as community members and citizens] need to get involved in the political process, and get young Greek Americans involved.”

Rev. Dr. Demetrios J. Constantelos spoke on “The Challenges Facing the Greek Orthodox Church in America.” He identified five major challenges: doctrinal, ethical, liturgical, mixed marriages and conversions to the faith. Doctrinal challenges

currently faced by the Church include agnosticism, secularism and a broad variety of creeds that “confuse and leave young people to question the [Greek Orthodox] faith,” points out Constantelos.

On ethics, the Church has outlined rules which are disregarded at an increasing frequency. On liturgical practices, Father Constantelos pointed to a dismaying low rate of participation in the Church community on the part of Greek Americans, citing a growing differentiation being made between being Greek and being Greek Orthodox and a disturbing trend on the part of the clergy to drop “Greek” elements from the Orthodox faith. And while many mixed marriages – even those blessed in the Church – rarely stay in the Church, those converting to the faith often do not have the depth of appreciation for or knowledge of the Greek language and culture to see how intrinsic a part it is of the Greek Orthodox faith, Father Constantelos pointed out.



Rev. Dr. Demetrios Constantelos

Professor Van Coufoudakis spoke on “The Importance of Increasing Modern Greek Studies Programs and Expanding the Curriculum”. After providing an overview of the current state of modern Greek studies in America, he offered advice to the Greek American community on how it can proceed more effectively in establishing additional modern Greek studies programs at universities throughout the United States.

American universities currently host 25 modern Greek studies programs, witnessing also the rise of Greek American studies. According to Coufoudakis, many programs have become repositories information, attracting visiting scholars. However, programs often “face funding, organizational and staff problems,” and we need to “think creatively on how we can assist these programs.”



Nicholas Javaras, Executive Vice President of the American College of Greece

The conference was sponsored by Sigmapharm Laboratories, LLC, and held in cooperation with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) U.S.A. Region, and the Behrakis Foundation. Co-sponsors of the conference included the Hellenic American National Council, the Federation of Hellenic American Societies of Philadelphia and Greater Delaware Valley, the Greek American Chamber of Commerce (Greater Philadelphia Chapter), the Hellenic Lawyers Association of Philadelphia, the Hellenic Medical Society of Greater Philadelphia, the Hellenic University Club of Philadelphia, the U.S.-Greece Business Advisory Council and the Hellenic News of America.

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Giving Thanks For our Hellenic Heritage: We Are All Greeks!

November 26, 2009

SANTA FE, N.M. – I just returned from attending the 8th Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America sponsored by the American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF). Held this year in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, nicknamed the City of Brotherly Love, from the Greek words *philos* (φίλος) and *adelphos* (αδελφος), both the conference and the host city proved to be memorable, inspirational, and meaningful experiences for me.

I am still processing and digesting the key learnings/insights from the conference, and I look forward to sharing some of my observations and substantive take-aways in future ΛΟΓΟΣ columns. For now, let me say that the AHIF had created a more than full agenda of topics and speakers that, quite frankly, may have been overly-ambitious for only a day-long event. Indeed, there was so much to say and discuss; yet so little time! Upon reflection, I also wish that there had been more down time to meaningfully engage and connect, including socially, with the conference delegates.

This said, and especially with the Thanksgiving holiday being just around the corner as I write this week's column, I must add—and, yes, underscore—that I am very grateful and thankful for having had the opportunity to experience such an important conference on issues facing the future of Hellenism. And while I didn't necessarily agree with all that was shared at this gathering, it was a real privilege and honor to be in the midst of so many passionate, thoughtful, and influential Greeks/Hellenes, Greek Americans, and friends of Greece in America's City of Brotherly Love. In many ways and during many moments, I experienced how difference is the beginning of synergy, a notion that I introduce in my book, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, as well as how powerful the cultural identity of being Greek can be for one and all!

Interestingly, on my way to Philadelphia to attend the AHIF conference, I received an article, entitled *We Are All Greeks Now*, by email from a Greek-American friend, Dr. Mike Vasilomanolakis. This article appeared in *Spiritual Wealth* (November 20, 2009), a publication service of The Oxford Club, LLC, and was written by the firm's Investment Director, Alexander Green, who, among other things, is a New York Times best-selling author.

Even though he sports a popular and famous Greek first name, Alexander, Mr. Green is not Greek per se, at least not by heredity. Yet I don't think that it would be too far-fetched to call him a Philhellene, if for no other reason than the message he seeks to convey in his article. Noting that he is in the midst of a tour that includes Greece, Green astutely observes and emphasizes that if there is one overwhelming impression, it is the enormous debt of gratitude we owe the ancient Greeks.

More than 2,400 years ago, they founded Western civilization. Their way of life, their emphasis on reason, their ideals still shape every aspect of life in the West.

In his article, Green identifies many and varied contributions, including numerous discoveries and innovations, by the ancient Greeks that can only be viewed as ageless wisdom in light of their sustaining influence on our so-called post-modern world. And even though he points out that other cultures have also made countless contributions over the millennia, he underscores that it is the Greek legacy of reason, investigation, and individual freedom that led to the remarkable ascendancy of the West. Moreover, in true Philhellenic fashion, he even quotes the English Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who famously observed, We are all Greeks.

Mr. Alexander Green, in my opinion, couldn't have chosen a better time to communicate the enormous debt of gratitude we owe the ancient Greeks [emphasis added]. This is especially true for Americans who are getting ready to celebrate a national holiday that was founded on the very concept of gratitude—Thanksgiving. Let us remind ourselves that Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks not only for the harvest (and the bountiful food that will be consumed during this holiday period) but also to express gratitude in general. Whatever our personal circumstances, there is always something, usually many things, for which we should be thankful. Taking this time to express gratitude goes well beyond a full stomach and means much more than preparing for an early shopping spree on Black Friday, known, of course, as the busiest shopping day of the year.

Thanksgiving, on the contrary, should be a time for taking pause and reflecting upon what really matters in life. That is, it is a prime time to focus on the deeper meaning of who we are, what we stand for and espouse, what we are doing to and for ourselves and others, and where we are going (or at least would like to go).

Ironically, among the many things that I learned at the AHIF Conference in Philadelphia is that we need to be reminded, more than just occasionally, of the enormous debt of gratitude we owe our Greek ancestors, not just in ancient Greece but throughout the ages and around the world. Indeed, we have a lot for which we should be very proud and thankful this holiday season. Importantly, the future of Hellenism in America does not start from nothingness; on the contrary, it must build upon, honor, and yes, even seek to preserve our collective past. In the final analysis, the future of Hellenism in America is a search for meaning that depends on more than the efforts of any given organization or conference, no matter how well intended, endowed, or influential. "Let us not forget: We are all Greeks!"

Dr. Pattakos, author of *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*, is currently working on a new book on how to live a meaningful life inspired by Greek culture (see: www.theopaway.com). His column is published weekly in *The National Herald*. Readers may contact him with questions, comments, and/or suggestions for topics at: alex@prisonersofourthoughts.com or visit his web site: www.prisonersofourthoughts.com.

Nov 24, 2010

<https://usa.greekreporter.com/2010/11/24/the-9th-annual-future-of-hellenism-conference-honored-john-aniston-in-la/>

9th Annual “Future of Hellenism” Conference Honored John Aniston in LA



By Alex Mizan*

On Saturday, November 20th, 2010 the American Hellenic Institute held its 9th Annual “Future of Hellenism” conference in at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Los Angeles. The conference was well attended by both members of the local Greek-American community and by active Greek-Americans who flew in from all corners of the country to exchange ideas and information about various subjects.

The conference was co-sponsored by local organizations such as the American Hellenic Council, AHEPA District 20 and the Greek Heritage Society of Southern California. It addressed issues regarding politics, education, business, entertainment, culture, religion and youth.

The honorary guest of the conference was acclaimed actor John Aniston who received the AHI Hellenic Heritage Achievement Award.

The conference opened with a general overview of where Greek-American organizations are heading. The attendees were addressed by 2010 Ahepan of the Year Costa “Chachi” Tzavaras. He spoke about the necessity and importance of grass roots revitalization of our local communities by fostering meaningful interpersonal relations. Paul Kotrotsios, publisher of the Hellenic News and organizer of the annual Hermes Expo mentioned the need for cooperation among all organizations and involvement of our youth.

Greek-American Congressman Gus Bilirakis & AHC President Michael Galanakis discussed the need for more political involvement at the grass-roots level on behalf of the community. They stressed the fact that Greek-Americans should be more involved in the political process by fundraising and holding officials accountable when it comes to issues of concern to the community.

HBO Miniseries President Kary Antholis and John Aniston discussed the role of the community in the entertainment industry and how we can promote our values, ideals and culture through film to the broader world.

Keynote speaker Professor Dan Georgakas discussed the development of modern technology and how it affects our relations with Greece, our families in Greece, our contact with the mother country, our language and identity. He stressed that the radical developments in transportation and telecommunications encourage multiculturalism more than ever. While at the same time, they allow us to be constantly informed and updated about developments hundreds of miles away.

The first topic covered in the afternoon session was Greek-American education. AHI President Aleco Haralambides spoke in detail about the Greek Charter School that his father founded in Miami, Florida and how it has been used and should be used as a model for future endeavors. Dr. Thomas Gallant and Professor Demetrios Liappas spoke about the state and future of the Greek language and culture; both ancient and modern in US higher educational institutions. Helen Dumas discussed the challenges faced by elementary and secondary Greek schools in America.

Afterwards, cultural and religious identity issues were extensively discussed by a panel comprised of Rev. John Bakas of Saint Sophia Cathedral, Professor of Archeology and Classics at UCLA John Papadopoulos, Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei & AHI Board member Nick Karambelas.

The next subject addressed by the conference was a variety of study abroad programs that exist between the U.S. and Greece. Dr. Jim Dimitriou, Director of the AHEPA "Journey to Greece" program, Art Dimopoulos, coordinator of the National Hellenic Society Study Abroad Program and AHI Director Nick Larigakis shared with the audience the experiences, challenges and benefits of maintaining study abroad programs. They stressed that such programs are the most critical elements in keeping first and second generation Greek-Americans linked to their roots.

This view was shared by actual past American-born attendees of these programs such as Michael Savvas of San Diego and Joseph Skarzenski of Los Angeles. Both of them together with Radio Neo & Neo Magazine Contributor Joanna Xipa, spoke highly of how their trips to Greece provided a once-in-a-lifetime experience that made them truly connect to their heritage, their motherland and even how to better relate to their parents and grandparents.

Other key participants included Kyriakos Tsakopoulos of AKT Development who gave the opening remarks for the conference and Demetrios Boutris of the Boutris Group. The event was also attended by active young Greek -American students, members of the National Hellenic Student Association of America and the Hellenic Business Network.

While the conference concluded with the remarks of acclaimed writer Professor Van Coufoudakis at about 6:00 pm, many of the attendees stayed longer extending the discussions in private gatherings.

*Alex Mizan is the Director of American Hellenic Council

http://www.neomagazine.com/2011_01_january/_westcoast.html

The Future of Hellenism in America Conference



The 9th Annual "Future of Hellenism in America" Conference, hosted by the American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHI) was held recently in L.A., at The Beverly Hilton Hotel.

More than 25 prominent speakers were featured from across the country who analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American businesses & organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, Greek education and perspectives from the Youth. AHI Executive Director, Nick Larigakis opened the conference and welcomed notable speakers including: award-winning actor John Aniston; Kary Antholis of HBO Films; Andreas Kyprianides, honorary consul, Republic of Cyprus (in L.A.); and U.S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL). A summary of all the speakers' remarks can be found by clicking on the Conference Summary link in the AHI website (http://www.aheworld.com/press_releases/2010_086.html)

Honored to be moderating the Youth Panel Discussion at the end of the day, after attentively listening to all presentations, I felt both excited and a bit overwhelmed. I admit the task before us is abominable, yet I strongly believe that all the impossible IS possible. Gone are the days when this U.S. Melting Pot made us forget about where we come from and who we are. Coming from a Greek immigrant background, where we value our roots, we take deep offense to others telling us who we can and cannot be. But after being made aware of the dire statistics of our dwindling language and traditions practiced by our students today, I was pleasantly surprised to hear that our sense of ethnic pride is on the other hand, rising among young Greek Americans!



We live in a dichotomy of honoring our family traditions, while respecting our friends & neighbors around us, enjoying the best of both worlds. The question is: How do we continue our Hellenic identity from one generation to the next? Despite all the available resources, it all starts and ends in our families. Both parents need to be consistent in their belief systems. Just being Greek-blooded is not always enough, because both Greek and mixed families have shown varying degrees in their sense of Hellenism, confirmed through my personal experiences in both private and Church-based Greek language instruction. The common thread we need is 'thelisi' i.e. a strong will. Stressing the importance of learning a 2nd language, or even a 3rd, is possible when we get involved early enough.



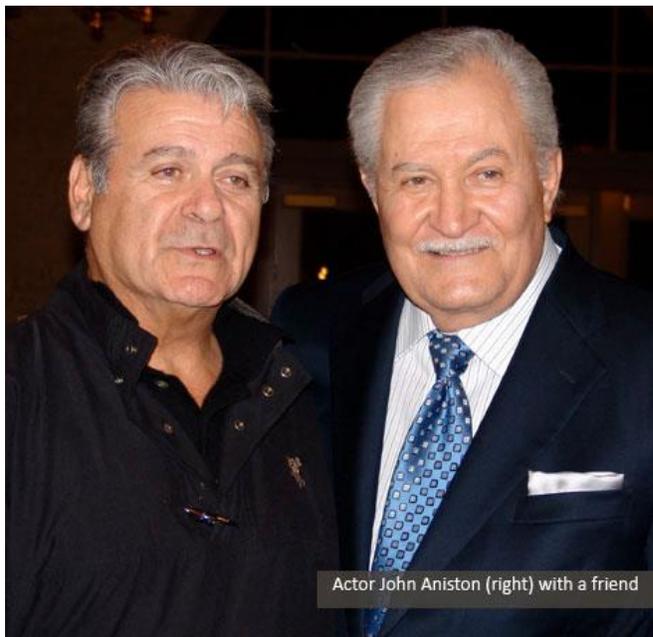
Even in today's global economy, there's a growing need to fill bi-lingual job vacancies for careers locally and world-wide. So why not start them young to connect with the very core of our culture – our language? Learning the foundations of the richest language in the world will allow students to excel in the Maths & Sciences, as well as appreciate the heart of Greek Literature and story telling dating as far back as 1200 BC and now glamorized through today's media. I'm thrilled that Hollywood now recognizes the need to tell our story! This gives our future filmmakers the

opportunity to use this powerful tool to raise awareness of Greek issues, much like the Jews did for Isreal. More & more Greek Film Festivals have been surfacing across the America over the past 20 years from NY to LA, as our turn has finally come!

Where there's a will there's a way! We need to step forward with a much more active role in socializing our children, nurturing them from a very young age, within the family. When they go off to college, it would be nice to see them heading their respective Hellenic Students Associations across all the major universities in the country; however there's a harsh reality today proving that the majority of the members are foreign Greek students from abroad, coming together to see familiar faces from their homeland. Sadly, not enough Greek American students are representing – proof that somewhere along the lines, we've gone astray.



NEO's Joanna Xipa served as Youth Panel moderator



Actor John Aniston (right) with a friend

We cannot become dependent on society around us, waiting for our churches, organizations, industry leaders and executives to guide our youth. These can only work alongside the pre-existing passion ignited from within our families. Take Konstantina Konugres, for example, a 16 year old high school student, who together with her cousin, took it upon themselves to start a social Greek Club at her local high school, in Orange Country, CA. She noticed the need to dispel the myths/stereotypes of being Greek-American. Open to all students of all backgrounds, they called it "Get your Greek On" offering monthly club meetings/social outings enjoying Greek food, music & fellowship – a perfect way to promote Greek culture to the world around them – with an

average of 20-30 new students joining per month (in a school with only 5 Greek-American students enrolled)! It doesn't take much, now does it?

So my conclusion lies in the notion of awareness: the more we talk about it amongst our colleagues, peers and especially within our own families, the more likely our chances of rekindling the eternal flame to lead by example in making our voices heard. If we care at all with what our homeland is going through, then, this, in my eyes, is where the future of Hellenism not only in America, but around the world, lies.

<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/ahif-hosts-10th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference/>

AHIF Hosts 10th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

Washington, DC –The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its landmark Tenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year’s conference was held in Washington, DC at The Capital Hilton, November 18-19, 2011.

Featuring more than 20 prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

At a dinner hosted the evening before the conference on November 18, AHI President Nick Larigakis opened the conference and welcome remarks followed from: Dinner Chairman Kostas Alexakis, chairman, Public Sector Solutions and AHI board member; Conference Chairman and AHI Founder Gene Rossides, and AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas. Ambassadors to the United States Vassilis Kaskarelis and Pavlos Anastasiades, of Greece and Cyprus respectively, also offered greetings.

The dinner’s Keynote Speaker was Professor Dan Georgakas, who also received the AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America. Professor Georgakas, who is the director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY, spoke on the topic “The Now and Future of Greek America.” The professor provided an overview of both positive and negative trends and statistics regarding the strength of the Greek American community’s identification with its Hellenic roots. In his view, Hellenism has its roots in adhering to “an independent judgment, polemical tradition, reason, due process, and multiculturalism.” While marriage outside the community has increased and the instances of Greek language spoken in the home has virtually disappeared except among immigrants and their children, Georgakas asserted that, “There are dynamic new factors in progress” that provide a counter-push. His findings suggested that 80 percent of Greeks marry non-Greeks.

In his view, the internet has provided a medium through which Greek Americans can connect and reconnect with their culture through ever-increasing methods. Online social networks are proliferating, bringing people in touch with each other and with news from the homeland irrespective of geographic location and on a real-time basis. These elements have inspired “Neo-

Hellenism,” according to Georgakas, in which Hellenism is based more on cultural identification rather than geographic location.

Highlighting initiatives that the community can do to strengthen ties to Greece, Georgakas said Greek American organizations can use the internet more effectively, and the community can work to introduce Greek language into the public school curriculum. The community also would benefit from having more professionals with a Greek American consciousness working in diplomacy and the media, and it could strengthen its base by getting more young Greek Americans to Greece to solidify their ties with the country. In order to maintain culture, he emphasized the need to make the Greek American profile more contemporary and interesting for young people by stating that “Greeks must keep connection with modern Greece.” He recommended that film festivals and similar activities that combine education with leisure can be an effective means of keeping the community’s future engaged.

The conference covered the following topics:

- Opening and Welcome Remarks
- AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America
- Greek Education in America (Panel I)
- The Greek American Community and the Political Process (Panel II)
- Upholding Hellenic Heritage through culture and education (Luncheon Keynote Address)
- Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the Needs of the Community (Panel III)
- Current Perspectives on Current Challenges (Panel IV)
- Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans (Panel V- A)
- A Perspective from Young Greek Americans (Panel V- B)
- Discussion: Where do we go from here?
- Concluding Remarks

AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas opened the conference proceedings with an overview of the Future of Hellenism in America Conference. He provided his thoughts about Hellenism, stating that it is not 100 percent comprised of language or genes or religion or political preferences, but rather Hellenism is a compilation of all of these different characteristics and categories. Dr. Spireas also stressed the need to convey the importance of Hellenism to younger generations.

Panel I: Greek Education in America

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Lena Petropoulos, director, St. George Greek School, Bethesda, Maryland
- Aleco Haralambides, Esq., founding member and vice president, Archimedean Academy, Miami, Florida
- Artemis Leontis, associate professor of Modern Greek, Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan
- Ted Spyropoulos, president, Regional Coordinating Council, SAE-USA

- Moderator: Dr. Spiro Spireas, president, AHI Foundation

Lena Petropoulos' presentation on "Church Greek School Programs in America: Are We Meeting the Needs?" provided a history of Greek School programs in the United States and highlighted the role the schools have played to the immigrant communities and the periods of growth the schools have experienced throughout the 20th century. For example, in the 1980s, Petropoulos stated that there was a 23 percent increase in enrollment. In her opinion, the schools are meeting the needs but a lot more can be done to realize better results.

Aleco Haralambides, who is a former president of AHI, shared his experience as a founding member of Archimedean Academy, a public charter school that opened its doors nine years ago. He explained how public charter schools are administered and the challenges of a Greek language school, including the difficulty of securing Greek language textbooks for grade levels one through four. Archimedean Academy has 950 students enrolled with another 1,000 on a waiting list, he said. Less than 10 percent are Greek American, he added. Haralambides believes Greek language public charter schools can be an outlet for third, fourth, and fifth generation Greek Americans to learn Greek, and in addition, the school can serve as "feeder programs" for Modern Greek Studies programs at universities.

Artemis Leontis examined the challenges and opportunities at Modern Greek Studies programs at the university level, and she began her presentation stating, "Greece matters today more than ever." She viewed as an opportunity that student interest in these programs is at a high level. The associate professor shared an anecdote of one of her students who took a course of hers and used it to her advantage as a graduate student of business at Fordham when studying about Greece's current economic condition. The student's background from the Modern Greek Studies program at the University of Michigan provided a unique perspective for the student to approach the compelling academic question, "Should Greece Default?" Leontis also provided a description of various stages that Modern Greek Studies programs can undergo. For example, a program at Stage 1 would offer two years of Greek, Stage 2, a full sequence of language studies complimented with other courses; and Stage 3 would integrate the courses into the broader undergraduate curriculum perhaps becoming a Minor. In addition, Leontis has observed a pattern of growth of programs during the past six years at both large and small universities. However, she cited examples of how the programs are vulnerable, including instructors being underpaid and teaching positions being temporary ones. Ways to support Modern Greek Studies programs are: 1) financial (through endowments, 2) engaging in a program's activities via its email or distribution lists, and 3) encourage young people to enroll in their classes.

Ted Spyropoulos presented on the topic "The Role of Greece in Enhancing Greek Education in America." He was critical of parents not being able to teach their own children Greek history and language. He said that we all expect the teachers to fill the gaps when we ourselves are not consistent with such efforts within our own house. Spyropoulos added that Hellenes have to create a common account, a Hellenic Fund, which would enable the community to overcome challenges. "Hellenism has to form a united front to overcome its challenges," he said. Finally, commenting on the current crisis in Greece, he argued that this crisis presents an opportunity for us to self-examine

and explore what we can do to improve our own situation and also how we can each contribute to the cause of improving our community.

Panel II: The Greek American Community and the Political Process

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Endy Zemenides, executive director, Hellenic American Leadership Council
- Andreas Akaras, policy advisor, U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes of Maryland
- Nick Larigakis, president, American Hellenic Institute
- Ambassador Patrick Theros, principal, Theros & Theros LLP
- Moderator: Manny Rouvelas, partner, K&L Gates LLP

Opening this panel was Endy Zemenides who offered a presentation on “The Importance of Grass Roots Lobbying Efforts.” In his remarks, Zemenides utilized sports analogies to emphasize the importance of teamwork and having depth in achieving success in grass roots lobbying. Utilizing the same 20 to 30 persons or the same talking points will not lead to successful outcomes. “Depth is important to the success of any movement or organization,” he said. Zemenides shared his observations as a senior advisor to the senatorial campaign of fellow Greek American Alexi Giannoulias, and also spoke about the opportunities for young people to get involved in the grass roots process through a new organization he heads called the Hellenic American Leadership Council.

Andreas Akaras discussed why it is important for members of the community to become involved and engaged within the community under the topic “The Importance of Developing Congressional Relations.” He emphasized the importance of joining one or more organizations to become educated and to reach out to others to help them become educated on the issues. Akaras also reviewed a recent advocacy campaign by Greek and Armenian American organizations to block a bill in the House Committee on Natural Resources (on which Congressman John Sarbanes sits) that would provide Turkey with unique economic development opportunities with Indian Tribal Nations.

Nick Larigakis addressed the topic of “Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to U.S. Interests?” He contended that a majority of the Greek American community “Don’t know [the issues] that well or know them superficially.” Larigakis stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is important for the United States to support the Greek American community’s issues. He cited Greece’s strategic importance to the United States, including its role in NATO, its facilitating the use of NSA Souda Bay, and its role in the Balkan War, which was unpopular in Greece. Larigakis also discussed Cyprus’ importance to United States interests, including being an initial signatory to a PSI agreement with the United States, being a safe haven for American citizens who had to evacuate Lebanon, and the utilization of the port at Limassol for “R and R.” Finally, he touched on how effective local activism can be to achieving results on Capitol Hill and why it is crucial for all organizations to “be on the same page” with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements to which many Greek American organization sign on.

To present examples of whether or not the Greek American community's messages are getting through to mainstream audiences and think-tank organizations, Ambassador Patrick Theros made several observations stemming from his participation with foreign policy think-tanks and councils as a former member of the Foreign Service. For example, he noted that among the 25 to 30 people that comprise the Commission on U.S.-Turkey Relations that the subject of Greece has not come up in discussion and Cyprus is only raised in the context of Turkey's break in relations with Israel. "[The community] can't keep relying on others to make mistakes for us to take advantage of," he said. Ambassador Theros also pointed out that no comments about Greece or Cyprus have been made by the current candidates running for president of the United States. He cited two examples of problems for the Greek American community: 1) no coordination between Greek American organization unlike the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish American Organizations, and 2) Congress is no longer the center for the development of American foreign policy. Instead, policy is developed by bureaucracy. As a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Ambassador Theros said he believes that there are only eight people who claim Greek heritage. He concluded with three recommendations: 1) the community must increase the number of Greek Americans who enter the Foreign Service, 2) the community must revisit the approach it takes to bureaucracy, and 3) ensure that whatever message is communicated is in the best interest of the United States.

Luncheon Greetings & Speaker

AHI Board Member James L. Marketos, partner, Berliner, Corcoran & Rowe LLP, served as luncheon chairman. He thanked the conference benefactors and introduced the luncheon's principal speaker, Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, executive director, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA). "It's hard to think of an individual who does more on a day-to-day basis for Hellenism than our speaker, Ambassador Tsilas," said Marketos, who provided an overview of the programs the foundation has developed to project Hellenism for the benefit of mainstream society.

Ambassador Tsilas commended AHI for hosting another successful conference and for its contributions to the rule of law since 1974. He proceeded to discuss the Onassis Foundation's work to promote Hellenism against the backdrop of Greece's financial crisis. Amid such challenging economic times, Ambassador Tsilas identified that it is the Classics or Hellenic Studies programs that are the most vulnerable targets for universities to cut. The foundation attempts to uphold the values of Hellenic heritage and strengthen the endeavors of the Greek American community. He identified education and culture as the two pillar values of the foundation through which it operates. The foundation tries to outreach throughout the country to bring people together and address large audiences. With regard to educational endeavors, Ambassador Tsilas identified a challenge dealing with chairs of Hellenic study programs at universities, but it does support them globally, including in South America and Constantinople. As an alternative, the foundation developed a "University Seminars Program" that brings professors from Europe and across the globe to the United States. He also discussed the Onassis Lecture Series as well as a translation program that brings scholars together to translate academic works. In addition, Ambassador Tsilas described the parent foundation's newest cultural center in Athens which opened in December 2010. It has been successful in presenting programs that have a common denominator of Hellenic culture and artists but with new people, ideas, and creations. The foundation also offers research

scholarships to both students and professors. He also stated importance of working together to present classical events, citing a recent reading at the Nashville Parthenon. Ambassador Tsilas concluded by reemphasizing that education based on Hellenic values is universal and diachronic and that “culture is not a luxury, but an imperative need.” He strongly contends that Hellenism is here to stay for many more millennia.

Panel III: Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the needs of the Community?

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Dr. James F. Dimitriou, past supreme president, Order of AHEPA
- Rev. Dr. Stephen Zorzos, presiding priest, St. Sophia Cathedral, Washington, DC
- Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D., associate professor of Education, North Park University, Illinois
- Moderator: Professor Van Coufoudakis, rector emeritus, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, and former president, Modern Greek Studies Association

Opening speaker of the panel, Dr. James Dimitriou, shared his thoughts on the topic, “Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the Needs of the Community?” He recounted how Greek American organizations such as AHEPA formed to meet the needs of the Greek immigrant in the early 20th century, who was looking for help with jobs, language, and housing. Dr. Dimitriou also offered his views about the needs of contemporary Greek American community, describing it as “highly mobile, suburbanized, and geographically dispersed.” He touched on the ever-growing need for professional organizations and the need to band together politically in a unified voice. Dr. Dimitriou concluded by recommending that thought be given to creating a Center for American Hellenism.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Zorzos addressed the challenges facing the Greek Orthodox Church in America. He identified pluralism as the “true challenge” for the Orthodox Church. “America suffers from a surplus of religion, not a deficiency,” he stated. Today, in a “world of consumerism,” a single religion cannot take for granted an individual’s allegiance to his/her religion, he added. Father Zorzos explained that for the first time in its 2,000-year history, the Greek Orthodox Church finds itself without any external pressures (i.e., occupying forces), and it is the first time its history that it is operating in a “free market” of religious choices. This means the Greek Orthodox Church in America is forced to compete in the “free market of pluralism,” he explained. Father Zorzos believes that this is the last generation of Greek Orthodox who are going to die Greek Orthodox simply because they were born Greek Orthodox. He stated the church ought to engage American pluralism and be competitive in the marketplace. Father Zorzos believes there is no other choice.

An examination of how second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity was provided by Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D. Dr. Bartolomei shared data from a study taken from 2008 to 2010 of 181 second and third generation Greek Americans. The findings show that 1) family is important to these generations and 2) that they are proud of their ethnicity. The data also demonstrated there is a big decline in use of Greek language between second and third generation Greek Americans as well as a decline the numbers who attend Greek

school. However, third generation Greek Americans want to travel and did express a desire to study Greek. Dr. Bartolomei believes it is “time for us to wake up” and recommended that the community bolsters university study-abroad programs and Modern Greek Studies programs.

Panel V: Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Panel A: Greek American Organizations Study Programs to Greece and Cyprus
- Dr. James F. Dimitriou, program director, AHEPA Journey to Greece Program
- Endy Zemenides, board member, National Hellenic Society
- Nick Larigakis, president, American Hellenic Insitute
- Panel B: Perspective from Young Greek Americans
- Aris Chronis, co-founder, DCGreeks.com
- Constance Baroudos, AHI Foundation foreign policy trip participant
- Aphrodite Bouikidis, program director, The Next Generation Initiative (HelleNext)
- Moderator (both panels): Andrew Kaffes, president, A.G. Kaffes & Associates LLC

Concluding Remarks

Following the series of sessions, Professor Van Coufoudakis provided an overview of the day’s proceedings and identified the common themes that were presented. He noted areas where positive developments had occurred and offered ideas for how the Greek American community can take action. Dr. Coufoudakis noted as a positive addition the contribution of the Jewish American community’s perspective on their issues and questions it faces many of which are similar to the issues and questions the Greek American community and other ethnic groups face. He also touched upon the theme of “where do we go from here?” “Do we carry the discussion back to our communities, our churches, our homes?” he asked. If not, we may have wasted our time, he cautioned.

AHI President Nick Larigakis, AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas and Professor Dan Georgakas fielded questions from the audience for this wrap-up session. General topics and issues touched upon included the recession affecting the United States and its impact on Greek Americans, including job placement; the current political situation in Greece and its effect on the Greek American community, and how does the Greek American community help Greece, including with investment in Greece. Moreover, organizational challenges, including overcoming financial hurdles were discussed. Attendees also shared what they have done to promote, preserve, or project Hellenism in their communities.


AHI

ADVOCATES FOR THE RULE OF LAW.

December 16, 2011—No. 85

AHIF Hosts Tenth Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

WASHINGTON, DC –The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its landmark Tenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year’s conference was held in Washington, DC at The Capital Hilton, November 18-19, 2011.

Featuring more than 20 prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

At a dinner hosted the evening before the conference on November 18, AHI President Nick Larigakis opened the conference and welcome remarks followed from: Dinner Chairman Kostas Alexakis, chairman, Public Sector Solutions and AHI board member; Conference Chairman and AHI Founder Gene Rossides, and AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas. Ambassadors to the United States Vassilis Kaskarelis and Pavlos Anastasiades, of Greece and Cyprus respectively, also offered greetings.

The dinner’s Keynote Speaker was Professor Dan Georgakas, who also received the AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America. Professor Georgakas, who is the director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY, spoke on the topic “The Now and Future of Greek America.” The professor provided an overview of both positive and negative trends and statistics regarding the strength of the Greek American community’s identification with its Hellenic roots. In his view, Hellenism has its roots in adhering to “an independent judgment, polemical tradition, reason, due process, and multiculturalism.” While marriage outside the community has increased and the instances of Greek language spoken in the home has virtually disappeared except among immigrants and their children, Georgakas asserted that, “There are dynamic new factors in progress” that provide a counter-push. His findings suggested that 80 percent of Greeks marry non-Greeks.

In his view, the internet has provided a medium through which Greek Americans can connect and reconnect with their culture through ever-increasing methods. Online social networks are proliferating, bringing people in touch with each other and with news from the homeland irrespective of geographic location and on a real-time basis. These elements have inspired “Neo-Hellenism,” according to Georgakas, in which Hellenism is based more on cultural identification rather than geographic location.

Highlighting initiatives that the community can do to strengthen ties to Greece, Georgakas said Greek American organizations can use the internet more effectively, and the community can work to introduce Greek language into the public school curriculum. The community also would benefit from having more professionals with a Greek American consciousness working in diplomacy and the media, and it could strengthen its base by getting more young Greek Americans to Greece to solidify their ties with the country. In order to maintain culture, he emphasized the need to make the Greek American profile more contemporary and interesting for young people by stating that "Greeks must keep connection with modern Greece." He recommended that film festivals and similar activities that combine education with leisure can be an effective means of keeping the community's future engaged.

The conference covered the following topics (below links lead to relevant sections in Conference Summary):

- Opening and Welcome Remarks
- AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America
- Greek Education in America (Panel I)
- The Greek American Community and the Political Process (Panel II)
- Upholding Hellenic Heritage through culture and education (Luncheon Keynote Address)
- Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the Needs of the Community (Panel III)
- Current Perspectives on Current Challenges (Panel IV)
- Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans (Panel V- A)
- A Perspective from Young Greek Americans (Panel V- B)
- Discussion: Where do we go from here?
- Concluding Remarks

The conference was held in cooperation with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), which was a Major Benefactor for the conference, and co-sponsored by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, a Conference Benefactor.

Each year the conference is held in a different U.S. city to spread the seeds of ideas generated at the conference, and to obtain feedback from the local Greek American community on various challenges facing Hellenism in America. Conference speakers identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today and offered suggestions for the future.

Other sponsors of the conference included Conference Benefactors James and Theodore Pedas, Drs. Spiro and Amalia Spireas, and Ted G. Spyropoulos; and a host of individual sponsors.

Click here to view photos of the event(s).

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Conference Summary

Welcome Remarks

AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas opened the conference proceedings on November 19, 2011 with an overview of the Future of Hellenism in America Conference. He provided his thoughts about Hellenism, stating that it is not 100 percent comprised of language or genes or religion or political preferences, but rather Hellenism is a compilation of all of these different characteristics

and categories. Dr. Spireas also stressed the need to convey the importance of Hellenism to younger generations.

Panel I: Greek Education in America

Session speakers and moderator included:

- **Lena Petropoulos**, director, St. George Greek School, Bethesda, Maryland
- **Aleco Haralambides, Esq.**, founding member and vice president, Archimedean Academy, Miami, Florida
- **Artemis Leontis**, associate professor of Modern Greek, Department of Classical Studies, University of Michigan
- **Ted Spyropoulos**, president, Regional Coordinating Council, SAE-USA
- **Moderator: Dr. Spiro Spireas**, president, AHI Foundation

Lena Petropoulos' presentation on "Church Greek School Programs in America: Are We Meeting the Needs?" provided a history of Greek School programs in the United States and highlighted the role the schools have played to the immigrant communities and the periods of growth the schools have experienced throughout the 20th century. For example, in the 1980s, Petropoulos stated that there was a 23 percent increase in enrollment. In her opinion, the schools are meeting the needs but a lot more can be done to realize better results.

Aleco Haralambides, who is a former president of AHI, shared his experience as a founding member of Archimedean Academy, a public charter school that opened its doors nine years ago. He explained how public charter schools are administered and the challenges of a Greek language school, including the difficulty of securing Greek language textbooks for grade levels one through four. Archimedean Academy has 950 students enrolled with another 1,000 on a waiting list, he said. Less than 10 percent are Greek American, he added. Haralambides believes Greek language public charter schools can be an outlet for third, fourth, and fifth generation Greek Americans to learn Greek, and in addition, the school can serve as "feeder programs" for Modern Greek Studies programs at universities.

Artemis Leontis examined the challenges and opportunities at Modern Greek Studies programs at the university level, and she began her presentation stating, "Greece matters today more than ever." She viewed as an opportunity that student interest in these programs is at a high level. The associate professor shared an anecdote of one of her students who took a course of hers and used it to her advantage as a graduate student of business at Fordham when studying about Greece's current economic condition. The student's background from the Modern Greek Studies program at the University of Michigan provided a unique perspective for the student to approach the compelling academic question, "Should Greece Default?" Leontis also provided a description of various stages that Modern Greek Studies programs can undergo. For example, a program at Stage 1 would offer two years of Greek, Stage 2, a full sequence of language studies complimented with other courses; and Stage 3 would integrate the courses into the broader undergraduate curriculum perhaps becoming a Minor. In addition, Leontis has observed a pattern of growth of programs during the past six years at both large and small universities. However, she cited examples of how the programs are vulnerable, including instructors being underpaid and teaching positions being temporary ones. Ways to support Modern Greek Studies programs are: 1) financial (through

endowments, 2) engaging in a program's activities via its email or distribution lists, and 3) encourage young people to enroll in their classes.

Ted Spyropoulos presented on the topic "The Role of Greece in Enhancing Greek Education in America." He was critical of parents not being able to teach their own children Greek history and language. He said that we all expect the teachers to fill the gaps when we ourselves are not consistent with such efforts within our own house. Spyropoulos added that Hellenes have to create a common account, a Hellenic Fund, which would enable the community to overcome challenges. "Hellenism has to form a united front to overcome its challenges," he said. Finally, commenting on the current crisis in Greece, he argued that this crisis presents an opportunity for us to self-examine and explore what we can do to improve our own situation and also how we can each contribute to the cause of improving our community.

Panel II: The Greek American Community and the Political Process

Session speakers and moderator included:

- **Endy Zemenides**, executive director, Hellenic American Leadership Council
- **Andreas Akaras**, policy advisor, U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes of Maryland
- **Nick Larigakis**, president, American Hellenic Institute
- **Ambassador Patrick Theros**, principal, Theros & Theros LLP
- **Moderator: Manny Rouvelas**, partner, K&L Gates LLP

Opening this panel was **Endy Zemenides** who offered a presentation on "The Importance of Grass Roots Lobbying Efforts." In his remarks, Zemenides utilized sports analogies to emphasize the importance of teamwork and having depth in achieving success in grass roots lobbying. Utilizing the same 20 to 30 persons or the same talking points will not lead to successful outcomes. "Depth is important to the success of any movement or organization," he said. Zemenides shared his observations as a senior advisor to the senatorial campaign of fellow Greek American Alexi Giannoulis, and also spoke about the opportunities for young people to get involved in the grass roots process through a new organization he heads called the Hellenic American Leadership Council.

Andreas Akaras discussed why it is important for members of the community to become involved and engaged within the community under the topic "The Importance of Developing Congressional Relations." He emphasized the importance of joining one or more organizations to become educated and to reach out to others to help them become educated on the issues. Akaras also reviewed a recent advocacy campaign by Greek and Armenian American organizations to block a bill in the House Committee on Natural Resources (on which Congressman John Sarbanes sits) that would provide Turkey with unique economic development opportunities with Indian Tribal Nations.

Nick Larigakis addressed the topic of "Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to U.S. Interests?" He contended that a majority of the Greek American community "Don't know [the issues] that well or know them superficially." Larigakis stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is important for the United States to support the Greek American community's issues. He cited Greece's strategic importance

to the United States, including its role in NATO, its facilitating the use of NSA Souda Bay, and its role in the Balkan War, which was unpopular in Greece. Larigakis also discussed Cyprus' importance to United States interests, including being an initial signatory to a PSI agreement with the United States, being a safe haven for American citizens who had to evacuate Lebanon, and the utilization of the port at Limassol for "R and R." Finally, he touched on how effective local activism can be to achieving results on Capitol Hill and why it is crucial for all organizations to "be on the same page" with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements to which many Greek American organization sign on.

To present examples of whether or not the Greek American community's messages are getting through to mainstream audiences and think-tank organizations, **Ambassador Patrick Theros** made several observations stemming from his participation with foreign policy think-tanks and councils as a former member of the Foreign Service. For example, he noted that among the 25 to 30 people that comprise the Commission on U.S.-Turkey Relations that the subject of Greece has not come up in discussion and Cyprus is only raised in the context of Turkey's break in relations with Israel. "[The community] can't keep relying on others to make mistakes for us to take advantage of," he said. Ambassador Theros also pointed out that no comments about Greece or Cyprus have been made by the current candidates running for president of the United States. He cited two examples of problems for the Greek American community: 1) no coordination between Greek American organization unlike the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish American Organizations, and 2) Congress is no longer the center for the development of American foreign policy. Instead, policy is developed by bureaucracy. As a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Ambassador Theros said he believes that there are only eight people who claim Greek heritage. He concluded with three recommendations: 1) the community must increase the number of Greek Americans who enter the Foreign Service, 2) the community must revisit the approach it takes to bureaucracy, and 3) ensure that whatever message is communicated is in the best interest of the United States.

Luncheon Greetings & Speaker

AHI Board Member **James L. Marketos**, partner, Berliner, Corcoran & Rowe LLP, served as luncheon chairman. He thanked the conference benefactors and introduced the luncheon's principal speaker, **Ambassador Loucas Tsilas**, executive director, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA). "It's hard to think of an individual who does more on a day-to-day basis for Hellenism than our speaker, Ambassador Tsilas," said Marketos, who provided an overview of the programs the foundation has developed to project Hellenism for the benefit of mainstream society.

Ambassador Tsilas commended AHI for hosting another successful conference and for its contributions to the rule of law since 1974. He proceeded to discuss the Onassis Foundation's work to promote Hellenism against the backdrop of Greece's financial crisis. Amid such challenging economic times, Ambassador Tsilas identified that it is the Classics or Hellenic Studies programs that are the most vulnerable targets for universities to cut. The foundation attempts to uphold the values of Hellenic heritage and strengthen the endeavors of the Greek American community. He

identified education and culture as the two pillar values of the foundation through which it operates. The foundation tries to outreach throughout the country to bring people together and address large audiences. With regard to educational endeavors, Ambassador Tsilas identified a challenge dealing with chairs of Hellenic study programs at universities, but it does support them globally, including in South America and Constantinople. As an alternative, the foundation developed a “University Seminars Program” that brings professors from Europe and across the globe to the United States. He also discussed the Onassis Lecture Series as well as a translation program that brings scholars together to translate academic works. In addition, Ambassador Tsilas described the parent foundation’s newest cultural center in Athens which opened in December 2010. It has been successful in presenting programs that have a common denominator of Hellenic culture and artists but with new people, ideas, and creations. The foundation also offers research scholarships to both students and professors. He also stated importance of working together to present classical events, citing a recent reading at the Nashville Parthenon. Ambassador Tsilas concluded by reemphasizing that education based on Hellenic values is universal and diachronic and that “culture is not a luxury, but an imperative need.” He strongly contends that Hellenism is here to stay for many more millennia.

Panel III: Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the needs of the Community?

Session speakers and moderator included:

- **Dr. James F. Dimitriou**, past supreme president, Order of AHEPA
- **Rev. Dr. Stephen Zorzos**, presiding priest, St. Sophia Cathedral, Washington, DC
- **Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D.**, associate professor of Education, North Park University, Illinois
- **Moderator: Professor Van Coufoudakis**, rector emeritus, University of Nicosia, Cyprus, and former president, Modern Greek Studies Association

Opening speaker of the panel, **Dr. James Dimitriou**, shared his thoughts on the topic, “Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the Needs of the Community?” He recounted how Greek American organizations such as AHEPA formed to meet the needs of the Greek immigrant in the early 20th century, who was looking for help with jobs, language, and housing. Dr. Dimitriou also offered his views about the needs of contemporary Greek American community, describing it as “highly mobile, suburbanized, and geographically dispersed.” He touched on the ever-growing need for professional organizations and the need to band together politically in a unified voice. Dr. Dimitriou concluded by recommending that thought be given to creating a Center for American Hellenism.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Zorzos addressed the challenges facing the Greek Orthodox Church in America. He identified pluralism as the “true challenge” for the Orthodox Church. “America suffers from a surplus of religion, not a deficiency,” he stated. Today, in a “world of consumerism,” a single religion cannot take for granted an individual’s allegiance to his/her religion, he added. Father Zorzos explained that for the first time in its 2,000-year history, the Greek Orthodox Church finds itself without any external pressures (i.e., occupying forces), and it is the first time its history that it is operating in a “free market” of religious choices. This means the Greek Orthodox Church in America is forced to compete in the “free market of pluralism,” he explained. Father Zorzos believes that this is the last generation of Greek Orthodox who are going to die Greek Orthodox simply

because they were born Greek Orthodox. He stated the church ought to engage American pluralism and be competitive in the marketplace. Father Zorzos believes there is no other choice.

An examination of how second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity was provided by **Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D.** Dr. Bartolomei shared data from a study taken from 2008 to 2010 of 181 second and third generation Greek Americans. The findings show that 1) family is important to these generations and 2) that they are proud of their ethnicity. The data also demonstrated there is a big decline in use of Greek language between second and third generation Greek Americans as well as a decline the numbers who attend Greek school. However, third generation Greek Americans want to travel and did express a desire to study Greek. Dr. Bartolomei believes it is “time for us to wake up” and recommended that the community bolsters university study-abroad programs and Modern Greek Studies programs.

Panel IV: Current Perspectives on Current Challenges

Session speakers and moderator included:

- **Melanie Maron Pell**, director, American Jewish Committee, Washington Regional Office
- **Nicholas G. Karambelas**, partner, Sfikas & Karambelas LLP; AHI Foundation Board Member
- **Antonis H. Diamataris**, publisher, *The National Herald*
- **John Sitilides**, principal, Trilogy Advisors LLC

Melanie Maron Pell opened the session addressing the topic “The Jewish American Community: How Do We Compare?” Pell provided demographic figures about the Jewish American community in the United States, citing the population at between 5.5 to 6.84 million, or roughly 2 percent of the United States population. She also identified a few challenges the community is facing, including zero population growth. With regard to Jewish American organizations, she offered that the community tends to be “hyper-organized” with multiple organizations that tend to overlap. Much like the Greek American community, Pell stated that a sense of volunteerism is “a pillar of the Jewish community.” She added that the AJC has recently embarked on missions to Greece and Cyprus, and she viewed our collective agendas as intersecting.

Nicholas Karambelas turned the focus of the session to the pressing issue of the day with respect to Greece, “The Greek Debt Crisis: Challenges and Responses.” He offered, “We need a group of prominent people with resources that will study each aspect of how is it that the U.S. and Greeks in other countries can assist Greece and assist themselves.” Karambelas presented suggestions for such a group to examine, including 1) a U.S.-Greece tax treaty that could be amended to benefit commerce between the U.S. and Greece similar to one signed recently by Canada and Greece, 2) make available to Greek nationals with businesses in Greece Treaty Investor (E-2) visas that would allow them to establish businesses in the U.S. with which they can conduct business with their businesses in Greece. A bilateral investment treaty (BIT) between the U.S. and Greece, which is needed to make the E-2 visas available, does not exist, and 3) facilitate a bi-national research and development agreement that would establish a foundation that provides a matchmaking service and funding for commercial ventures between American and Greek high-tech or energy companies. The foundation would fund upwards of 50 percent of the project development and commercialization costs. Such an agreement exists between the U.S. and Israel, he pointed out. In addition, Karambelas suggested the exploration of special programs in the Export/Import Bank of

the U.S. government which funds the cost of exports from the United States for projects in foreign countries. A final suggestion that he viewed as very important would be the establishment of private equity fund by the Greek diaspora to fund Greek-related ventures in or outside of Greece. Karambelas concluded by recommending that a central organization, such as AHI, be utilized to facilitate and coordinate business and commerce among Greeks living in all countries. The goal would be to bring companies together to benefit Greece. "The more business being done by Greeks abroad will bring benefits to Greece as well...may be able to amass enough capital to invest in Greece."

"The Role of the Greek Media in Facilitating Hellenism" was the topic of discussion for **Antonis Diamataris**, publisher, *The National Herald*. "I believe Hellenism will survive in Greece as well as in the United States," he said, citing the important conditions needed to perpetuate Hellenism that includes being part of a community. Diamataris provided circulation statistics for *The National Herald* of 27,000 and the daily Greek edition of 40,000 readers. In addition the online versions of the paper have 15,400 and 9,500 subscribers for the English and Greek versions, respectively. However, despite the progress that has been made, he believes that the community has to work harder to reverse certain perceptions. "We are better than 99 percent of the ethnic media in the United States," he said. Despite serious problems the good news is that for the first time in the history of the paper, which dates back to 1915, the technical means are available to reach deeper into the community thanks to the Internet.

Panel V: Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans

Session speakers and moderator included:

Panel A: Greek American Organizations Study Programs to Greece and Cyprus

- **Dr. James F. Dimitriou**, program director, AHEPA Journey to Greece Program
- **Endy Zemenides**, board member, National Hellenic Society
- **Nick Larigakis**, president, American Hellenic Institute

Panel B: Perspective from Young Greek Americans

- **Aris Chronis**, co-founder, DCGreeks.com
- **Constance Baroudos**, AHI Foundation foreign policy trip participant
- **Aphrodite Bouikidis**, program director, The Next Generation Initiative (HelleNext)
- **Moderator (both panels): Andrew Kaffes**, president, A.G. Kaffes & Associates LLC

Panel A: Greek American Organizations Study Programs to Greece and Cyprus

Dr. James Dimitriou opened the panel with a presentation that provided an overview of the AHEPA Journey to Greece Program. The Journey offers students the ability to earn up to nine transferable college credits by studying about ancient and modern Greece at the University of Indianapolis, Athens, AHEPA's partner in the program. The program has had 382 students participate representing 28 states and Canada. In sum, 71 universities have accepted credits from the AHEPA Journey to Greece Program since its re-birth in 2006, according to Dr. Dimitriou. For the 2011 session, the program had 42 student participants representing 11 states and Canada. Highlights included the unique opportunity for students to enroll in a Service Learning course and

offer their volunteer services at the Special Olympics Games for credit. Dr. Dimitriou noted the generous support of sponsoring organizations to the Journey program, including the American Hellenic Institute Foundation, the National Hellenic Society, and HelleNext.

Endy Zemenides followed with a presentation about the National Hellenic Society's Heritage Greece Program, which is patterned after "Birthright Israel." Now in its third year, Heritage Greece provided 20 students with an experience to visit Greece for the first time in an immersion program designed to fortify their respective knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Greek language, culture, and history. NHS sponsors Heritage Greece in collaboration with DERE - The American College of Greece, which allows participants to receive three academic credits that are transferable to the student's home institution. The program's itinerary includes visits to important archaeological and religious sites, tours of the Greek countryside, spending time with a host Greek family, and visits to other Greek sites and participation in many cultural activities. Heritage Greece is the only Greek American program that conducts a pre and exit survey of its participants to measure the program's effectiveness and impact on the students' appreciation and understanding of their heritage and modern Greece. Zemenides added that NHS is proud to provide support to the AHEPA Journey to Greece Program and AHI Foundation's foreign policy study abroad program because it is important to send students overseas to study. In addition, Zemenides spoke about the merits of Greek America Foundation's Hellenic Legacy scholarship for study abroad as well as the foundation's National Innovation Conference (NIC) that will be held in Athens in 2012. He added that NIC would provide a wonderful forum for study abroad participants to attend and meet industry leaders and innovators.

To close the panel, **Nick Larigakis** spoke about the "American Hellenic Foundation Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus." The difference of this trip is that college-age students travel to both Greece and Cyprus with a specific focus on foreign policy. The goal of this two-week program is to help facilitate a better understanding of these issues with future Greek American leaders. "We provide a living classroom," he said describing the program's ability to provide its intimate group of 10 students with real-world, first-hand experiences such as visiting occupied Cyprus to witness Turkish troops and desecrated churches. The small number of students also allows for proper dialogue and discussion with policymakers and diplomats to explain their foreign policy practices. Meetings with ministers and deputy ministers of Foreign Affairs and high-ranking military officials within Greece's "Pentagon" equivalent were examples of those the students will experience. It is also important for the students to write about their experiences upon their return and share them with their peers in university publications. He cited two examples of participants one of who had her account published in a school newsletter and a second who helped organize a panel discussion at his university. In addition, three students sought out internships in congressional offices upon their return. "We are going to need these students as foot soldiers going forward and this program provides a small opportunity for them to become educated on the issues and become proactive in the community," Larigakis concluded. He also commended all the study abroad programs that are offered.

Panel B: Perspective from Young Greek Americans

Aris Chronis began the panel with a discussion on “Promoting Hellenism by Directly Connecting Greek Americans Online and in the Real World.” He touched on the conditions that led to the launch of DCGreeks.com 10 years ago, which included the inconveniences of subscribing to several email lists and duplication of emails. “DCGreeks.com was started with the goal of simplifying and organizing Greek American social young professional’s social experience in the DC area,” he said, adding that uniting Greek Americans across the DC was also an objective. The web site evolved from an events calendar to picture galleries and eventually a member directory, he explained. DCGreeks.com became an independent online source for Greek information and promotion of everyone’s events equally. Eventually, the web site became a promotion site for national Greek American events, such as AHEPA and YAL conventions, as well. He added Facebook has been detrimental to the effort to centralize all Greek American community events and information because it has added a dimension of diffusion to the attention span of the audience. Chronis explained that now there is not a central place for information, and furthermore, people believe the ways to promote Hellenism is to simply re-posting news items instead of engaging with other Greek Americans. “Original thought and discourse has gone away,” he said. He concluded that young Greek American professionals would like to interact w/ Greek Americans in settings that make sense to them and is affordable. Chronis believes organizations must rebrand their events to appeal to young professionals. The Pan-Hellenism Weekend, which is organized by DCGreeks.com, offers organizations the opportunity to partner with them in the effort to reach young professionals.

Constance Baroudos a second-generation Greek American, shared her first-hand experiences as a young Greek American looking for categorized three factors that allows her to stay close to the Greek American community: 1) her parents and her upbringing, 2) the community itself, including the foundation it provides, and 3) the individual. Her parents encouraged her to attend Greek school and learn Greek and her upbringing in the church provided events that brought the community close together (festivals and dinner-dances). “I believe that the church community has given a lot to me,” she said. In addition, Greek dance and music plays a significant factor in influencing young people, motivating many of her friends and family members to study cultural anthropology and learn the history of folk dancing. “It allows them to stay in touch with the different regions of Greece,” she said. Baroudos views the third factor, the individual person, as the most important. “You can have great parents and a great community, but the truth is that it comes down to you and what you want,” she said. Baroudos recommended a few changes that she would like to see including more of an involvement in Greece. “It is our duty to apply our passion and talents to help or contribute to Greece,” she said. In addition, successful Greek Americans must reach out to young Greek Americans to help them make connections and meet the right people. In turn, younger professionals can help give back to the greater community.

The panel closed with **Aphrodite Bouikidis** who spoke on the topic, “The Next Generation Speaks: An Update on Our National Survey of Young Hellenic-Americans,” which was a survey conducted by The Next Generation Initiative (HelleNext). She believes it is important that we are asking the next generation what Hellenism is and how to connect to it. “And if it is different to them then it is to us I think that’s ok,” she said. The mission of HelleNext is to connect the next generation to leaders and to their communities. The initial findings of a nationwide survey of 1,000 Greek American undergraduates and graduates yielded some interesting results. Fifty percent identified

as a priority knowing more about ancient Greece or marrying a Greek, but close to 80 percent identified as a priority finding a Greek American mentor, securing an internship with a Greek American professional, and networking with other Greek American young professionals. In addition, 60 percent believed that it was somewhat or very important to be a part of the Greek Orthodox Church, but 90 percent believed that it was somewhat or very important to be proud of their Greek heritage. The preferred means through which they would like to connect with their heritage is by meeting young professionals or traveling to Greece and Cyprus rather than involvement in the church or Greek American organizations. Moreover, a survey of 17 student associations found that only two have cooperated with Greek American organizations to coordinate an event. "The survey is critical overall and to developing new programs," she said. HelleNext will work with students to develop the next steps concluded Bouikidis.

An important example of how this survey helped restructure their existing Athens Fellowship program is through the HelleNext Reinventing Greece media project. This trip involved three weeks in Athens in July. She noted that "This summer, HelleNext took a chance, and let the Fellows do the work in Athens." The organization invited them to play a leading role in promoting new dialogue, change and partnership. They met and interviewed officials, entrepreneurs, investors, business leaders, researchers, journalists, editors, youth, civil society activists and others about all the changes taking place in the country, and the ideas/solutions they have for addressing these challenges. Other than producing solution-oriented articles and identifying additional contacts to interview, the fellows established strong contacts with several organizations who asked to collaborate with HelleNext and the network of students and young professionals in the future. With guidance from an experienced mentor, the fellows posted their stories and interviews on the Reinventing Greece website, www.reinventinggreece.org.

Concluding Remarks

Following the series of sessions, **Professor Van Coufoudakis** provided an overview of the day's proceedings and identified the common themes that were presented. He noted areas where positive developments had occurred and offered ideas for how the Greek American community can take action. Dr. Coufoudakis noted as a positive addition the contribution of the Jewish American community's perspective on their issues and questions it faces many of which are similar to the issues and questions the Greek American community and other ethnic groups face. He also touched upon the theme of "where do we go from here?" "Do we carry the discussion back to our communities, our churches, our homes?" he asked. If not, we may have wasted our time, he cautioned.

AHI President Nick Larigakis, AHI Foundation President Dr. Spiro Spireas and Professor Dan Georgakas fielded questions from the audience for this wrap-up session. General topics and issues touched upon included the recession affecting the United States and its impact on Greek Americans, including job placement; the current political situation in Greece and its effect on the Greek American community, and how does the Greek American community help Greece, including with investment in Greece. Moreover, organizational challenges, including overcoming financial hurdles were discussed. Attendees also shared what they have done to promote, preserve, or project Hellenism in their communities.



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AHIF Hosts 11th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

By *NEO Magazine* on January 10, 2013



(L-R) Congressman John Sarbanes, AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award Recipients Dr. Victor G. Polizos and Karen Stamatiades, AHI President Nick Larigakis, and Conference Chairman Sandy Papadopoulos at the Awards Dinner



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The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its landmark 11th Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year's conference was held in Atlanta, Ga., at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of the Annunciation, Thalia N. Carlos Hellenic Community Center. Featuring more than 20 prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

At a dinner hosted the evening before the main events, American Hellenic Institute President Nick Larigakis extended welcoming remarks followed from Conference Chairman Sandy Papadopoulos.

The dinner's Keynote Speaker was U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD). Following the day's events he stated: "I very much enjoyed speaking to Atlanta's Greek American community about Hellenism in the Public Service. By giving back to the broader society we enrich ourselves as individuals, improve the communities we live in, strengthen our country, and set a great example for the next generation. By engaging in acts of Hellenism in the Public Service we express our *philotimo* and present the best of the high ideals and values of Hellenism. Whether it is a businessman serving on a hospital board, a student volunteering at Americorps, or an educator going the extra mile, Hellenism in the Public Service celebrates the great deeds and hard work of those in our community striving to give back to the broader society."

Atlanta natives Dr. Victor G. Polizos and Karen Stamatides received AHI's Hellenic Heritage and Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism.

In his acceptance, Dr. Polizos focused on how Hellenism has inspired him in his life and how the ancient Greeks instilled a sense of pride in his heritage. He also spoke of being inspired by his immigrant parent, as they taught him at an early age to love his Hellenic roots and shared stories of their homeland of Greece. He remains inspired everyday by witnessing the involvement of his wife, Christina, and children Georgea and Constantine, in their Greek Orthodox Church community through leadership in choir, Sunday School and Hellenic dance

groups. Dr. Polizos also thanked many friends who have inspired and continue to inspire him through their life's work. "We all have one thing in common; our passion for Hellenism," he said.

In her acceptance, Stamatiades described her journey to becoming a Hellenophile, which was advanced by her longstanding membership in the Daughters of Penelope and that membership afforded her the opportunity to put this love into action. As the National President of the Daughters of Penelope, she instituted a Civic Responsibility campaign which reached out to members of Congress with the message of the purpose, goals and interests of the Daughters of Penelope. She also worked to outreach to the Daughters' 10,000 members to encourage them to become more involved in various Hellenic issues and carry that message to their respective representatives. This effort culminated in a successful Capitol Hill Day in March of 2008, which saw members and their representatives meeting face to face to discuss issues of Hellenic interest and thus gave us a unified voice to maximize impact. These programs are still in effect and continue to give the organization's members a vehicle to express their views and Hellenic concerns to their elected representatives.

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AHIF 12th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

Washington, DC –The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its landmark Twelfth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year's conference was held in Miami, Fla., at the Conrad Miami Hilton, November 22-23, 2013.



Featuring more than 20 prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

AHIF held a dinner on the eve of the conference, November 22. There, AHI President Nick Larigakis officially opened the conference and welcome remarks followed from Conference Chairman Aleco Haralambides, a former AHI president.

The dinner's Keynote Speaker was U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), who jumped at the opportunity to be the Keynote Speaker in large part because of the respect he has for the families that were being honored by AHI. He commended AHI and President Nick Larigakis for doing an outstanding job. "I witness it on a daily basis," he said. "We've been successful and we owe a lot of that to AHI." Congressman Bilirakis also noted his work with AHI to ensure our cultural history survives. "I can tell you that the future of Hellenism is bright," he said. "We need to preserve our culture and Hellenism....I'm not shy about wearing (our) Greek pride on my sleeve."

Longtime AHI supporter and member Gus Andy and John Haralambides (posthumously) received AHI's Hellenic Heritage and Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America.

In his acceptance, Andy said, “I am truly honored and humbled to receive the AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for promotion of Hellenism in America this evening. It is especially a thrill because of how passionately and strongly I believe in the mission the work of the American Hellenic Institute—which was founded by a tremendous individual in Eugene Rossides and is led by a dynamic President, Nick Larigakis. AHI’s unwavering dedication and commitment to strengthening of relations between the United States and Greece; to finding a just and viable solution to the division of Cyprus; and to eliminating the plight of our Ecumenical Patriarchate has unyielding and persistent; and the work of AHI is what keeps me motivated to do more when it comes to these important issues.”

Accepting on behalf of John Haralambides (posthumously) was his son, Aleco, who remarked how much his father appreciated and supported the work of AHI. Haralambides recounted that it was his father’s life-long dream to foster the promotion of Greek language and education in America. In this regard, Haralambides stated that his father was the driving force and inspiration behind the creation and founding of Archimedean Academy in Miami, Florida. Today, he would be very proud of the academy’s success in meeting its mission, which is “to initiate the young mind into the art of thinking through the teaching of Mathematics and the Greek Language.” Aleco’s mother, Adi, joined him in accepting the award.

The AHI Foundation hosted the conference in cooperation with the Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation (USA), and the National Hellenic Society (NHS) co-sponsored it.

Each year the conference is held in a different U.S. city to spread the seeds of ideas generated at the conference, and to obtain feedback from the local Greek American community on various challenges facing Hellenism in America. Conference speakers identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today and offered suggestions for the future.

Panel I: Greek Education in America

In his presentation “Establishing Greek Charter Schools: How Do You Begin and Why They are Important to the Future of the Community,” Dr. George Kafkoulis explained how public charter schools are administered and the challenges of a Greek language school, including the difficulty of securing Greek language textbooks for grade levels one through four. Archimedean Academy has 950 students enrolled with another 1,000 on a waiting list, he said. Less than 10 percent are Greek American, he added. Dr. Kafkoulis believes Greek language public charter schools can be an outlet for third, fourth, and fifth generation Greek Americans to learn Greek, and in addition, the school can serve as “feeder programs” for Modern Greek Studies programs at universities.

Georgios Anagnostou, Ph.D., presented on the topic, “Modern Greek Studies at the University Level: Challenges and Opportunities.” He provided a candid assessment of the lack of support and funding for certain university programs, which is especially true for Modern Greek studies. “[Academic] institutions are starting to act more like corporations, where demand and supply guide their operations,” he said. “Greek studies is at a huge disadvantage and cannot compete with language powerhouses which command high enrollments.” He added that people are also starting to question the professional value of cultural programs. For example, why does one need this field if it offers slim opportunities for employment? Dr. Anagnostou also offered that internationalization works as a resource and force of expansion that needs to be taken

advantage of by Modern Greek studies programs. He concluded by asking the compelling question, why are scholarships only offered to students of Greek descent? "Hellenism isn't about biology, it's about culture," he said. "These American students will be the future journalists, legal policy makers, anthropologists driving the country and we will be wasting a great resource if we do not embrace them. We do not need to neglect and alienate them."

Artemis Zenetou explored the topic, "The Role of Greece in Enhancing Greek Education in America; The Fulbright Program." She provided an overview and history of the Fulbright Program, including offering such facts as Greece being the first Fulbright Program in Europe and the second operating program in the world. With regard to program in Greece she stated, "Supporting these projects, which I consider essential, is difficult in an environment where issues such as unemployment and hunger are now taking precedence." Zenetou also discussed the benefits of the Fulbright Program to Greece. "[It is] a great way to demystify our country to an American constituency, bringing teachers and their students back to Greece through cultural enrichment seminars," she said. American Fulbright scholars "were the best ambassadors of our country to the U.S.," having perpetuated Greek and Hellenic culture and ideals upon their return to the United States. "This 'people-to-people diplomacy' in the form of 'the multiplier effect' (one person reaching out to many students) has made big differences in the surrounding communities of our alumni," she said. Zenetou concluded by providing many examples of Fulbright alumni and their legacies in the United States, a few of which were present at the conference.

Panel II: The Greek American Community and the Political Process

Opening this panel was Congressman Gus Bilirakis, who discussed why it is important for members of the community to become involved and engaged with Congress under the topic "The Importance of Grass Roots Advocacy Efforts." He offered advice to the audience on the topic. "We must build personal relationships with our members of Congress," the congressman said. He also stressed the importance of setting up meetings with members of Congress, both in the congressional district and in Washington. Congressman Bilirakis encouraged conference attendees to make phone calls and to send emails to their members of Congress, asking them to co-sponsor legislation and to join the Hellenic Caucus. "We need to be more organized," he said. "We are making progress but we need to step up our grassroots effort. Let's spread the knowledge of the Patriarchate and Halki and inform them of the issues."

Nick Larigakis addressed the topic of "Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to the U.S.?" He contended that a majority of the Greek American community "Don't know [the issues] that well or know them superficially." Larigakis stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is in the best interest of the United States to support the Greek American community's issues. He cited Greece's strategic importance to the United States, including its role in NATO and the facilitation of utilizing NSA Souda Bay. For the latter, Larigakis shared his first-hand experience visiting NSA Souda Bay and the interactions he has had with U.S. military officials who stressed the importance of the base. Larigakis also discussed Cyprus' importance to United States interests, including being an initial signatory to a PSI agreement with the United States, being a safe haven for American citizens who had to evacuate Lebanon, and the utilization of the port at Limassol for "R and R."

Furthermore, Larigakis discussed the geopolitical significance of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral relationship and the democratic stability it provides in an otherwise instable region. Finally, he touched on how effective local activism can be to achieving results on Capitol Hill and why it is crucial for all organizations to “be on the same page” with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements to which many Greek American organization sign on.

Morning Greetings and Luncheon Keynote Speaker

Conference Chairman Aleco Haralambides welcomed everyone to the morning proceedings. He thanked the conference benefactors and introduced the speakers for the morning program, which included U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Professor Dan Georgakas, director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY.

In her greetings, Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen commended the American Hellenic Institute and congratulated the honorees at the previous evening’s awards dinner. She further expressed her profound understanding of, and appreciation for, Greece as chairman emeritus of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and current chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and N. Africa. “The U.S.-Greece alliance has been essential in combating extremism, preventing the proliferation of weapons and for ensuring the stability of the region,” she said. The former chairman displayed her thorough knowledge of the region by detailing the significance of recent discoveries of extremely large quantities of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the emerging strategic relationship between Greece, Cyprus and Israel. She concluded by encouraging the audience to outreach to congressional offices and by reaffirming Greece’s strategic importance to the United States. “I will continue to support the U.S.-Greece relationship and will continue to support any measure that can only make it stronger.”

Professor Georgakas presented on the theme, “The Now and Future of Greek America.” He spoke on a broad range of topics, including: a focus on when the community speaks about American foreign policy in the eastern Mediterranean, the need for the Greek American community to be progressive in its approach and embrace the new multi-cultural dynamics of American society, the importance of Internet and other technological advances. The professor concluded with a brief review of the demographic factors that work against enduring ethnic identity in the United States. “To ignore these realities would be suicidal,” he said. “Happily, over the past decade, the Greek American activism at the local level has shown considerable vigor. Given the new social dynamics and technological tools at hand, this opens the door for a renewable and culturally enriched Greek America.”

Haralambides also introduced the conference luncheon’s principal speaker, Antonios Sgouropoulos, who is the consul general, Consulate General of Greece in Tampa. Consul General Sgouropoulos represented Ambassador of Greece to the U.S. Christos Panagopoulos. On behalf of the ambassador, Consul General Sgouropoulos provided an overview of the current situation in Greece, a “look ahead” into Greece’s 2014 EU Presidency, and iterated the importance of the U.S.-Greece strategic alliance. He also complemented the work of the Greek American community, especially that of Florida.

Panel III: The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community

Demetrios Kirkiles spoke on the topic, "Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the Needs of the Community?" He provided an overview of his experience as a member and officer in the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) and cited the organization's mission statement that offers a member the opportunity to promote the Hellenic ideals of philanthropy, education civic responsibility, and family and individual excellence. He added, "Hellenic organizations are based on the premise of coming together as a unit, remember our founding roots and work together to build a strong future."

"The Challenges Facing the Greek Orthodox Church in America," was the topic discussed by Rev. Elias Bouboutsis, Ph.D. Rev. Bouboutsis believes two primary challenges of the community are "to be authentic and adaptive in the diaspora." To illustrate his position, Rev. Bouboutsis shared a quote from Father Kalistos Ware, "Orthodoxy is indeed a very ancient and old tree but it is a living tree, a growing tree, a changing and evolving tree." Rev. Bouboutsis interprets Father Ware's quote as meaning "In other words, paradosis-based authenticity is not replication...or imitating external forms, such as being a knock-off of the church of Greece in this country. Discernment is key here, since as the scripture reminds us 'evil itself can appear as an angel of light.' We cannot afford to confuse ritual purity, a kind of obsessive attachment to external forms, with authenticity." Ultimately, integrating both the deep roots and the new growth in a living, breathing organism is at the core of the challenges we face.

An examination of how second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity was provided by Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D. Dr. Bartolomei shared data from a study taken from 2008 to 2010 of 181 second and third generation Greek Americans. The findings show that 1) family is important to these generations and 2) that they are proud of their ethnicity. The data also demonstrated there is a big decline in use of Greek language between second and third generation Greek Americans as well as a decline the numbers who attend Greek school. However, third generation Greek Americans want to travel and did express a desire to study Greek. Dr. Bartolomei believes it is "time for us to wake up" and recommended that the community bolsters university study-abroad programs and Modern Greek Studies programs.

Panos Stavrianidis presented on the topic, "The Evolution of Greek America in the 21st Century and its Struggle for Survival." His presentation mirrored Balodimas-Bartolomei's presentation as he shared results of a survey he administered to sample of 1,000 Greek Americans from New Jersey, of which 240 were returned. "Greek-Americans are a mono-ethnic group, and an outstanding example of how immigrants and their descendants can integrate and advance within the American mainstream," he said. However, according to the survey's results, Stavrianides believe the community will lose the Greek language and organizational membership and political activity will decrease with each new generation.

Panel IV: The Cultural Dimension

"Preserving the History of the Greek American Community and its Importance to Future Generations" was the topic presented by Art Dimopoulos, who read the remarks of Connie Mourtoupalas, who was unable to attend. Mourtoupalas' remarks articulated the importance of preserving the history of the Greek American community by drawing a parallel with preserving American history. "Our own history is also America's history," she wrote. "After all, what is America if not the sum of different cultural communities which make up the American landscape?" To illustrate her point, Mourtoupalas provided the example of the National Hellenic Museum's documentation of the story of George Colvocoresses. By documenting and presenting the story of George Colvocoresses, a survivor of the Chios 1822 massacre, who made it to Baltimore and eventually became a captain in the U.S. Navy, and fought in the American Civil War, with three major victories against the Confederates, who was also an officer in the U.S. Navy's first ever expedition to the Pacific Ocean, the National Hellenic Museum sheds light on an important chapter of American history." In her remarks, Mourtoupalas also stressed the importance of preserving the near 200-year history of Greeks in America "because it is our story and we have the right and the responsibility to know it and pass it on to future generations." She furthermore explained how museums such as the National Hellenic Museum go about documenting history by collecting and preserving in properly controlled environments primary sources, material evidence, which researchers peruse and write history. Mourtoupalas concluded by urging attendees to "no underestimate the power of an old letter from a relative, a military uniform, a medal, a lowly family heirloom" as all pieces that can be placed together to tell a bigger story.

Michael J. Reppas examined the topic, "By Protecting the Cultural Property of Greece We Are Protecting the Cultural Property of the World." He based his presentation on the notion that culture is our identity—comprised of one's language, religion, dancing, music, history, and artifacts, among other items. He paints a picture for attendees of a piece of cultural property (the Statue of Liberty, for example) that has been broken up into pieces and then sold to and owned by other museums around the world and asked a series of thought-provoking questions. "How do you feel now that your people do not even own the severed pieces? How is ownership of cultural property resolved today? Can anyone own someone else's past or is cultural property owned by everyone in the world?" The challenge, according to Reppas, is to determine who can own a piece of the cultural property or a piece of history. "That feeling is exactly what the struggle over looted cultural property is all about," he said. "The reality is that all parties have to find a way to work together to resolve these issues, making sure there are many winners instead of just one." Reppas then drew a comparison to the Parthenon sculptures—a prime example of 19th century looting at the height of European colonialism at a time when Greece was occupied by the Ottoman Empire. "It's my hope that people throughout the world will realize the significance of cultural property to the people of its country of origin," he said. "It's my hope that such knowledge will inspire students, educators, authors, lawyers and legislators...to demand the return of these most prized pieces of antiquity to their countries of origin and to truly work together to preserve and respect the contributions of source countries as part of the achievements of mankind without depriving their descendants of ownership."

Panel V: Current Perspectives on Current Challenges

Professor Ioannis Floros opened the panel speaking on the topic, “The Greek Economic Crisis: Its Relevance to the Greek American Community.” In his presentation, Floros provided an overview of the current situation in Greece, and he also offered his thoughts on what can be done to improve the situation there.

Brian Siegal followed with a presentation on the topic, “The Jewish American Community: How Do We Compare?” He identified several ways in which the two communities share profound similarities and links, including a strong sense of attachment to respective homelands, a strong commitment to democratic values, and a strong family life. To illustrate, Siegal shared a quote from Winston Churchill, who once said of the history of Greeks and Jews, “No two races have set such a mark upon the world. Both have shown capacity for survival, in spite of unending perils and suffering from external oppressors, matched only by their own ceaseless feuds, quarrels and convulsions...Personally I have been on the side of both, and believe in their invincible power to survive internal strife and the world ties threatening their extinction.” Siegal also shared his appreciation for the historic bonds between Greeks and Jews and offered, “I want to start by saying thank you on behalf of a sister community for all that the Greek community did during the Second World War when Greek authorities tried to protect Jews hiding from the Nazis.” To conclude, Siegal presented his thoughts on what elements of culture are important to be sustained in Diaspora communities. “

Panel VI: Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans

To open the panel, Art Dimopoulos presented on the National Hellenic Society’s Heritage Greece Program. He discussed the program and described it as an unforgettable journey to Greece tailored to connect students with their Greek identity and roots through a cultural immersion experience shared with a peer group of Greek students from NHS’ partner and host institution—the American College of Greece/DEREE. “The program is a gift from the National Hellenic Society to the selected candidates,” he explained. “It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to explore Greek heritage, culture and identity with a peer group of students from the US and Greece. Students learn language skills within the context of modern Greece and travel to important archaeological locations. Visits to an island and related sites and activities will facilitate strong connections with students’ Greek roots and identity.” He also noted as a benefit that the Heritage Greece experience continues beyond Greece as Heritage Greece alumni avail themselves of opportunities to develop professionally as part of the National Hellenic Society network and programs.

Nick Larigakis spoke about the American Hellenic Foundation Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and other various study abroad programs offered by Greek American organizations. He noted the difference of the AHI Foundation trip, which is that college-age students travel to both Greece and Cyprus with a specific focus on foreign policy. The goal of this two-week program is to help facilitate a better understanding of these issues with future Greek American leaders. “We provide a living classroom,” he said describing the program’s ability to provide its intimate group of 10 students with real-world, first-hand experiences such as visiting occupied

Cyprus to witness Turkish troops and desecrated churches. The small number of students also allows for proper dialogue and discussion with policymakers and diplomats to explain their foreign policy practices. Meetings with ministers and deputy ministers of Foreign Affairs and high-ranking military officials within Greece's "Pentagon" equivalent were examples of those the students will experience. It is also important for the students to write about their experiences upon their return and share them with their peers in university publications. He cited two examples of participants one of who had her account published in a school newsletter and a second who helped organize a panel discussion at his university. In addition, three students sought out internships in congressional offices upon their return. "We are going to need these students as foot soldiers going forward and this program provides a small opportunity for them to become educated on the issues and become proactive in the community," Larigakis concluded. He also commended all the study abroad programs that are offered.

Panel B: Next Generation Perspectives

Georgea Polizos, who participated on the AHI Foundation's Study Abroad Foreign Policy Trip, shared her passion for Hellenism's impact in the community and how it had such a tremendous effect on her life. "It was truly inspiring and enlightening to have so many of us come together in the spirit of Hellenism," she said. "I feel that the future of the Greek American community is brighter than ever with so many of us working together on issues that are vital to our cultural heritage."

Anna Tsiotsios shared her thoughts stating, "I think, that for the future of Hellenism in America, it is equally as important to be connected to our American heritage...For Greek Americans it is important to treat the hyphen between our two heritages as an equal sign, not a minus. We need to view ourselves as part of the fabric of American society in order to perpetuate Hellenism for years to come."

Eftihios Evan G. Andronis based his presentation on the thesis of "opportunity." I believe that the future of Hellenism depends on the opportunities given to the younger Hellenic generations," he said. "I believe that in order to have a successful future, the younger generations need to connect with professionals who are experienced in their careers." As an example, he pointed to his very experience at this Hellenism Conference provided by AHI. "AHI has given me my first opportunity to speak in a public forum."

Following the series of sessions, AHI President Nick Larigakis provided an overview of the day's proceedings and identified the common themes that were presented under the theme, "Where Do We Go From Here?" An in-depth Q&A session ensued.

JANUARY 5TH, 2015

<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/ahif-13th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference/>

AHIF: 13th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

Washington, DC –The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its landmark Thirteenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year's conference was held in Houston, Texas, at the Hilton Houston Post Oak, Nov. 21-22, 2014.

Featuring more than 20 prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.



AHIF held a dinner on the eve of the conference, November 21. There, AHI President Nick Larigakis officially opened the conference and welcome remarks followed from Georgios Papanikolaou, consul general of Greece to Houston.

Longtime AHI supporters and members George Blytas and Nina Peropoulos received AHI's Hellenic Heritage and Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America.

In his acceptance, Blytas expressed his appreciation for the honor bestowed upon him by AHI as a longtime supporter of the organization and its mission. He also thanked AHI for its tireless efforts as the chief Greek American organization that advocates for the rule of law.

Peropoulos remarked about the importance of AHI to the Greek American community, especially working on Greek American issues such as the name-recognition issue for FYROM. During her time as President of the Pan-Macedonian Association, Peropoulos worked in

collaboration with AHI on the issue. In her acceptance, she also expressed gratitude to AHI for the award and recognition.

The AHI Foundation hosted the conference in cooperation with the National Hellenic Society (NHS) and SigmaPharm Laboratories LLC sponsored it. AHEPA Alexander the Great Chapter 29, Houston, and the Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest were co-sponsors.

Each year the conference is held in a different U.S. city to spread the seeds of ideas generated at the conference, and to obtain feedback from the local Greek American community on various challenges facing Hellenism in America. Conference speakers identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today and offered suggestions for the future.

Conference Summary

The conference began with welcome remarks from AHI President Nick Larigakis. He introduced the conference's Opening Keynote Speaker Professor Dan Georgakas, director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY. Professor Georgakas presented on the theme, "The Now and Future of Greek America." He spoke on a broad range of topics, including: a focus on when the community speaks about American foreign policy in the eastern Mediterranean, the need for the Greek American community to be progressive in its approach and embrace the new multi-cultural dynamics of American society, the importance of Internet and other technological advances. The professor concluded with a brief review of the demographic factors that work against enduring ethnic identity in the United States. "To ignore these realities would be suicidal," he said. "Happily, over the past decade, the Greek American activism at the local level has shown considerable vigor. Given the new social dynamics and technological tools at hand, this opens the door for a renewable and culturally enriched Greek America."

Panel 1: Greek Education in America

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Eleni Alexopoulou, director, Paideia Bilingual Preschool & Nursery, Falls Church, Va.
- Steven Christoforou, interim director, Y2AM (Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)
- Polyvia Parara, Ph.D., visiting assistant professor, Department of Classics, University of Maryland
- Moderator: Katerina Kontogeorgaki, Modern Greek teacher, Annunciation Greek Language and Culture School

In her presentation "Church Greek School Programs in America: Are We Meeting the Needs?," Eleni discussed the role the schools have played in their communities and used her experiences at Paideia as an example of the process of starting a bilingual education program and challenges the school faced along the way. "High quality education can and should be offered by highly skilled professionals in a climate of trust and collaboration. The Greek language should be taught as well as cultural and religious material by developing new programs that match the

community's needs and interests. A modernized business and financial administration of the schools, along with a modern approach to schools' academic administration infrastructure can help to build a strong, positive relationship among students, teachers, parents and communities." Ultimately, in her opinion schools are meeting the needs but a lot more can be done to realize better results.

"People desire two basic things: a sense of meaning, and a sense of community," Steven Christoforou said to introduce the topic, "Youth Ministry, Social Media and the Greek American Community." "When communicating what Hellenism is to youth and young adults, we need to keep these two items in mind," he added. Christoforou posed the following thought-provoking questions to the audience: "What sense of meaning does Hellenism provide for them, and what sense of community? And, in a social media age where people have greater access to ideas than ever before, does Hellenism offer a universal sense of meaning that will resonate with people growing up in an increasingly shrinking world?"

Polyvia Parara, Ph.D. explored the topic, "Modern Greek Studies at the University Level: Challenges and Opportunities." She cited as challenges the statistics according to the Modern Greek Studies Association that Modern Greek Studies are offered in 57 programs across the U.S. and Canada, which range from doctorate to elementary instruction of the language. She added that only two percent of all colleges and U.S. universities offer Modern Greek.

"It is the duty of the Greek American community to respond to this demand for Hellenic education and build Modern Greek Programs so that the younger generations have the choice to study the Greek Language and Civilization at the academic level, in an age that they are mature and they choose deliberately to study the Greek heritage," Parara said. She believes this strategic goal is vital to the future of Hellenism for several reasons, chief of which is the deep connection with Greece the students will develop. "It is for the benefit of Hellenism to provide our youth with the opportunity to study the Greek Language and Civilization in U.S. academic institutions," she concluded.

Panel II: The Greek American Community and the Political Process

- Session speakers and moderator included:
- Nick Larigakis, president, American Hellenic Institute
- James Cargas, former candidate for U.S. Representative, 7th Congressional District of Texas
- Moderator: Leon Andris, AHI Board Member

Nick Larigakis addressed the topic of "Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to the U.S.?" He contended that a majority of the Greek American community "Don't know [the issues] that well or know them superficially." Larigakis stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is in the best interest of the United States to support the Greek American community's issues. He cited Greece's strategic importance to the United States, including its role in NATO and the facilitation of utilizing NSA

Souda Bay. For the latter, Larigakis shared his first-hand experience visiting NSA Souda Bay and the interactions he has had with U.S. military officials who stressed the importance of the base. Larigakis also discussed Cyprus' importance to United States interests, including being an initial signatory to a PSI agreement with the United States, being a safe haven for American citizens who had to evacuate Lebanon, and the utilization of the port at Limassol for "R and R." Furthermore, Larigakis discussed the geopolitical significance of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral relationship and the democratic stability it provides in an otherwise instable region. Finally, he touched on how effective local activism can be to achieving results on Capitol Hill and why it is crucial for all organizations to "be on the same page" with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements to which many Greek American organization sign on.

James Cargas presented on the topic of "The Importance of Grass Roots Advocacy Efforts."

Morning Greetings, Luncheon Keynote Speaker

President Larigakis introduced the conference luncheon's principal speaker, Dr. Van Coufoudakis, former dean, professor emeritus, Indiana University-Purdue University College of Arts and Science. He spoke on the theme "Keeping Hellenism Alive in 21st Century America: Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats."

After examination of the challenges and opportunities facing the Greek American community in the 21st century, Van Coufoudakis concluded: "We spoke of our community's changing nature and the challenges and opportunities confronting our community. The challenges are real, but so are the opportunities for maintaining Hellenism alive in 21st century America, a country that now finds strength in its diversity. The old dilemma of being Greek and Orthodox in America does not exist any longer. If we believe in who we are, and in the strength of our heritage, tradition and faith, we can keep Hellenism alive in the U.S. The challenges and opportunities are ours. No one else can protect or promote Hellenism for us!"

Panel III: The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Rev. Father Stelios Sitaras, proistamenos, Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church, Galveston, Texas
- Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D., professor of Education, North Park University, Illinois
- Panos Stavrianidis, Ph.D., MBA, Adjunct Professor of Management, SUNY
- Moderator: Leon Andris, AHI Board Member

"One of the major challenges we face as a church is that America is a multi-cultural, multi-denominational, and even an anti-religious country," Rev. Father Stelios Sitaras said in his presentation on the topic, "The Challenges Facing the Greek Orthodox Church in America." "The

fact that there is no shame in society anymore is tearing at the fabric of our church and our nation," he added. "We as a church are struggling to get and to keep your attention."

An examination of how second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity was provided by Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D. Dr. Bartolomei shared data from a study taken from 2008 to 2010 of 181 second and third generation Greek Americans. The findings show that 1) family is important to these generations and 2) that they are proud of their ethnicity. The data also demonstrated there is a big decline in use of Greek language between second and third generation Greek Americans as well as a decline the numbers who attend Greek school. However, third generation Greek Americans want to travel and did express a desire to study Greek. Dr. Bartolomei believes it is "time for us to wake up" and recommended that the community bolsters university study-abroad programs and Modern Greek Studies programs. She added that the community needs more programs such as those offered by AHI that reach out to our young adults and present them with a more contemporary view of their ethnicity.

Panos Stavrianidis, Ph.D. presented on the topic, "The Rise of Multiculturalism and Interracialism in America – A Study of Inter-marriage in the Greek American Community." In an overview, he said the racial and ethnic composition in the United States has been changing radically in recent decades and continues to undergo the most dramatic changes ever. The Census Bureau projects that the share of ethnic and racial minorities will reach 54% of the total population by 2042. One of the major drivers of this change of landscape is the soaring intermarriage rate. According to a recent Pew research center report (2012), about 15% of new marriages in the United States in 2010 were between spouses of different races or ethnicities, more than doubling the 1980 level of 6.7%.

"Multiculturalism has generated a change in Greek America and has reinforced elements of Greek American identity as Greek American youths become more curious to explore their own culture and language heritage," he said. "However, multiculturalism could potentially present a challenge to ethnic identity maintenance as it produces a new generation of multiethnics; for these individuals, the need for maintaining one's culture and identity may significantly diminish."

During this presentation Dr. Stavrianidis, through quantitative and qualitative data, demonstrated the effect of societal evolution throughout the last five decades and how it might influence the disposition of Greek America in the years to come.

Panel IV: Current Perspectives on Current Challenges

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Anthony Kouzounis, immediate past supreme president, American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA)
- Lena Patsidou, president, Hellenic Professional Society of Texas
- Randy Czarlinsky, director, American Jewish Committee-Houston
- Moderator: John Remediakis, president, Hellenic Cultural Center of the Southwest

“Are Greek American Organizations Meeting the Needs of the Community?” was the topic presented by Anthony Kouzounis, the immediate past supreme president of AHEPA. He recounted his interactions with pockets of Greek American communities during his travels throughout the United States as AHEPA supreme president. One theme that always came up for him to address was the “relevance” of organizations such as AHEPA in today’s society.

Lena Patsidou examined the topic of “The Role that Hellenic Professional Societies Can Play” in contemporary Greek American society. In addition to the Greek Orthodox Churches and other long-time established Greek American organizations, such as the AHEPA, Philoptohos, etc., there have been efforts to establish other local organizations with objectives around cultural awareness and professional networking for members of Greek descent, he explained. “There is a variety in the objectives and activities of such organizations, as well as on how they operate, depending on the locale, and the membership make-up,” Patsidou said.

The Hellenic Professional Society of Texas is such an organization, which was established in Houston 40 years ago. The HPST mission is to organize social, cultural, and educational activities for the benefit of the Society’s members and the public, to encourage and promote the pursuit of education and facilitate cooperation among people of Greek descent, and to promote the Greek language and culture. Although the Society is open and caters to Greek Americans and non-Greeks alike, the membership is mainly first-generation Greeks. It provides newcomers a platform to stay closer to the culture of Modern Greece, showcase this culture, and ease their transition to the American life.

AJC-Houston Director Randy Czarlinsky presented on the topic, “The Jewish American Community: How Do We Compare?”

Panel V: Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Art Dimopoulos, Executive Director, National Hellenic Society
- Nick Larigakis, President, American Hellenic Institute
- Georgea Polizos, legislative director, American Hellenic Institute
- Alexis Angelo, program coordinator, AmeriCorps Vista
- Moderator: Art Dimopoulos, Executive Director, National Hellenic Society

To open the panel, Art Dimopoulos presented on the National Hellenic Society’s Heritage Greece Program. He discussed the program and described it as an unforgettable journey to Greece tailored to connect students with their Greek identity and roots through a cultural immersion experience shared with a peer group of Greek students from NHS’ partner and host institution—the American College of Greece/DEREE. “The program is a gift from the National Hellenic Society to the selected candidates,” he explained. “It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to explore Greek heritage, culture and identity with a peer group of students from the US and Greece. Students learn language skills within the context of modern Greece and travel to

important archaeological locations. Visits to an island and related sites and activities will facilitate strong connections with students' Greek roots and identity." He also noted as a benefit that the Heritage Greece experience continues beyond Greece as Heritage Greece alumni avail themselves of opportunities to develop professionally as part of the National Hellenic Society network and programs.

Nick Larigakis spoke about the American Hellenic Foundation Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and other various study abroad programs offered by Greek American organizations. He noted the difference of the AHI Foundation trip, which is that college-age students travel to both Greece and Cyprus with a specific focus on foreign policy. The goal of this two-week program is to help facilitate a better understanding of these issues with future Greek American leaders. "We provide a living classroom," he said describing the program's ability to provide its intimate group of 10 students with real-world, first-hand experiences such as visiting occupied Cyprus to witness Turkish troops and desecrated churches. The small number of students also allows for proper dialogue and discussion with policymakers and diplomats to explain their foreign policy practices. Meetings with ministers and deputy ministers of Foreign Affairs and high-ranking military officials within Greece's "Pentagon" equivalent were examples of those the students will experience. It is also important for the students to write about their experiences upon their return and share them with their peers in university publications. He cited two examples of participants one of who had her account published in a school newsletter and a second who helped organize a panel discussion at his university. In addition, three students sought out internships in congressional offices upon their return. "We are going to need these students as foot soldiers going forward and this program provides a small opportunity for them to become educated on the issues and become proactive in the community," Larigakis concluded. He also commended all the study abroad programs that are offered.

Panel B: Next Generation Perspectives

Georgea Polizos shared her passion for Hellenism's impact in the community and how it had such a tremendous effect on her life. "It was truly inspiring and enlightening to have so many of us come together in the spirit of Hellenism," she said. "I feel that the future of the Greek American community is brighter than ever with so many of us working together on issues that are vital to our cultural heritage."

Polizos also touched upon the challenges the community faces. "These issues are very real and as such, they need our continued attention," she said. "Our mission is clear; we must continue to educate first ourselves and each other and those around us. Hellenism to me means nothing to me if I cannot share its meaning with others within and outside our community. We are all part of this community and I believe in my generation of Greek Americans. We have tremendous talent and potential to mobilize on behalf of Hellenistic ideals and their significance worldwide if we stay focused, informed and, most importantly, unified."

Alexis Angelo shared her thoughts stating: "To be Greek American is very different than to be wholly Greek or wholly American. I have always equated being Greek American to something Olympia Dukakis once referred to as 'being a hyphenated American.' Although being a hyphen

can sometimes seem disheartening, not fully being one culture, it offers great benefits and opportunities for our community.” She added that being Greek American presents a certain duality and the ability to appreciate and consider multiple perspectives, an important skill in our globalized world.

“Our Greek American community has many strengths: strength in the tightness of our community, strength in the duality of our community, and strength in the activism of our community,” Angelo concluded. “But in order for our community to continue thriving and growing it is important for us to take responsibility for maintaining these great strengths and legacies developed by past generations of Greek Americans.”

Concluding Remarks

Following the series of sessions, AHI President Nick Larigakis presented an overview of the day’s proceedings and moderated a discussion presented under the theme, “Where Do We Go From Here?” that included Dr. Van Coufoudakis and Professor Dan Georgakas, director, Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies, Queens College-CUNY. An in-depth Q&A session ensued.

The American Hellenic Institute is a non-profit Greek American think-tank and public policy center that works to strengthen relations between the United States and Greece and Cyprus, and within the Greek American community.

JANUARY 17TH, 2016

The AHIF's Fourteenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America

<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/the-ahifs-fourteenth-annual-conference-on-the-future-of-hellenism-in-america/>

New York- By Vicki James Yiannias



The four recipients of the American Hellenic Institute Foundation's (AHIF) Hellenic Heritage and Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America praised the AHIF for championing the advancement of Hellenism in the United States and strengthening the relationship between Greece and the United States, and the importance of supporting the AHI.

Nitsa Morekas and the Korologos brothers, Tom, John, and Lou, all longtime Baltimore, MD. community supporters and AHI members received their awards at the November 20 dinner that inaugurated the Fourteenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America (November 20-21, 2015), held at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront.

This annual conference, which takes place in a different city each year and raises specific issues and guidance for the community to consider, is one example of the AHIF's efforts to keep the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community.

The AHI Foundation hosted the conference in cooperation with the National Hellenic Society (NHS).

Important, and appreciated, was the opportunity given to young people at the conference to speak for themselves (Panel B: Next Generation Perspectives) rather than being the subject of

discussion alone. AHI President Nick Larigakis noted that the American Hellenic Foundation Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus differed from other study abroad programs offered by Greek American organizations (which he praised) in that college-age students travel to both Greece and Cyprus with a specific focus on foreign policy on the AHIF trip, and two participants of the trip, Paulina Likos and Elias Gerasoulis expressed their thoughts about their trips and the conference.

The conference and its dialogues come at an important time when it is being asked “how the Greek American community can be strengthened and an expanded identity can be crafted,” said Gerasoulis, “I was extremely pleased that many agreed that our efforts cannot be put solely on cultural or customary initiatives—which are vital projects that deeply enrich our community and that we should continue to invest in—but that there must be a multi-faceted approach where strong values and standards of excellence are emphasized as well and passed onto future generations.”

Said Larigakis of all the AHIF Foreign Policy trip alumni: “We are going to need these students as foot soldiers going forward and this program provides a small opportunity for them to become educated on the issues and become proactive in the community,”

Nick Larigakis officially opened the conference at the dinner on the first night followed by a welcome from Conference Chairman Aris Melissaratos and greetings from Christos Panagopoulos, ambassador of Greece to the U.S. Andreas Akaras was Master of Ceremonies.

In the evening’s keynote address, Congressman John Sarbanes spoke highly of AHI’s role in the community and its mission to further Hellenism and its principles in the United States, the importance of Hellenism in the Public Services, which he advances, and shared his belief that Hellenism and its values provide Greek Americans with a way to give back to the community and to engage with the broader society.

Nearly 20 prominent individuals and scholars from across the U.S. gave presentations at the conference that analyzed key issues, the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, and Greek education. A few are mentioned here. A detailed exposition of the conference will be presented in an essay in the next issue of the AHIF policy journal.

Professor Dan Georgakas, director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY the Opening Keynote Speaker of the conference presented, “The Now and Future of Greek America”. Georgakas emphasized that by 2050, the vast majority of Greek Americans would be of mixed ethnic heritage, and in that sense, will have to make a conscious choice “to identify as being Greek”. He outlined actions that the community can take to make that choice more likely, such as community-sponsored youth trips to Greece, secular cultural centers, religious activism, and creative use of mass media.

Georgakas underscored the need to support Greek American Studies and to be fully aware of our history in the United States. He further emphasized that our identity must be “Greek and American, rather than narrowly ethnocentric”.

In her talk, “Modern Greek Studies at the University Level: Challenges and Opportunities.” Dr. Gonda Van Steen spoke about the history and role of the Modern Greek Studies Association

GSA. which promotes the scholarly study of Greece, Cyprus, Greek America, and the Greek language. Since its inception in 1968, the MGSA has gathered neo-Hellenists at biennial symposia and has also been engaged in the publication of scholarly articles via its journal, the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. The association further reaches a wide audience via its website, listserv, job postings, and other information useful to colleagues, especially to graduate students and recent Ph.Ds., who face a bleak job market in the Humanities. Van Steen also presented the Center for Greek Studies at the University of Florida, where she is housed, as a vibrant hub that brings Modern and Ancient Greek together in teaching, research, and service.

Speakers in the session, "The Greek American Community and the Political Process" were Nick Larigakis, Nick Karambelas, partner, Sfikas and Karambelas LLP and AHI legal counsel, Ambassador Patrick Theros, former U.S. ambassador to Qatar. Moderated by Kostas Alexakis, AHI board member.

Larigakis addressed the topic "Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to the U.S.?" contending that a majority of the Greek American community "Don't know [the issues] that well or know them only superficially." He stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is in the best interest of the United States to support the Greek American community's issues. He cited Greece's strategic importance to the United States, including its role in NATO and the facilitation of utilizing NSA Souda Bay. Larigakis talked about visiting NSA Souda Bay and the interactions he has had with U.S. military officials who stressed the importance of the base. He also discussed Cyprus' importance to United States interests, made evident when Vice President Joe Biden bolstered U.S.-Cyprus relationship by calling it, "a genuine, strategic partnership" during his historic May 2014 visit to the island, and the geopolitical significance of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral relationship and the democratic stability it provides in an otherwise unstable region. Local activism can achieve results on Capitol Hill, he said, so it is crucial for all organizations to "be on the same page" with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements.

Nick Karambelas's "How the Eurozone Crisis Affects the Greek American Diaspora." He offered that Greek Americans have a long history of assisting Greece in times of crisis, sometimes with their lives. Greek Americans formed military units in the United States which fought for Greece in the Balkan Wars of 1912; during the Second World War and the Greek civil war, Greek Americans organized efforts which were instrumental in alleviating the suffering of the Greek people, and if the present crisis were the result of war, we would do the same and, as Americans, advocate in political circles for policies which asserted the interests of the United States with respect to Greece. Because this is the worst crisis, short of war, which Greece has faced since 1952, "we must be more creative and innovative in the types of measures we undertake.... The Greek American community as a whole can have a greater effect on assisting Greece to create the conditions which can attract direct investment. An effective means of doing this is for the Greek American community to put its resources behind identifying programs and initiatives that are available through the U.S. government that foster direct investment in other countries."

It seems that by now we are the only ones who are aware of OXI Day, the victories over Persia at Marathon and Salamis, and the defeat of the first caliphate at the gates of Constantinople in the

early 8th century A.D., all decisive historical events that saved European civilization, said Ambassador Patrick Theros in his talk, "How Effective Are We at Getting Our Message Heard and Considered?" If we want others to respect and admire us and our children to "feel pride when they hear from their non-Greek friends about our greatness we have to stop bragging to ourselves only," it's up to us to tell them.

"The old dilemma of being Greek and Orthodox in America does not exist any longer," said the conference luncheon's principal speaker, Dr. Van Coufadakis, former dean, professor emeritus, Indiana University-Purdue University College of Arts and Science, making the same point in another way, in his talk, "Keeping Hellenism Alive in 21st Century America: Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats." The challenges are real, but the strength America now finds in its diversity offers opportunities for keeping Hellenism alive. "if we believe in who we are, and in the strength of our heritage, tradition and faith, we can keep Hellenism alive in the U.S. The challenges and opportunities are ours. No one else can protect or promote Hellenism for us!"

Ambassador Loucas Tsilas, professor; senior advisor to the National Hellenic Museum Board; former Greek ambassador to the U.S.; former executive director, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, spoke on "The Importance of Promoting Greek Culture", saying that "Hellenic culture is a set of values and a way of living and governing that has acquired a universal and diachronic importance", a common language that can be used to advance the highest and loftiest principles and ideals of humankind. Ambassador Tsilas added that especially during the present crisis in Greece, it is only natural for the Greek American community to be emphasizing Hellenic values in this country—whose political, intellectual and cultural life is largely based on those values.

The findings from Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei's 2008-2010 study of how 181 second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity showed that it is "time for us to wake up" regarding perpetuating Greek language and identity, she said in her talk in the panel titled, The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community. She stated the importance of university study-abroad programs and Modern Greek Studies programs and more programs such as those offered by AHI that reach out to our young adults and present them with a more contemporary view of their ethnicity.

Concluding with an overview of the conference, Nick Larigakis then moderated a Q&A session, "Where Do We Go From Here?" with Dr. Van Coufadakis, Professor Dan Georgakas, and Conference Chairman Aris Melissaratos, during which the many sponsors of the conference were acknowledged for their generous support. The conference was sponsored by SigmaPharm Laboratories LLC and individual sponsors (one being the Baltimore-Piraeus Sister City Committee).

GreekNews

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<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/ahis-15th-annual-future-of-hellenism-conference/>



AHI's 15th Annual Future of Hellenism Conference

Elizabeth, NJ.- By Vicki James Yiannias

It was a time to show support for the Greek American community in the US to retain its vibrancy and heritage and to grow, rather than diminish, in challenging times. Many came to participate and gave their all to work out approaches for solutions at the 15th Annual Conference on The Future of Hellenism, held at the Renaissance Newark Airport Hotel in Elizabeth New Jersey on November 18 and 19.

Anne Michal, President, Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos was presented with the AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism in America at the Awards dinner on Friday evening. His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos of New Jersey gave the invocation. Nick Larigakis President, American Hellenic Institute; Zenon Christodoulou, Conference Chairman, Founding Chair of the New Jersey State Hellenic American Heritage Commission; Dr. Spiro Spireas, President, American Hellenic Institute greeted and welcomed guests. Pavlos Yeroulanos, Former Minister for Culture and Tourism, Board Member, Benaki Museum, gave the Keynote speech, "The Role of Greece in Promoting Hellenism Abroad".

5 Panels were held on Saturday, each with a moderator and panelists speaking on these topics: Greek Education in America; Current Perspectives and Current Challenges; The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community; Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans.

On Saturday morning Dan Georgakas, Director, Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies, Queens College—CUNY, delivered the Opening Keynote, which set the tone for the issues that were to be discussed at the Conference.

He began by noting that while “We are living in the best of times”, with above the national average in income, education, and stability of family, and are model immigrants, liked and respected, “We are living in the worst of times”, as well, from the point of view that there is no “cultural shot in the arm” from immigration. The number of Greeks going back are about the same as those coming in”, said Georgakas, and of 400,000 who have left Greece during the crisis, only 5,000 have come to the US. He went on to provide a breakdown of elements involved in retaining the interest and involvement of the new generation in their Greek heritage and the unity of the Greek American community in the cultural and political arenas.

What is to be done, regarding familiarity of the youth with Greek culture? When students go on Student Abroad trips that are already in place, they come back “very Greek”, he said. This is the point at which they need to be incorporated into organizations. “Students can give organizations more social media savvy and other related modern technology.”

On learning the Greek language, “There is a question as to whether we must speak Greek,” said Georgakas, who said he wouldn’t debate whether it is necessary, but assuming the answer is yes, by what means can the next generation be encouraged to learn the language? Urging the use of Greek because it is our traditional language has not been successful, so focusing on college language courses is one way to bring this about, the reasoning being: Studying Greek meets college requirements for foreign language study; it opens the door to study abroad—there are grants available for this—and close contact with faculty can ease the movement to advanced study. Public schools in urban areas are introducing language studies, and Greek should be offered as part of the new multilingual America, “But this requires activism. Tarpon Springs, where Greek is put into the public school system is a great example. To do this requires dedicated individual or groups, and probably would only be viable in areas with a significant Greek population. So this could be part of the solution, but not the solution.” Subscription to print publications is another encouragement; if there are Greek publications at home, sons and daughters may want to read them, whereas if they’re not there, they will not go out and buy them on their own.”

Cultural organizations have done well in attracting youth with dance and music groups but there is little support for the other arts; our talented people move to where their gifts are welcomed.

Modern Greek Studies Association programs: The gap needs to be closed between the study of the classics and modern history which includes the formation of Greek America. Academics are often elitist and mainly interested in talking with other specialists rather than the community, the public, or even academics in other disciplines. The Greek American community are not much interested in modern Greek studies. Perhaps one annual event planned jointly with a strong cultural element is a starting point, such as a film screening, an event with local Greek artists, poets, etc.

Regarding Orthodox outreach: The plight in the Middle East is not addressed, said Georgakas, “I’ve said it before, but we have 500 food festivals and I don’t know any that have a literature

table. There could be a political table on a religious issue such as the opening of the Halki seminary. Ask for signatures and send them on to politicians. The Church is not doing that or anything else of a public relations”

On the topic of political activism, the American Hellenic Institute comes first to mind, “Naturally, you should be support this organization and its projects. Every community should have a political committee in touch with local politicians of both parties. Action comes from the group up, from the grass roots, or not at all, said Georgakas, we cannot wait for some umbrella organization to lead.”

“The challenge today is of a different nature. There is no enemy per se but a demographic reality affecting all Americans in various ways. We face that challenge from a position of strength. But need to take actions or that outmarried majority will not opt to be Greek and the organized community could perish.”

Dr. Van Coufadakis, Former Dean, Professor Emeritus, Indiana University—Purdue University College of Arts and Sciences, also made two concluding points. In the first he stressed the importance of continuing the dialogue of the conference and working to expand participation, “The discussion we had all day today must continue,” said Coufadakis, “Those attending should continue these discussions in their own local organizations whether AHEPA, Philoptochos, regional associations, etc.” Following that thought, he said, “The torch is being passed to the new generation of Greek Americans. “We, the “old timers” have done a lot. We could have done more or differently... Now it is up to the new generation of Greek Americans to make sure that Hellenism stays alive in the 21st century and beyond.”

In his concluding remarks, Yannis Floropoulos, Secretary, Essex County Democratic Committee, and Adjunct Professor, City College of NY and Montclair State University, pointed out that the values, norms, and beliefs that construct the identity of the “Millennial Generation” are not geographically fixed or fixated around a central authority or institution. As Hellenes we should not fear or be skeptical of the future of Hellenism with the Millennial Generation. For thousands of years Hellenism was not geographically situated or revised by any institution other than that of human progress. We should welcome the Millennial identity because that is what we have been as Hellenes for millennia.”

In his concluding statement Dan Georgakas spoke of voting strength, saying, “Eighty percent of the Greeks in America live in metropolitan areas, so we have political clout in close elections in those venues. And the necessity of realizing the distinction between ethnicity and religion. “Equating Orthodoxy with being Greek is not acceptable. I would guess that at least forty percent of Greek Americans are secular, a very high percentage in the arts and higher education. We also have Greek Jews and Greek Protestants. John Brademas, who was of Greek descent but a Protestant is an outstanding example.”

<https://www.greeknewsonline.com/expressions-of-the-activist-minority-the-ahifs-16th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference/>

Expressions of the Activist Minority, The AHIF's 16th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

New York- By Vicki James Yiannias

Our series of reports on the American Hellenic Institute Foundation's (AHIF) 16th Future of Hellenism in America conference, held in Wilmington, Delaware on November 17-18, begins at the end. The CONCLUSION of the conference, at which one of the four speakers was Dr. Dan Georgakas, Director of Greek Studies, Center for Greek Studies, Queens College—CUNY (also OPENING KEYNOTE speaker) provided some optimism after a day of presentations discussing some difficult challenges to the future of Hellenism in America.

Greeting and congratulating the participants on being "in the activist minority that drives changes in Greek America," Georgakas said, "Our success in America has been phenomenal. Partly this is due to being adept at accepting and adjusting to change. As we contemplate a possible multi-ethnic Greek America we have considerable assets. We begin, of course by not denying the nature of the challenge. We can continue to be a prosperous and coherent community if we proceed on the firm rock of Hellenistic culture and do not allow ourselves to be trapped in the quicksand of nostalgia and wishful thinking."

Georgakas began his brief overview of the thrust of the conference as it was detailed in specific presentations saying, "the multi-ethnic challenge of must underline any thinking of the next 20 years." The rate of Greek American out-marriage is now at least 80% or higher, so the future of Greek America is multi-ethnic, with family traditions along multi-cultural lines. With no one born in Greece, Greek American identity becomes more a matter of choice. He emphasized that this is not a Greek American problem only, it is

one faced by all ethnic groups; and the matter of national/cultural identity is a European problem, as well.

Higher incomes, homes, education, prestige, low crime, and stable families are important Greek American assets, he said. Greek American organizations, such as AHI, AHEPA, and the National Hellenic Society are carrying out their efforts abroad successfully, encouraging a growing cordiality between Greece and the Diaspora, and the plan is to give everyone an opportunity to take part.

With electronic media no one is isolated, but it is being used internally, not externally. The AHIF on-line journal is an exception, as it seeks to influence a broad sphere, and includes American journalists. Cultural magazines online, podcasts, appeal to younger people and should be utilized. Regarding Greek American secular culture, dancing/music events are already successful to be continued and increased as are scheduled talks, Hellenic Link, the National Hellenic Museum, the activity of Pontian groups, film screenings, and export as well as import.

There is a need, however, for print media, which now includes the National Herald, the "Greek News" newspaper, Hellenic News of America.

Concerning secular higher education, it was said that more Greek Studies programs and language centers are needed as well as studies abroad, outreach to Greece, and more community support. There is relatively nothing written about the Greek crisis in mass media.

The point was made that Greek Orthodoxy in America, leaving aside financial and sexual scandals, is in decline, there are fewer churches and not enough priests, and parishes are depending on food festivals to survive. Non-immigrant parishioners are still ethnic and spouses are mainly converts. There are three options for a solution to this: 1. Continue as we are and hope to muddle through. 2. Tighten Hellenic identity, making it stricter, smaller but coherent, narrowing the multi-ethnic element. 3. Seek converts and consolidation with other Eastern Orthodox Churches; do as the Roman Catholics have done. Accept multi-ethnic parishes.

Greek Americans have a unique cultural heritage. Greeks were the founders of European thought and literature. "We at AHI stress the Greek 'rule of law concept,'" said Georgakas. Christ and some disciples spoke Greek, some of New Testament is written in Greek, Early Christian theology was based in Greece, the Byzantines warded off Islamic empires long enough for Europe to become Europe, Greek scholars set off the Renaissance in Italy and even northern Europe, Greeks carried out the first successful revolt against the Ottomans and first defeat of the fascists in WWII

The Future of Hellenism Conferences are held in a different city each year. MASTER OF CEREMONIES 16th Annual Future of Hellenism in America: George Rassias, Esq., Schmidt, Kirifides, Rassias. INVOCATION: Rev. Presbyter Christos Christofidis, Proistamenos Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Wilmington, Delaware. OPENING: Nick Larigakis (who just completed his 30th successful year as President of the American Hellenic Institute). WELCOME: Conference Chairman and AHI Board Member Nick Chimicles, Senior Partner, Chimicles & Tikellis LLP and Lisa Blunt Rochester, Congresswoman, Delaware. GREETINGS: Delaware Senator Christopher Coons. PRESENTATION: AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in America Honorees: Odyssey Charter School of Wilmington, Georgia Halakos, and John Vasiliou. KEYNOTE: Ambassador Haris Lilacs, Ambassador of Greece to the United States. BENEDICTION: Rev. Presbyter Christos Christofidis. Panels and speakers will be discussed in subsequent articles.

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AHIF Hosts 16th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

WASHINGTON, DC –The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its Sixteenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year's conference was held in Wilmington, Del., at the DoubleTree Hotel, Nov. 17-18, 2017.

Featuring nearly 20 prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

On the eve of the Hellenism Conference, November 17, AHIF held the most successful conference dinner to date with more than 150 persons in attendance. There, AHI President Nick Larigakis officially opened the conference and welcome remarks followed from Conference Chairman Mr. Nick Chimicles, Esq. and greetings from Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester who represents Delaware at large; George Rassias, Partner at Schmidt, Kirifides & Rassias served as Master of Ceremonies. Ambassador Haris Lalacos, Greek Ambassador to the United States delivered the Keynote Address, "The Role of Greece in Promoting Hellenism Abroad." The Invocation and Benediction were given by Rev. Presbyter Christos Christofidis of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of Wilmington.



Georgia Halakos and John Vasiliou received AHI's Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in America. The Odyssey Charter School of Wilmington received the AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award in recognition of its contribution to public education and the advancement of Hellenic paideia in America.

In acceptance remarks, Halakos commended the work of others in the community, saying, "I would like to thank AHI for this award. Although I am very grateful and honored, I must say that there are many others, countless others, deserving of this recognition – and those should be standing up here with me and in front of me. Whether it is our respected Clergy, fellow parishioners, fellow members of our local Philoptochos Society or the many other organizations of our Church, or the many good people who have served on our Parish Council over the years — the work of the Church is the product of many minds, hands and hearts. Again, thank you for this recognition I am very honored and humbled."

In his acceptance, Vasiliou complimented AHI's advocacy and thanked the Institute and its president for championing the rule of law, "For more than four decades, the American Hellenic Institute has been a strong advocate of the foreign policy issues that matter most to us Greek Americans. Bringing us together annually at this Future of Hellenism Conference is yet another example of their continual effort towards keeping these issues in the spotlight. I appreciate the recognition tonight for the work that I do in the Greek American community to promote both Hellenism and Orthodoxy, but I am even more thankful to AHI and President Nick Larigakis for continually championing the rule of law in the Eastern Mediterranean."

Dmitri Dandolos, Board President, representing Odyssey Charter School, spoke about the school's roots and accomplishments during its 11 years of operation.

In 2006, the members of AHEPA Chapter 95 began an initiative to create Delaware's first foreign-language/math-focused elementary charter school. Their vision was to excite students about learning and position them to succeed in life through the teaching of the Greek language, history and culture as a portal to Humanities and a foundation to Arts and Sciences.



"Today, with 1,668 children in grades K through 10, Odyssey is Delaware's first dual-language school where Modern Greek is taught as a second language. The skills learned through this dual-language instruction have enabled Odyssey's students to exceed every required performance standard of the Delaware Department of Education. For example, Odyssey has received accolades such as placement in Delaware's 'Top Ten Schools in Standardized Testing' in statewide assessments and being rated consistently as a 'Superior School' by the Delaware Department of Education.

"Odyssey is very proud to have received by the American Hellenic Institute the Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award in recognition of its contribution to public education and the advancement of Hellenic Paideia in America."

The AHI Foundation hosted the conference, in cooperation with AHEPA Chapter 95, Wilmington; AHI-Delaware Chapter, Hellenic News of America, Hellenic University Club of Wilmington, and Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church community of Wilmington.

THE CONFERENCE

The conference began with welcome remarks from AHI President Nick Larigakis and Conference Chairman Nick Chimicles. Mr. Chimicles, introduced the conference's Opening Keynote Speaker Professor Dan Georgakas, director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY.

Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) opened the discussion by expressing his condolences for the flood victims in Athens. He extended his gratitude for the compassion of the Greek people in dealing with the refugee crisis. The senator stated, "The United States and Greece have a remarkable shared history and Greek Americans have taught us a great deal." He added that the very first foreign policy issues he was asked about as a candidate were his thoughts on Greece and Cyprus. Senator Coons discussed how he led a delegation to Crete to enhance his knowledge of NSA Souda Bay. He also talked about the need to restart efforts to find a Cyprus solution, and he cited Turkish President Erdogan's belligerence.

Professor Georgakas presented on the theme, "The Now and Future of Greek America" in which he emphasized that by 2050, the vast majority of Greek Americans would be of mixed ethnic heritage. In that sense, they will have to make a conscious choice to identify as being Greek. Georgakas outlined actions the community can take to make that choice more likely. He spoke

of youth trips to Greece sponsored by the community, secular cultural centers, religious activism, and creative use of mass media. He also noted major changes in American society that could aid in the teaching of the Greek language, including online distance learning. In the spirit of the Socratic maxim, "Know thyself," Georgakas underscored the need to support Greek American studies and to be fully aware of the community's history in the United States. He placed further emphasis that our identity must be Greek and American, rather than narrowly ethnocentric.

Panel I: Current Perspectives on Current Challenges

Session speakers and moderator included:

Paul Kotrotsios, Founder & Publisher of the Hellenic News of America and Hermes Expo International

Dr. Gonda Van Steen, Executive Director, Modern Greek Studies Association of North America, and Cassas Chair in Greek Studies at the University of Florida

Nick Chimicles, Conference Chairman, Senior Partner, Chimicles & Tikellis LLP; and AHI Board Member

Moderator: Dr. George Moutsatsos, President, AHI-Delaware Chapter

Paul Kotrotsios addressed the role of print media in the Greek American community. From humble beginnings thirty years ago, the Hellenic News of America has grown into a 64-page publication with a significant social media presence. Mr. Kotrotsios explained how his paper has served as a cohesive forum for the Greek-American community and contributed to the preservation of the Hellenic identity in America. He highlighted his paper's accomplishments, which includes continued support for Greek American politicians, helping to foster stronger economic ties between Philadelphia and Thessaloniki, and providing scholarships for students studying in Greece. Mr. Kotrotsios thanked his supporters and encouraged further community engagement with his paper. He closed by praising the critical role the American Hellenic Institute has played in securing the future of Hellenism.

Dr. Gonda Van Steen analyzed two models of Greek-American education at the pre-college level and stressed the need to build bridges to Modern Greek Studies programs at the university level. One model, the "expatriate model," has focused traditionally on children's education in Greek or in a bilingual system. A newer "charter school model" aims at a more thorough cultural integration of a student audience that encompasses many more American students, reaching well beyond the children of Greek immigrants.

Van Steen proceeded to outline the history and role of MGSA. The association functions as a clearinghouse and forum for all academics and professionals interested in promoting the scholarly study of Greece, Cyprus, Greek America, and the Greek language. Since its inception in 1968, MGSA has gathered neo-hellenists at biennial symposia and has been engaged in the publication of scholarly articles via its journal, the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. The association further reaches a wide audience via its website, listserv, job postings, and other

information useful to colleagues, especially to graduate students and recent PhDs, who face a bleak job market in the Humanities. Van Steen also presented the Center for Greek Studies at the University of Florida, where she is housed, as a vibrant hub that brings modern and ancient Greek together in teaching, research, and service and builds on the strengths of the Florida Greek community.

Nick Chimicles, spoke about the important role of successful Greek American professionals to encourage and support the advancement of young, qualified Greek Americans in their careers. This has been a longstanding page in many other ethnic playbooks and Greek Americans need to be more mindful and committed to give a helping hand to those who moving-up their own ladders of professional achievement and success. Mr. Chimicles also addressed some of the “takeaways” from the conference including the stark statistics presented by other speakers with respect to the declining number of families becoming members of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States. That situation has been unfolding over the last 25 years, resulting in a corresponding reduction in church marriages and baptisms (but, unsurprisingly, an increase in funerals) and an insufficient number of priests to serve our communities. This led to a lively discussion about ways to increase church retention rates, including phasing out the use of the Greek language in the divine liturgy and other church services and allowing women to become members of the clergy.

Panel II: Engagement in Our

Community & How We Compare

Session speakers and moderator included:

Matthew Caplan, Board Member, B'nai B'rith International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy

Dr. Zenon Christodoulou, Founding Chair of the New Jersey State Hellenic American Heritage Commission

Nick Larigakis, President, American Hellenic Institute

Moderator: Spiros Mantzavinos, VP of Strategic Communications & Public Affairs, The NGAGE Co.

Matthew Caplan presented on the comparisons between the Jewish American and Greek American communities, as well as programs and innovations the Greek American community can look to for best practices. In particular, Caplan discussed his personal experiences with the Birthright program that has sent nearly 40,000 young people annually to Israel. He also discussed the shared problems and unique opportunities each community may face in a continuing multi-cultural world. Noting comparable rates of assimilation, Caplan highlighted the approaches of both progressive and traditional streams of Judaism. He cited the Pew Research Center's recent study on Jewish identity to suggest that there is solace to be found in sparking, continuing, and maintaining a prideful ethnic identity while still also being both respectful and

understanding of other backgrounds through dialogue. Caplan also noted the organizational structure of the American Jewish community, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and board membership structures of Jewish-communal organizations, to suggest ways in which the Greek community could establish a similar framework. Overall, Caplan hoped to impart words of encouragement and pride in engaging future generations in what it means to recognize where one's family came from and what that means for the rest of one's life.

Dr. Zenon Christodoulou discussed the many issues that emerge when evaluating whether Greek American Organizations meet the needs of the Greek community. At the AHI Conference, we explored the topic objectively to yield unique insights, unbiased conclusions and progressive strategies for the future. It was realized that the national Greek community is changing rapidly and beyond our control. To think that our children and grandchildren will express their values in the same way we did is unrealistic. That's not to say that they won't embody and support the same traditional Greek ideals we have, but their method of support will seem very foreign to older generations. We must anticipate and welcome this potentially awkward change as tomorrow's needs will not be constrained by the past. When arriving in a new land, immigrant communities often band together in an effort to survive. Subsequent generations transcend the survival stage and often maintain ethnic behavior patterns out of habit. Current and future generations will continue their local socialization and often adhere to traditions out of mere obligation, if at all. Behaviors of this type will likely prove unsustainable as the time demands of today don't allow for superfluous activities. So, the community's leadership must be mindful of the changing demands of our diaspora and provide current benefits that satisfy their ever-changing needs. Finally, the discussion questioned the need for multiple redundant organizations which only serve to dilute our collective efforts and confuse would-be-members from participating in a substantive way. If our stewardship of Hellenism is to be successful, we must maintain a flexibility and openness that reflect current and future realities while limiting the dilution of our efforts, which often comes in the form of too many organizations pursuing similar objectives with limited resources.

Nick Larigakis addressed the topic of "Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to the U.S.?" He contended that a majority of the Greek American community "Don't know [the issues] that well or know them only superficially." Larigakis stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is in the best interest of the United States to support the Greek American and Cypriot American community's issues. He cited Greece's strategic importance to the United States, including its role in NATO and the facilitation of utilizing NSA Souda Bay. For the latter, Larigakis shared his first-hand experience visiting NSA Souda Bay and the interactions he has had with U.S. military officials who stressed the importance of the base. He also referenced the importance of grassroots education on the issues of Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey. Grassroots activism and education of policy makers is vital to the future of Greek Americans. Furthermore, Larigakis discussed the geopolitical significance of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral relationship and the democratic stability it provides in an otherwise instable region. Finally, he touched on how effective local activism can be to achieving

results on Capitol Hill and why it is crucial for all organizations to “be on the same page” with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements to which many Greek American organizations sign on.

Luncheon Keynote Speaker

President Larigakis introduced the conference luncheon’s principal speaker, Dr. Van Coufoudakis, former dean, professor emeritus, Indiana University-Purdue University College of Arts and Science. He spoke on the theme, “Keeping Hellenism Alive in 21st Century America: Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats.”

After examination of the challenges and opportunities facing the Greek American community in the 21st century, Van Coufoudakis concluded: “We spoke of our community’s changing nature and the challenges and opportunities confronting our community. The challenges are real, but so are the opportunities for maintaining Hellenism alive in 21st century America, a country that now finds strength in its diversity. The old dilemma of being Greek and Orthodox in America does not exist any longer. If we believe in who we are, and in the strength of our heritage, tradition and faith, we can keep Hellenism alive in the U.S. The challenges and opportunities are ours. No one else can protect or promote Hellenism for us.”

Panel III: The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community

Session speakers and moderator included:

Rev. John Touloumes, President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council

Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, PhD., Professor of Education, North Park University, Illinois

Dr. Panos Stavrianidis, Adjunct Professor of Management, SUNYA

Moderator: Leon Andris, AHI Board Member

Father John Touloumes discussed the importance of community as presented in the understanding of the *platia*, a vibrant, open to all, friendly town-center in traditional Greek communities. Father John reveals the church as the most significant community, or *platia*, and the most important source of Hellenism for Greek Americans. Through the church, Greek Americans are connected to their culture, faith, family, history and future. However, the Greek Orthodox Church in America is grappling with a significant decline in church attendance over the past decade. In response to these demographic challenges, Father John proposes, “to continue to grow the Greek Orthodox Church in America, to keep the fountain of Hellenic spirit from drying up, to open the arms of both to the world, we need to keep the experience of the *platia* alive.” He suggests reaching out to those beyond the Greek community and welcome them to the church with open arms. He cites his own parish as an example of community that has flourished through embracing diversity and is now home to people of many different

ethnicities. Hellenism and the Greek Orthodox Church are forever linked, and for both to thrive, we must live up to the ethos behind the traditional *platia*.

Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D. provided an examination of how second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity. Through her study, Dr. Bartolomei demonstrated a widening gap between second-generation Greek Americans and third/third-plus Greek Americans and a marked generational decrease of Greek cultural, ethnic, and religious identity. Although many of the third/third-plus generation participants in her study are not as involved in the Greek community and Greek Orthodox Church as second-generation Greek Americans are, the majority still consider themselves Greek Orthodox, maintain several Greek traditions and customs, and are proud of their identity. Dr. Bartolomei maintains the changing face of Hellenism continues to transform Greek communities. "We have entered a new phase," she said. "To preserve our heritage, it is critical that we change the ways in which we interact with our youth, especially our young adults, and present them with a more contemporary view of their ethnicity. Considering that the majority of third/third plus generation Greek Americans in this study expressed a strong interest in studying the Greek language, the results from this study can serve as a tool for the advancement of Modern Greek Studies programs. Additionally, innovative programs and initiatives such as: Study Abroad in Greece; AHI and the National Hellenic Society scholarship programs; service-learning programs in Greece for college students; and specialized study programs in Greece that focus on contemporary Hellenic culture are the key to keeping our Greek American youth connected and involved."

Dr. Panos Stavrianidis, Ph.D. presented on the topic, "The Cultural Revolution of Greek America's Millennials and their Impact on the Preservation of Hellenism." During his presentation, Dr. Stavrianidis emphasized the role of Millennials, as major influencers in the evolving Greek America of the 21st century. Millennials have become the nation's largest generation, surpassing the Baby Boomers. They are also the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort of youth in the nation's history. Nonetheless, Millennials markedly are less religious than previous generations. Through quantitative and qualitative data, Dr. Stavrianidis demonstrated the impact of Greek America's Millennials on the preservation of Hellenism. He also indicated the role of the Greek Orthodox Church as the major pillar of Greek America and its ability/inability to remain as such in the future. Results demonstrate that the decline of the attendance and membership within the Greek Orthodox Church in the U.S. has had an immediate impact in the continuation and retention of basic characteristics like the Greek language, ethnic identity, customs and culture. The Orthodox Church, being the major center of influence, should reconsider its previous methods and renew them to accommodate the plethora of intermarriages which have become interracial as well. Dr. Stavrianidis also emphasized the steady decline of the existing Hellenic secular organizations and predicted that they will drastically diminish in a decade or two. He proceeded to mention that organizations like AHI and AHEPA – with proven results throughout their tenure – can play a pivotal role in attracting millennials through progressive programs that can be quite effective in instilling a new and more "acceptable" Hellenic character to them.

Panel IV: Looking to the Next**Generation of Greek Americans**

Session speakers and moderator included:

Art Dimopoulos, Executive Director, National Hellenic Society

Nick Larigakis, President, American Hellenic Institute

Elias Gerasoulis, Student, University of Pennsylvania

Elizabeth Tzimopoulos Conway, Federal Strategy & Operations Analyst, Deloitte

Moderator: Peter Milios, legislative director, American Hellenic Institute

Art Dimopoulos discussed the need to adopt customer-centric approaches to preserving, celebrating and passing on the paradosis of Hellenic heritage, culture and traditions through dynamic programs such as the National Hellenic Society's Heritage Greece Program. Heritage Greece is a shared experience of Greek American students and a peer group of students from the American College of Greece in Athens, Europe's oldest and largest American styled higher education institution. Together the students explore their shared heritage and identity. Upon their return from Greece, the students become part of the Heritage Greece Alumni network, where NHS continues their commitment to help them advance in their careers and serve as ambassadors of Hellenic heritage in America.

Nick Larigakis spoke about the American Hellenic Foundation Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and other various study abroad programs offered by Greek American organizations. He noted the difference of the AHI Foundation trip, which is that college-age students travel to both Greece and Cyprus with a specific focus on foreign policy. The goal of this two-week program is to help facilitate a better understanding of these issues with future Greek American leaders. "We provide a living classroom," he said describing the program's ability to provide its intimate group of 10 students with real-world, first-hand experiences such as visiting occupied Cyprus to witness Turkish troops and desecrated churches. The small number of students also allows for proper dialogue and discussion with policymakers and diplomats to explain their foreign policy practices. Larigakis also discussed success stories of Policy Trip alumni. For example, Dina Baroudos, who helped to foster collaboration with the Lexington Institute on Souda Bay's importance via the white paper, "Souda Bay: NATO's Military Gem in the Eastern Mediterranean," and its subsequent release on Capitol Hill. Alexandra Veletsis is another example. She works in the Office of Public Liaison at the White House. He also noted that AHI's Legislative Director, Peter Milios attended the program, as well as Elias and Elizabeth, the next two speakers representing the Next Generation's perspectives.

Mr. Elias Gerasoulis presented on the topic, "An Expanded Vision of Hellenism." He talked about how Hellenism extends beyond normative cultural practices, such as music and food. Rather, Hellenism is a much deeper, transcendent ideal with universal implications. He talked about his own personal multi-ethnic background and how an expanded definition of Hellenism could be

repurposed into institutional structures. Examples of how a modernized and nuanced approach to Hellenism could succeed include the American Hellenic Institute's own Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and the success of the Odyssey Charter School and other similar institutions. Elias added that initiatives to promote Greek-American mentorship need to be standardized and expanded. Furthermore, investments towards education initiatives such as the Odyssey Charter School should happen so that one day, thousands of such institutions flourish throughout the country. For this to happen, Elias stated, there needs to be coordinated effort and investment in the Greek American community. He thinks that young people need to be brought into the process, and Hellenism needs to present a powerful way that is relevant to their lives. For this to happen, young Greek Americans need to be involved and have a voice in terms of directing the future of Hellenism. Overall, Elias is optimistic about Hellenism and its future.

Elizabeth Tzimopoulos Conway stated that the meaning of Hellenism is unique to all of us—religion, language, customs, traditions. Older generations of Greeks often refer to the "Good Old Days," bemoaning today's "disappearing diaspora," and contending that "Hellenism is dying." We are in an age of acceleration unlike any other. The world is rapidly changing, and technology is advancing at lightning speed. As a reflex to rapid change, older generations latch onto the past like an anchor—we see this especially with the current state of the Greek Orthodox Church. For the longest time, the Church has been an anchor of Hellenism, with many seeing Orthodoxy as inseparable from the concept of Hellenism. But Orthodoxy is only one vehicle through which Hellenism is expressed.

Hellenism is not a mold defined by select criteria, but an evolving organism that extends beyond language, religion, or celebration. As "Hellenes," we need to care about more than just bouzoukia, spanakopita, and kalamatiano. We also need to care about Greece from a global perspective and be aware of the challenges facing Greece today. She adds, we need to think not just about how we can maintain a Hellenic cultural pride, but how we can be advocates of the greater picture of Hellenism. As a participant in the AHIF Foreign Policy Trip, she stated the group explored pressing issues facing the Republic of Cyprus and Greece. Throughout the group's interactions with politicians, diplomats, business leaders, and members of the military, the students began to understand Greece's geostrategic importance in the Mediterranean, and how Greek Americans can be better advocates for Greece. Conways believes the future of Hellenism requires a much greater accountability to the challenges facing Greece alongside our adherence to traditional language and religion. There is no denying that Hellenism is riding massive waves of change—linguistically, religiously, and even with the rise of mixed-marriages, she says. "However, one is no less Greek because of blood percentage, language fluency, or adherence to faith. A good Hellene needs to be culturally, politically, and socially accountable to a Hellenistic cause. So long as we pursue this accountability to the entire Greek cause, Hellenism will continue to thrive," she concluded.

Following the series of sessions, AHI Board Member Nick Karambelas, Esq. presented an overview of the day's proceedings and moderated a discussion presented under the theme,

“Where Do We Go From Here?” that included AHI President, Nick Larigakis, Dr. Van Coufoudakis, Professor Dan Georgakas, and Nick Chimicles. An in-depth Q&A session ensued, and the conference’s many sponsors were acknowledged for their generous support.

“On behalf of AHI, I convey the Institute’s sincere appreciation to AHI Board Member Dimitri Halakos for his assistance and steadfast support of this conference,” Larigakis said. “Dimitri helped to coordinate logistics and was a true asset to the event being yet another success.”

December 27, 2017

<http://aheworld.serverbox.net/media-center/press-releases/2017/2197-ahif-hosts-16th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference.html>

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Georgia Halakos and John Vasiliou received AHI's Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in America. The Odyssey Charter School of Wilmington received the AHI Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award in recognition of its contribution to public education and the advancement of Hellenic paideia in America.

In acceptance remarks, Halakos commended the work of others in the community, saying, "I would like to thank AHI for this award. Although I am very grateful and honored, I must say that there are many others, countless others, deserving of this recognition – and those should be standing up here with me and in front of me. Whether it is our respected Clergy, fellow parishioners, fellow members of our local Philoptochos Society or the many other organizations of our Church, or the many good people who have served on our Parish Council over the years — the work of the Church is the product of many minds, hands and hearts. Again, thank you for this recognition I am very honored and humbled."

In his acceptance, Vasiliou complimented AHI's advocacy and thanked the Institute and its president for championing the rule of law, "For more than four decades, the American Hellenic Institute has been a strong advocate of the foreign policy issues that matter most to us Greek Americans. Bringing us together annually at this Future of Hellenism Conference is yet another example of their continual effort towards keeping these issues in the spotlight. I appreciate the recognition tonight for the work that I do in the Greek American community to promote both Hellenism and Orthodoxy, but I am even more thankful to AHI and President Nick Larigakis for continually championing the rule of law in the Eastern Mediterranean."

Dmitri Dandolos, Board President, representing Odyssey Charter School, spoke about the school's roots and accomplishments during its 11 years of operation.

"In 2006, the members of AHEPA Chapter 95 began an initiative to create Delaware's first foreign-language/math-focused elementary charter school. Their vision was to excite students about learning and position them to succeed in life through the teaching of the Greek language, history and culture as a portal to Humanities and a foundation to Arts and Sciences.

"Today, with 1,668 children in grades K through 10, Odyssey is Delaware's first dual-language school where Modern Greek is taught as a second language. The skills learned through this dual-language instruction have enabled Odyssey's students to exceed every required performance standard of the Delaware Department of Education. For example, Odyssey has received accolades such as placement in Delaware's 'Top Ten Schools in Standardized Testing' in statewide assessments and being rated consistently as a 'Superior School' by the Delaware Department of Education.

"Odyssey is very proud to have received by the American Hellenic Institute the Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award in recognition of its contribution to public education and the advancement of Hellenic Paideia in America."

The conference covered the following topics:

- Opening and Welcome Remarks
- Current Perspective on Current Challenges (Panel I)
- Engagement in Our Community & How We Compare (Panel II)
- Luncheon Speaker
- The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community (Panel III)
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- Discussion: Where Do We Go From Here?

The AHI Foundation hosted the conference, in cooperation with AHEPA Chapter 95, Wilmington; AHI-Delaware Chapter, *Hellenic News of America*, Hellenic University Club of Wilmington, and Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church community of Wilmington.

“We sincerely appreciate the support from our many generous sponsors,” AHI President Nick Larigakis said. “Thanks to their support, the Conference on Hellenism remains a success on an annual basis.”

Additional Conference Sponsors included: Gus Andy, James and Theodore Pedas, Constantine Galanis. Heritage Sponsors: Tsimas Management and the Tsionas Family. Hellenic Hosts: Nick Chimicles, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of Wilmington, DE, James Lagos, Pat’s Pizza, Seasons Pizza, Winner Ford (Tom & Georgia Hatzis). Supporters included: Anagnostis Matulas, Dr. George Moutsatsos, Astra Foods, PK’s Food, Opa Opa and George Rassias.

Each year the conference is held in a different U.S. city to spread the seeds of ideas generated at the conference, and to obtain feedback from the local Greek American community on various challenges facing Hellenism in America. Conference speakers identified key challenges facing the Greek American community today and offered suggestions for the future.

Conference Summary

The conference began with welcome remarks from AHI President Nick Larigakis and Conference Chairman Nick Chimicles. Mr. Chimicles, introduced the conference’s Opening Keynote Speaker Professor Dan Georgakas, director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY.

Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) opened the discussion by expressing his condolences for the flood victims in Athens. He extended his gratitude for the compassion of the Greek people in dealing with the refugee crisis. The senator stated, “The United States and Greece have a remarkable shared history and Greek Americans have taught us a great deal.” He added that the very first foreign policy issues he was asked about as a candidate were his thoughts on Greece and Cyprus. Senator Coons discussed how he led a delegation to Crete to enhance his knowledge of

NSA Souda Bay. He also talked about the need to restart efforts to find a Cyprus solution, and he cited Turkish President Erdogan's belligerence.

Professor Georgakas presented on the theme, "The Now and Future of Greek America" in which he emphasized that by 2050, the vast majority of Greek Americans would be of mixed ethnic heritage. In that sense, they will have to make a conscious choice to identify as being Greek. Georgakas outlined actions the community can take to make that choice more likely. He spoke of youth trips to Greece sponsored by the community, secular cultural centers, religious activism, and creative use of mass media. He also noted major changes in American society that could aid in the teaching of the Greek language, including online distance learning. In the spirit of the Socratic maxim, "Know thyself," Georgakas underscored the need to support Greek American studies and to be fully aware of the community's history in the United States. He placed further emphasis that our identity must be Greek and American, rather than narrowly ethnocentric.

Panel 1: Current Perspectives on Current Challenges

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Paul Kotrotsios, **Founder & Publisher of the *Hellenic News of America* and *Hermes Expo International***
- Dr. Gonda Van Steen, Executive Director, Modern Greek Studies Association of North America, and Cassas Chair in Greek Studies at the University of Florida
- Nick Chimicles, **Conference Chairman, Senior Partner, Chimicles & Tikellis LLP; and AHI Board Member**
- Moderator: Dr. George Moutsatsos, **President, AHI-Delaware Chapter**

Paul Kotrotsios addressed the role of print media in the Greek American community. From humble beginnings thirty years ago, the *Hellenic News of America* has grown into a 64-page publication with a significant social media presence. Mr. Kotrotsios explained how his paper has served as a cohesive forum for the Greek-American community and contributed to the preservation of the Hellenic identity in America. He highlighted his paper's accomplishments, which includes continued support for Greek American politicians, helping to foster stronger economic ties between Philadelphia and Thessaloniki, and providing scholarships for students studying in Greece. Mr. Kotrotsios thanked his supporters and encouraged further community engagement with his paper. He closed by praising the critical role the American Hellenic Institute has played in securing the future of Hellenism.

Dr. Gonda Van Steen analyzed two models of Greek-American education at the pre-college level and stressed the need to build bridges to Modern Greek Studies programs at the university level. One model, the "expatriate model," has focused traditionally on children's education in Greek or in a bilingual system. A newer "charter school model" aims at a more thorough cultural integration of a student audience that encompasses many more American students, reaching well beyond the children of Greek immigrants.

Van Steen proceeded to outline the history and role of MGSA. The association functions as a clearinghouse and forum for all academics and professionals interested in promoting the scholarly study of Greece, Cyprus, Greek America, and the Greek language. Since its inception in 1968, MGSA has gathered neo-hellenists at biennial symposia and has been engaged in the publication of scholarly articles via its journal, the *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. The association further reaches a wide audience via its website, listserv, job postings, and other information useful to colleagues, especially to graduate students and recent PhDs, who face a bleak job market in the Humanities. Van Steen also presented the Center for Greek Studies at the University of Florida, where she is housed, as a vibrant hub that brings modern and ancient Greek together in teaching, research, and service and builds on the strengths of the Florida Greek community.

Nick Chimicles, spoke about the important role of successful Greek American professionals to encourage and support the advancement of young, qualified Greek Americans in their careers. This has been a longstanding page in many other ethnic playbooks and Greek Americans need to be more mindful and committed to give a helping hand to those who moving-up their own ladders of professional achievement and success. Mr. Chimicles also addressed some of the “takeaways” from the conference including the stark statistics presented by other speakers with respect to the declining number of families becoming members of the Greek Orthodox Church in the United States. That situation has been unfolding over the last 25 years, resulting in a corresponding reduction in church marriages and baptisms (but, unsurprisingly, an increase in funerals) and an insufficient number of priests to serve our communities. This led to a lively discussion about ways to increase church retention rates, including phasing out the use of the Greek language in the divine liturgy and other church services and allowing women to become members of the clergy.

Panel II: Engagement in Our Community & How We Compare

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Matthew Caplan, **Board Member, B’nai B’rith International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy**
- Dr. Zenon Christodoulou, **Founding Chair of the New Jersey State Hellenic American Heritage Commission**
- Nick Larigakis, President, American Hellenic Institute
- Moderator: Spiros Mantzavinos, VP of Strategic Communications & Public Affairs, The NGAGE Co.

Matthew Caplan presented on the comparisons between the Jewish American and Greek American communities, as well as programs and innovations the Greek American community can look to for best practices. In particular, Caplan discussed his personal experiences with the Birthright program that has sent nearly 40,000 young people annually to Israel. He also discussed the shared problems and unique opportunities each community may face in a

continuing multi-cultural world. Noting comparable rates of assimilation, Caplan highlighted the approaches of both progressive and traditional streams of Judaism. He cited the Pew Research Center's recent study on Jewish identity to suggest that there is solace to be found in sparking, continuing, and maintaining a prideful ethnic identity while still also being both respectful and understanding of other backgrounds through dialogue. Caplan also noted the organizational structure of the American Jewish community, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, and board membership structures of Jewish-communal organizations, to suggest ways in which the Greek community could establish a similar framework. Overall, Caplan hoped to impart words of encouragement and pride in engaging future generations in what it means to recognize where one's family came from and what that means for the rest of one's life.

Dr. Zenon Christodoulou discussed the many issues that emerge when evaluating whether Greek American Organizations meet the needs of the Greek community. At the AHI Conference, we explored the topic objectively to yield unique insights, unbiased conclusions and progressive strategies for the future. It was realized that the national Greek community is changing rapidly and beyond our control. To think that our children and grandchildren will express their values in the same way we did is unrealistic. That's not to say that they won't embody and support the same traditional Greek ideals we have, but their method of support will seem very foreign to older generations. We must anticipate and welcome this potentially awkward change as tomorrow's needs will not be constrained by the past. When arriving in a new land, immigrant communities often band together in an effort to survive. Subsequent generations transcend the survival stage and often maintain ethnic behavior patterns out of habit. Current and future generations will continue their local socialization and often adhere to traditions out of mere obligation, if at all. Behaviors of this type will likely prove unsustainable as the time demands of today don't allow for superfluous activities. So, the community's leadership must be mindful of the changing demands of our diaspora and provide current benefits that satisfy their ever-changing needs. Finally, the discussion questioned the need for multiple redundant organizations which only serve to dilute our collective efforts and confuse would-be-members from participating in a substantive way. If our stewardship of Hellenism is to be successful, we must maintain a flexibility and openness that reflect current and future realities while limiting the dilution of our efforts, which often comes in the form of too many organizations pursuing similar objectives with limited resources.

Nick Larigakis addressed the topic of "Greek American Issues: What Are They and Why Are They Important to the U.S.?" He contended that a majority of the Greek American community "Don't know [the issues] that well or know them only superficially." Larigakis stressed the importance of speaking to legislators as Americans and educating them as to why it is in the best interest of the United States to support the Greek American and Cypriot American community's issues. He cited Greece's strategic importance to the United States, including its role in NATO and the facilitation of utilizing NSA Souda Bay. For the latter, Larigakis shared his first-hand experience visiting NSA Souda Bay and the interactions he has had with U.S. military officials who stressed the importance of the base. He also referenced the importance of grassroots education on the issues of Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey. Grassroots activism and

education of policy makers is vital to the future of Greek Americans. Furthermore, Larigakis discussed the geopolitical significance of the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral relationship and the democratic stability it provides in an otherwise instable region. Finally, he touched on how effective local activism can be to achieving results on Capitol Hill and why it is crucial for all organizations to “be on the same page” with their policy statements, a role that AHI provides through its annual Policy Statements to which many Greek American organizations sign on.

Luncheon Keynote Speaker

President Larigakis introduced the conference luncheon’s principal speaker, Dr. Van Coufoudakis, former dean, professor emeritus, Indiana University-Purdue University College of Arts and Science. He spoke on the theme, “Keeping Hellenism Alive in 21st Century America: Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats.”

After examination of the challenges and opportunities facing the Greek American community in the 21st century, Van Coufoudakis concluded: “We spoke of our community’s changing nature and the challenges and opportunities confronting our community. The challenges are real, but so are the opportunities for maintaining Hellenism alive in 21st century America, a country that now finds strength in its diversity. The old dilemma of being Greek and Orthodox in America does not exist any longer. If we believe in who we are, and in the strength of our heritage, tradition and faith, we can keep Hellenism alive in the U.S. The challenges and opportunities are ours. No one else can protect or promote Hellenism for us.”

Panel III: The Changing Nature of the Greek American Community

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Rev. John Touloumes, **President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council**
- Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, PhD., **Professor of Education, North Park University, Illinois**
- Dr. Panos Stavrianidis, **Adjunct Professor of Management, SUNYA**
- Moderator: Leon Andris, **AHI Board Member**

Father John Touloumes discussed the importance of community as presented in the understanding of the *platia*, a vibrant, open to all, friendly town-center in traditional Greek communities. Father John reveals the church as the most significant community, or *platia*, and the most important source of Hellenism for Greek Americans. Through the church, Greek Americans are connected to their culture, faith, family, history and future. However, the Greek Orthodox Church in America is grappling with a significant decline in church attendance over the past decade. In response to these demographic challenges, Father John proposes, “to continue to grow the Greek Orthodox Church in America, to keep the fountain of Hellenic spirit from drying up, to open the arms of both to the world, we need to keep the experience of the *platia* alive.” He suggests reaching out to those beyond the Greek community and welcome

them to the church with open arms. He cites his own parish as an example of community that has flourished through embracing diversity and is now home to people of many different ethnicities. Hellenism and the Greek Orthodox Church are forever linked, and for both to thrive, we must live up to the ethos behind the traditional *platia*.

Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, Ph.D. provided an examination of how second, third, and third-plus generations of Greek Americans view their Greek ethnicity. Through her study, Dr. Bartolomei demonstrated a widening gap between second-generation Greek Americans and third/third-plus Greek Americans and a marked generational decrease of Greek cultural, ethnic, and religious identity. Although many of the third/third-plus generation participants in her study are not as involved in the Greek community and Greek Orthodox Church as second-generation Greek Americans are, the majority still consider themselves Greek Orthodox, maintain several Greek traditions and customs, and are proud of their identity. Dr. Bartolomei maintains the changing face of Hellenism continues to transform Greek communities. "We have entered a new phase," she said. "To preserve our heritage, it is critical that we change the ways in which we interact with our youth, especially our young adults, and present them with a more contemporary view of their ethnicity. Considering that the majority of third/third plus generation Greek Americans in this study expressed a strong interest in studying the Greek language, the results from this study can serve as a tool for the advancement of Modern Greek Studies programs. Additionally, innovative programs and initiatives such as: Study Abroad in Greece; AHI and the National Hellenic Society scholarship programs; service-learning programs in Greece for college students; and specialized study programs in Greece that focus on contemporary Hellenic culture are the key to keeping our Greek American youth connected and involved."

Dr. Panos Stavrianidis, Ph.D. presented on the topic, "The Cultural Revolution of Greek America's Millennials and their Impact on the Preservation of Hellenism." During his presentation, Dr. Stavrianidis emphasized the role of Millennials, as major influencers in the evolving Greek America of the 21st century. Millennials have become the nation's largest generation, surpassing the Baby Boomers. They are also the most ethnically and racially diverse cohort of youth in the nation's history. Nonetheless, Millennials markedly are less religious than previous generations. Through quantitative and qualitative data, Dr. Stavrianidis demonstrated the impact of Greek America's Millennials on the preservation of Hellenism. He also indicated the role of the Greek Orthodox Church as the major pillar of Greek America and its ability/inability to remain as such in the future. Results demonstrate that the decline of the attendance and membership within the Greek Orthodox Church in the U.S. has had an immediate impact in the continuation and retention of basic characteristics like the Greek language, ethnic identity, customs and culture. The Orthodox Church, being the major center of influence, should reconsider its previous methods and renew them to accommodate the plethora of intermarriages which have become interracial as well. Dr. Stavrianidis also emphasized the steady decline of the existing Hellenic secular organizations and predicted that they will drastically diminish in a decade or two. He proceeded to mention that organizations like AHI and AHEPA – with proven results throughout their tenure – can play a pivotal role in

attracting millennials through progressive programs that can be quite effective in instilling a new and more “acceptable” Hellenic character to them.

Panel IV: Looking to the Next Generation of Greek Americans

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Art Dimopoulos, Executive Director, National Hellenic Society
- Nick Larigakis, President, American Hellenic Institute
- Elias Gerasoulis, **Student, University of Pennsylvania**
- Elizabeth Tzimopoulos Conway, **Federal Strategy & Operations Analyst, Deloitte**
- Moderator: Peter Milios, legislative director, American Hellenic Institute

Art Dimopoulos discussed the need to adopt customer-centric approaches to preserving, celebrating and passing on the *paradosis* of Hellenic heritage, culture and traditions through dynamic programs such as the National Hellenic Society's *Heritage Greece Program*. Heritage Greece is a shared experience of Greek American students and a peer group of students from the American College of Greece in Athens, Europe's oldest and largest American styled higher education institution. Together the students explore their shared heritage and identity. Upon their return from Greece, the students become part of the Heritage Greece Alumni network, where NHS continues their commitment to help them advance in their careers and serve as ambassadors of Hellenic heritage in America.

Nick Larigakis spoke about the American Hellenic Foundation Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and other various study abroad programs offered by Greek American organizations. He noted the difference of the AHI Foundation trip, which is that college-age students travel to both Greece and Cyprus with a specific focus on foreign policy. The goal of this two-week program is to help facilitate a better understanding of these issues with future Greek American leaders. “We provide a living classroom,” he said describing the program's ability to provide its intimate group of 10 students with real-world, first-hand experiences such as visiting occupied Cyprus to witness Turkish troops and desecrated churches. The small number of students also allows for proper dialogue and discussion with policymakers and diplomats to explain their foreign policy practices. Larigakis also discussed success stories of Policy Trip alumni. For example, Dina Baroudos, who helped to foster collaboration with the Lexington Institute on Souda Bay's importance via the white paper, “Souda Bay: NATO's Military Gem in the Eastern Mediterranean,” and its subsequent release on Capitol Hill. Alexandra Veletsis is another example. She works in the Office of Public Liaison at the White House. He also noted that AHI's Legislative Director, Peter Milios attended the program, as well as Elias and Elizabeth, the next two speakers representing the Next Generation's perspectives.

Panel B: Next Generation Perspectives

Mr. Elias Gerasoulis presented on the topic, “An Expanded Vision of Hellenism.” He talked about how Hellenism extends beyond normative cultural practices, such as music and food. Rather, Hellenism is a much deeper, transcendent ideal with universal implications. He talked about his own personal multi-ethnic background and how an expanded definition of Hellenism could be repurposed into institutional structures. Examples of how a modernized and nuanced approach to Hellenism could succeed include the American Hellenic Institute’s own Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and the success of the Odyssey Charter School and other similar institutions. Elias added that initiatives to promote Greek-American mentorship need to be standardized and expanded. Furthermore, investments towards education initiatives such as the Odyssey Charter School should happen so that one day, thousands of such institutions flourish throughout the country. For this to happen, Elias stated, there needs to be coordinated effort and investment in the Greek American community. He thinks that young people need to be brought into the process, and Hellenism needs to present a powerful way that is relevant to their lives. For this to happen, young Greek Americans need to be involved and have a voice in terms of directing the future of Hellenism. Overall, Elias is optimistic about Hellenism and its future.

Elizabeth Tzimopoulos Conway stated that the meaning of Hellenism is unique to all of us—religion, language, customs, traditions. Older generations of Greeks often refer to the “Good Old Days,” bemoaning today’s “disappearing diaspora,” and contending that “Hellenism is dying.” We are in an age of acceleration unlike any other. The world is rapidly changing, and technology is advancing at lightning speed. As a reflex to rapid change, older generations latch onto the past like an anchor—we see this especially with the current state of the Greek Orthodox Church. For the longest time, the Church has been an anchor of Hellenism, with many seeing Orthodoxy as inseparable from the concept of Hellenism. But Orthodoxy is only one vehicle through which Hellenism is expressed.

Hellenism is not a mold defined by select criteria, but an evolving organism that extends beyond language, religion, or celebration. As “Hellenes,” we need to care about more than just bouzoukia, spanakopita, and kalamatiano. We also need to care about Greece from a global perspective and be aware of the challenges facing Greece today. She adds, we need to think not just about how we can maintain a Hellenic *cultural* pride, but how we can be advocates of the greater picture of Hellenism. As a participant in the AHIF Foreign Policy Trip, she stated the group explored pressing issues facing the Republic of Cyprus and Greece. Throughout the group’s interactions with politicians, diplomats, business leaders, and members of the military, the students began to understand Greece’s geostrategic importance in the Mediterranean, and how Greek Americans can be better advocates for Greece. Conways believes the future of Hellenism requires a much greater accountability to the challenges facing Greece alongside our adherence to traditional language and religion. There is no denying that Hellenism is riding massive waves of change—linguistically, religiously, and even with the rise of mixed-marriages, she says. “However, one is no less Greek because of blood percentage, language fluency, or

adherence to faith. A good Hellene needs to be culturally, politically, and socially accountable to a Hellenistic cause. So long as we pursue this accountability to the entire Greek cause, Hellenism will continue to thrive,” she concluded.









https://www.thenationalherald.com/archive_general_news_community/arthro/ahif_hosts_17th_annual_future_of_hellenism_in_america_conference-23995/

AHIF Hosts 17th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference



Rev. Presbyter Peter Kostakis gave the invocation with George Naftis, at left. Photo: Courtesy of AHIF

TNH Staff

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Featuring nearly twenty prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including: the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

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Ambassador Haris Lalacos, Greek ambassador to the United States, delivered the Keynote Address, "The Role of Greece in Promoting Hellenism Abroad." The ambassador's remarks were thorough and touched upon topics such as increase coordination between the U.S. and Greek governments. He emphasized that the relationship between the U.S. and Greece is at a high

point, and the future looks bright regarding the relationships between these two governments. One of his most poignant remarks, however, was when he discussed his affinity for Greek Americans. Amb. Lalacos stated, "I am always touched when Greek Americans are connected with Greek culture and language."

The Invocation and Benediction were given by Rev. Presbyter Peter Kostakis, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Dallas.



*AHI Foundation President Constantine Galanis, honoree Barbara Vittas, Amb. Haris Lalacos, honoree Maria Lainioti Carayannopoulos, and AHI President Nick Larigakis.
Photo: Courtesy of AHIF*

Barbara Vittas and Maria Lainioti Carayannopoulos received AHI's Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in America.

In her acceptance remarks, Vittas first thanked all the individuals involved with and speaking at the awards dinner, honored guests, attendees, as well as congratulating her fellow award-winner, Mrs. Maria Carayannopoulos. During her speech, Vittas said, "When I first moved to Texas in 1979 and became involved in the community, people had the conception of church-based initiatives as simply older Greek women at the kitchen [...] By 2012, Ladies Philoptochos Society was able to raise \$800,000 in philanthropic aid to those in Greece and Cyprus."

During her speech, Mrs. Carayannopoulos stated, "I am overwhelmed with gratitude and joy for this wonderful but totally unexpected honor. I am truly humbled! Thank you from my heart, Mr. Larigakis, for your leadership at AHI and for making a bridge to the Greek American communities near and far. And congratulations to my fellow winner, Barbara Vittas—it is an incredible honor to be up here with her. We should all be united in our efforts to preserve and share our Hellenism and Orthodoxy. I dedicate this plaque to my father who taught me to be humane, to my mother that gave me music to soothe my life and to my beloved late brother Dimitri who shared his life with me, mentored me, and brought me to America!"



December 14, 2018

<https://www.aheworld.org/press-releases-1/2018/12/4/ahif-hosts-17th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference>

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Special thanks to Donna Ralli-Lalangas and Paun A. Peters for their tremendous work in helping to make this year’s conference a complete success. Their assistance throughout the planning and implementation of the conference was instrumental.

“We sincerely appreciate the support from our many generous sponsors,” AHI President Nick Larigakis said. “Thanks to their support, the Conference on Hellenism remains a success on an annual basis.”

Additional Conference Sponsors included: Gus Andy, James and Theodore Pedas, Constantine Galanis. **Heritage Sponsors:** Alepooh, Inc. & Holy Trinity Choir, George Carayannopoulos, and Paun A. Peters & Family. **Hellenic Hosts included:** James H. Lagos Company Inc., The Paulos Foundation, and Theodore Vakrinis & Dr. Helen Abadzi. **Supporters included:** Donna Ralli-Lalangas and Vittas Aviation Consultants.

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CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The conference began with welcome remarks from AHI President Nick Larigakis, who introduced the conference's Opening Keynote Speaker, Professor Dan Georgakas, director of Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, Queens College, CUNY.

Professor Georgakas talked about the Greek-American community through a historicized lens. He explained that immigration from Greece to the United States occurred in three different waves: from the turn of the century until the 1930s, the mid-1940s until 1965, when racial immigration quotas were abolished, and then from 1965 until the 1980s. However, Professor Georgakas stated we can no longer rely on the motherland to provide increases to the Greek American population as net migration from Greece to the United States has been close to zero for the past three decades. Furthermore, Professor Georgakas emphasized that Greeks are marrying outside of their ethnic group at a large rate, and that Greek Americans in the future will have a plethora of cultures to identify with and from which to choose. As such, they could decide to identify with other cultures rather than Greek culture, potentially leading to the gradual erosion of the Greek American community. On balance, Professor Georgakas emphasized the urgency with which the Greek American community must view its longer-term trends.

PANEL I: CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON CURRENT CHALLENGES

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Dr. Georgios Anagnostou, professor, Ohio State University Department of Classics
- Professor Alexander Kitroeff, associate professor of History, Haverford University
- Moderator: George Vittas

Professor Anagnostou first spoke on the topic, "Greek Education in America: Are We Meeting the Needs." He spoke about Greek education not only being important to academic curricula, but also as a means of facilitating a modern Greek identity. Given there is a "transforming" Greek America, Professor Anagnostou stated the need to explore different potential directions. The three potential directions included a "turn toward the teaching of culture and religious (at the expense of language instruction), the emphasis in language, or [questioning] the need for cultural/language education." On balance, Professor Anagnostou argued that perhaps a more decentralized approach in which parishes are given more autonomy to conduct their programs could be more effective.

Professor Kitroeff spoke next on "The Role of Greek American Professionals. Are they meeting the needs?" The central theme of Professor Kitroeff's talk was what he termed the "paradox of success." Professor Kitroeff stated, on one hand, it is great news Greek Americans are achieving great economic and social success. On the other hand, he noted that success and becoming part of the American mainstream could dilute a commitment to the Greek American community. Professor Kitroeff noted that while Greek Americans should be involved in philanthropic activities not specifically associated with the Greek American community, the potential risk of

resources not being dedicated to Greek American organizations is a cause of concern. Professor Kitroeff then showed statistics on the amount that different ethnic groups in the United States donated to ethnic associations. The Greek American community, despite achieving tremendous socio-economic success, were shown as trailing behind other groups, such as Jewish Americans, in this regard. Overall, Professor Kitroeff emphasized the need for Greek Americans to support Greek American institutions even as Greek American influence extends beyond its ethnic boundaries.

PANEL II: ENGAGEMENT IN OUR COMMUNITY & HOW WE COMPARE

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Eric Fusfield, deputy director, B'nai B'rith International Center for Human Rights and Public Policy
- Nick Larigakis, president, American Hellenic Institute
- Moderator: Paun Peters

Mr. Fusfield prefaced his presentation by stating that a lot of what he expected to say was altered by the tragic antisemitic shootings at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mr. Fusfield stated that even though American Jews have made great strides in American society, this tragic shooting demonstrates that the safety of American Jews is still a legitimate concern. On that note, Mr. Fusfield warned about anti-Semitism on both the far-right and the far-left. He stated it is legitimate to inquire about the efficacy of specific Israeli government policies. However, many of the radical left-wing groups on college campuses are reflexively anti-Israel. Fusfield emphasized that preserving the State of Israel is of paramount importance to American Jews, especially in a world in which anti-Semitism still exists and poses a potential threat. Lastly, Fusfield also noted many Jews are currently marrying non-Jews in the United States and that it is essential that this trend is approached in a thoughtful and considerate manner.

Mr. Larigakis first commended Mr. Fusfield and the need to stand against the anti-Semitism as shown by the Pittsburgh shooting. On that note, Larigakis talked about how he spoke to Greek government officials about the need to remain vigilant against anti-Semitism, referring to a few cases in which Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in Greece. Moreover, the AHI president noted Greek Americans, like American Jews, did face discrimination in pre-WWII America, although Greece's brave stance against the Nazi's elevated Greek American stature and capitulated this once ostracized group into the mainstream. In that vein, Larigakis also commended the fundraising ability of American Jewish groups such as AIPAC, which has an annual budget in the tens of millions. Larigakis built upon some of the themes Professor Kitroeff touched upon, accentuating the need for better coordination of resources within the Greek American community and pointing to the American Jewish community as a model of success in this front.

LUNCHEON KEYNOTE SPEAKER

President Larigakis introduced the conference luncheon's principal speaker, Dr. Van Coufoudakis, former dean, professor emeritus, Indiana University-Purdue University College of Arts and Science. He spoke on the theme, "Keeping Hellenism Alive in 21st Century America: Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats."

While Professor Van Coufoudakis touched upon some of the challenges of the modern Greek American community, including potential erosion of culture, he also highlighted the advantages of Greeks in the 21st century United States. Greek Americans, Professor Coufoudakis argued, are

no longer subject to the same conformist pressures and racial discrimination that they experienced one hundred years ago in the United States. As such, Greek Americans can express their Orthodoxy or cultural customs in a completely unfettered fashion. Ultimately, Professor Coufoudakis stated that it is up to the Greek American community to promote and preserve Hellenism moving forward.

PANEL III: THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE GREEK AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Session speakers and moderator included:

- Rev. Fr. Philemon Patitsas, St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church, Naples, FL
- Dr. Angelyn Balodimas-Bartolomei, PDF, professor of Education, North Park University, Illinois
- Moderator: Leon Andris, AHI Board member

Reverend Patitsas gave a panoramic view of Hellenism and its relationship to Orthodoxy. Rev. Patitsas first described the importance of Greek philosophy and government as foundational to the renaissance, enlightenment, and ultimately modern-day Western society. Reverend Patitsas spoke about how this ancient ethos of inquiry and discovery served as a 'light' to the West. Moreover, Reverend Patitsas spoke about how faith, something that transcends logic and rationality, has also been an instrumental part of Hellenism's story and identity. Ultimately, Reverend Patitsas states, the goal of a priest is to help parishioners get to "know Christ."

By contrast, Dr. Balodimas-Bartolomei gave a detailed sociological analysis of first, second, and third generation Greek Americans. Her research is a study in "ethnogenesis," or more simply put, the formation of ethnic identity. Dr. Balodimas-Bartolomei had some very interesting insights. While she noted a decrease in ethnic demarcations over successive generations, there was an increased interest and curiosity in the exploration of ethnic identity in each consecutive generation. For example, a larger percentage of second generation Greek Americans speak the Greek language compared to third generation Greek Americans. However, a larger percentage of third generation Greek Americans have an interest in learning the language vis-à-vis second generation Greek Americans. In the end, Dr. Balodimas-Bartolomei concluded many younger Greek Americans, especially those from families who have been in America for multiple generations, "Do not go to Greek School, do not speak the language, are not around those who speak Greek, do not uphold many traditions, are not involved in organizations, do not read Greek magazines and newspapers, do not often go to Greece, do not care to marry a Greek American but.... They are very proud of being Greek, many still attend church, and a large number would like to study Greek."

PANEL IV: LOOKING TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF GREEK AMERICANS

Session speakers and moderator include:

- Art Dimopoulos, executive director, National Hellenic Society
- Elias Gerasoulis, AHI legislative assistant
- Peter Milios, AHI legislative director
- Moderator: AHI President Nick Larigakis

Dimopoulos' talk centered around student programs, such as those offered by the National Hellenic Society, and their relation to Greek American identity. More specifically, Dimopoulos discussed the importance of these programs to reconnecting Greeks with their heritage. Growing up, Dimopoulos stated there was the pressure to be an "American." Nowadays, Dimopoulos said it now in vogue to be proud of and display one's culture. As an overarching point, Dimopoulos stated that having roots and an identity is of value, especially in a rapidly changing world, and that programs such as those offered by the Greek American community, or the Jewish community, such as Birthright, are of great benefit.

Peter Milios built upon some of the themes touched upon by Dimopoulos while also bringing a 'youth' perspective to the discussion. Milios stated that given the rapid transformations that are occurring in the world or society, young people need something to hold on to—and having a strong and rich culture and identity can be a stabilizing influence. Milios said being affiliated with an ethnic identity is easier today than before. Moreover, he talked about the need for more Greek American organizations to be oriented to the needs of young Greek Americans, particularly those in the 25-40 age bracket. He stated professional networking organizations could potentially fulfill those needs.

Mr. Elias Gerasoulis presented on the topic, "A Multi-Faceted Approach to Hellenism." He emphasized how Hellenism extends beyond normative cultural practices, such as music and food. Rather, Hellenism is a much deeper, transcendent ideal with universal implications. He also discussed how his own personal multi-ethnic background and how an expanded definition of Hellenism could be repurposed into institutional structures. Examples of how a modernized and nuanced approach to Hellenism could succeed include the AHI Foundation's own Foreign Policy Trip to Greece and Cyprus and the success of Greek American charter schools. Elias added that initiatives to promote Greek American mentorship need to be standardized and expanded. He believes young people need to be brought into the process and Hellenism needs to present a powerful way that is relevant to their lives. For this to happen, young Greek Americans need to be involved and have a voice in terms of directing the future of Hellenism. Gerasoulis concluded that because 'Hellenism' is such an intricate conception and means different things to different people, it should be presented as the multi-faceted entity. As such, an individual may choose from the various aspects of Hellenism with which they identify best—whether it is its deeper ethos or simply its delicious food. Overall, Elias is optimistic about Hellenism and its future.

“DISCUSSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?”

- Nick Larigakis, AHI president
- Constantine Galanis, AHI Foundation president
- Dr. Van Coufoudakis, former dean and professor emeritus, Indiana University—Purdue University College of Arts and Sciences
- Dr. Dan Georgakas, director, Greek American Studies, Center for Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies, Queens College—CUNY
- Moderator: Donna Ralli Lalangas, Esq.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Following the series of sessions, Ms. Lalangas presented an overview of the day’s proceedings and moderated a discussion, “Where Do We Go From Here?” The ending re-stated the main points and themes of the discussion: that Hellenism means different things to different people, and that while the preservation of Hellenism in America is an urgent issue, it is one that allows for creative solutions and possibilities, especially in the 21st century. Lastly, the panel conveyed to the audience that the conference discussions could be thought of as a “seed.” Furthermore, the panel encouraged attendees to plant that “seed” in their local communities. An in-depth Q&A session ensued, and the conference’s many sponsors were acknowledged for their generous support.

Paun & Magdaline Peters held a post-conference reception for conference speakers and participants during the evening at their home in Fort Worth. Nick Larigakis thanked the Peters family for its support, stating, “We are incredibly grateful for your gracious hospitality and generous support. The Dallas/Fort Worth Greek American community has been wonderful to us. We look forward to continuing and strengthening our relationship with Greek Americans in Texas.”



December 16, 2018

<https://www.newgreektv.com/news-in-english-for-greeks/omogeneia/item/27107-ahif-hosts-17th-annual-future-of-hellenism-in-america-conference>

AHIF Hosts 17th Annual Future of Hellenism in America Conference

Written by [E.Tsiliopoulos](#)

The American Hellenic Institute Foundation (AHIF) hosted its Seventeenth Annual Conference on the Future of Hellenism in America, keeping the discussion of the promotion and preservation of Hellenism at the forefront of the community. This year's conference was held in Dallas, TX., at the Hilton Anatole Hotel, Nov. 9-10, 2018.

Featuring nearly twenty prominent speakers from across the country, conference presentations analyzed key issues including: the future of Greek American organizations, the political process and lobbying, religious and ethnic identity, promoting Hellenic values through business, Greek education, and perspectives from young Greek Americans. Speakers also identified how Hellenism could be promoted in the future through these various channels.

On the eve of the Hellenism Conference, November 9, AHIF held a successful conference dinner with more than 125 persons in attendance. There, AHI President Nick Larigakis officially opened the conference and welcome remarks followed. George Naftis served as Master of Ceremonies.

Ambassador Haris Lalacos, Greek ambassador to the United States, delivered the Keynote Address, "The Role of Greece in Promoting Hellenism Abroad." The ambassador's remarks were thorough and touched upon topics such as increase coordination between the U.S. and Greek governments. He emphasized that the relationship between the U.S. and Greece is at a high point, and the future looks bright regarding the relationships between these two governments. One of his most poignant remarks, however, was when he discussed his affinity for Greek Americans. Amb. Lalacos

stated, "I am always touched when Greek Americans are connected with Greek culture and language."

The Invocation and Benediction were given by Rev. Presbyter Peter Kostakis, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Dallas.

Barbara Vittas and Maria Lainioti Carayannopoulos received AHI's Hellenic Heritage Public Service Award for the Promotion of Hellenism and Orthodoxy in America.

In her acceptance remarks, Vittas first thanked all the individuals involved with and speaking at the awards dinner, honored guests, attendees, as well as congratulating her fellow award-winner, Mrs. Maria Carayannopoulos. During her speech, Vittas said, "When I first moved to Texas in 1979 and became involved in the community, people had the conception of church-based initiatives as simply older Greek women at the kitchen [...] By 2012, Ladies Philoptochos Society was able to raise \$800,000 in philanthropic aid to those in Greece and Cyprus."

During her speech, Mrs. Carayannopoulos stated, "I am overwhelmed with gratitude and joy for this wonderful but totally unexpected honor. I am truly humbled! Thank you from my heart, Mr. Larigakis, for your leadership at AHI and for making a bridge to the Greek American communities near and far. And congratulations to my fellow winner, Barbara Vittas—it is an incredible honor to be up here with her. We should all be united in our efforts to preserve and share our Hellenism and Orthodoxy. I dedicate this plaque to my father who taught me to be humane, to my mother that gave me music to soothe my life and to my beloved late brother Dimitri who shared his life with me, mentored me and brought me to America!"