



ASSEMBLY OF
TURKISH AMERICAN
ASSOCIATIONS

Issue 10
March 2026



International Women's Day

From Heritage to Horizon:
Turkish Women Shaping the Future



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"The press is the common voice of the nation."
"Everything in the world is the work of women."
"Oh, rising new generation, the future is yours. We founded the Republic; It is you who will take it forward and sustain it."
"Teachers, you will shape the minds of the new generation."
The Republic demands from you generations that are free in thought, free in conscience, and free in wisdom."



ASSEMBLY OF
TURKISH AMERICAN
ASSOCIATIONS

"Peace at Home, Peace on Earth"

K. Atatürk



ATAA
USA

Issue 10
March 2026

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Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) is established in 1979 to fight defamation and attacks on Turkish Americans. ATAA has evolved to be the most influential grassroots umbrella organization for the Turkish community in the United States and Canada.

We Stand Stronger as a United Community

ATAA COMMUNITY 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

EVENTS

JANUARY

2026

JANUARY

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

ATAA Fundraising -Turkish Coffee, Tea, Pastries (1/10)

Location: Downtown McKinney (House of Motives)

Host: Alev Wieland

ATAA UN NEXTGEN Project- Intro to SDGs: People, Planet & Peace (1/11)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Canan Özakıy, Didem Altop

ATAA Fundraising - Celebrating World Turkic Language Family Day High Tea-Turkish Flavors & Hospitality (1/18)

Location: The Plaza at Edgemere-Performing Art Center -8523 Thackery St, Dallas, TX 75225

Host: Alev Wieland

TACAM Feb 14 Valentine's Day Celebration

Location: TACAM Cultural Center, Wixom, MI

TACAM Jan 23 Turkish Heritage Night

Location: Little Caesars Arena, Detroit, MI

ATAA Turkic Minority Webinar (1/25)

Location: Webinar

Host: Dr. Nilüfer Esen-Bilgin

FEBRUARY

2026

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28

FEBRUARY

ATAA UN NEXTGEN Project - Social Innovation: Theories of Change & Purposeful Leadership(2/8)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Canan Özakıy, Didem Altop

ATA-NC - [Choir Turkish Music Concert](#) (2/21)

Location: Turkish House (7:00pm)

ATAA Commemorate Feb 21-Mother Language Day (2/22)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Alev Wieland, Berna Gürdal, Selim Erhan

ATA-NC - Children's Folk Dance Practice (2/22)

Location: Turkish House (11:00am)

ATA-NC - Cary Final Friday Art Loop Event Vintage Vibes (2/27)

Location: Turkish House (7:00pm)

ATA-NC - Community Gathering – A Conversation on Democracy and Justice (2/28)

Location: Turkish House (11:00am)

TURANT - Iftar 6:00pm (2/28)

Location: Turkish Cafe & Lounge- 8412 Preston Rd #450, Plano, TX 75024, USA

Hosts: Dr. Gonca Usta

Please share your events with us via:

magazine@ataa.org, president@ataa.org



ATAA COMMUNITY 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

EVENTS

MARCH 2026

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

MARCH

ATAA UN - NEXTGEN Project- Young Impact Leaders & Their Supporters (3/1)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Canan Özaktay, Didem Altop

ATAA Fundraising - Turkish Coffee Documentary Exclusive Film Viewing (2:00-5:00pm) (3/8)

Location: 8412 Preston Rd #450, Plano, TX 75024, USA

Hosts: Alev Wieland, Dr. Fatma Gul, Kursat Dogru, Pelin Hoskan Sa

ATA-NC - International Women's Day Event (3/8)

Location: Turkish House (8:00-10:30am)

ATA-NC - "A Story within a story" Can Atalay Documentary Screening (3/17)

Location: Duke University (7:00pm)

APRIL 2026

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26	27	28	29	30		

APRIL

ATAA UN - to Commemorate April's 24th Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace (4/5)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Selim Erhan, Yücel Burdurlu

ATAA UN - NEXTGEN Project-Decade of Water: Global Lessons & Local Action (4/12)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Canan Özaktay, Didem Altop

ATAA Fundraising - Turkish Nights Dinner & Dance (4/18)

Location: Turkish Cafe & Lounge- 5760 Legacy Dr. Plano Texas 75024

Hosts: Alev Wieland

ATA-NC - Children's Day Festival of Cary (4/18)

Location: Downtown Cary Park (1:00pm)

MAY 2026

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

MAY

ATAA Conference and General Assembly Meeting (May 1,2,3)

Location: The Westin Dallas Stonebriar Golf Resort & Spa - 1549 Legacy Dr, Frisco, TX 75034

Hosts: ATAA



Friday Tickets



Saturday Tickets



Hotel Reservations



Hair Styling by Ata

ATAA UN - to Commemorate May 21 Worlds Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development (5/17)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Selim Erhan, Yücel Burdurlu

Please share your events with us via:

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ATAA COMMUNITY 2026 EVENTS CALENDAR

EVENTS

OCTOBER 2026

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

OCTOBER

103rd Republic Day Celebrations

Location: All ATAA Locations

Host: ATAA Component Organization Leader

NOVEMBER 2026

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

NOVEMBER

ATAA UN - to Commemorate November 21 World Science Day for Peace and Development (11/8)

Location: Webinar

Hosts: Selim Erhan, Yücel Burdurlu

DECEMBER 2026

sun	mon	tue	wed	thu	fri	sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

DECEMBER

ATAA ART - Turkic Film Festival First tire, Turkish Coffee Day (Dec 4.5)

Location: NY Turkish House, 821 1st Ave, New York, NY 10017

Host: ATAA Art Committee

World Turkish Language Family Day Dec 15-Turkic Languages Film Festival (Dec 4 or 5)

Location: All ATAA Locations

Host: ATAA Component Organization Leaders



tiff
Turkic
Languages
Film Festival
Coming Soon!!



Please share your events with us via:

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Alev Wieland
ATAA President
president@ataa.org

Dear Members of the Turkish American Community,

Turkish women have never waited for permission to lead. They have led through history—with courage in moments of crisis, creativity in times of transformation, and resilience when the world demanded more than seemed possible.

From the founding years of the Republic, when Turkish women earned political rights ahead of many parts of the world, to today's global stage where they excel as engineers, scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, diplomats, educators, and community builders—the story is clear: Turkish women shape the future.

Within the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), this legacy is visible every day. ATAA women leaders contribute vision, governance, advocacy, and continuity. They guide cultural programs that celebrate Turkish heritage, organize community outreach that strengthens civic ties, and develop initiatives that support educational growth for children and young adults. Their leadership ensures that Turkish Americans are not only connected to their roots but are empowered to thrive in the wider society.

Equally important is their role as mentors and role models. ATAA women leaders actively invest in the next generation through youth programs, student scholarships, leadership workshops, and professional networking opportunities. By sharing their stories of overcoming obstacles, they help young women navigate career paths, public service, and personal development with confidence and purpose.

ATAA women also balance heritage with innovation. They preserve culture while building bridges across communities. They advocate for representation while fostering collaboration. They demonstrate that tradition and progress are not opposites—they are partners. Through initiatives such as cultural festivals, interfaith dialogues, and professional mentorship programs, these leaders extend their impact beyond the Turkish American community, enriching the social and cultural fabric of the broader society.

Resilience is not merely endurance; it is transformation. Turkish women transform challenges into opportunity and local engagement into global contribution. Whether advancing technology, strengthening civic institutions, promoting cultural diplomacy, or mentoring future leaders, their influence reaches far beyond borders. Many ATAA programs are

From Heritage to Horizon: Turkish Women Shaping the Future

designed specifically to encourage women to step into leadership roles, with workshops, networking events, and public speaking platforms that prepare them to lead confidently in their communities and careers.

To the young women reading this: leadership is not a title—it is a decision. Your voice matters now, not “someday.” Step forward even when the path feels uncertain. Ask bold questions. Take up space. Lead with empathy, competence, and courage. The world does not need you to fit a mold; it needs you to shape a new one. Every initiative, no matter how small, creates a ripple effect. ATAA women leaders show that impact is not always measured by position—it is measured by action, mentorship, and dedication to community.

International Women's Day is not only a celebration—it is a call to action. A call to invest in women's education, amplify women's voices, and widen pathways to leadership. When women rise, communities thrive. When Turkish women lead, institutions grow stronger, and societies move forward. ATAA continues to focus on creating tangible opportunities for women to succeed—from leadership training programs to partnerships with universities and professional associations.

ATAA women leaders also champion the arts, sciences, and entrepreneurship. Through programs that highlight Turkish American women innovators, creators, and thinkers, they inspire not only young women but the entire community. They actively work to create spaces where women can network, collaborate, and lead projects that make a meaningful difference locally and globally.

At ATAA, we remain committed to empowering women, supporting leadership development, and honoring both the legacy and the future of Turkish women everywhere. Their courage, creativity, and integrity remind us that leadership is a lifelong journey. By lifting one another and sharing wisdom across generations, ATAA women leaders ensure that the future is bright, inclusive, and full of possibility.

Today, we celebrate you - Tomorrow, we build with you.

Happy International Women's Day!

With warm regards,

Alev Wieland
ATAA President



**MAY 1-2
2026**

**THE WESTIN DALLAS STONEBRIAR
GOLF RESORT & SPA**
1549 LEGACY DRIVE,
FRISCO, TX, 75034



ATAA 2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE



ASSEMBLY OF
TURKISH AMERICAN
ASSOCIATIONS



STAY TUNED! DETAILS @
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SECURE YOUR ROOM @
BOOK.PASSKEY.COM/E/51113025



Join Us for the ATAA 2026 Annual Conference & Gala at the Westin Stonebriar Golf Resort & Spa, Frisco, TX

[Online Registration](#) | [Program](#) | [Sponsorship & Advertisement Kit](#) | [Hotel Information](#)

The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) will hold its 2026 Annual Conference on May 1–2, 2026, at the Westin Stonebriar Golf Resort & Spa, 1549 Legacy Drive, Frisco, TX, 75034, featuring the theme “Stronger Together, Building Tomorrow.” The annual conference will bring together ATAA members, Turkish Americans, community leaders, youth members, and scholars from across the nation, Canada, and Türkiye. The conference will start with registration and special events on Friday, May 1, and end with a gala dinner on Saturday, May 2, in the evening. ATAA Annual General Assembly Meeting will be held with the delegates at the same venue on Sunday, May 3, 2026, 10:00am-12:00pm. ATAA Delegates are composed of ATAA Board of Directors and Board of Trustee members as well as the representatives of active component associations of the Assembly.

Program Overview

Friday, May 1, 2026 – City Experience Tour

A guided Dallas–Fort Worth excursion, including visits to the **Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District**, **The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza**, and **Southfork Ranch**, followed by dinner and cultural entertainment at **Turkish Café & Lounge**.

Saturday, May 2, 2026 – Conference Day

A full day of conference sessions, networking, and professional engagement.

Program Highlights

- Guardians of the Past, Architects of the Future – AI
- Building Visibility, Securing Recognition: Strategic Actions for the Turkish American Community
- Your Voice, Your Community, Your World
- Turkish American Youth Shaping the Future
- Functional Leadership – Building Strength Through Our Differences
- Estate Planning Session – Estate Planning and Planned Giving

(Program and speaker details coming soon. Visit www.ataa.org for updates.)

Click the appropriate button below to purchase tickets for the Friday, May 1 and Saturday, May 2 events.

[BUY FRIDAY, MAY 1](#)

[BUY SATURDAY, MAY 2](#)

ATAA 2026 Annual Conference

Program | Friday, May 1, 2026

9:30 am Dallas City Tour

(Dallas city tour on the way to Fort Worth – Guide Mr. Erdal Sipahi.
Transportation will take guests from the hotel at 9:30 am)

11:00 am- 12:00 pm Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District Tour

Find Your Wild West Spirit at Fort Worth Stockyards – Texas with Cattle Drive at 11:30 am- It is recommended to arrive 30 minutes early to secure a viewing spot, as streets close shortly before the drive begins), lunch, western shopping.

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm Lunch

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm Kennedy Museum Visit

The Museum, located within the former Texas School Book Depository building, chronicles the assassination and legacy of President John F. Kennedy. The main exhibit is on the sixth floor.

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Southfork Ranch Tour – Experience the World’s Most Famous Ranch!

Famously home to the Ewing family from the TV series Dallas, Southfork Ranch is a premier event venue just 30 minutes from downtown Dallas. Known as “The World’s Most Famous Ranch,” it offers 60,000+ square feet of indoor space and 200,000+ square feet outdoors. Visitors can enjoy daily guided tours of the Ewing Mansion, ranch grounds, and the Dallas Legends Exhibit, exploring the history and legacy of the iconic show.

6:15 pm – 6:30 pm

7:30 pm- 10:30 pm Travel to Restaurant

Dinner and Entertainment

Immerse yourself in the rich flavors and traditions of Türkiye at the Turkish Café & Lounge. Guests will enjoy a sumptuous dinner of authentic Turkish cuisine, from savory mezes to perfectly spiced entrees, all served in a warm and inviting atmosphere.



ATAA 2026 Annual Conference Program | Saturday, May 2, 2026

The Westin Stonebriar Golf Resort & Spa, 1549 Legacy Drive, Frisco, Texas 75034

- 7:00 am – 7:45 am **Registration & Breakfast**
- 8:00 am – 8:15 am **Opening Ceremony & Welcoming Remarks**
- 8:15 am – 9:15 am **Diplomatic Addresses**
- 9:15 am – 9:50 am **Official Address & Keynote Message**
- 9:50 am – 10:00 am **Break**
- 10:00 am – 10:50 am **Session 1 – Guardians of the Past, Architects of the Future-AI**
- 10:50 am – 11:00 am **Break**
- 11:00 am – 11:50 am **Session 2 – Building Visibility, Securing Recognition: Strategic Actions for the Turkish American Community**
- 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm **Luncheon**
- 1:15 pm – 2:05 pm **Session 3 – Your Voice – Your Community – Your World**
- 2:05 pm – 2:15 pm **Break**
- 2:15 pm – 3:05 pm **Session 4 – Turkish American Youth Shaping the Future**
- 3:05 pm – 3:15 pm **Break**
- 3:15 pm – 4:00 pm **Session 5 – Functional Leadership- Building Strength Through Our Differences**
- 4:00 pm – 4:10 pm **Break**
- 4:10 pm – 5:00 pm **Session 6 – Estate Planning Session – Estate planning and Planed Giving**
- 5:00 pm – 5:25 pm **Closing Remarks**
- 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm **Reception**
- 7:30 pm – 11:30 pm **2026 Annual Gala**

Welcoming Remarks

Dinner

Annual Awards Ceremony

Live Music Performance/Entertainment – Nova Band-Houston TX

(Program subject to change)

BUY SATURDAY, MAY 2

ATAA 2026 Annual Conference

Sunday, May 3, 2026

10:00 am – 12:00 pm General Assembly Meeting (ATAA Board of Directors, Board of Trustees and representatives of current component associations only)

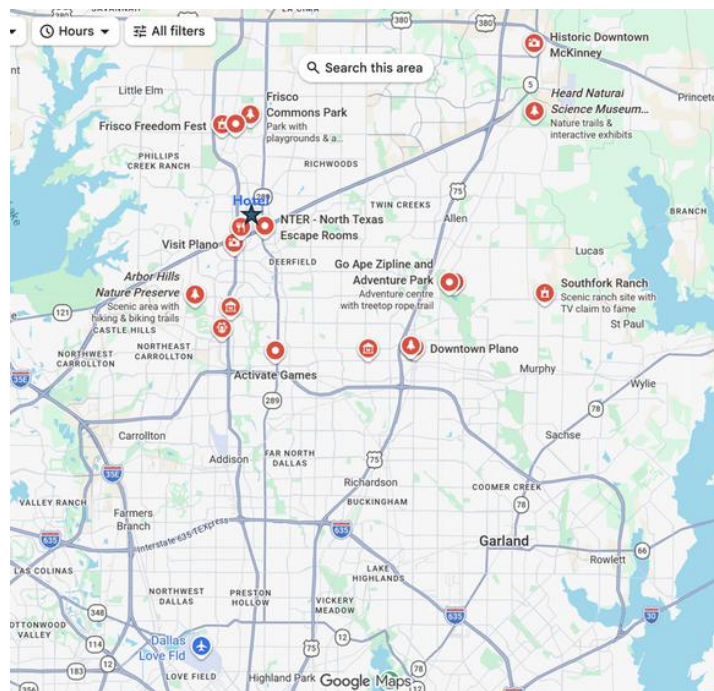
Hotel Information

Special Room Rate Available!

Emerging from an extensive property rejuvenation, The Westin Stonebriar Golf Resort & Spa in Frisco, TX is a versatile haven for both business and leisure travelers, conveniently located near the top attractions of Frisco, Plano, and Dallas. Click [here](#) for more information.

A discounted hotel room rate is available for attendees of the 2026 Annual Conference. To secure the discounted conference rate of \$199 per room, per night, plus applicable taxes, please click the booking button below.

[RESERVE YOUR ROOM](#)



Become an ATAA 2026 Annual Conference Sponsor

Platinum Elite Sponsor - \$15,000

Recognition as the Platinum Elite Sponsor

Acknowledgement of the company's sponsorship with the logo on all printed and online materials
Prominent display of sponsor logo on convention banner, main stage backdrop and registration area Booth
space and opportunity to provide branded gift bags for attendees (at sponsor expense)
5 total complimentary registrations for the Full Conference and Gala.

Platinum Sponsor - \$10,000

Recognition as the Platinum Sponsor

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Prominent display of sponsor logo on conference banner, main stage backdrop and registration area Booth
space and opportunity to provide branded gift bags for attendees (at sponsor expense)
4 complimentary registrations for the Full Conference and Gala.

Diamond Sponsor - \$5000

Recognition as the Diamond Sponsor

Acknowledgement of the company's sponsorship with the logo on all printed and online materials
Prominent display of sponsor logo on conference banner, main stage backdrop and registration area 3
complimentary registrations for the Full Conference and Gala.

Gold Sponsor - \$3000

Recognition as the Gold Sponsor

Acknowledgement of the company's sponsorship on all printed and online materials
Display of sponsor logo on conference banner
2 complimentary registrations for the Full Conference and Gala.

Silver Sponsor - \$1500

Recognition as the Silver Sponsor

Acknowledgement of the company's sponsorship on all printed and online materials
Display of sponsor logo on conference banner
1 complimentary registration for the Full Conference and Gala.





Dr. Selim Erhan
ATAA USA Editor

Humans consist of two complementary sexes: men and women. Each has unique strengths, and when these strengths are combined, the potential of any team becomes virtually limitless. Throughout history, women have demonstrated remarkable resilience and capability, shaping science, leadership, culture, politics, and everyday life—even in the face of significant barriers

Imagine the extraordinary progress humanity could achieve if societies fully empowered girls to reach their potential.

A vivid historical example of this is the early Turkish Republic in the 1920s. Following World War I, the Ottoman Empire was defeated, and its territory was occupied by five foreign powers—England, France, Italy, Russia and the United States. Despite a ceasefire, these forces pursued policies of oppression, threatening the survival of the Turkish nation. It was during this crisis that Mustafa Kemal, later honored with the name Atatürk, led a successful independence war, securing the borders of modern Türkiye.

Atatürk's vision for the new Republic went beyond military victory. He understood that a strong nation could not be built without the full participation of its people—men, women, and children alike. Women, in particular, were empowerment, given opportunities for education, technology, science, government, and meaningful roles in society. These reforms transformed Türkiye within fifty years, producing a modern country with well-educated citizens and a society deeply rooted in a rich cultural heritage stretching back over five millennia.

Today, the legacy of Atatürk's vision is evident in the prominent role Turkish women play across diverse fields. They excel in science, engineering, education, arts, business, gastronomy, diplomacy, politics, and sports. Türkiye was a pioneer in advancing women's political rights, granting them the right to vote and be elected decades ahead of many European nations.

Let's work together, grow together, and continue building a vibrant, connected, and resilient Turkish American community.

From Roots to Innovation Turkish Women Leading Tomorrow

Turkish women have continued to demonstrate remarkable achievements beyond Türkiye as well, building successful careers, leading institutions, advancing scientific research, founding businesses, shaping cultural landscapes, and serving in influential roles across the globe. In academia, medicine, engineering, finance, technology, the arts, and public service, they have distinguished themselves through excellence, resilience, and determination.

As members of the global diaspora, Turkish women have not only integrated into their host countries but have also enriched them—bridging cultures, fostering dialogue, and contributing innovative ideas and leadership. Many have become professors, physicians, entrepreneurs, diplomats, artists, executives, and community leaders, breaking barriers and redefining expectations.

Their accomplishments stand as living proof that when women are empowered through education, opportunity, and equal rights, there are no limits to what they can achieve.

Turkish American women today, inspire younger generations, strengthen the communities they serve, and reflect the enduring spirit of progress and equality rooted in the values of modern Türkiye everywhere they live.





Dr. Selim Erhan
ATAA USA Editor

Do you know the value ATAA brings to our community?

We are often asked what value ATAA brings to its members. First and foremost, ATAA brings power to our community—and this power takes many forms.

One important source of this power is a strong, well-maintained network that allows members and component associations to communicate with one another. Through this network, members can share ideas, make their voices heard, and collaborate on valuable initiatives and projects.

Another key source of power is knowledge—perhaps the most important pillar we stand on, yet unfortunately the least utilized. Knowledge empowers us to shape our thinking, understand our challenges, and plan our path forward.

For generations, passivity was ingrained in our society. Under the Sultanate system, decisions were made from above, leaving people with little say and little sense of personal agency. While this passivity is gradually giving way to activism, the pace of change must accelerate. In a democracy, there is no single authority responsible for protecting us—we must protect ourselves. That means organizing, working together with like-minded individuals, and building strong, sustainable systems. But before we can do any of that, we must educate ourselves.

A clear example of why education matters is the Armenian issue. Turks continue to face genocide accusations, despite rulings in international courts finding no evidence of state-sponsored, systematic extermination, even during wartime. Nevertheless, many children are taught in schools that Turks committed genocide, and too often parents lack either the knowledge or the motivation to investigate these claims. As a result, entire families are left dis-empowered.

This issue currently is repeatedly used as a propaganda tool to influence public opinion and to further long-standing efforts aimed at weakening and dividing Türkiye in pursuit of its resources.

For decades, ATAA members have worked diligently to collect and preserve accurate historical information. The ATAA website provides access to articles, books, and other educational materials that document the Armenian uprising as a well-organized movement intended to dismantle the Ottoman Empire—an effort that ultimately ended in tragedy. The details of this uprising, including the support it received from European powers and Russia, are well documented through accessible books and short educational videos.

One invaluable resource within ATAA is our Trustee, Ergun Kırlikovalı, who has tirelessly advocated for historical truth over many decades. He has developed educational programs, videos, and webinars—especially aimed at our youth. We owe him our sincere gratitude for his extensive web library, which includes concise and informative videos available at

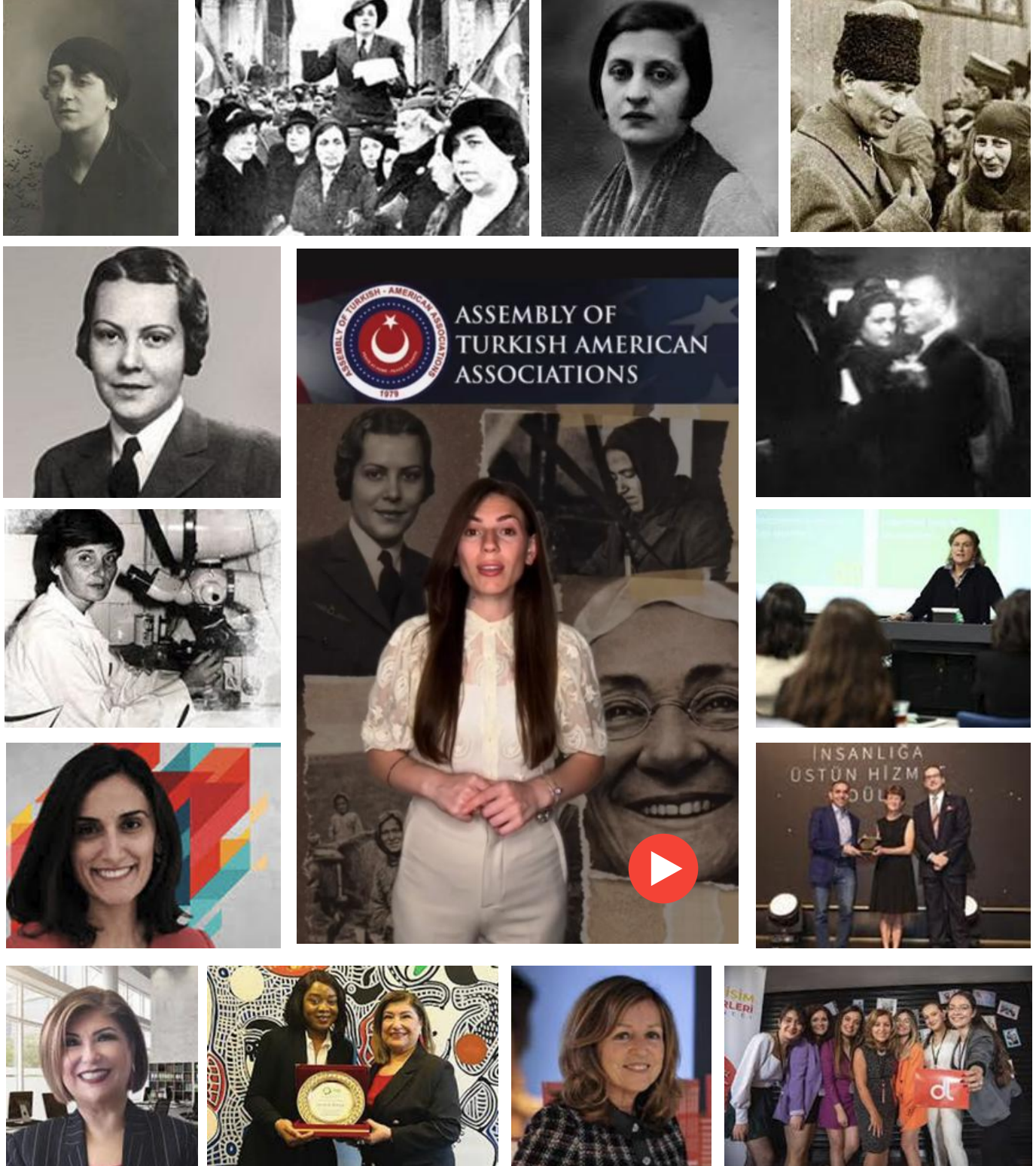
<http://www.MythsandRealities.com>.

Knowledge is power. ATAA exists to provide that power—if we choose to use it.



ATAA - Value we bring to our community
Watch the video

Happy International Women's Day



HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

March 8 is not only a celebration—it is a structural reflection point. The story of Turkish women is not linear; it is layered. From Ottoman reformists to Republic-era pioneers, from scientists to entrepreneurs, Turkish women have consistently reshaped institutional, cultural, and technological landscapes. This special issue traces that trajectory—heritage as foundation, horizon as ambition.

HERITAGE

ROOTS OF REFORM AND RESISTANCE

NEZİHE MUHİDDİN

Political Organization Before Its Time



Nezihe Muhiddin was among the earliest architects of structured feminist activism in Türkiye. She founded the **Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Women's People's Party)** before women even had suffrage rights.

Her earlier work with **Ottoman Society for the Defense of Women's Rights (Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti)** institutionalized advocacy around education and political participation.

Strategic Legacy:

- Early political party formation by women
- Systematic rights-based advocacy
- Blueprint for later suffrage reforms (achieved nationally in 1934)

HALİDE EDİB ADIVAR

Literature as National Strategy



Halide Edib Adıvar transformed narrative into mobilization. During the War of Independence, she delivered mass speeches in Istanbul and later served on the Anatolian front.

Her novels explored modernization, gender identity, and national sovereignty—bridging cultural production and political transformation.

Strategic Legacy:

- Intellectual mobilization
- Women's visibility in nationalist discourse
- Early feminist literary critique

Turkish women — Guardians of heritage and architects of change. From the front lines of reform to the quiet resilience within homes and communities, they have shaped a nation's identity with unwavering determination.

FOUNDATION

REPUBLIC, REFORM, AND INSTITUTIONAL BREAKTHROUGHS

In the foundation of the Turkish Republic, women stood not at the margins, but at the heart of transformation. From the sweeping reforms of the early Republic to groundbreaking advances in education, law, and civic life, Turkish women helped shape the institutions that defined a modern nation. Their courage and conviction turned reform into reality, laying enduring pillars of equality, progress, and public leadership that continue to strengthen the Republic today.

SABIHA GÖKÇEN

Aviation and Symbolism



Sabiha Gökçen became the world's first female combat pilot. Supported by **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**, she represented the Republic's modernization thesis: merit over tradition.

Her career reframed aviation—then a strategic defense sector—as gender-neutral capability.

Institutional Impact:

- Expanded women's participation in defense and STEM
- Global recognition in aviation history

AFET İNAN

Constructing Historical Identity



Afet İnan played a pivotal role in early Republican historiography and educational reform.

Through her work with the Türk Tarih Kurumu, she institutionalized national historical research and promoted academic inclusion for women.

Institutional Impact:

- National curriculum reform
- Female academic representation
- Identity formation in early Republic

**“Building the Nation, Shaping the Future:
Women at the Heart of Reform and Progress.”**

TRANSFORMATION
SCIENCE, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND SOCIAL ENGINEERING

Turkish women have been at the forefront of the nation’s transformation, shaping science, civil society, and social progress with courage and vision. From advancing public health and education to leading philanthropic initiatives that empower communities, they have redefined what is possible in both professional and social spheres. By bridging knowledge, leadership, and social responsibility, these women have engineered lasting change—turning the promise of reform into concrete improvements that continue to strengthen Türkiye’s modern identity.

TÜRKAN SAYLAN

Medicine as Social Infrastructure



Türkan Saylan integrated healthcare with social mobility. Beyond her dermatology career, she founded the **Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği)**, providing scholarships to thousands of girls.

Her model linked public health, education access, and civil society governance.

Systems-Level Impact:

- Public health outreach
- Educational equity for girls
- Institutional civil society strengthening

GÜLER SABANCI

Industry and Governance



Güler Sabancı became chair of **Sabancı Holding**, one of Türkiye’s largest industrial and financial groups.

Her leadership reflects structural evolution: women not only participating in the economy but directing capital allocation and corporate governance.

Economic Impact:

- Corporate leadership normalization
- Philanthropic educational investment
- Global business integration

“Turning Knowledge into Change: Women Transforming Society
Through Science and Civic Leadership.”

HORIZON
TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND THE NEXT FRONTIER

Turkish women are shaping the horizon of science, innovation, and global impact. Pioneers like those advancing cutting-edge research in materials science and biomedical engineering are not only breaking barriers in laboratories but also putting Türkiye on the map of global scientific excellence. Their curiosity, ingenuity, and persistence expand the boundaries of knowledge, inspiring new generations and proving that the country’s brightest future is being written at the very edge of discovery.

CANAN DAĞDEVİREN
Science at the Global Edge



Turkish scientist invents wearable
scanner to detect breast cancer

Canan Dağdeviren, a physicist at MIT, develops flexible electronic devices for medical diagnostics.

Her work on wearable biomedical sensors demonstrates how Turkish women now operate at the frontier of global innovation ecosystems.

Future Impact:

- Biomedical engineering advancement
- Female representation in high-tech research
- Cross-border scientific leadership

DR. ÖZLEM TÜRECİ
Science That Saves Lives



Turkish scientist co-develops
mRNA COVID-19 vaccine

Dr. Özlem Türeci, co-founder of BioNTech, pioneers messenger RNA vaccine technology that enabled one of the first COVID-19 vaccines.

Her work demonstrates how Turkish women now operate at the frontier of global biomedical innovation and public health impact.

Economic Impact:

- Corporate leadership normalization
- Philanthropic educational investment
- Global business integration

“Pushing Boundaries, Shaping the Future: Women Driving Global Innovation.”

DIASPORA LEADERSHIP

ATAA WOMEN STRENGTHENING TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCE

Turkish women are shaping the horizon of science, innovation, and global impact. Pioneers like those advancing cutting-edge research in materials science and biomedical engineering are not only breaking barriers in laboratories but also putting Türkiye on the map of global scientific excellence. Their curiosity, ingenuity, and persistence expand the boundaries of knowledge, inspiring new generations and proving that the country's brightest future is being written at the very edge of discovery.

NURTEN URAL

**Organizational Development &
Community Infrastructure**



Nurten Ural has held executive leadership roles in ATAA, focusing on governance reform, membership expansion, and community engagement.

Under female leadership figures like Ural, ATAA strengthened inter-association coordination and elevated women's participation in diaspora decision-making structures.

Impact Profile:

- Institutional governance modernization
- Cultural diplomacy
- Female leadership normalization within diaspora networks

SEMA BAŞOL

**Empowering the
Next Generation**



Sema Başol has co-founded the **Turkish Women's Initiative (TWI)**, pioneering programs that equip young Turkish women with leadership skills through experiential learning and community-based projects. Since its launch more than a decade ago, TWI's signature Sparks Program has graduated hundreds of young women whose social change initiatives have touched the lives of thousands across Türkiye and beyond.

Impact Profile:

- Leadership development for young women
- Empowering civil society and global collaboration
- Promoting female leadership in communities

“Connecting Voices, Empowering Influence: Women Leading Across Borders.”

NEXT GENERATION LEADERSHIP ATAA YOUTH - LEADERSHIP INFORMATION

This Women's Day, we spotlight the young women rising within ATAA Youth who are shaping the future of diaspora diplomacy. Through leadership training, civic engagement, and active participation in policy and UN-related initiatives, they are gaining the skills and confidence to move from community involvement to global impact. Their journey reflects a powerful shift—where the next generation is not waiting to lead, but already doing so.



The future of ATAA lies in a new generation of leaders—many of them young women—who are redefining diaspora engagement through strategy, policy, and global connectivity. As ATAA advances its youth-centered vision, the Youth Committee serves as a cornerstone of long-term leadership development, equipping Turkish-American youth (ages 14–24) to move beyond cultural participation into civic and international policy influence.

Through initiatives such as the NextGen Webinar Series, mentorship pipelines, and direct engagement in ATAA United Nations projects, youth leaders are gaining hands-on experience with global frameworks, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Their involvement in UN-aligned programming, conference participation, and policy dialogue positions them as emerging contributors to multilateral conversations.

Impact Profile – Strategic Vision Alignment:

- Unified Turkish youth leadership network
- Structured personal, social, and professional development
- Inclusive, women-forward youth governance
- Integrated civic and global policy engagement
- Sustainable youth leadership infrastructure
- Measurable diaspora impact

This marks a clear evolution—from preservation to participation, from representation to measurable influence. With young women increasingly at the forefront, ATAA Youth is not simply preparing future leaders—it is cultivating globally competent changemakers who will shape the next era of diaspora diplomacy.

“Inspiring Leaders, Connecting Communities From Heritage to Global Influence

ATAA Dallas, TX High Tea - Turkish Flavors and Hospitality

On January 18, 2026, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) proudly organized the High Tea – Turkish Flavors & Hospitality event in Dallas, Texas. This special gathering was held in celebration of December 15 World Turkic Language Family Day, proclaimed by UNESCO, an important observance honoring the deep-rooted history, linguistic unity, and cultural connections shared among Turkic languages and the communities that speak them.

This day highlights the vital importance of preserving our shared linguistic and cultural heritage for future generations. Within the framework of UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, language is recognized as one of the most essential carriers of identity, cultural memory, and social continuity. Languages are not merely tools of communication; they serve as bridges that transmit a community’s history, values, wisdom, and aesthetic sensibilities from one generation to the next.

This first-ever celebration of World Turkic Language Family Day in Texas brought together ATAA, TURANT and COEDFO community leaders, members, youth, families, friends, and guests to mark this historic moment. The event reflected the spirit of unity, connection, and shared purpose that defines our community. ATAA serves as a vital unifying umbrella organization for more than 50 component organizations nationwide. United by shared values, empowered by strong leadership, and strengthened through lasting partnerships, ATAA envisions an engaged and resilient network that honors our heritage, invests in the next generation, and serves as a pillar of support for Turkish Americans across the country. Our mission is to foster cultural pride and mutual understanding, and the presence of our guests and partners at this event meaningfully strengthened that mission.

At its heart, this gathering was a celebration of culture, language, connection, and fellowship. Turkish hospitality—rooted in warmth, generosity, togetherness, and tradition—was joyfully shared with all participants. We were especially honored by the presence of our American friends, Dallas Pakistan community leaders, whose participation reinforces the importance of cultural understanding in enriching communities, strengthening mutual respect, and building lasting bridges.

One of ATAA’s key objectives is to educate, empower, and support young people as future leaders. In support of this mission, a raffle was held to raise funds to sponsor youth participation at ATAA’s National Conference in Frisco, Texas, on May 1–2, 2026.



Our Keynote Speaker was Prof. Dr. Rıza Yıldırım- Professor at the University of Vien

Dr. Rıza Yıldırım enlighten the audience about historical, linguistic, and cultural features of the Turkish language - Speaking Turkish: On History, Language, and Belonging.



Surprise speaker Prof. Dr. Halit Üster – Southern Methodist University (SMU)

Dr. Üster talked about his PhD student years, and as ATAA scholarship recipient, how he helped Ahmet E. Uysal, Dr. Warren S. Walker and Barbara K. Walker who received the Fulbright Grant to research in Türkiye - “Translation of the Turkish Oral Narrative Tales”.

[Some of this work can be viewed on line via link below](#)



ATAA Dallas, TX High Tea - Turkish Flavors and Hospitality

TURANT, a valued ATAA member since the organization's earliest days, has served the local community for over 50 years. Its dedication has played a significant role in preserving Turkish cultural heritage both locally and nationally. TURANT President Dr. Gonca Usta spoke about the close ties and strong collaboration between ATAA and TURANT.

COEDFO President Dr. Fatma Gül shared insights into —ATAA's longstanding member —COEDFO's, collaborative educational initiatives, which align with ATAA's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

This gathering reminded us of the strength we find when we come together with purpose—under the umbrella of ATAA—and alongside our Turkish American, Turkic, interfaith brothers and sisters, and American friends. Through culture, language, music, art, shared values, and fellowship, we remain connected, and gatherings like this ensure those connections continue to grow.

Special Thanks

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who honored us with their presence and support:

- **Commissioner Susan Fletcher**, for her continued encouragement and participation
- Local business owners **Mehmet and Halina Celik**, for joining us despite busy schedules and a young family
- Our distinguished speakers, **Prof. Dr. Rıza Yıldırım**, **Prof. Dr. Halit Üster** for sharing their valuable knowledge and insights

We also thank our community leaders—**Dr. Gonca Usta**, **Dr. Fatma Gül**, **Nadeem Zaman**, and **Durdane Balakishiyeva** (could not be present due to sickness)—and all who work tirelessly to strengthen our community.



Commissioner Susan Fletcher

Sponsors and Contributors

This event would not have been possible without the generosity of our sponsors, donors, and volunteers. We are deeply grateful to each individual and organization who believed in our mission and invested in our community and youth.

Event Sponsors and Contributors included:

- Pastries by **Melike Turan**
- Baklava by **Nevin Öksüzler**
- Raffle items donated by **Şafak Smith, Sinan Gürman, Nuray Fuller, and Alev Cosmetics**
- Valet services by **Tevfik Dalgıç, İpek Rudd, and Sevil Öner**
- Tea glasses and spoons by **Hakan Altın, Altın Grocery Store**
- Thermos vessels and table pitchers by **Chef Kubilay Önder of the Lorenzo Hotel**, with additional pitchers provided by **Dr. Fatma Gül**
- Lokum by **Pelin Hoşkan San**
- Music sponsorship by **Bengu and Kürşad Doğru and Pelin Hoşkan San**
- Young musicians coordinated by **Yücel Burdurlu**
- And everyone who purchased a ticket and joined us



L to R: Lila Üster, Batu Üster, Alev Wieland, Dr. Fatma Gül

ATAA Dallas, TX High Tea - Turkish Flavors and Hospitality

Special thanks go to our dedicated project team who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. In particular, **Pelin Hoşkan San**, who led significant portions of the project while I was traveling overseas. Although she could not attend, she sends her warm regards.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to **Dr. Fatma Gül, Nimet Kalender, İpek Rudd, Dilek Kaya, Manny Molera**, and **Ron Wieland**, whose constant support is invaluable. This event would not have been possible without them.

To our entertainment volunteers—**Birsen Yıldırım, Dilek Evren Nassar**, and **Cem Kara**—and our talented youth performers **Batu and Lila Üster**, thank you for bringing music and joy to our celebration.



Entertainment Volunteers (L to R): Cem Kara, Birsen Yıldırım, Dilek Evren Nassar



Batu Üster performed **Bouree in F Major by George Philip Telemann**. Batu is a sophomore at Booker T Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.



Project Team (L to R) : Dilek Kaya, Şafak Smith, Nimet Kalender, Dr. Fatma Gül, Nazlı Bektaş Kutlu. Not present - Pelin Hoskan San, İpek Rudd.



Lila Üster performed **Yıldızların Altında** (means Under the Stars) by Katanzade Ali Riza Bey. Lila is a sophomore at Greenhill School.



As we move forward, I invite everyone to stay connected and continue this meaningful journey with us.

Alev Wieland
ATAA President



Speaking Turkish: On History, Language, and Belonging



Prof. Rıza Yıldırım, PhD
University of Vienna
Professor of Alevi Theology

Dear distinguished guests,

In this short talk, I would like to highlight some historical, linguistic, and cultural features of the Turkish language. Some of what I will share today may sound familiar or even trivial to part of the audience. Still, I sincerely hope that others will find these remarks informative—and perhaps even thought-provoking.

Language is, after all, a genuine mirror of a people and their culture. In that sense, I invite you to listen carefully if you wish to better understand your Turkish friends—not only how they speak, but how they think, remember, and relate to the world.

Let me begin with a brief historical perspective. Turkish is one of the world's major historical languages, with a written tradition that extends back more than thirteen centuries. Today, over 200 million people speak Turkic languages across a vast geography stretching from Eastern Europe to Central Asia and Western China.

Linguistically, Turkish belongs to a large family with several major branches. The Oghuz group, which includes Turkish as spoken in Türkiye, Azerbaijani, and Turkmen, is the most populous. The Karluk branch includes Uzbek and Uyghur, while the Kipchak branch encompasses languages such as Kazakh and Kyrgyz. These languages are mutually distinct, yet they share deep structural and historical affinities.

The earliest written records of Turkish date to the 8th century, known as the Orkhon Inscriptions, carved in stone in what is now Mongolia. These texts commemorate Bilge Qaghan and his brother Kül Tigin, rulers of the Göktürk Khanate. Remarkably, these inscriptions are not merely political monuments. They contain reflections on power and responsibility, loyalty and justice, the rise and fall of states, and the moral obligations of rulers toward their people. From the very beginning, Turkish appears not only as a spoken language, but as a medium of political thought and ethical reflection.

Over the centuries, Turkish became the language of multiple states, empires, and societies. It was spoken and written by the Göktürks, the Karakhanids, the Seljuks, the Mamluks, the Ottomans, and the Safavids. Through these polities, Turkish entered new regions and cultural environments, adapting to different religious, social, and administrative contexts.

Throughout much of the second millennium, Turkish functioned as a language of governance, law, poetry, historiography, and religious expression from Central Asia to Anatolia, from the Balkans to the Middle East. For long periods, it served as a lingua franca of military and political elites across Eurasia. It is worth recalling that in Iran, for example, ruling dynasties and their military elites were native Turkish speakers until the fall of the Qajar dynasty in 1925.

At the same time, Turkish produced works of lasting literary value. Epic narratives, lyrical poetry, mystical writings, legal texts, and historical chronicles all flourished in Turkish, written in different scripts, including runic, Arabic, and later Latin. This multiplicity of scripts enhanced the language's adaptability and cultural depth. Especially during the Ottoman period, Turkish developed into a cosmopolitan literary language, capable of expressing philosophy, mysticism, and refined aesthetic sensibilities.

Linguistically, Turkish possesses a rich vocabulary. But its real strength lies not in its vocabulary but in its grammar and syntax. Turkish is often described as a highly systematic language, almost architectural in its design.

At its core, Turkish is an agglutinative language. Meaning is built by adding clearly defined suffixes to a root, each suffix carrying a precise grammatical function. Rather than relying heavily on auxiliary words or irregular constructions, Turkish assembles meaning step by step, like a carefully engineered structure.

As a result, a single Turkish word can express what might require an entire sentence in English. Yet this complexity is not chaotic. On the contrary, the system is highly regular and rule-governed. Once the underlying logic is grasped, the language becomes remarkably transparent and predictable.

Let me pause here and illustrate this agglutinative structure with a famous example. May I ask whether there is a native Turkish speaker in the audience who would like to translate the following single word into English?



Çekoslovakyalılaştıramadıklarımızdan mısınız?

Turkish syntax is equally distinctive. The verb typically comes at the end of the sentence. This structure encourages a particular mode of attention: one must listen or read carefully until the very end to fully grasp the meaning. In a subtle way, the language trains patience, anticipation, and contextual thinking.

Perhaps most striking is Turkish's capacity to absorb vocabulary from other languages—Arabic, Persian, Greek, Armenian, French, Italian, and more recently English—without losing its structural integrity. Borrowed words are not simply inserted; they are fully integrated. They take Turkish suffixes, obey Turkish phonetic rules, and become part of the system.

Even verbs can be formed with ease. Through auxiliary verbs such as etmek or yapmak, Turkish can transform borrowed nouns into fully functional verbs—something many languages struggle to do. This makes Turkish exceptionally flexible in incorporating new concepts, technologies, and cultural influences.

For example, plan functions as both a noun and a verb in English, as it does in many European languages. Turkish borrows plan as a noun and combines it with yapmak to create a verb. The expression plan yapmak, meaning “to plan,” fits seamlessly into Turkish grammar and syntax, behaving no differently from a native verb.

This ability reflects something deeper. Turkish is not a fragile linguistic system easily overwhelmed by external influence. It is a strong grammatical framework, capable of integrating diversity while preserving coherence. In this sense, Turkish grammar is not merely a technical feature; it is a cultural achievement—balancing openness with order, flexibility with structure.

This brings us to a more fundamental reflection. Linguistic research has long shown that speaking a language is far more than exchanging information. To speak a language is to enter into a living relationship with the generations who spoke it before us and the civilization they helped create. Language connects us to a world of shared symbols, values, memories, and sensibilities.

Language also shapes how we perceive and interpret the world. It influences how we organize thought, express emotion, and relate to others.

Seen from this perspective, the flexibility of Turkish, especially its ability to adopt and adapt without dissolving, finds a striking parallel in the experiences of Turkish communities in the United States. Many Turkish Americans integrate successfully into American society and its cultural ecosystem, while maintaining a distinct sense of identity. Much like the language itself, they navigate openness and continuity at the same time.

There is, of course, much more to be said about the deep correspondence between language and cultural behavior. Yet I should probably stop here before fully exhausting your attention.

In the end, to speak Turkish is not simply to use a means of communication. It is to participate in a long historical conversation—one that stretches across centuries and continents, linking language, culture, and civilization into a shared human inheritance.

I am confident that our guests in the room will join me when I say that it is our pleasure, as Turkish Americans, to bring this exceptionally rich and diverse inheritance into the American cultural landscape.

Thank you very much for your attention!

About the Author

Prof. Rıza Yıldırım is an academician specializing in Ottoman History, Iranian History, Religious Studies, and Alevism. After completing his undergraduate studies in Physics at Bilkent University, he earned his master's and doctoral degrees in History at the same university. His doctoral dissertation, completed in 2008, focused on the struggle between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, examining the economic and political foundations of the emergence of Alevism within this context. From 2009 to 2015, he worked as an assistant professor and associate professor in the history department at the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye Economics and Technology University. During the same period, he spent a year each as a visiting scholar at Harvard University and Boston University. In 2016, he moved to Atlanta to pursue a second doctorate in Religious Studies at Emory University. He completed his second dissertation, which examined the political and religious structure of the Safavid State, in 2024. He currently works as a Professor at the University of Vienna. Yıldırım has published six books and numerous academic articles in the fields of Ottoman History, Safavid History, Alevism, Bektashism, Ahilik, and Sufism.





Assembly of Turkish American Associations

FUNDRAISING

“Legends in a Cup: Turkish Coffee Tales from Anatolia”

ATAA -Exclusive Film Screening with English

Subtitles for Everyone to Enjoy

Date: March 8, 2026

Time: 2:00pm - 5:00pm

Venue: 8412 Preston Rd #450, Plano, TX 75024, USA



Our Event Sponsor



A Premier Turkish Cuisine with Full Service Restaurant
Taste the beauty of our Mediterranean cuisine restaurant
8412 Preston Rd #450, Plano, TX 75024, USA

Celebrating Women's Power

Join us, men and women both, for a special International Women's Day screening of the inspiring **Turkish Coffee Lady** documentary film, **Turkish Coffee Tales from Anatolia** — highlights Gizem Şalcıgil White, a Turkish American entrepreneur with a passion for bridging cultures through coffee.

Her story reflects resilience, leadership, entrepreneurship, and the unstoppable spirit of Turkish American women.

Gizem Şalcıgil White – “For me, it's not just about breaking barriers; it's about shattering limitations and creating a world where every woman is free to soar and inspire.”

Experience empowerment and connection as we celebrate women who lead with courage and heart.

What to Expect:

- Exclusive screening of Turkish Coffee Lady documentary film
- Freshly brewed authentic Turkish coffee
- Tea service
- Delicious Turkish desserts
- Community conversation and inspiration

Come sip, watch, celebrate and be inspired by the power of Turkish American women together.

**Because every cup tells a story
and every woman shapes the future.**

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Come sip, watch, celebrate and be inspired by the power of Turkish American women together.

**Because every cup tells a story
and every woman shapes the future.**

**All proceeds will support youth sponsorships for
students attending the ATAA 2026 Conference.**



ATAA Graduate Student Scholarship in Turkish Studies

The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), with the generous support of Drs. Bilgin Family, is proud to announce the launch of the ATAA Graduate Student Scholarship in collaboration with the American Association of Teachers of Turkic Languages (AATT).

This new scholarship program underscores ATAA's long-standing commitment to promoting Turkish Studies and supporting emerging scholars who contribute to the understanding of Turkish language, history, and culture in North America.

Each year, two graduate students presenting at the AATT Annual Graduate Student Conference will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship in recognition of their outstanding academic achievements and innovative research in the field of Turkish Studies.

The first awardees will be announced during the AATT Graduate Student Conference (2026) and recognized at the ATAA Annual Conference. In addition to receiving the monetary award, recipients will be featured on the ATAA website and in both AATT and ATAA newsletters.

This initiative represents a meaningful step toward strengthening academic collaboration and encouraging new generations of scholars to advance Turkish Studies in the United States and Canada.

For details and application information, visit the AATT website aatturkic.org or contact aattsecretariat@gmail.com with the subject line "ATAA Student Scholarship for AATT Graduate Student Conference."

**ASSEMBLY OF TURKISH
AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS**

SCHOLARSHIP

**EMPOWERING TURKISH STUDIES
GRADUATE STUDENTS**

About

A scholarship program that awards two graduate students each year to attend the Annual Graduate Student Conference of the American Association of Teachers of Turkic Languages (AATT).

Deadline
March 31, 2026

For More Information :
<https://www.ataa.org/about/scholarship/>



Turkic Identity and Minority Status in the U.S. Webinar



On January 25, 2026, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) hosted a timely and thought-provoking webinar titled “Turkic Identity and Minority Status in the U.S.: Legal Frameworks, Global Practices & Challenges.”

The event brought together community leaders and policy experts to examine how Turkic Americans are categorized within the American legal system—and why that categorization has real-world consequences.

The program was moderated by Nilüfer Esen-Bilgin, ATAA Past President and Advocacy Committee Chair. Featured speakers included Hülya Erol-Garvett, a civic advocate and community leader, and Lydia Borland, President of LB International Solutions LLC, who has extensive experience in government relations and policy analysis.

Together, they unpacked a complex but crucial topic: how identity categories in the United States shape access to rights, resources, and representation.

At its core, the discussion explored how the United States defines and measures minority status—and how that differs from approaches in other parts of the world.

The speakers explained that in many European and international contexts, minority recognition often centers on language, culture, and religion, with a focus on protecting collective identity.

The U.S. system, however, is largely structured around a civil-rights framework, where racial and ethnic categories are used to measure discrimination and disparities in areas such as housing, employment, education, healthcare, and political participation.

In the American context, being included in official data categories—especially those tied to the Census and federal standards—can determine whether a community’s challenges are documented and addressed.

If a group is not clearly visible in those data systems, it may struggle to demonstrate need or advocate effectively.

The speakers highlighted how Turkic Americans often experience what they described as a form of “statistical fragmentation.”

Members of the community may be categorized under broad classifications that do not fully capture their distinct identity. As a result, community-specific concerns may not be systematically tracked or measured.

A central theme of the webinar was the concept of invisibility—not as a symbolic issue, but as a structural one.

The discussion emphasized that invisibility in official data systems can carry tangible consequences.

The rest of the article written by Hülya Erol-Garvett can be found at the [TCUSAPAC Newsletter](#).

To listen to the webinar please either click on the picture or the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOuYV6Bu0Hc>





Dr. Nilüfer Esen Bilgin
ATAA Advocacy Committee Chair
& Past President

As a nonprofit and national umbrella organization representing Turkish Americans, the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) carries both an opportunity and a responsibility. In today's highly polarized environment, sometimes we also debate among the board members what ATAA should, and should not do. Therefore, it is increasingly important to clarify what advocacy means for a nonprofit organization, and where the line lies between principled civic engagement and partisan political activity.

Advocacy is not the same as partisanship. For a nonprofit organization such as ATAA, advocacy involves educating the public, promoting accurate understanding of Turkish history and culture, supporting civic awareness, and responding to issues that directly affect the Turkish-American community. It includes engaging policymakers on matters aligned with our mission and providing factual information to our members

However, federal law and our governing documents are clear: ATAA may not endorse or oppose political candidates, participate in campaign activity, or use organizational resources for partisan purposes. Speaking on policy is permitted; campaigning for individuals is not.

I tried to summarize the legal and ethical boundaries of ATAA in this table:

May	May Not
Respond to legislation or public narratives that misrepresent Turkish history or identity	Endorse or oppose political candidates
Provide accurate information to lawmakers about issues affecting Turkish Americans.	Engage in partisan campaign activity
Communicate with elected officials on matters of cultural, educational, or civic importance	Use organizational resources for electoral purposes
Speak about policy	Endorse or oppose political candidates
Share information	Engage in partisan campaign activity
Encourage civic participation and voter engagement	Allow organizational resources to be used for electoral purposes

Advocacy with Integrity: ATAA's Role as a Nonprofit Organization

The distinction is crucial. Speaking on policy is permissible; campaigning for individuals is not. Sharing information is appropriate; mobilizing for partisan advantage is not. It educates rather than inflames. It clarifies rather than divides. It strengthens the community's voice without compromising institutional integrity.

The line can sometimes feel narrow, especially when policy debates become highly charged. But clarity and consistency protect both the organization's credibility and its tax-exempt status.

As Turkish Americans continue to grow in civic participation and visibility, organizations like ATAA must model thoughtful engagement. Advocacy, when done responsibly, enhances the support and the democratic participation of members.

In doing so, ATAA can continue to serve as a respected voice for Turkish Americans: firm in values, careful in action, and committed to the public good.



Power of Engaged, Principled Leadership



Recognizing Berna Gürdal's Leadership and Service to ATAA

The Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) proudly recognizes Berna Gürdal for her exemplary leadership, tireless service, and impactful contributions to our national and international initiatives.

As President of the Turkish Women's League of America (TWLA) and an active partner organization leader within the ATAA UN Committee, Berna has played a vital role in advancing our community's voice on prominent global platforms.

Leadership at the United Nations Platform

Berna Gürdal has been a dedicated and effective Partner and contributor to ATAA's engagement at the United Nations. Through the ATAA UN Committee, she has helped strengthen collaboration among Turkish-American organizations and ensured meaningful representation in international discussions.

She was one of the key contributor and organizer of the December 4, 2025 celebration held at Turkish House in New York, commemorating December 15, World Turkic Language Family

Day. This very important historic event highlighted the richness, diversity, and shared heritage of the Turkic language family, bringing together community leaders, diplomats, scholars, and advocates in a spirit of unity and cultural pride. Her leadership and coordination were instrumental in the success of this distinguished gathering.

Advancing Dialogue Through Webinars and Global Engagement

Beyond in-person events, Berna has contributed significantly to ATAA's educational outreach through the organization and facilitation of webinars addressing global issues, education, cultural awareness, and community engagement. Her organizational skills have strengthened ATAA's ability to convene meaningful discussions that connect Turkish-American perspectives with broader international conversations.

2023 UN Water Conference – ATAA Side Event

One of Berna Gürdal's notable contributions was her leadership role in organizing and supporting ATAA's participation in the United Nations 2023 Water Conference. She played one of the key roles in coordinating the ATAA Side Event, contributing to both its organization and presentations.

This important international conference addressed global water sustainability challenges, and ATAA's presence underscored the Turkish-American community's commitment to environmental responsibility, sustainable development, and constructive global engagement. Berna's efforts ensured that the event was professionally executed and thoughtfully represented, enhancing ATAA's visibility and credibility within the UN framework.





A Partner Organization Leader Making National Impact

As a partner organization leader within the ATAA network, Berna Gürdal exemplifies collaborative leadership. She consistently bridges local community initiatives with national advocacy efforts, reinforcing ATAA's mission of unity, representation, and cultural diplomacy.

Her dedication reflects a broader vision: empowering organizations to work together, strengthening cultural identity, and contributing meaningfully to global discussions. Through her steady commitment, organizational skill, and inclusive leadership style, she has helped elevate ATAA's initiatives and expand its impact.

A Well-Deserved Recognition

Berna Gürdal's service to ATAA and the broader Turkish-American community demonstrates the power of engaged, principled leadership. Her contributions to UN-related initiatives, cultural celebrations, educational programming, and international conferences reflect both professional excellence and heartfelt dedication.

The ATAA community extends its sincere appreciation to Berna Gürdal for her steadfast partnership, her tireless efforts, and her continued commitment to advancing our shared mission on national and global stages.



Berna Gürdal graduated from Hacettepe University, Faculty of Nutrition and Dietetics, in 1997 and worked as a corporate dietitian at Panorama Food Company between 1997–1999. Between 1998–2005, she served as a clinical dietitian in the Department of Internal Medicine at Uludağ University, where she also

delivered presentations at various medical congresses. Her work on diabetes treatment was published in the book *Diabetes Mellitus* in 2006.

Living in New York since 2005, Berna Gürdal received the Child Nutrition and Cooking Program Certificate from Stanford University. In 2020, she completed the Nutrition and Healthy Living certificate program at Cornell University.

She is married and a mother of two. Her children are graduates of New York Atatürk School. She has been serving on the Board of Directors of the Turkish Women's League of America since 2017 and has been serving as its President since 2023.





ATAA recognizes **Ela Elmas** as the **Community Youth Star**—and in recognition of **Women's History Month**—we are proud to spotlight Ela, a dedicated leader whose vision, service, and advocacy have helped shape the future of youth leadership within Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA).

Ela as the Co-Founder of the ATAA Youth Committee, helped establishment of the committee in 2020. She served as Vice Chair through 2024, providing steady and strategic leadership during the committee's formative and growth years. Her work laid the foundation for a dynamic national platform that elevates the voices of Turkish-American youth across the United States.

Throughout her tenure, Ela was a driving force behind youth advocacy, programming, and leadership development. She played a key role in organizing and leading numerous webinars that created meaningful spaces for young people to engage with topics ranging from civic participation to professional development and community leadership. These initiatives not only expanded the Youth Committee's national reach, but also strengthened connections among Turkish-American students and young professionals across the country.

Ela represented the Youth Committee on the national stage at the 2023 and 2024 ATAA Annual Conferences, where she delivered thoughtful presentations on the importance of youth leadership. She emphasized that young people must be meaningfully engaged—not simply included—in decision-making processes that shape community institutions. Her message underscored a broader vision: that investing in youth leadership ensures long-term sustainability, innovation, and continuity within our organizations.

Her leadership is deeply informed by her academic and professional background. Ela earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the University of Colorado Denver, where she was recognized on the Dean's List and contributed to research in cognitive science.

She later completed a Master of Arts in Special Education with a concentration in Applied Behavior Analysis at Arizona State University. Today, she works in the field of Applied Behavior Analysis, bringing a research-driven and people-centered approach to her work with individuals with developmental disabilities. This same analytical rigor and empathy have defined her leadership style—intentional, inclusive, and grounded in service.

Beyond her national impact, Ela has been a committed community builder at the local level. She founded and led the Turkish American Youth of Colorado (TAYCO), creating opportunities for young people to connect with their cultural identity while stepping into leadership roles. She currently serves as Secretary of the Turkish American Cultural Society of Colorado (TASCO), continuing her dedication to strengthening Turkish-American civic life at the state level.

As a woman in leadership, Ela's presence has carried particular significance. Her advocacy helped ensure strong representation of women within the Youth Committee's leadership structure, fostering a culture where young women see themselves reflected at the national level. Through mentorship and example, she has inspired many to pursue leadership roles within the Youth Committee and throughout the broader Turkish-American community.

Ela Elmas's legacy is one of vision, empowerment, and enduring service. As a co-founder, national leader, and advocate for youth and women in leadership, she has helped transform the ATAA Youth Committee into the vibrant and representative body it is today. We are grateful for her dedication and proud to recognize her as a true Youth Community STAR.



Ela speaking at the 2023 Conference, alongside Gokhan Ozalp, Mehmet Tascioglu, Mert Tokman (L-R)





Lila Üster is a young American-born aspiring poet of Turkish descent from the Dallas Fort Worth area. She is a sophomore at Greenhill School who enjoys playing piano, reading and writing stories, and learning about different cultures and experiences. A rising writer, Lila's poems feature elements of the cultures both she and her parents grew up with, as well as the recurring themes of insecurity, girlhood, and family. Recently, she has won several Scholastic and University Interscholastic League (UIL) awards for her writing and poetry, and co-runs a student-led activism club at her school against book banning. Combining modern ideas with ancestral roots, she writes to raise awareness and give her readers a taste of her own multicultural experiences.

A Fountain of Girlhood

Bare bellies flat against dewy grass, in this moment we are just children – life's simplicity weighs only air on our shoulders. We are what comes before date nights and eating disorders. Lips red as cherries, tongues tasting sweet and bubbly still in our mouths, aluminum cans, empty without regret, crackle in our palms.

We, girls, giggle through soda-pop foam, sunburned cheeks, and knees bruising like ripened plums.

Fingers twist through each other's locks, charcoal-dark and seawater-wet, damp from the humidity of candy-sweet rain clouds.

Bursts of laughter echo in between thunder claps, an essence of girlhood exploding into the empty sky. We hold out our fists, knuckles turned to the expanse above as ladybugs, knocked to-and-fro in the late spring breeze of a rising storm, land upon curls of gnarled skin.

We chase windblown paper plates barefoot over the rolling hills, toes gripping wet, cool grass.

Hamburger grease on the grill and grandfathers cracking open cans of gold beer; they let us sneak sips from the ice-cold aluminum when our parents aren't looking. Coins of crinkle cut pickles crunch between mouthfuls of velvety cheddar, lettuce crisps, and tender disks of beef. Everything tastes better on days like this.

Whispers of cold vanilla cream and garden-picked strawberries promise nighttime festivities to come.

We peel bikinis off shoulders and [♪]hips, sticky with sweat, and stand under warm water streaming down our bare backs. Sitting on the bathroom floor, we paint each other's toenails, still wrapped in towels, smelling of lilacs and lemongrass – the shampoo of aunties' daughters who have long since left home.

In the dim light of bedroom lamps, we braid our hair and listen to aunties and uncles, cousins, mothers and fathers. The never-dull chatter, the constant conversation of relatives bound not by blood, but by the love they have for each other. We press our ears against cold floorboards, counting particles of dust in the darkness as we catch stories of coming-to-America and brothers and sisters away at college.

The sing-song narrative of native tongues and dialects float on melodic minor sound waves bouncing out of speakers and reverberating in the room – like the subtle sway of a belly-dancer's hips in time with the music.

In the candlelight, the simply dense way each family collects together feels like home.

Like somehow, a house beside the same ocean, under the same sky, lit by the same stars can be a nation for a group of people.

And we, girls, are not truly alone, as the women who lived, came, immigrated before us hold their place in our hearts.

♪ ☆ ♪

The moon and stars overhead are the same ones our families see half the world away.

Somehow, knowing that our identity follows us even in a new country, culture, home, is enough to remind us of who we are.

♪ ☆ ♪

Perhaps, for the time being, remembrance can be enough.



The Turkish American Cultural Association of Connecticut set up a monthly event as "Çay, Kahve Bahane-Toplantı Sahane", providing tea, coffee, and desert at the luncheon of the Turkish American community gathering.



Newly established Turkish American Cultural Association (AACACT) of Connecticut held their first BOD meeting at the Sultan's in Waterbury on Saturday, February 21, 2026.

TURKISH WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF AMERICA **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS** *In collaboration with* **BTF** **TURKWEN**

In support of March 8th INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Evrin Hizeler Aydın Managing Director Anadolu Foundation
Ferhan İstanbullu Media and Cultural Initiatives Leader
Dr. Feride Demir Art Historian and Digital Fabrication Specialist
Sevil Işık Immigration Attorney, Licensed in New York and Istanbul
Zeynep Sayım Yazal Moderator

"Standing for Her Rights: Justice and Action for Every Woman and Girl"

MARCH 7th 2026 SATURDAY **1 PM - 3 PM** **Turkish House**

Please RSVP until March 6th by twlanewyork@gmail.com

APRIL 23rd, NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND CHILDREN'S DAY & UNESCO WORLD ART DAY

5th ANNUAL PAINTING CONTEST 2026

15 LET ON LAND

2025 First Place for 12-14 ages Ceren EREN

Chairman of the Jury Bedri Baykam

AGES 6-8	AGES 9-11	AGES 12-14
Grand Prize : \$ 200	Grand Prize : \$ 200	Grand Prize : \$ 200
Second Prize : \$ 100	Second Prize : \$ 100	Second Prize : \$ 100
Third Prize : \$ 50	Third Prize : \$ 50	Third Prize : \$ 50
Honorable Mention : Art Kit	Honorable Mention : Art Kit	Honorable Mention : Art Kit

DATES Application Deadline: March 10, 2026
Announcement of the result: April 03, 2026
Exhibition Date: April 20-26, 2026

For Application: <https://atkb.org>



Turkish American Kids Ensemble of San Antonio (TAKE-SA)

A Youth Arts Initiative of ATA-San Antonio

Founded in 2017, the Turkish American Kids Ensemble of San Antonio (TAKE-SA) began as a small circle of children gathering to learn a single Turkish song and a few simple steps of traditional folk dance. What started as a modest cultural activity quickly blossomed into one of the most beloved folk dance groups at the San Antonio Folklife & Dance Festival—one of the largest and oldest folk festivals in San Antonio—where the ensemble proudly represents their beloved homeland, Türkiye. TAKE-SA's vibrant spirit has extended beyond city borders. A few years ago, upon special invitation, the group performed at the Annual Turkish Festival hosted by ATA-Houston, strengthening bonds within the broader Turkish-American community and showcasing the richness of Turkish folk culture.

More Than Dance and Song

Today, the dancers proudly perform 10 different regional folk dances from various regions of Türkiye, each reflecting the unique rhythm, costume, and spirit of its homeland. Their traditional costumes—carefully selected and purchased through generous community donations—were carried all the way from Türkiye, allowing the children to represent each region with authenticity and pride.

In addition to dance, they sing Turkish folk songs, national anthems, and patriotic marches—keeping alive melodies that carry generations of history and heart. Many children who did not previously speak Turkish learned traditional folk songs—sometimes even recalling lyrics that their own parents had forgotten.

Their classrooms have taken many forms—sometimes a fully equipped professional stage, sometimes a sunny corner of a city park.

At times, lessons happen in traditional classrooms; at other times, living rooms transformed with couches pushed aside to make space for young dancers in motion. No matter the setting, one thing remains constant: unwavering determination. TAKE-SA continues to pursue what they love, regardless of circumstances.

A Community Rooted in Togetherness

While TAKE-SA proudly serves the greater purpose of passing Turkish culture to the next generation of Turkish-Americans, its spirit has never been limited to dance, song, or language instruction alone. The group lives by a simple yet powerful motto: **“People who dance together, stay together.”** Their mission is unity. They are paving the way for a vibrant, young, and strong Turkish-American community—drawing strength from deep cultural roots while nurturing the young branches growing here.

Leadership with Heart

Guiding TAKE-SA with dedication and care is its proud founder and instructor for language, dance, and music, Oya DiCosimo. Ms. DiCosimo and her assistant Ms. Melike Yenice Guvenguez take immense pride in serving the young Turkish-American generation and find deep joy in working with the children. From living rooms to festival stages, TAKE-SA stands as a shining example of cultural dedication, resilience, and unity—proving that when young hearts come together in rhythm, tradition not only survives, it thrives.



Oya DiCosimo, originally from İzmir, Türkiye, is an experienced education and community engagement professional with over 20 years of expertise in international education, program management, and multilingual communication. She has served the Turkish American Association of San Antonio for 15 years and now serves as its President, focusing on children's language and cultural education through programs she has founded and led. Oya holds an MBA from Texas Health and Science University and a bachelor's degree from Hacettepe University. She has held leadership roles in student affairs, admissions, and international education, supporting students from diverse backgrounds, and currently teaches at San Antonio College. She is committed to fostering inclusive, educational, and culturally enriching programs for her community.



Dear ATA-NC Members and Friends,

As the American Turkish Association of North Carolina (ATA-NC) community, we are entering a very busy time of the year with a variety of important events and gatherings. Our goal is to serve our community and represent our culture by being a part of the extended NC communities as much as possible.

ATA-NC

Event Locations

ATA-NC Turkish House,
303 E Durham Rd, Cary, NC 27513, USA

Saturday, February 21 - 7 PM

ATA-NC Choir Turkish Music Concert at Turkish House

Sunday, February 22 - 11 AM Children's Folk Dance Practice at Turkish House

Friday, February 27 - 7 PM Cary Final Friday Art Loop Event
Vintage Vibes at Turkish House

Saturday, February 28 - 11 AM Community Gathering – A
Conversation on Democracy and Justice at Turkish House

Sunday, March 8 - 10:30 AM

International Women's Day Event at Turkish House

Tuesday, March 17 - 7 PM "A Story within a story" Can Atalay
Documentary Screening at Duke University

Saturday, April 18 – 1 PM

Children's Day Festival of Cary at Downtown Cary Park



Feb 27, 2026, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM



Feb 27, 2026, 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM



Mar 08, 2026, 10:30 AM – 1:00 PM



Apr 18, 2026, 12:00 PM – 7:00 PM



Turkish American Community Meets with Congresswoman Julie Johnson in Dallas

Under the leadership of Nuray Fuller, Turkish American residents from the greater Dallas area met with Julie Johnson on February 22 at Chefika Mediterranean Restaurant for a meet-and-greet focused on dialogue, civic engagement, and community partnership.

Mrs. Fuller thanked Congresswoman for allocating time from her current busy schedule to meet with the group and local donors for their support and civic engagement.

Congresswoman Johnson also expressed her appreciation to the attending members of the Turkish American community for their continued support and emphasized the importance of civic engagement. She noted that her current focus is on the upcoming primary elections and added that contributions from Turkish American residents in the DFW area would play a meaningful role in strengthening her campaign.

Congresswoman Johnson outlined several issues she is committed to advancing while answered questions attending Turkish Americans asked.

The discussion focused on strengthening voter engagement within the Turkish American community and building partnerships that support local small businesses. Participants also explored the development of internship pathways for university students to encourage civic participation and professional growth.

The Turkish American community raised questions about internship opportunities for university students. Congresswoman Johnson noted that her office periodically hires interns for both her district office and her Washington, D.C. office. She also encouraged Turkish Americans to engage actively with local chambers of commerce and build partnerships with area businesses. Highlighting key organizations, she pointed to the Dallas Regional Chamber (DRC),



Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, Greater Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce, North Dallas Chamber of Commerce, and Richardson Chamber of Commerce as among the most active in the region.

Participants encouraged Congresswoman Johnson to join the Congressional Turkish Caucus. In response, she immediately contacted her office and directed her staff to add her to the caucus. She also suggested organizing a congressional delegation visit to Türkiye, and the group agreed to begin coordinating plans for the proposed trip.

This gathering reflected the warmth of Turkish hospitality, featuring a rich variety of traditional Turkish cuisine prepared by Chefika, while providing an opportunity for open discussion on key policy priorities and local concerns.

Both Congresswoman Johnson and community members emphasized the value of small, focused discussions such as this one. Attendees agreed that continuing this format will help deepen relationships and ensure sustained collaboration.

This meeting marked an important step in strengthening the voice of Turkish Americans in North Texas and building a long-term, constructive partnership with elected leadership.

We would like to extend Chefika Mediterranean Restaurant for setting up an elegant and inviting meeting space and preparing a variety of delicious Turkish cuisines.

The organizers extend their sincere appreciation to everyone who helped make this engagement possible.





TURANT Iftar Gathering at Turkish Café: An Evening of Poetry, Tradition, and Music



This Ramadan, TURANT members and friends came together at Turkish Café & Lounge for a memorable iftar evening marked by warmth, culture, and heartfelt connection. As we broke our fast side by side, the true spirit of Ramadan gratitude, unity, and shared joy was beautifully reflected throughout the evening.

The program was enriched by the evocative poetry recitations of Fatih Akıcı, whose verses explored themes of Istanbul and togetherness. His words added a profound spiritual depth to the gathering, reminding us of the beauty and meaning of this blessed month.

The evening concluded with a captivating oud performance by **Bahadır Taşkonak**. The instrument's soulful and delicate melodies created a serene, reflective atmosphere, allowing guests to pause, listen, and fully embrace the peace of Ramadan.

We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who joined us and to our talented performers who made the evening truly special. Gatherings like these strengthen our community and remind us that iftar is not only about sharing a meal, but also about celebrating culture, art, and meaningful connection.

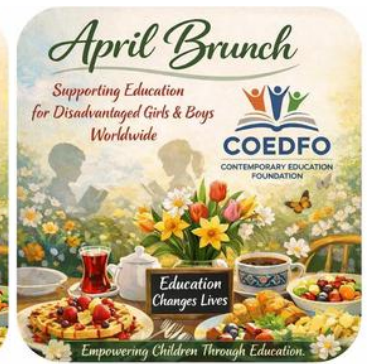
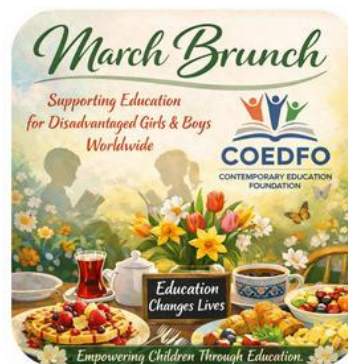
We look forward to many more evenings of togetherness.



COEDFO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the education of children and young people—especially disadvantaged girls and boys—around the world. We believe that through education, children can reach their full potential and grow into confident, productive adults.

On February 15, 2026 COEDFO held its monthly fundraising brunch. Participants learned about:

- COEDFO's 2026 objectives and projects
- Celebrated Şafak Smith's birthday who is long time friend and supporter of COEDFO work
- Share a meaningful time with friends that supports of education.



“When we come together with one shared dream, fellowship blossoms and harmony created feels like home.”



April 26  **ULUSAL EGEMENLİK VE ÇOCUK BAYRAMI** *Kırtlar Olgun* **SAVE DATE**

23 NİSAN

April 23rd, National Sovereignty and Children's Day, a gift from Atatürk, reminds us that our children are the future and hope of our country.

Join us for a joyful celebration featuring international dance performances, interactive workshops, symbolic appearances from beloved figures of Turkish history, and wonderful shows for the whole family.

Mark your calendar and don't miss this vibrant celebration of children, culture, and unity.

More details coming soon!

 **Sunday, April 26, 2026** 10:30 am - 3:30 pm

 **Lucie Stern Community Center**
1305 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto
taacalifornia@gmail.com
650-450-8567

 **Cal-Turks**
Serving the Turkish American Community since 1975

www.taaca.org  [/taacalifornia](https://www.facebook.com/taacalifornia)  [/taacalifornia](https://www.instagram.com/taacalifornia)

Turkish American Cultural Association of Michigan (TACAM) celebrated Valentine's Day with an unforgettable jazz evening, featuring renowned artist Fuad Tuac and two acclaimed jazz musicians from Detroit. The evening was filled with soulful melodies, warm ambiance, and a wonderful sense of community.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

HIKING

March 8th 11:00am-1:00 pm
Bedwell Bayfront Park
1600 Marsh Rd, Menlo Park, CA 94025

FREE EVENT - Register at www.taaca.org
Dogs are welcome 🐕

 **Cal-Turks**
TURKISH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
Serving the Turkish American Community since 1975





ATA-DC 2025-2026 Events



Arenowned Turkish flutist Şefika Kutluer, internationally celebrated as the “Magic Flute,” delivered a memorable performance at the ATA-DC Turkish House, bringing together music lovers for an evening dedicated to art and cultural exchange. Performing at the venue for the first time, Kutluer captivated the audience with her exceptional musical interpretation and virtuosity, creating an unforgettable atmosphere. The concert highlighted the continued role of Turkish cultural institutions in promoting the arts within the Turkish-American community, while organizers also announced plans for a future concert following the enthusiastic response from attendees. The evening stood as a testament to the unifying power of music and the enduring contribution of Turkish artists on the international stage.



A large delegation of Turkish Americans and Azerbaijani Americans from Virginia and neighboring states met with newly elected U.S. Congressman James Walkinshaw at Bistrot Cacao in Washington, D.C., to discuss issues of mutual interest and strengthen community engagement. Congressman Walkinshaw, who won the special election previously held by the late Gerry Connolly, exchanged views with community representatives on U.S.–Türkiye relations, regional security, counterterrorism cooperation, and economic matters affecting his district. Currently serving on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, including the Military and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, Walkinshaw emphasized the importance of dialogue with Turkish American constituents and expressed interest in visiting Türkiye following his invitation to join the Türkiye Caucus. The meeting highlighted ongoing efforts to foster constructive partnerships between Turkish-American communities and U.S. policymakers.



Maryland American Turkish Association (MATA)



Maryland American Turkish Association (MATA) partnered with Turkish Breakfast Club for a Sunday brunch event at Cazbar Restaurant in Columbia, Maryland on February 1st. Turkish-American community from the DMV area got together for a delicious Turkish breakfast while enjoying each other's company.



Maryland American Turkish Association (MATA) completed the phase 1 of the play based and child-centered 8-week Turkish Language Program (MATA ROOTS) in December and children received their certificates.

The second part of the program will commence on March 1st. Maryland Turkish American community is very excited about this new initiative.

Please contact activities@matamd.org for information.





29 Yıllık Gelenek: TACA Georgia 23 Nisan Coşkısına Hazırlanıyor

ATLANTA, GA – Georgia Türk Amerikan Kültür Derneği (TACA-Georgia), Ulu Önder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün dünya çocuklarına armağan ettiği 23 Nisan Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı'nı bu yıl 29. kez büyük bir coşkuyla kutlamaya hazırlanıyor. Şubat ayı itibarıyla Atlanta Dance Academy kapılarını TACA Georgia'nın minik yeteneklerine açtı.

Hazırlıklar Tüm Hızıyla Devam Ediyor

Her pazar günü, iki ay boyunca sürecektir olan yoğun çalışma temposu, gönüllülük esasıyla bir araya gelen bir eğitim ordusu tarafından yürütülüyor. Bu yılki gösterilerde:

- 60'tan fazla Türk-Amerikan çocuk, milli benliklerini ve kültürel miraslarını sahnede sergilemek için ter döküyor.
- Onlarca gönüllü öğretmen, koreografilerden kostüm detaylarına kadar her aşamada çocuklarımızı rehberlik ediyor.

Uluslararası Bir Kültür Köprüsü

TACA Georgia'nın bu yılki kutlaması sadece yerel değil, aynı zamanda çok kültürlü bir şölene dönüşüyor. TACA bünyesindeki 3 ana grubun yanı sıra, gösteriye şu ana kadar:

- 2 yerel çocuk grubu * 4 uluslararası çocuk sanatı grubu dahil oldu.

Bu çeşitlilik, 23 Nisan'ın "dünya barışı ve kardeşliği" vizyonunu Atlanta'nın kalbine taşıyor.

Güçlü Liderlik, Güçlü Organizasyon

Organizasyonun arkasındaki itici güç olan 23 Nisan Komite Başkanı Buket Bozdağ ve Etkinlik Komitesi Başkanı Gülşah Kasap Doğan, hazırlıkların titizlikle yürütüldüğünü belirttiler. Komite başkanları, bu geleneğin 29 yıldır kesintisiz sürmesinin Atlanta'daki Türk toplumunun birliği ve gelecek nesillere olan bağlılığının bir göstergesi olduğunu vurguluyorlar.

Büyük Gün: 18 Nisan 2026

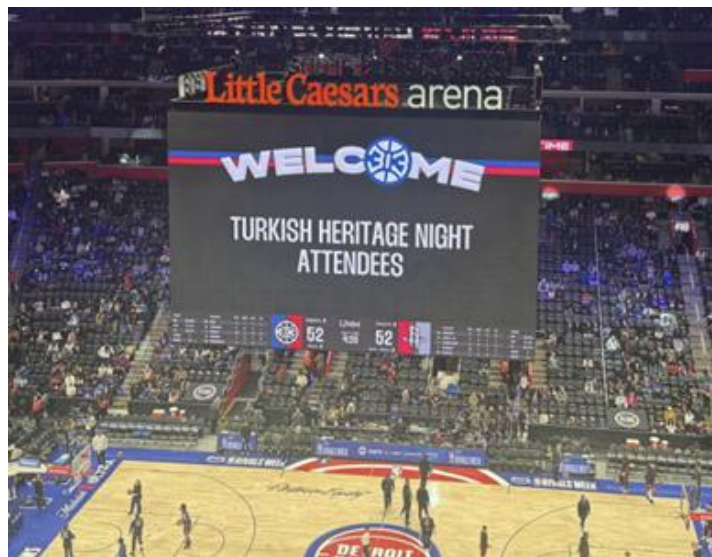
Tüm bu emeğin meyvesi, 18 Nisan Cumartesi günü düzenlenecek olan muhteşem sahne gösterisi ile taçlanacak. TACA Georgia, tüm toplum üyelerini ve çocuk dostlarını bu tarihi kutlamanın bir parçası olmaya davet ediyor.





Turkish Heritage Night at the Detroit Pistons vs. Houston Rockets Game

On January 22, 2026, Houston Rockets center Alperen Sengun took on the Detroit Pistons in a game that felt like a homecoming, thanks to a passionate showing of support from the local Turkish community. The Turkish American Cultural Association of Michigan (TACAM) organized a "Turkish Night" event, drawing around 250 Turkish fans to the arena to cheer on their national star. Sengun delivered a characteristically solid performance, shooting 70% from the field and contributing to a gritty 111-104 victory for the Rockets, which marked the team's first road win since New Year's Day. The presence of his dedicated fans underscored the deep pride and connection Sengun inspires among the Turkish diaspora wherever he plays in the NBA.





ATASC UPCOMING EVENTS.

February 7 - ATASC GA and Election
February 8 - VATAN GA
February 14 - VATAN Valentine's Day Celebration
February 15 - AKM youth Club Valentine's Day Party - open to parents @AKM
February 21 - ATASC-SD Turkish Music Chorus Iftar Dinner
February 21 & 22 - AKM Youth Club, Chorus, folk dancing Chinese festival
February 28 - LATAA Iftar Dinner
February 28 - joint event of ATAMLA and VATAN, 2-4 pm Nutuk Söyleşi
March 7 - TALL Casino Night
March 7 - OCTAA & TWI International Women's Day Hike (Joint event with TWI)
March 8 - LATAA & TWI International Women's Day Hike (Joint event with TWI)
March 15 - 8 Mart commemoration, AKM Youth club, chorus, movie, and q/a with director
March 21 AKM bayramlasma, breakfast, all AKM groups and friends.
April 4 - AKM youth Club, Financial Literacy
April 11-12 AKM Youth Club, Chorus, folk dancing Japanese Festival
April TBD - ATAMLA Spring concert
April 23-30 - ATAMLA Yadigar at Washington DC
May 2 - TALL Mother's Day Tea
May 17 or 18 - AKM Youth Club 19 Mayıs celebration,
October 24 - Republic Day Ball
December 12- TALL Holiday Party with White Elephant Gift Exchange

The 2026 General Assembly and Board of Directors elections of ATASC-SD San Diego Chorus have been successfully completed. The elections were conducted under the supervision of ATASC President-Elect Erdoğan Dede, together with the official witnesses.

Following the elections, the board members continuing from the previous term and the new member joining the board this year are as follows:

Continuing Board Members:

- President: Necmi Höke
- Vice President: Selim Taşiran
- Treasurer: Ayşegül Ciyer
- Social Media & Communications: Melike Akgün

New Board Member:

- Board Member: Bihter Padak



TASC-SD San Diego Chorus began 2026 with a memorable seaside picnic in San Diego. This joyful gathering brought our community together to celebrate music, friendship, and the start of an exciting new year.



ATASC-SD San Diego Turkish Music Hatıra Ormanı – Project Completed in İzmir. With the support of ATASC-SD San Diego Chorus and our generous donors, 2,403 trees have been planted in İzmir through the Ege Orman Vakfı. This project helps restore areas affected by wildfires and brings hope for the future.





ATASC-SD San Diego Turkish Music Chorus hosted a community iftar program, bringing members and guests together for an evening of fellowship and music that reflected the spirit of Ramadan.

The program was honored by the distinguished presence of representatives from the Consulate General of the Republic of Türkiye in Los Angeles: T.C. Los Angeles Consul General Menekşe Onuk, Security Attaché Ramazan Erdem, Deputy Consul Burak Hamarat, and his wife, Esra Hamarat.

The evening highlighted unity, cultural connection, and the enduring power of Turkish music within the San Diego community.



ATASC-SD San Diego Turkish Music Chorus will present a special Eid Celebration Dinner featuring TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) Istanbul Radio Vocal Artist İsmail Özkan.

The program will include a live performance by the San Diego Turkish Music Chorus together with İsmail Özkan, offering a distinguished evening of Turkish music in celebration of Bayram.

Saturday, March 28, 2026

6:30 PM – Cocktails

7:30 PM – Dinner

Holiday Inn – Ballroom

2725 Palomar Airport Road

Carlsbad, CA 92009

Musical Director: Necmi Höke

Seating is limited. Tickets may be purchased at the following link:

[Purchase Tickets Here](#)

The community is cordially invited to attend this special cultural evening.

**SAN DIEGO TÜRK MÜZİĞİ TOPLULUĞU & TRT İSTANBUL RADYOSU
SES SANATÇISI İSMAİL ÖZKAN İLE BAYRAM ÖZEL PROGRAMI**



LIVE MUSIC
TURKISH MUSIC CHORUS
EST. 2023
SAN DIEGO
Musical Director
NECMI HÖKE

İSMAİL ÖZKAN
EID CELEBRATION
DINNER

Gönüller aynı nağmede...
Bayramda aynı sofrada

Special Performance by the **SAN DIEGO TURKISH MUSIC CHORUS** with
TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) Vocal Artist **İSMAİL ÖZKAN**

 **Saturday**
March 28, 2026

6:30 PM: Cocktails
7:30 PM: Dinner

 Holiday Inn - Ballroom
2725 Palomar Airport Road Carlsbad CA 92009

Join us for a beautiful Eid celebration with music, joy, and community.
Limited seats – reserve your spot now!

ATASC  www.sandiegoturkishmusic.com





Ramadan Iftar Dinner

Join San Diego Turkish Music Chorus for a special iftar dinner featuring:

Live performance by the San Diego Turkish Music Chorus (SDTMC)
– Sufi & Classical Turkish Music

Hacivat & Karagöz shadow play movie

Manis accompanied by traditional drum

21 February 2026

Sufi Mediterranean Restaurant Ballroom

Iftar Time: At Sunset

Limited Early Bird tickets available

Get your tickets here: [Zeffy Ticket Link](#)



TALL Casino Night

Join TALL for an exciting Casino Night filled with fun, games, and giving back—celebrating International Women's Day for a meaningful cause!

All proceeds benefit Zonguldak Şehit Hasan Yağlı İlkokulu, supporting students with essential school supplies and sports equipment.

Saturday, March 7, 2026

Location: Long Beach, CA

Early Bird: \$100 (until Feb 16)

Regular: \$125 (starting Feb 17)

Sponsor a gaming table for \$250 and receive special recognition.

Payment Options:

- [Credit Card](#)
- Zelle: tallglobal@gmail.com

Get your tickets early to secure your spot! We can't wait to roll the dice for a great cause with you!

TALL Board of Directors





THIRD ANNUAL “URFA SIRA GECESI”

February 7th, Saturday, 2026, Palo Alto - California

The Turkish American Association of California hosted its Third Annual Sıra Gecesi on February 7, 2026, celebrating one of Şanlıurfa's most cherished cultural traditions, commonly known as Urfa.

For our annual community celebration held on Friday, all the tickets were sold out. Attendance exceeded 150 people. Mazlum Usta's çiğ köfte was in great demand. This wonderful atmosphere set the stage for the evening's highlights.

As always, Taksim Big Band added joy to the night with their music. Elçin Özkurt from QT Coffee treated our guests to delicious Turkish coffee. Mehmet Çevik from the Grand Bazaar brought wonderful baklava, adding a special flavor to our program. We would also like to extend special thanks to Sultana Restaurant for their delicious food.

Clearly, next year we will need a larger venue to accommodate our guests.

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL DAY HIKE

March 8th, Sunday, 2026, Menlo Park California

Join us for an unforgettable International Women's Hike — a celebration of strength, resilience, and sisterhood. Together, we'll step into nature and into our power, honoring the courage, determination, and unity that connect women across cultures and generations.

23 NİSAN ULUSAL EGEMENLİK VE ÇOCUK BAYRAMI

April 26th, Sunday, 2026, Palo Alto California

April 23, National Sovereignty and Children's Day, a gift from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, reminds us that children are the future of our nation. This day honors both the sovereignty of the people and the promise of new generations.

Families and community members are warmly invited to join a joyful celebration featuring vibrant international dance performances, engaging interactive workshops, symbolic appearances by beloved figures of Turkish history, and delightful shows for all ages.

This special event brings children, culture, and community together in a spirit of unity and happiness. Guests will enjoy a lively program that shows the wealth of Turkish culture and the universal joy of childhood.






Ventura County American Turkish Association

General Assembly 2026

A reflection on 2025 & plans for 2026

**Sunday, Feb 8
1:00-2:00PM
Online**

Happy Valentine's Day
A La Carte Appetizers

House made Dips \$15 per order
Served with warm pita wedges.
Char Roasted Artichoke Hearts \$9.95
Shrimp Scampi \$19

Main Entrée-Per Person
Includes Greek Salad, Hot Sauce Dough Bread, Butter, and two mini desserts per person.

Blue Feta Mignon Steak with Shrimp Skewer \$39
Greek Lemon potatoes, asparagus, parmesan mushrooms.

Greek Combo Platter \$48
Coleslaw, beef meatballs and beef protein, cornwheat, delicious local roasted grapes, lemon, a hand-chop, spinach, lemon potatoes, baked zucchini.

Seafood & Turkey Combo \$50
4 Lamb chops, 1lb. asparagus, chicken breast, lamb, 3 shrimp, 2 scallops, rice, and sautéed fresh Mediterranean vegetables.

Souvlaki Platter \$36
Lamb chops, 1lb. asparagus, chicken breast, chicken breast or shrimp, lemons, mushrooms, parmesan.

Grilled Lamb Chops \$38
Served with Greek lemon potatoes, asparagus, and parmesan mushrooms.

Grilled Fresh Fish \$35
Choice of salmon, sea bass, or halibut, rice pilaf and sautéed fresh vegetables.

Calamari Appetizer \$10
Raw Calamari and Celery Sticks \$5
Fajita Appetizer \$12.95
Sage-roasted Chicken \$11

Fresh Seared Ahi Tuna \$48
Prepared with House Sauce and Wasabi. Served with rice and sautéed fresh vegetables.

Salmon on a Plank \$45
Grilled salmon with a glaze and broiled in the oven on a cedar plank, with a sprinkle of sesame seeds. Rice pilaf and fresh sautéed vegetables.

Souvlaki Combo Platter \$38
A combination of three souvlaki - lamb, 1lb. asparagus and chicken breast, served over rice pilaf, and fresh sautéed Mediterranean vegetables.

Vegetarian Combo Platter \$38
Vegetarian meatballs, green beans, sautéed mushrooms, Greek lemon potatoes, cornwheat, salad with tabbouleh sauce and spinach.

Kid's Plate (under 12) \$15
Choice of spaghetti with meatballs and parmesan (one only), fish and chips or chicken tenders and fries, for Cream for dessert.

Tables are reserved for two hours.
Greek Dancing and Dinner will be live on keyboard. Enjoy Belly Dancing at 6 PM & 8 PM.
Minimum total purchase of \$45 per adult - CA sales tax and 12% gratuity. Non-alcohol plate charge.

The Greek
1535 Spinnaker Dr. Ventura CA 93001 • (805) 659-5279



LET'S CELEBRATE
Valentine's Day
TOGETHER

**Saturday, February 14th
6:00PM**

The Greek Mediterranean Steak and Seafood
1583 Spinnaker Dr #101, Ventura, CA 93001
RSVP atasc.org by Feb 10th

TWI - SOCAL

Walks to Support Young Women's Empowerment In Türkiye

SoCal is coming together for international women's day to support leadership empowerment for young women in Türkiye. 2 days, 2 locations 2 amazing pier to pier beach walks

March 7, OCTAA and TWI in Newport Beach. For details and to sign up for the OC walk [click on the link](#)

March 8th LATAA and TWI in Manhattan Beach. For details and to sign up for the LA walk [click on the link here.](#)

Amazing cause --> Supports TWI's Sparks Programs

Come join us and celebrate international women's day and support both your local ATASC chapter and help empower young women in Türkiye.



OCTAA & LATAA PRESENT

SOCAL WOMEN'S DAY HIKES

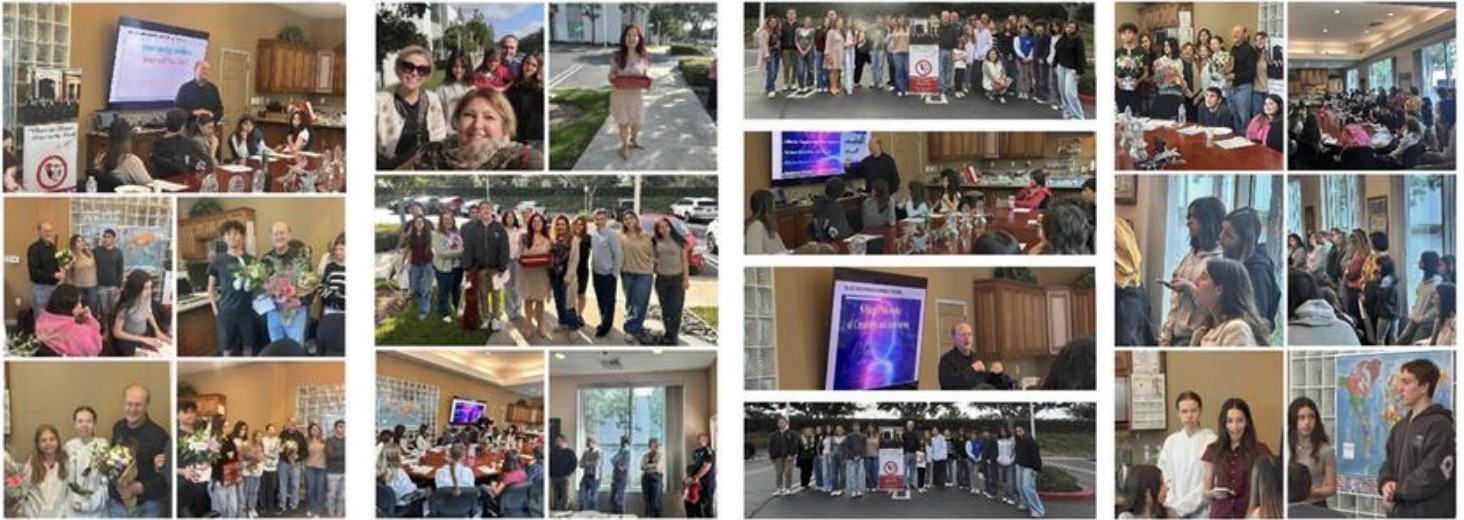
IN COLLABORATION
WITH TWI

SAVE THE DATES FOR OUR
ANNUAL WALKATHON CELEBRATING
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

 MARCH 7TH,
SATURDAY
NEWPORT
BEACH

 MARCH 8TH,
SUNDAY
MANHATTAN
BEACH





ATAMLA UN International Day of Education AKM Youth Club – Los Angeles

The Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) Youth Club marked the UN International Day of Education with an inspiring visit to the office of Mr. Ergun Kırlikovalı—philanthropist, biochemical engineer, innovator, and past President of ATAA.

Mr. Kırlikovalı shared powerful insights on innovation, scientific curiosity, and the importance of independent thinking, encouraging our students to see challenges as opportunities for growth. The event highlighted education as a fundamental human right and a driving force for peace and sustainable development, as recognized by the United Nations on January 24.

We are also honored by the presence of the Consul General of Azerbaijan in Los Angeles, H.E. Vugar Gurbanov, and his family, whose participation added special meaning to the day.

ATAMLA – AKM Los Angeles extends heartfelt thanks to Mr. Ergun Kırlikovalı for his hospitality, mentorship, and continued support of AKM's mission to empower youth under Atatürk's vision.



San Diego ATASC-SD Turkish School will start instruction on January 12, 2025. Please find the school's academic schedule [here](#). For more information: turkishschoolsds@gmail.com

LATAA Turkish School, proudly serving the Turkish community in the greater Los Angeles area, is excited to begin a new school year on January 5, 2025. Please find the school's academic schedule [here](#). For more information: school@laturks.org

OCTS Turkish School started instruction on January 5, 2025. Please find the school's academic schedule [here](#). For more information: www.octurkishschool.org octs@octaa.org



Turkish American Cultural Association of Virginia (TACAV)

On December 15th, in celebration of World Turkic Language Family Day, TACAV proudly hosted a meaningful cultural event honoring the rich heritage and unity of the Turkic world.

The evening was further distinguished by the presence of Catherine S. Read, Mayor of Fairfax, city whose attendance highlighted the importance of cultural diversity, community engagement, and international friendship within our region.

The program brought together community members, cultural leaders, and guests in a celebration of shared language, history, and traditions — reinforcing TACAV's commitment to strengthening cultural ties and promoting unity across generations.



Proclamation of World Turkic Family Day



TACAV attended TurkNetwork business network meeting on January.



KIRMIZI MİKROFON KOROSU

KONSERİ

“Çiçek Bahçesi”

9 Mayıs Cumartesi

6:30 PM LANGLEY HIGH SCHOOL
6520 Georgetown Pike McLean, VA

\$30 bağışınız ile yerinizi ayırtın!

Zelle : together@tacav.org Venmo : [@TACAV](https://www.venmo.com/TACAV)



TACAV sponsored “Hamsi Şenliği” and supported local organizations.



Dr. Selim Erhan
ATAA USA Editor

Dear Members,

I would like to begin by explaining why we made the deliberate decision to join the United Nations Global Communications Department as a non-governmental organization.

Yes, this status allows us to send representatives to United Nations meetings. It gives us a platform to address fabricated accusations originating from certain Armenian and Greek diaspora groups. It enables us to bring forward the contributions Turks have made over many millennia, and to highlight the numerous social projects that have successfully elevated societies through education, scientific advancement, responsible use of resources, agricultural development, and the pursuit of peaceful relations with neighbors.

However, for us as Turkish-Americans, the most meaningful benefit has been the opportunity to inspire our youth.

The United Nations emphasizes grassroots movements as essential to achieving its sustainability goals. We see these goals as guiding principles that help young people design projects that foster responsibility, global awareness, and active citizenship. Our world needs bright, well-rounded young individuals who live with purpose—who can identify what is missing, recognize areas in urgent need of development, and understand the mistakes of the past so they are not repeated.

Today's workforce increasingly prioritizes social responsibility. This preference spans every professional field, from politics and industry to science and research institutions. With this in mind, we have developed programs that prepare our youth to present themselves as socially responsible, engaged applicants.

Using United Nations Days as a framework, participating youth strengthen their presentation skills, gain experience in structured programs, conduct meaningful research on topics related to Türkiye, and deepen their connection to Turkish culture. They also explore the social programs implemented during the Atatürk era—initiatives introduced by the newly founded Turkish Republic in the 1920s that demonstrated remarkable results within just two decades. Learning about these achievements has been especially empowering and motivating for our youth.

We are currently developing new programs and warmly encourage the participation of your children. Thank you for your continued support.

Our journey continues — and the path forward is brighter when we walk it together.

Selim Erhan
Dr. Selim Erhan

Co-Chair, ATAA Committee on UN Relations

Help us to continue our critical work by donating today!



ATAA STEAM Program help us to continue our enable our young capable Turkish American students to reach their potential.

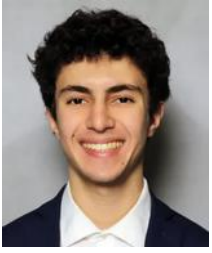


Trees are essential for both people and the environment. They enhance air quality, carbon sequestering, energy conservation, water sustainability, reduction of storm water runoff and erosion, increase water quality, provide noise reduction, serve as wildlife habitat.



This Turkish/English e-Book is designed and published to educate our children about peace, friendship, respect, diversity, honesty, love, and environment.





Sean Bilge Özalpaşan
ATAA UN Youth
Representative

The Fahrettin Kerim Gökay Anadolu Lisesi (FKGAL) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Team is a remarkable group of high school students, supported by university-level mentors, who recently won the Student Unmanned Aerial Systems (SUAS) Competition. Their achievement has not only made their country proud, but it has made us a diaspora community swell with pride and pleasure. Following their SUAS victory, the team traveled to MIT for another competition, bringing them to Boston and providing an opportunity for a meaningful exchange between FKGAL and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA).

Prior to the team's arrival in Boston, ATAA President Alev Wieland assigned me the responsibility of welcoming the FKGAL UAV Team, assisting them with any questions they might have, and helping them explore potential connections in the area. As a freshman Computer Engineering student at Tufts University, a member of the Tufts Electric Racing team, and the ATAA United Nations Youth Representative, I was honored to take on this role and serve as a bridge between the team and the larger Boston area.

Before the team arrived in Boston, we arranged an extended video call in which I had the opportunity to interview them about their journey, their preparation process, and the lessons they learned along the way. Their press advisor, Tayfun Altuntaş, helped coordinate the conversation. The following is a summary of that discussion:



Welcoming the FKGAL

Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Team to Boston



What is the most important achievement you have gained as a team during this process? What did you learn in terms of leadership and team management?

- One of the most important achievements gained on behalf of the team throughout this process was the development of the ability to make sound decisions while maintaining composure during crisis moments. In terms of leadership and team management, we clearly experienced that technical competence alone is not sufficient; a disciplined work culture, open communication, and clear distribution of responsibilities form the foundation of success. Being able to unite different perspectives around a common goal stood out as one of the most valuable gains of this process.

How are the preparations for the upcoming competition going? What differences stood out compared to the SUAS process?

- The preparation process for the competition MIT was primarily structured around software development, algorithm design, and intensive simulation work. Testing different scenarios repeatedly in virtual environments made it possible to anticipate system behaviors in advance. In contrast, during the SUAS process, physical systems, mechanical integration, flight safety, and field operations played a more decisive role. Experiencing both processes made a significant contribution to the team's development of a holistic engineering approach that addresses digital and physical systems together.





What were the most significant challenges you faced during the competition process, and how did you manage them?

- One of the most challenging aspects encountered throughout the overall process was securing funding and gaining access to advanced technical infrastructure. Preparing for an international-standard competition requires serious planning in terms of hardware, software, and operational capabilities. Additionally, mastering deep technical knowledge simultaneously across multiple engineering disciplines was also a significant challenge. Thanks to strong sponsorship structures and the guidance of mentor teams, both financial and technical challenges were managed with a professional and sustainable approach. Strategic resource planning, transparent communication with stakeholders, and continuous mentor support ensured that the obstacles encountered were overcome in a controlled and effective manner.

What kind of responsibility does representing Turkish engineers on international platforms mean to you?

- Representing Turkish engineers on international platforms is not only a great source of pride for the team but also signifies a serious responsibility. At every stage, we acted with the awareness that we were representing not only the project being carried out but also our country's engineering culture, work discipline, and problem-solving competence. This sense of responsibility served as a powerful source of motivation that drove the team to work more meticulously, in a more planned manner, and more professionally.

What kinds of challenges did you encounter during the team formation process, and how did you achieve harmony within the team?

- During the team formation process, bringing together individuals with different work habits and perspectives under a common structure brought certain challenges along with it. Initial disruptions in task distribution and communication processes were resolved through proper structuring, clear role definitions, and structured workflows. As common goals became clearer and regular communication channels were established, team cohesion strengthened and we built a sustainable work culture.

Once the FKGAL Team arrived in Boston, I had the pleasure of welcoming them in person. We met at a local café in the Italian end of Boston, where we had long conversations spanning multiple topics. Our dynamic was warm, open, and genuine, and it was clear that the team's passion for engineering and innovation was fierce and undying.

From the café, we toured parts of downtown Boston before making our way to Tufts University, where I showed the team around my campus. Their experience creating such a successful team and competing internationally provided invaluable insight into what it takes to build and sustain a massive operation like their team, covering everything from team structure and mentorship to technical development and fundraising.

Aside from our technical conversations, we also spent meaningful time discussing our lives, me from a Turkish-American, diaspora point of view, and them from a born-and-raised Turkish point of view. We touched on the importance of maintaining cultural connections, and the ongoing work of the ATAA United Nations Committee. It was a genuine pleasure to share these perspectives and find common ground across our different but overlapping experiences.

I am grateful to ATAA President Alev Wieland for entrusting me with this responsibility, and I look forward to the continued growth of connections between young Turkish American professionals and the talented teams emerging from Türkiye.



Inspiring Change: Young Minds, Global Goals



2/1/2026

The Legal Rights of Immigrants in the U.S. and the Challenges They Face by Utku Galip Akcok and Anıl Can Çetinkaya.



1/29/2026

UN Conference Room#1
Town Hall Meeting with the President of the General Assembly - UN_PGA — Photo received through UNDGC_CSU (UN DGC Civil Society Unit)

Help us to continue our critical work by donating today!

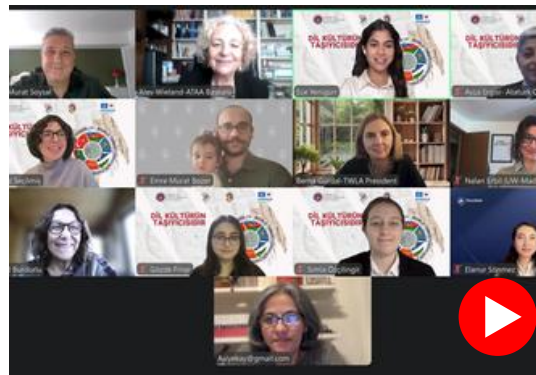


ATAA STEAM Program help us to continue our enable our young capable Turkish American students to reach their potential.



2/8/2026

Social Innovation: Theories of Change & Purposeful Leadership with Didem Altop, Nilüfer Atalay, Asiye Bahar Tabanlı, Mina İlköz Demirtaş.



2/22/2026

The Power of Mother Language and Multilingualism with Elanur Sönmez, Emre Murat Bozer, Deniz Seçilmiş, Ayça Ergisi, Dr. Nâlan Erbil, Ece Yenigün, Sean Özalpaşan, Sımla Özçilingir, Gözde Pınar.



Trees are essential for both people and the environment. They enhance air quality, carbon sequestering, energy conservation, water sustainability, reduction of storm water runoff and erosion, increase water quality, provide noise reduction, serve as wildlife habitat.



This Turkish/English e-Book is designed and published to educate our children about peace, friendship, respect, diversity, honesty, love, and environment.



Nilgün Özsoy
ATAA UN Committee



Spring Clean Your Body & The Science-Backed Way

The best detox for summer is not something you buy. It is how you sleep, eat, move, and take care of yourself every day.

Every March, we see the same promises; detox teas, cleanses, supplement kits that will flush away the winter and get you ready for summer. Most of it does not hold up to science. Some of it can cause harm.

But here is what many people do not realize: your body already has a powerful detox system. Your liver, kidneys, guts, and brain work around the clock to process and remove harmful substances. You do not need to buy something to replace this system. What you can do is help it work better.

Sleep is where it starts. Scientists found the brain has its own cleaning system, the glymphatic system, which clears toxins during deep sleep especially those linked to Alzheimer's. This process is much more active in deep sleep, so quality matters more than quantity. Consistent bedtime, a cool dark room, and avoiding phone use before bed can improve sleep depth.

Cruciferous vegetables are your liver's best friend. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower contain sulforaphane, which stimulates liver detox enzymes. A study showed daily broccoli sprout extract helped people eliminate 61% more benzene via urine in 24 hours. Broccoli sprouts are particularly rich in sulforaphane. Cooking can destroy the necessary enzyme, so eat these vegetables raw, lightly steamed, or add mustard seed powder to cooked broccoli.

Fiber supports everything. It is not exciting, but research shows that fiber changes the gut in ways that directly help both the liver and kidneys. Resistant starch improved kidney filtration in studies of kidney disease. Aim for 25 to 35 grams a day from legumes, oats, vegetables, and whole grains.

Exercise reduces liver fat. A clinical trial found that regular moderate exercise reduces liver fat, improves detoxification, enhances sleep quality, and boosts lymphatic function. Aim for 150 minutes of exercise weekly.

Sweating adds an extra route. Studies indicate that sweat can contain detectable levels of heavy metals such as lead, arsenic, and mercury, occasionally exceeding those found in urine. While sauna sessions two to four times per week may serve as a beneficial adjunct, they should not be considered substitutes for physical activity and balanced nutrition. It is essential to maintain adequate hydration and replenish electrolytes as needed.

Hydration keeps the kidneys working. Your kidneys filter about 180 liters of blood plasma every day. They need water to do this properly. Low water intake is connected to higher risk of kidney disease. Aim for about 2.7 liters for women and 3.7 liters for men daily from all sources.

And reduce what comes in. Limiting alcohol lets your liver function more effectively. Reducing ultra-processed foods and chemical exposures also supports detoxification.

Your Spring Detox Checklist

Sleep ☐ 7–9 hours, focus on sleep quality ☐ Consistent bedtime, dark cool room, no screens 1 hour before bed

Eat ☐ Cruciferous vegetables 4–5 times per week (raw or lightly steamed) ☐ Add broccoli sprouts to salads and sandwiches ☐ 25–35g fiber daily from whole foods

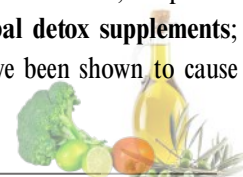
Move ☐ 150+ minutes moderate exercise per week

Sweat ☐ Sauna 2 – 4 times per week, 15–30 minutes ☐ Hydrate and replace electrolytes

Hydrate ☐ 3 – 4 liters total daily fluid

Reduce ☐ Limit or cut out alcohol ☐ Fewer ultra-processed foods
☐ Less unnecessary chemical exposure

Skip the juice cleanses (your liver needs protein and fiber, not just fruit sugar), **skip the colon cleanses** (risk of real harm, no proven benefit), and **be careful with high-dose herbal detox supplements**; some, like concentrated green tea extract, have been shown to cause liver damage.





Alev Wieland

Share your favorite
healthy choice recipes:
president@ataa.org

Inflammation and Cold Fighting Herbal Tea

Ingredients (Use only organic)

1/4 teaspoon of oregano or fresh leaves
4-5 sage leaves
1 teaspoon green tea
2 teaspoon of lemon juice
2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon of fresh turmeric, peeled and diced
1 teaspoon of fresh ginger peeled and diced
1/2 teaspoon of whole cloves
1/2 teaspoon of black pepper corns or fresh ground pepper
1/4 teaspoon of Manuka honey (optional)
Boiling water - enough to fill the tea pot

Tools needed

Tea pot with stainless steel strainer (10-14 oz)
Tea Cup

Preparations

Add lemon juice and vinegar into the pot
Incest the strainer into the pot
add all ingredients in to the strainer
Poor the boiling water over the ingredients until tea pot is full
Let it steep for 5 minutes
Drink in the morning before you eat anything.



Gingerr



Turmeric



Cloves



Sage



Oregano



Green Tea



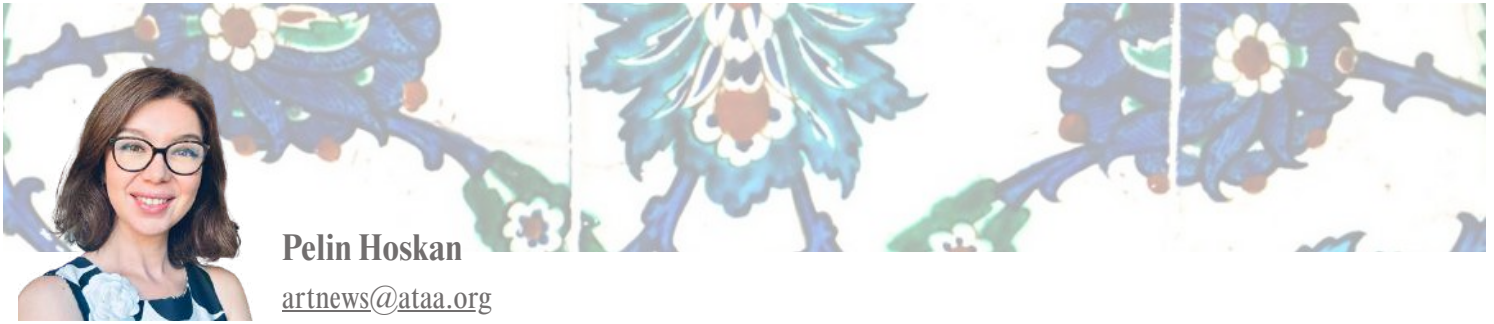
Lemon Juice



Apple Cider Vinegarr

Great drink when you have a cold or sour throt. Enjoy!





Pelin Hoskan
artnews@ataa.org



Interview with Nisan Ak

“Let’s come together. Let’s come together more. We need a voice.”
Founder Of Turkish American Orchestra (TAO)

“Selected as one of the “30 Under 30” by Forbes Türkiye in 2019, Nisan Ak is a rapidly rising conductor from Istanbul. Over the course of her career, she has conducted orchestras across four continents. Her recent engagements include orchestras in cities such as Ankara, Pachuca, Atlanta, Columbia, Vienna, Pärnu, Washington DC, and New York City, among others. Ak is the founder and Music Director of the Bruch Chamber Orchestra (BCO). The orchestra holds a unique place in the classical music world with its entirely female executive team—an uncommon distinction—composed of members all under the age of thirty. In 2022, the BCO released its debut album, which was featured on four global playlists by Apple Music and reached 100,000 listeners in under two months.”



This paragraph was written in October 2024, when I first began contributing to the ATAA magazine and featured the Turkish American Orchestra and Nisan Ak. Five issues and a year and a half later, I had the opportunity to interview her over Zoom.

Pelin Hoşkan: Hello Nisan, and welcome to our interview for the ATAA Magazine. Let’s begin with our first question. For someone meeting you for the first time today, how would you describe yourself when we say “Nisan Ak”?

Nisan Ak: Let’s start with the *orchestra conductor*. But beyond that, I would like to add something like music advocate. Because an “educator” alone can sometimes feel like someone who simply explains whatever exists in the curriculum. It can feel a bit limited.

I enjoy talking about the things that are not in the curriculum—digging into them, uncovering them, really exploring them.

For example, one of the things I’m currently obsessed with is the fact that **Turkish composers barely exist outside of Türkiye—almost not at all**. Another thing I keep questioning is why some works are considered masterworks and others are not.

Why isn’t a work by Ahmet Adnan Saygun listed among the masterworks? Why not? Why? There is no reason. Absolutely no reason.

So these are the kinds of issues I care about. That’s why I sometimes describe myself as a music advocate, or maybe a music communicator. I don’t even know if such a title really exists—but music advocate feels right.

Because I care deeply. I’m troubled by these things.

Pelin Hoşkan: Yes, I understand your concern very clearly. Even though this wasn’t one of the questions I prepared, I wonder: could this concern come from trying to exist outside the country where you were born, and perhaps from the desire to embrace the identity you left behind?

Nisan Ak: Of course. Inevitably, when you're an immigrant, you end up representing your country whether you intend to or not.

When I lived in Türkiye, I had different concerns. My concerns were about issues **within Türkiye**. But once you leave Türkiye, especially in a profession like this, you inevitably become a representative of your country.

Since I represent Türkiye, I naturally start thinking about how **Türkiye is represented abroad**.

When someone meets me for the first time, within the first two seconds they hear that I have an accent. They know immediately that I'm not from here, not part of this community.

As you know, Americans—especially in certain places—are very community-oriented, often around religious or social groups.

Pelin Hoşkan: I'm in Dallas, at the heart of those communities. And we are simply not present within them.

Nisan Ak: In fact, organizations like Assembly of Turkish American Associations know this very well. We are so small that we are almost impossible to count. We are not even considered a minority. Because we are less than one percent, right?

Pelin Hoşkan: Yes, but until recently I didn't mind not being counted as a minority. Because when you're not even considered a minority, it almost feels like you're simply part of the majority.



Nisan Ak: But it turns out that's not really the case.

There's also another complicated issue. Politically, it's problematic, but being categorized as white is also strange to me. I don't really feel that I belong to "white culture."

Yes, I come from a country that is 99% Muslim. My eyes are blue, maybe I'm white-passing, but culturally I feel very far from what is considered "white."

When you arrive somewhere new, you are often the only Turkish person people meet.

And if you also have a visible role in society—like being an orchestra conductor—they don't just see you as a conductor. They see you as a Turkish conductor, and even more specifically as a Turkish female conductor.

So there are three layers immediately: Turkish, woman, and conductor.

Only after people get to know you do they start adding other things. They might say, "She's funny," or "She's committed," or something else. But before anything else, those three identities come first.

Pelin Hoşkan: Honestly, I'm a bit surprised to hear that. In a field like music—which is often said to be a universal language—there is still this strong sense of national identity?

Nisan Ak: Are you kidding? Music is actually one of the places where these kinds of communities and traditions are the strongest. Music is a very old profession. Orchestras are very old institutions. And they are extremely traditional. When you don't easily fit into those traditions, people don't quite know what to do with you. Think about Dallas. In Dallas, the most visible minorities are Black, Hispanic, and Asian communities, right? So when an orchestra is looking for a conductor, they are also looking for a cultural ambassador. Of course, you need to conduct well—that's the basic requirement. But beyond that, what you represent matters. If they hire an Asian conductor, they reach one audience. If they hire a Black American conductor, they reach another. If they hire a Hispanic conductor, they connect with yet another community. But when you're Turkish, they don't know where to place you. You're not quite white, you have an accent, but you're not European either. So they wonder: If I bring this person here, how will I sell tickets?



Pelin Hoşkan : This has been such an unexpected start to the conversation. I didn't think we would go in this direction at all. I thought I would ask things like "Who is Nisan Ak? What was she like as a child? How did her parents discover her musical talent?" But instead we went straight to the heart of the matter. Still, I think this actually fits the spirit of ATAA very well. I also feel drawn into this role of cultural ambassador.

Nisan Ak: I'm very happy to hear you say that. You're not alone. I'm not alone either. As Turkish people in America, we need to come together and become a stronger voice. I don't want to make this political, but we really do need to unite.

Pelin Hoşkan : When I hear things like this, I get goosebumps. Yes, sometimes it feels like we are oil and water—never mixing. I don't know why it has been like this until now. But I believe the power of cultural activities. That's why I wrote about your orchestra when it was first founded. It was actually my first article for ATAA. I gathered information from your website, from biographies, from different sources, and wrote about the orchestra. Two years later, here we are having this conversation together. It feels very special. This issue of the magazine focuses on women leaders. And you work in a very male-dominated profession. I honestly cannot remember ever seeing a female orchestra conductor.

Nisan Ak: When I was a student, before I decided to become a conductor, I had never seen a female conductor either. So how did it happen? Mostly through a series of coincidences. But the real story is not how it happened—it's how it happened despite everything. In masterclasses I heard things like, "Women cannot be orchestra conductors." Imagine: I paid to attend the masterclass, and someone says women cannot conduct because of their nature.

So when you reach a certain position of representation, people simply don't know what to do with you. Some doors open, and others never open. When they don't open, you create your own doors. That's what the Turkish American Orchestra is for example. I also noticed something else: even in Türkiye, orchestras rarely perform **Turkish repertoire**. It's actually very difficult to access the works of the first generation of Republican composers like Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Cemal Resit Rey, or Ulvi Cemal Erkin. Finding the sources is difficult. Even if I go out of my way—emailing people, searching for scores, trying to locate recordings—it takes enormous effort. But imagine a major orchestra like the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Do you think their music director has time to email people asking where to find scores? Of course not. So the first challenge is **accessibility**. If our works are not archived and accessible, they simply won't be performed. And today, if you are not on the internet, you practically don't exist.

Pelin Hoşkan : Exactly.

Nisan Ak: If you're not easily searchable on Google, you're invisible. That's why we try to bring at least one forgotten masterwork back to life in each concert. For example, in our last concert we performed Saygun's Suite Op. 14. In the upcoming one we will perform Köçekçe. Before that, we performed a suite by Hasan Niyazi Tura. Slowly, we are bringing these works back from the dusty shelves.

Pelin Hoşkan: And your concerts combine many styles, right?

Nisan Ak: Yes. That's actually one of the unique aspects of what we do. Our programs include Western classical music, Ottoman court music, and Turkish popular music. For example, in one concert we performed a new orchestral fantasy inspired by the song "Her Şey Güzel Olacak" by Athena. Another example: a student from the Manhattan School of Music created a new orchestral interpretation of "Uzun İnce Bir Yoldayım" by Asik Veysel. When audiences recognize a melody, they follow it even as it transforms and travels through different musical worlds. That familiarity allows us to take them somewhere new.

Pelin Hoşkan: I would love to attend one of your concerts.

Nisan Ak: Please come. Our next concert is on May 23 in New York. Our last concert was sold out.

Pelin Hoşkan: What is your message for our reader? In one sentence.

Nisan Ak: Let's come together! Let's come together more. We need a voice.

Pelin Hoşkan: I love that message. Thank you so much, Nisan. I hope we'll have the chance to speak again—perhaps next time about another fascinating aspect of Turkish classical music. I would especially love to discuss your integration of traditional Turkish instruments into the symphony orchestra. That's a conversation I'm really looking forward to continuing. Until next time.



The Power of Compassion: Women Leadership and the Memory of the Soul



“A woman who develops herself, achieves mastery in her field, and shares it with others lives her story fully. She contributes to society, earns respect, and cultivates a life she truly deserves.”

Dr. Gülseren Budayıcıoğlu, —February 28, 2026, Istanbul

In this special interview series prepared for International Women’s Day on March 8, we are honored to host Gülseren Budayıcıoğlu, whose stories have touched not only the hearts of millions but also the most fragile places within the human soul.

Bringing together the scientific discipline of psychiatry and the transformative power of literature, Budayıcıoğlu has reached wide audiences through narratives that make the invisible visible, give voice to what has long remained unspoken, and turn personal pain into a form of collective reflection. Her stories bring not only fictional characters to the stage, but also invite readers to confront their own pasts, wounds, and the possibility of healing.

Within the symbolic meaning and spirit of International Women’s Day, we came together to talk about what it truly means to be a woman, to grow stronger, to reconcile with vulnerability, and to embrace one’s own story.

When does a woman become a leader? Is it when she receives a title? When she stands at a podium? Or when she speaks for the first time despite her fears?

In this conversation, we would like to redefine power together with you.

Pelin Hoşkan: What is true power, Dr. Budayıcıoğlu? And how is it connected to a deeper, inner form of leadership?

Dr. Gülseren Budayıcıoğlu: First, I would like to thank you, dear Pelin, for your kind words and for bringing me together with members of our community who are living in different parts of the world. Living in a place like the United States—the most developed, modern, and well-equipped country—almost becoming part of that society while adapting to a completely new culture and habits has opened doors to an entirely new life for each of us.

From this interview, I realize that you are exploring ways to stay connected and united in that distant land, and you allow me to be a small part of this togetherness. You also give me the joy of letting my voice reach those faraway places. Right now, I feel as if I am among my closest relatives whom I haven’t seen in a long time.

I send my warmest greetings and love from Türkiye, to each of you and will do my best to answer your questions.

What is power?

Dr. Gülseren Budayıcıoğlu: To answer this, we must first ask ourselves another question: What is fear?

Fear is an internal transformation that occurs when the organism perceives a threat to its safety, its existence, or its life. It is an extremely sharp and vital emotion.

Power, on the other hand, is the ability to cope with that intense emotion—to continue struggling with life despite our fears. We may also call this courage. Courage does not mean the absence of fear; it means refusing to give up despite fear.



In ancient times, this instinct was coded in all living beings as “fight or flight.” Today, however, fear no longer appears only in life-threatening situations. It has spread into many other areas of life: whether we succeed in an exam, whether we can speak in public, whether we perform well in our work, whether we gain acceptance in society, receive approval, earn respect, make our voices heard.

Let me share a personal example.

When I was a medical student, I was also working as a television announcer for the evening broadcasts on TRT. I was only nineteen or twenty years old at the time, appearing on screen every evening before millions of viewers.

My friends who watched me often asked the same question: “If it were me, I’d be terrified just sitting at that desk. Look at your courage—aren’t you ever afraid of going on television?” I never quite knew what to say. I couldn’t tell them the truth—that I was very afraid as well.

When I sat at the announcer’s desk, I was terrified. I was extremely nervous, my hands and feet trembled, my heart felt like it was jumping into my throat.

The only difference between them and me was this:
**Despite being very afraid, I was determined to do the job.
I refused to surrender to my fears.**

Over the years, I trembled less, but my fear of the screen never completely disappeared. The same happens when I speak before audiences. At first I feel very nervous, but then I relax.

Even during oral exams at medical school, my hands trembled and my heartbeats echoed in my head.

Yet these fears did not make me weak. I never gave up—neither on exams nor on the screen.

Our fears never truly leave us during life. But to become strong, we must walk through those paths and not abandon our decisions, even when we are afraid.

There is a concept often used by Mevlana: Reaching the Truth. (Hakikate Ermek) A person must first understand themselves, their path, and their destiny.

Leadership and the Path to Truth

Leadership means influencing and guiding groups—large or small—toward a goal. It involves personal vision, values, and responsibility. It is a process of inspiring others, setting direction, and encouraging a spirit of collaboration.

When you become strong, life gradually pushes you toward the position of leadership within a group.

There is a concept often used by Mevlana: Reaching the Truth. (Hakikate Ermek)

This idea can be interpreted in many ways, but for me it means something very personal: A person must first understand themselves, their path, and their destiny. They must ask themselves certain questions.

*What role has life given me in the story that destiny has written for me?
Which emotions and situations do I repeatedly recreate in my own story?*

To answer these questions, we must understand the **pattern of our destiny**. (Kader Motifi)

Every person has two forms of capital: The genetic and structural traits we inherit from our ancestors

The character and habits we develop from the roles assigned to us in the homes where we are raised

If you grew up in a home where you were loved, valued, and raised with care—especially by your mother—you are fortunate. Society will often accept and appreciate you with less effort. But if you did not receive that love and care, adulthood becomes much harder. Even if society values you, you may struggle to believe that you deserve it.

In such cases, two paths often appear: either you work tirelessly, dedicating yourself to society and perhaps achieving remarkable success, or you surrender to fate and slowly disappear.



If you witnessed violence in your childhood home, that violence may also settle into your soul. You may oppose violence, yet still struggle to control your own reactions. In short, the homes **we are born into and the roles given to us there write the first draft of our destiny.**

Yet if we can recognize these roles and understand the emotional lenses through which we view life—what frightens us most and where we feel safe—then we gain the power to rewrite our story.

Often, the first seeds of leadership are planted in childhood. In many families, one child—often the eldest—is given more responsibility and sometimes even the role of a “second mother.” Carrying such weight can be painful, yet it also strengthens the child over time. And in that process, **the first seeds of leadership begin to grow.**

Compassion and Strength

Pelin Hoşkan: Do compassion and vulnerability—traits often associated with women—have a place in the definition of strength?

Dr. Gülseren Budayioğlu: Whenever I speak about women, I feel a quiet sadness at first. Because if we look back into distant history, women were not even fully considered human beings.

Although they were essential for the continuation of the human lineage, they were often seen as weak creatures who needed protection and were only useful for bearing children. In Anatolia, they were sometimes even referred to as “spoon enemies,” (Kaşık düşmanı) meaning another mouth to feed.

It took thousands—perhaps tens of thousands—of years for women to be accepted as equal human beings.

Yet when I look at the evolution of humanity, I am amazed. In early times, human beings seemed to possess mostly negative emotions such as fear and anger. Over long periods, emotions like love, compassion, joy, and happiness gradually developed.

I believe women played a major role in this transformation. In ancient societies, men hunted and protected the family from danger. But women carried children for nine months, gave birth, cared for them, and ensured their survival.

I believe women played a major role in this transformation. In ancient societies, men hunted and protected the family from danger. But women carried children for nine months, gave birth, cared for them, and ensured their survival.

The first positive emotions likely developed through the love and compassion shown to infants.

Even the men who later protected women and children were once babies themselves—and it was their mothers who first taught them those feelings.

Women have also always been more emotionally sensitive and fragile than men, and regardless of age, all human beings need compassion. Modern science confirms this. Research shows that newborn babies need love and affection just as much as they need mother’s milk in order to survive and develop.

In this sense, women have secured their place in society not through force, but through **love, compassion, and emotional depth.**

Pelin Hoşkan: Can Compassion and Authority Exist Together?

Dr. Gülseren Budayioğlu: What a beautiful question.

Yes—compassionate authority is perhaps humanity’s greatest dream. Throughout history, people have imagined and tried many forms of governance. Yet as a psychiatrist, I see that most people secretly long for a leader who protects them, understands their needs, and surrounds them with compassion.

Someone who guides them, makes wise decisions, acts fairly, and inspires trust—much like loving parents or teachers. But combining compassion and authority in a single person is not easy.

Women may sometimes achieve this more naturally because compassion is already deeply embedded within them. However, once someone becomes an authority figure, there is always a risk that compassion will slowly fade while power grows stronger.

We often see this in political leaders. They begin with great promises and empathy, but as their authority grows, the underlying compassion gradually disappears.



Empathy as Leadership Strength

Pelin Hoşkan: Empathy is often considered a trait closely associated with women. Do you think empathy is a strategic strength for a leader, or can it sometimes become a burden that pushes one beyond their own boundaries?

Dr. Gülseren Budayioğlu: Empathy—the ability to understand another person’s feelings and imagine ourselves in their place—is deeply human. And it is true that women often excel at it because emotions occupy a larger space in their inner world.

A leader who can empathize well understands the needs and problems of their team more clearly. This allows them to guide the group more effectively.

However, too much empathy can also become exhausting. It may lead leaders to make overly emotional decisions or disrupt the balance within a group.

I once worked with a patient who was the first female CEO of a major company. She was very successful, and the company grew significantly during her leadership. Yet she struggled with conflicts among her executive team.

She empathized deeply with her employees and tried to solve their problems. But the closeness she showed to some employees eventually disturbed the balance within the organization.

For leaders, maintaining **healthy boundaries** and **distance** is essential.

And this is why leaders are often, in many ways, the loneliest people.

The Inner Conflict of Women Leaders

Pelin Hoşkan: In your view, what is the greatest internal conflict faced by women leaders? Is it the tension between society’s expectations of the “good woman” and the need to maintain a strong stance? How did you personally navigate this balance?

Dr. Gülseren Budayioğlu: The first step to successful leadership is effective communication and the ability to motivate others. Leaders are expected to make decisions quickly, possess confidence, and take responsibility.

If you are a leader, you must maintain a certain graceful distance in relationships, while also preserving compassion and respect. Simply being seen as a “good woman” is not enough.

People tend to trust and admire individuals they see as somewhat different from themselves—slightly elevated, even a little unreachable. Think about how we viewed our teachers when we were students.

Even when someone works closely with a leader, they should not feel they have complete access.

This tension is often the **greatest inner conflict for women leaders**. Leadership is not easy, but it is deeply fulfilling. People may place you on a pedestal, yet inside you remain a human being—with your own pain, weaknesses, and struggles.

If you pursue leadership, you must learn to carry these burdens quietly.

Advice for Young Women

Pelin Hoşkan: Finally, what advice would you give to a young woman today—especially one who wishes to pursue a path in academia or the arts? As women, what is the first condition for becoming the leader of our own story?

Dr. Gülseren Budayioğlu: I always encourage people to invest in themselves throughout their lives and to take life seriously. For women especially, responsibilities never seem to end.

Many women place their families and children before themselves and make endless sacrifices. In countries like Türkiye, the most self-sacrificing woman is often considered the most admirable.

Yet scientific studies show that women who constantly prioritize others over themselves are more likely to develop serious illnesses such as cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, or ALS.

In other words, these women sometimes **die from the weight of their own sacrifice**.



Women must learn to protect themselves. Yes, let us remain loving and compassionate—but we must not neglect ourselves.

Life gives us only one chance to live.

We should invest in ourselves, create space for growth, understand who we are, and develop our talents.

Follow the areas where your inner world feels alive—where your spirit feels excitement and curiosity.

Seeing ourselves improve in something, recognizing our abilities and talents, is the golden key to happiness.

True happiness also comes from touching the hearts of others. If you are an artist, create and let others experience your work. If you are an academic, teach your students the best of what you know. If you cook well, open a small café. If you write well, write—and let us read.

Develop yourself, and then share that development with society.

When a person grows and then shares that growth with others, they reconcile with themselves. And the ultimate goal of psychiatry is precisely that—to help people make peace with themselves.

A woman who is at peace with herself, who has realized her dreams, who shares them with her community, and who is recognized and respected both by her family and society, has not only written her own story—she has also given herself a good life.

Pelin Hoşkan: Thank you for your generosity in sharing your knowledge, wisdom, and experiences that inspire and heal.



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TRC KÜLTÜR VE TURİZM BAKANLIĞI

Gülseren Budayıcıoğlu ile Söyleşi

Göçmen Kadınların Dönüşüm Yolculuğu



Göç, sadece bir yer değiştirme değil, kimliklerin, ilişkilerin ve yaşam anlatısının yeniden şekillenmesidir.

Psikiyatrist ve yazar Gülseren Budayıcıoğlu ile kader motifi kavramını göçmen kadınların travma, kimlik bölünmesi, içsel çatışma, ve güçlenme süreçleri üzerinden konuşacağız.

Moderatör: Prof. Nurcan Ensari





Tarih: 29 Mart, 2026
Saat: 10:00 am (PST)
12:00 pm (CST)
1:00 pm (EST) | 20:00 (TR)
**QR Kod Okutarak
Kayıt Olabilirsiniz
Format Zoom Webinar**



Mehmet Taşcıoğlu
Youth Committee Chair
ataayouthcom@gmail.com

Dear Friends,

On behalf of our Vice Chair Bora Özalp, Secretary İlayda Yeni, and all committee members, we are proud to report that the ATAA Youth Committee has been actively and effectively engaged in planning programs, conducting research, and organizing panels to advance Turkish American youth advocacy throughout 2025! For those who are new, the ATAA Youth Committee's mission is for members to act as model Turkish Americans and preserve the Turkish heritage and culture through various activities while giving back to our community. We want to empower and unite our fellow Turkish American youth with our projects that span the nation.



Joining the Youth Committee

If you are a Turkish American in high school or college, we welcome you to join the ATAA Youth Committee!

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis.

When you join the ATAA Youth Committee as a student, you receive opportunities to:

- Plan nationwide webinars and celebrations
- Coordinate large-scale research projects
- Volunteer on meaningful initiatives
- Build a network of prominent Turkish American professionals
- Join a supportive group of friends and future colleagues!

Please apply here: <https://forms.gle/42cLc36GgRTQTEbB9>

ATAA Youth Committee Research Update - Turkish Student Engagement Study



[Website](#)





The ATAA Youth Committee is pleased to share an update on the ATAA Research Survey Turkish Student Engagement!

Following the ERA Plan Presentation at the 2023 ATAA Conference, the ATAA Youth Committee (YC) launched this study as part of the “Educate” pillar, with the goal of better understanding the values, expectations, and engagement patterns of Turkish and Turkish-American university students across the United States.

This project builds on the YC’s prior research, “Generational Experiences as Turkish Americans,” published in May 2025, and represents a continued effort to produce data-driven insights that can strengthen Turkish Student Associations (TSAs) and related community organizations.

The study explored key questions, including:

- What students seek from Turkish Student Associations and community organizations
- How expectations differ based on birthplace and early socialization
- Which programs or initiatives generate the highest levels of engagement
- Which values are most important among Turkish and Turkish-American students

The research survey officially closed on February 15, 2026.

The Youth Committee is currently analyzing the data, and **results will be shared at the ATAA 2026 Conference.**

We thank everyone who participated and supported this initiative. We look forward to presenting insights that will help guide future programming, engagement strategies, and community-building efforts.



Upcoming Events

In addition to the ATAA Research Survey - Turkish Student Engagement, the ATAA Youth Committee will soon be announcing our next webinar! We look forward to welcoming you to our upcoming events and continuing to engage with our community.

Stay Connected with the ATAA Youth Committee

 [“ataayouthcom”](https://www.instagram.com/ataayouthcom) sites.google.com/view/ataayouthcommittee





Yücel Burdurlu

ATAA Secretary & Membership Chair
membership@ataa.org

[Become a New
Member](#)



Celebrating International Women's Day and the remarkable women of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations

The celebration of ATAA women is a celebration of strength, dedication, and leadership.

Within the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA), women are not only participants, but they are also leaders, organizers, visionaries, mentors, and builders of our community. From advocacy to culture, from fundraising to youth engagement, their contributions shape the direction and success of the organization every day. ATAA women lead committees and initiatives with professionalism and passion. They represent our community with dignity and confidence. They strengthen membership through connection and outreach. They preserve and promote Turkish heritage across generations. They inspire younger members to take responsibility and lead.

Their work is often done quietly, but its impact is powerful. They organize events, moderate panels, coordinate conferences, support advocacy efforts, and build bridges within and beyond the Turkish American community. When women thrive within ATAA, the entire organization grows stronger. Their voices bring balance. Their energy builds momentum. Their vision ensures sustainability.

In this issue, we honor the women of ATAA — past and present — who continue to elevate our mission with integrity, intelligence, and heart. Their contributions are not only appreciated; they are essential.

Cheers to their leadership guiding with vision, courage, and wisdom, their resilience standing strong through challenges and change, commitment to service giving their time, energy, and heart to our community and their role in shaping the future of ATAA — building a stronger, more inclusive tomorrow for the Assembly of Turkish American Associations

What are you waiting for?

Step into a powerful and united community! Join the Assembly of Turkish American Associations today. Become a member, strengthen our voice, and help us build the future together



[Renew Your Membership](#)



"ATAA: Building a Better Future, One Member at a Time."

MEMBERSHIP NEWS - We Welcome Our New Members



Tuğçe Arıt Çınaroğlu – Chicago, Illinois

Tuğçe was born in 1986 in Bursa, Türkiye. She is a graduate of Marmara University Faculty of Law. Following her graduation, she practiced law in Türkiye, working in the fields of family law, enforcement and bankruptcy law, labor law, and commercial law. In 2012, I relocated to the United States with my husband under an investor visa and settled in the Chicago area, where I became involved with TACA and the local Turkish American community. Tuğçe strongly believe that Turkish people living in the United States can support one another not only socially but also professionally and culturally. By acting collectively, we can develop meaningful and productive projects that allow us to represent both ourselves and our country accurately and honorably in the United States, while also contributing positively to Türkiye from abroad.

Bengü Bostancı, Seattle, Washington

Bengü Bostancı relocated to the Seattle, Washington area 25 years ago after earning her degree in science education in Türkiye. She began her career in education working in the Lake Washington School District. She is the founder and past president of the Turkish-American Cultural Association of Washington (TACAWA) Social Support Network. For the past 12 years, Bengü has served as Head of School and Director of the American-Turkish Academy of Washington (ATA-WA), a nonprofit institution dedicated to teaching Turkish language and culture to children. In addition to her leadership in the Turkish American community, Bengü has been actively involved in her daughters' schools' Parent Association boards and is currently the PA president of her younger daughter's school. Bengü is deeply passionate about education-focused philanthropy. She enjoys traveling with her family and resides in Redmond, Washington, with her husband and younger daughter, Eda, who is in high school. Her elder daughter, Dila, is currently attending college in Boston.



Burçak Küçükusta – Dallas, Texas

Burçak is a marketing and innovation professional with 15+ years of experience in the consumer goods and footwear industries. She began her career at Unilever Türkiye and later led B2B consultancy and e-commerce at her family's fourth-generation footwear business. Deeply committed to social impact, she has championed scholarship initiatives, led alumni engagement for ACI (Izmir American Collegiate Institute), and supported family business development through TAIDER. She serves as President of the R&D Committee and on the Supervisory Board of TASEV (Turkish Shoe Sector Development Foundation), fostering cross-sector collaboration. A Sabancı University economics graduate, she also holds an executive MBA from Boğaziçi and a digital marketing certificate from Northwestern University.



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Didem Altop, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Didem Altop is a Turkish American venture capitalist, ecosystem builder, and social-impact leader with over 25 years of experience advancing entrepreneurship across Türkiye and the United States. She is a General Partner at Treeo VC, a Miami-based early-stage fund investing in AI-native, B2B, immigrant-led startups entering the U.S. market. At Treeo VC, she provides capital, strategic guidance, and global network access to help founders scale with purpose and resilience. Didem is widely recognized for spearheading the launch and expansion of Endeavor Türkiye as its Founding Managing Director, catalyzing one of Türkiye's most influential high-impact entrepreneurship movements. She later co-founded and led a venture studio in Istanbul, supporting early-stage founders and designing corporate innovation programs for companies. Alongside her venture career, Didem has engaged deeply with nonprofit associations—often as a founder, board member, or strategic advisor—championing initiatives that promote entrepreneurship, women's leadership, youth development, and volunteerism across Türkiye. As a Board Member of Turkish Philanthropy Funds (TPF), she supports diaspora-driven impact initiatives and hosts the monthly Voices of Partners webinar series spotlighting social innovators. Her work directly supports SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

Ali Çitil – Istanbul, Türkiye

Ali Çitil is the Founder and Chairman of the Board of Citil Real Estate Investment, an Istanbul-based company in Türkiye, and the Founder and Chairman of the Board of Citil Partners Construction LLC in the United States. He is also the Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board of Citil Attorney Partnership, a law firm. With a strong legal background and extensive experience in real estate development, investment, and cross-border transactions, he has worked closely with investors, developers, and legal professionals on projects between Türkiye and the United States. Ali Çitil actively contributes his expertise and international network to initiatives that promote sustainable investment, legal clarity, and economic collaboration within the Turkish-American community.



Mustafa Abacıoğlu - New York

Born and raised in Houston, USA, Mustafa Abacıoğlu is a Turkish American Pharmacist. In his career in the pharmaceutical industry, he worked in Sales, Marketing, Market Access, Medical Affairs, Regulatory Affairs, and Procurement departments at Boehringer Ingelheim, AbbVie, Daiichi Sankyo, GSK, Seagen (Pfizer), and AMEX Healthcare in Türkiye, Austria, the USA, Kenya, and Global Headquarters. Currently, he works as a Professional Development Manager at NCODA, a Global Oncology Network, in New York, USA. He also serves as an Executive Committee Member for the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Industrial Pharmacy Section and the Turkish American Pharmacists' Association.

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Prof. Ali Beşkök – Dallas, Texas

Prof. Beşkök received his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Türkiye, in 1988. He earned an M.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering from Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis in 1991, followed by M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering from Princeton University in 1994 and 1996, respectively. From 1994 to 1996, Dr. Beşkök was a Visiting Scholar at the Center for Fluid Mechanics at Brown University. He then served as a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Research Laboratory of Electronics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1996 to 1998. He joined the Mechanical Engineering Department at Texas A&M University as an Assistant Professor in 1998 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2004. In 2007, Dr. Beşkök moved to the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Department at Old Dominion University, where he held the Batten Endowed Chair Professorship in Computational Engineering. In 2013, he joined Southern Methodist University as Chair of the Mechanical Engineering Department, a role he held until 2019. He currently serves as the George R. Brown Chair in Mechanical Engineering and the Associate Dean for Research Innovation and Ph.D. Education at the SMU Lyle School of Engineering. Dr. Beşkök's research focuses on micro- and nano-scale transport phenomena. He resides in Plano, TX with his spouse Carolyn, and he has two adult children, Sarah Aylin and Sinan Martin Beşkök.

Dr. Timur Sümer - Florida

Retired Medical Doctor (MD) & Professor of Pediatrics

Dr. Sumer graduated from Hacettepe University Medical School and completed his Pediatric Residency in the United States at University of Rochester. He pursued subspecialty fellowship training in Pediatric Hematology and Oncology at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and Georgetown University. During his academic career, he served on the faculty at King Faisal University and later held positions in the United States at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Hurley Medical Center. At Hurley Medical Center, he served as Director of the Pediatric Residency Program and was promoted to Professor of Pediatrics. Dr. Timur Sumer continued his professional career in Michigan at McLaren Medical Center and in private practice until his retirement in August 2015.



"ATAA: Building a Better Future, One Member at a Time."

MEMBERSHIP NEWS - We Welcome Our New Members



Dr. Nilüfer Büyükdamgacı Sümer - Florida

Dr. Nilüfer Büyükdamgacı Sümer is a distinguished physician with extensive training and clinical experience in both Ophthalmology and Internal Medicine. She completed her secondary education at Ankara Kız Lisesi in Ankara, Türkiye. She earned her medical degree (MD) from Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine. Dr. Sümer pursued her residency training in Ophthalmology at Cerrahpaşa Faculty of Medicine, where she specialized in eye diseases. She later served as an Ophthalmologist and Clinical Instructor at King Faisal University, Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Continuing her medical career in the United States, Dr. Sümer completed her Internal Medicine residency at Hurley Medical Center in affiliation with Michigan State University, Flint, Michigan, where she also served as Chief Resident. Following her residency, she worked as a Clinical Instructor and Internist at Hurley Medical Center and later at McLaren Flint, both affiliated with Michigan State University. Dr. Nilüfer Büyükdamgacı Sümer retired in 2013 after a long and accomplished career dedicated to patient care, medical education, and professional excellence.

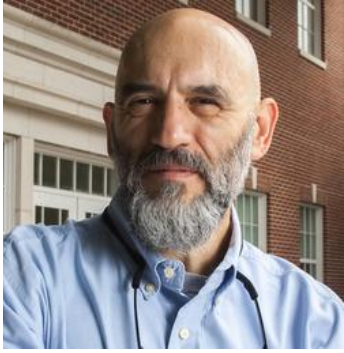
Rabia Rana – North Carolina

Rabia is a Senior Architectural Designer with over 25 years of experience leading large-scale commercial projects from concept to completion. She creates innovative design solutions and has a proven track record of managing complex building types. She excels at balancing aesthetic vision with functional excellence to achieve high-value project outcomes. Born and raised in Türkiye, Rabia moved to the United States in 2013. She holds a Bachelor of Architecture from Trakya University, an Executive MBA from Istanbul Technical University, a Master of Architecture from NC State University, and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Queens University of Charlotte. In addition to her work in architecture, Rabia is a social entrepreneur. She is the founding president of the Women and Construction NGO (IVKAD) in Türkiye, a past president of ATA-NC, and a founding partner of Pembe Atlas Turkish Short Story Atelier. Her short stories have been published on various platforms, as well as in two Turkish short story anthologies. Along with being the mother of a 19-year-old girl, she enjoys writing, cooking, painting, and mentoring young professionals. Top of Form



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Prof. Halit Üster - Texas

Prof. Üster is in the Department of Operations Research and Engineering Management (OREM) at SMU Lyle School.

His research interests are in optimization models and efficient solution algorithms for design and analysis of networked systems with applications in logistics and communications. Societal impact is typically a central theme and emphasis in the applications of Üster's research. Specifically, his recent research focuses on application areas including electric vehicle charging networks, emergency logistics networks for disaster preparedness, multi-commodity and relay networks in transportation to address driver turnover and shortage problems, biomass/bio-energy logistics networks for sustainable energy, closed-loop logistics and recycling networks, integrated production-distribution-inventory networks, and wireless sensor networks with environmental monitoring applications. His publications appeared in Transportation Science, IIE Transactions, Naval Research Logistics, INFORMS Journal on Computing, and IEEE/ACM Transactions on Networking, among others. His research has been funded by National Science Foundation, US Department of Agriculture, and industry. He serves as an Associate Editor for Transportation Science, IIE Transactions on Scheduling and Logistics, and Sustainability Analytics and Modelling. Üster is a member of INFORMS and IIE, and routinely serves the INFORMS and IIE communities in varying capacities.

Education: Ph.D. in Management Science/Systems, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada ; M.A. in B.Ad., Production/Operations Management, Hacettepe University, Ankara, Türkiye; B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Türkiye.

Prof. Sila Çetinkaya - Texas

Prof. Çetinkaya of OREM and Cecil H. Green Professor of Engineering in the SMU Lyle School of Engineering.

She holds courtesy appointments with ITOM in the SMU Cox School of Business and with Internal Medicine in the UT Southwestern Medical Center. Çetinkaya's research interests include supply chain and healthcare analytics, stochastic optimal control theory, and applied probability. Her publications appeared in the most reputable outlets of industrial engineering and management science including Operations Research, Management Science, Production and Operations Management, Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers (IIE) Transactions, INFORMS Journal of Applied Analytics (previously, Interfaces), Naval Research Logistics, and Transportation Research-B and -E, among many others. Her research program has been funded by multiple grants from National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Education, Texas Engineering Education Coordination Board, Frito-Lay, Pepsi-Co, and Nokia, among other sponsors. She serves as a department editor of IIE Transactions and an associate editor of Naval Research Logistics. Çetinkaya is a member of INFORMS and IIE.

Education: Ph.D., Management Science, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada; M.Sc., Industrial Engineering, Bilkent University, Ankara, Türkiye; B.Sc., Industrial Engineering, Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul, Türkiye.



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Nihan Balşık Kaya - Connecticut

Born in Türkiye, Nihan Balşık Kaya, MSc, PhD(c) has a multidisciplinary background in anthropology, geography, and social work, with over a decade of experience in youth and women's studies. She completed her undergraduate studies in Anthropology and Geography Education at Ankara University and earned her master's degree in Social Work from Hacettepe University, where she is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Social Work. Her research focuses on school social work, adolescent development, and immigrant women's experiences, particularly examining perceived discrimination and identity formation among Turkish immigrant women in the United States. Throughout her career, she has worked closely with students as an educator and mentor, supporting their academic, social, and emotional development. Nihan currently works in a public school in Connecticut and continues to engage in social work practice through life skills training and substance abuse prevention programs for adolescents. Grounded in cultural sensitivity and community engagement, she is committed to strengthening families, empowering youth, and fostering cross-cultural dialogue within the Turkish-American community.

Övgü M Özdoğan - Texas

Övgü is Associate Attorney at Oguz Law

Övgü is an attorney licensed in both Türkiye and the State of Texas. After earning his law degree from Istanbul University, he moved to the United States to pursue an LL.M. at Texas A&M University School of Law, where he also worked as a research assistant with Professor Fatma Marouf. Currently, he works as an Associate Attorney and Texas Operations Coordinator at Oguz Law, helping individuals, families, and businesses navigate complex immigration and corporate matters.



Hilal Uz - Alabama

Hilal was born in Bursa, Türkiye. After building her professional career in Human Resources, she relocated to the United States in 2024. She transformed the experience of building a new life in a different country into a space for meaningful production and sharing. By combining her professional background with her personal journey, Hilal continues to create and move toward her goals with discipline and consistency. She currently serves as a member of the social media team and resides in Alabama with her husband.

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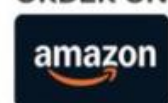


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