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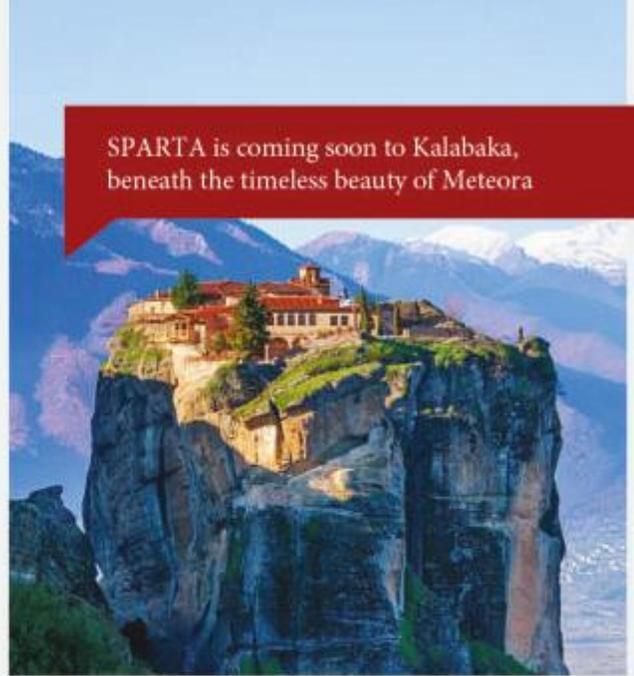
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FROM THE EDITOR



## THE VALOR OF OLD MEN

I remember my father telling me the story of how he wrote an essay in school when he was a kid back on Chios, on a story he got from his father, who got it from his uncle, who got it from a choriano, about the old man who grabbed a rusty old rifle to stand up against the Turks that were supposed to invade his village.

“The old man had fought way back against the Turks,” my dad told me, while he cleaned some chicken for dinner, and my father was very fastidious about skinning the chicken, so it took up the whole story. “And now the old man heard the Turks were about to invade the village. Only not when I’m here! he said.”

So the old man found his old Kariofilis, with the long barrel, and the scrolled decorations on it, and he cleaned it up, and scraped off the rust, and blew in the barrel, and took out some spider webs and spiders, and then he went looking for powder, and steel balls, and rags to wrap around the balls, and then his katsouniki to shove them all in, but all he had were the rags, so he shoved in rocks.

“And there I stood, he told the people later,” my dad continued the story, “and now I was ready!” My dad put the chicken skin on a paper towel. “Only, Barba, they told him, you were only one man. And how did you know your gun would fire? How did I know my gun would fire? the old man told them. I

knew my toufeki was going to blow up, because it was so old, only the Turks would think it was a cannon with the boom, and all the palikaria of Chios had shown up to fight them, so they would think about it and not show their heads, until our own palikaria showed up with their own rifles and cannons and the mahi would start!”

So, my dad said, putting the chicken in the oven, the old man was ready-- but the Turks never came. But the old man was still considered a palikari for showing his fighting spirit, and after the alarm about the Turks subsided, the choriani treated the old man to a whole skin of wine, and that night he went to sleep drunk, but happy and valorous.

“And then he never stopped talking about the time he took his toufeki and held back the Turks,” my dad said, washing chicken skin off his fingers, “and how it made the whole Turkish army think twice about invading Chios again when even the old men fought like leontaria.”

The name of the story was Tou Toufekiou o Agralos and my father won the prize for it in school that Independence Day, celebrated that year up in the mountains of Chios, where the old man lay buried with his rifle and forgotten, until my dad honored him.

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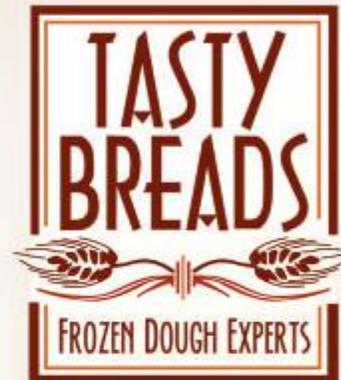
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# Leadership 100 Inducts New Chairman, Approves \$6.5 Million in Grants at the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference



Archbishop Elpidophoros with newly installed Leadership 100 Chairman, Michael N. Bapis, Outgoing Leadership 100 Chairman, Demetrios G. Logothetis, and Leadership 100 Executive Director, Paulette Poulos. PHOTO: DIMITRIOS PANAGOS

The 35th Annual Leadership 100 Conference, which took place on February 5-8, 2026, at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort and Spa in Phoenix, Arizona, ended three days of momentous actions. Foremost was the transition of the Chairmanship from Demetrios G. Logothetis to Michael N. Bapis and the approval by the Executive Committee of \$6.5 million for 42 new and prior year grants.

In addition, Archbishop Elpidophoros presented his vision for the future of the Church in America, and four outstanding speakers were presented with the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Excellence.

Logothetis said, "I am enormously pleased to complete my two terms as Chairman with the unanimous approval by the Executive Committee of \$6,510,700 for 42 new and prior year grants for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and related and affiliated organizations, from the outstanding recommendations by the Grant Committee, chaired by Justin Bozonelis. Upon distribution, total grants by Leadership 100 since its founding will reach a historic \$89,355,203. Growth in our grants is a sure sign of the vitality of Leadership 100 and the commitment of its members to our mission and purpose."

"Furthermore, I am pleased to turn over the leadership to Michael N. Bapis as Chairman, accompanied by Emanuel Cotronakis, our legal counsel, as Vice Chairman, Justin

Bozonelis, after seven years as Chairman of the Grant Committee and fifteen years of service, as Treasurer, and Maria Alwin as Secretary."

The conference commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passing of Leadership 100 Founder Archbishop Iakovos with an opening documentary, "In His Own Words: Archbishop Iakovos," introduced by Bishop Anthony of Synada, which theme was taken up by Archbishop Elpidophoros. Following the Annual Lecture, His Eminence laid out his vision for the future of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, inspired by the great step of Archbishop Iakovos in bringing the Greek Orthodox Church into the modern world.

The Grand Banquet on Saturday, February 7 witnessed the transition to the new Chairman and Officers with the presentation of the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Excellence to the four outstanding conference speakers: George Postolos, President & CEO, The Postolos Group LP; Katina Pappas Dermatas, CEO, Ladurée US and American Macaroon; Dr. Stamatis Kartalopoulos, nationally and internationally renowned scientist, academic, and inventor, and author of *Hellenic Cities in Asia Minor: "Where the Stones Still Speak"*; and George Logothetis, Executive Chairman of Libra Group.

Archbishop Elpidophoros, along with Executive Director Paulette Poulos, then acknowledged Chairman Demetrios G.

Logothetis for his valuable service to Leadership 100 and presented him with the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Excellence and called to the stage Marianthe Logothetis, presenting her with the Shining Star Award for her support and contributions offered to her beloved husband.

Earlier, the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Outstanding Service was presented to Theo Nicolakis, Director of National Ministries and Chief Information Officer and the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Achievement was presented to Aristomenis "Menios" Papadimitriou, Director of Archives, both representing the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in addressing the conference.

Other programs and events included the Saturday Forum highlighting the Metropolis of San Francisco Folk Dance and Choral Festival featuring the Holy Trinity Cathedral of Phoeni Dance Group with Michael Syrengelas, Co-Chairman, Executive Board; the New Member/First Timers Orientation; the Annual General Assembly at which Rev. Protopresbyter Peter Orfanakos, President of the Archdiocese Presbyters Council, expressed heartfelt gratitude to Leadership 100 for its untiring support, and at which Kassandra Romas, longtime Treasurer, Executive Committee and Board Member was acknowledged for her service with the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Outstanding Service, Anastasia Lambiris, outgoing Chairman for the Young Professionals, was presented with the Archbishop Iakovos Leadership 100 Award for Achievement, and Kyra Limberakis, CEO of Orthodox Volunteer Corps, was presented with the Archbishop Leadership 100 Award for Achievement; the Hellenic Glendi; the Annual Leadership 100 Walk/Run and Pickleball Tournament and Awards, Chaired by Mike Manatos, the Golf and Tennis Tournaments and Awards, organized by John Aivazoglou and the Children's Program and newly innovated Teenager Program, organized by Maria Pardalis and Marika Christopher.

The Conference formally concluded with the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and a Memorial Service for Leadership 100 members at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Phoenix, Arizona on Sunday, February 8, presided over Archbishop Elpidophoros with respected Hierarchs and Clergy.

# Leadership 100 Appoints New Executive Director



*Protopresbyter Panagiotis Papazafiropoulos*

The Leadership 100 Executive Committee, meeting on Friday morning, February 27, 2026, elected Rev. Protopresbyter Panagiotis Papazafiropoulos as Executive Director of Leadership 100, with the consensus of the Board of Trustees, meeting Friday afternoon, according to Michael N. Bapis, Chairman. He will officially take office on June 1, 2026. "We

are pleased with the choice of Father Panagiotis at this critical juncture for Leadership 100 and our Beloved Church. He brings deep experience, expertise, and energy to the role of Executive Director. We are indebted to our current Executive Director, Paulette Poulos, for recommending him and grateful that she will stay on in a new role for a transitional period to familiarize him with our operations," said Bapis. Father Panagiotis comes to the role with more than 20 years of experience in ecclesiastical administration and the financial sector. He currently serves the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America as the Director of the Archbishop's Office, where he oversees the day-to-day operations of the Office of the Archbishop. Before his ordination, he worked in consultative financial services where he delivered tailored insurance solutions to institutional clients and their families. He served as Archdiocesan Assistant Chancellor and Interim Chancellor, where he managed clergy assignments, mediated conflicts, conducted sensitive investigations, and oversaw the administrative transition of the Chancellor's Office after the Enthronement of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America. During his ministry at the Archdiocese, he was responsible for the

organization of the 2021 Apostolic Visit of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the United States, the Centennial Clergy Laity Congress in New York City, and the visit to the United States of Pope and Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria in 2022, among others. Earlier in his ministry, Father Panagiotis served as Youth Director of the Archdiocesan District, where he organized youth ministries across athletics, camping (Camp Saint Paul), and young adult programs. He merged the two basketball programs to one League (GOBL) that now has almost two thousand active players throughout the Archdiocesan District. Through strategic planning and operational streamlining, he strengthened inter-ministry collaboration and generated annual revenue surpluses. Father Panagiotis is the Presiding Priest of St. Gerasimos Greek Orthodox Church in New York, and he holds the ecclesiastical rank (offikion) of Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne. This esteemed rank, bestowed only by the Ecumenical Patriarch, is one of the then highest honors conferred upon married clergy. Father Panagiotis holds a B.A. from New York University, a degree in Theology from the University of Athens, a Master of Arts from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, and a degree in Byzantine Music from the National Conservatory of Greece. He is married to Presvytera Christina, and together they are parents to Marianna, Demetrios and Vasilios.



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# AHI Announces Honorees for 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Hellenic Heritage Achievement & National Public Service Awards Dinner

The American Hellenic Institute (AHI) will host its 52nd Anniversary Hellenic Heritage Achievement & National Public Service Awards Dinner on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at The Capital Hilton in Washington, D.C. The black-tie event will bring together



*Helen A. Carlos*

leaders from public service, business, faith, and the Greek American community to honor individuals whose lives and careers exemplify Hellenic values, service, and leadership.

The honorees for the awards dinner are:

Helen A. Carlos will be honored for her lifelong commitment to faith-centered leadership, education, and institutional stewardship within the Greek Orthodox Church. A longtime trustee and senior leader of Hellenic College Holy Cross, Ms. Carlos has played a pivotal role in strengthening the institution's academic mission and long-term stability. Her legacy includes founding the St. Helen's Pilgrimage for seminarians and sustained support for initiatives that prepare future clergy and lay leaders, reflecting a deep sense of responsibility to the Church and its future.



*Savas C. Tsivicos*

Savas C. Tsivicos will be recognized for decades of leadership advancing Greek American and Cypriot causes through civic engagement, advocacy, and humanitarian service. An immigrant from Cyprus, Mr. Tsivicos has

combined professional success as a business leader with sustained service across major Hellenic organizations, including having served two-terms as AHEPA Supreme President. He has been a prominent voice for justice, human rights, and a lasting resolution to the Cyprus issue, earning wide recognition in the United States and abroad.

Stavros "Steve" Veletsis will be honored for a lifetime defined by resilience, faith, and commitment to Hellenic heritage. From his early life in Constantinople and forced exile to Greece, to building a distinguished career in the American hospitality and food services industry, Mr. Veletsis has exemplified perseverance and service. His philanthropy spans Orthodox Christian missions, humanitarian relief, and the preservation of historic Hellenic and Orthodox sites.

The evening will be hosted by Mike Emanuel, Chief Washington correspondent for FOX News Channel, who will serve as Master of Ceremonies. The program will include a silent auction and reception, followed by dinner and the formal awards presentation.

"We are proud to present a program that reflects both the enduring mission of AHI and the values that have guided our work for more than five decades," President Nick Larigakis said. "This year's honorees exemplify the very best of Hellenic leadership, service, and commitment to community. Each has excelled in their respective fields and set extraordinary examples through their dedication to faith, public service, and advocacy. We look forward to honoring their achievements."



*Stavros "Steve" Veletsis*

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# AHEPA Senior Living Announces Three Senior Leadership Promotions

AHEPA Senior Living announced three senior leadership promotions across its enterprise, strengthening operational and external affairs leadership at both AHEPA Senior Living and Hellenic Senior Living. “We are excited to announce these well-earned promotions, which reflect the depth of talent within our organization and our commitment to developing leaders who understand our mission from the ground up,” Board Chairman Ike Gulas said. “As demand for affordable senior housing and assisted living continues to grow, experienced leadership is essential to sustaining operational excellence across our communities and supporting our long-term growth while advancing our public policy priorities that strengthen our mission.”



Sandra Dzankovic

Sandra Dzankovic has been promoted to Vice President of Operations for AHEPA Senior Living’s nationwide portfolio of 89 federally-assisted senior housing communities.

Sandra has served as Director of Operations since April 2023, providing strategic oversight of the portfolio and the company’s service coordination and compliance departments — responsibilities she will continue as vice president. Her leadership strengthened operational consistency, enhanced financial performance, and advanced resident-centered programming throughout the portfolio.

She also serves as Region II Director, overseeing 18 properties across Texas, Minnesota, Iowa, California and New Mexico.

She began her career with AHEPA Senior Living in 2014 as a property manager in

Ankeny, Iowa. She was promoted to regional manager in 2020, during which time she coordinated the successful first-ever visit of a HUD secretary to an AHEPA Senior Living community in 2022. Prior to joining AHEPA Senior Living, she served as a certified nursing assistant, director of an Alzheimer’s care unit, and manager of an independent living community within a continuing care retirement community.

She holds a degree in psychology and social work from the University of Iowa, with an emphasis in gerontology.



Tammy Evans

Tammy Evans has been promoted from Director of Operations to Vice President of Operations for Hellenic Senior Living, AHEPA Senior Living’s portfolio of four affordable assisted living lifestyle communities in Indiana. She joined Hellenic Senior Living in 2021 and brings 19 years of healthcare experience to her new role. Her background includes six years as a social services director and 13 years as a healthcare administrator. She holds healthcare administrator licensure in Indiana, Florida and Alabama.

Tammy is a certified dementia practitioner and trainer and holds a degree in psychology. She is one semester away from completing her master’s degree in healthcare administration. Prior to transitioning into healthcare, she owned and operated a real estate company for nine years and continues to hold a real estate license in Indiana and Alabama.

Andrew Kaffes has been promoted from Senior Director of Government Affairs to Vice President of Government & External Affairs. He brings 30 years of experience working in Washington and provides

government relations leadership to advance AHEPA Senior Living’s mission and public policy agenda. He leads the development and execution of strategies that strengthen the organization’s engagement with Congress, federal agencies and external stakeholders.



Andrew Kaffes

Andrew joined AHEPA Senior Living in October 2020 after serving as a consultant to the organization for six years. He holds a master’s degree in political management from The George Washington University’s Graduate School of Political Management and a bachelor’s degree in public relations from Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

Serving more than 5,000 older adults across the United States, AHEPA Senior Living is a mission-driven, nationwide provider of affordable independent and assisted senior living communities.

Since 1980, it has developed and managed more than 90 affordable senior housing communities in 21 states administered through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program.

Through its Hellenic Senior Living brand, AHEPA Senior Living owns and manages four affordable assisted living communities with 532 units in Indiana.

The mission of AHEPA Senior Living is to provide older adults with safe, healthy and enriching affordable residential communities and quality services that allow them to thrive and enjoy peace of mind.

AHEPA Senior Living is based in Fishers, Ind.

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# Memory, Roots and a Forgotten Island in the Saronic Gulf

Visual artist Eri Dimitriadi speaks to NEO about memory, place and the search for roots

By Kelly Fanarioti

“When I was a child, I asked my mother what those empty houses on the island were. She told me that people with mental illnesses used to live there.”

With this memory the visual artist Eri Dimitriadi begins to describe her relationship with the small island of Agios Georgios, opposite Salamina. Many years later that memory became the starting point for the artistic project she presented in 2021, which attempted to shed light on a story that, as she says, “no one talked about.”

Over time the island of Agios Georgios served many different purposes. From the mid-nineteenth century, it functioned as a quarantine station for cholera cases, and remained in this role until 1947, when it was used as a base by the German occupation forces. For roughly the next twenty years, it operated as a place where people with mental illnesses were confined.

In 1967, it passed under the authority of the Hellenic Navy and since then it has remained abandoned and inaccessible.

Dimitriadi was only six-years-old when she noticed the ruined and almost collapsed houses on the island while walking with her mother in Salamina, where she was born and raised. Her mother explained that isolated people with mental illnesses used to live there, and told her a story about an elderly patient who wanted to reach the opposite shore and tried to empty the sea with a clay basket.

That story never faded from her memory.

Decades later, after moving to Athens, Dimitriadi decided to explore the island artistically in an effort to preserve the oral history of this small strip of land which for decades had been a place of confinement and silence, and also to learn more about the man from the story she had heard as a child.

In 2021, she presented an unusual exhibition at sea on a ferry boat running between Perama and Salamina. The project was curated by Galini Lazani, whose support was

instrumental during the development of the exhibition.

Through seven interviews she attempted to bring back the memories of local residents about Agios Georgios.

“Although the island has a long and complex history I chose to focus on the period when it functioned as an asylum,” she says to

NEO.

“I was deeply interested in the story of the patient who wanted to leave the island and reach the opposite shore. With a basket, he tried to empty the sea so he could cross. When I heard this story as a child, I found it fascinating. His thinking was so direct. If I want to leave, I must empty the sea. I began to wonder why this way of thinking is considered less ‘normal’ than our own which is often far more confused.”

also inspired the title of the exhibition which references the linguist Edward Sapir. “both, as yet unwearied, will keep pretty well together.”

On the ferry visitors can listen through speakers to seven interviews with residents of Salamina, who shared their memories of the island of Agios Georgios. Scattered across the center of the deck were clay baskets that Dimitriadi had created herself as a tribute to the man who, according to local memory, tried to empty the sea with a basket. As the ferry approached the island visitors saw for the first time in half a century the abandoned houses of Agios Georgios illuminated.

“I chose the light to come from inside the houses as if they were lit from within,” she explains. “I did not want the conventional external

illumination used for monuments whose history has already died. I wanted to give these buildings even for a moment the sense that life still existed inside them. I am an architect and these details matter to me.”

The choice of a ferry boat was not accidental. According to Dimitriadi, the Perama Salamina route was the way residents used to

encounter the island of Agios Georgios.

“The ferry route was the path through which the island and the people living there became visible to the residents of Salamina. To transfer this experience into a gallery space would have been like uprooting the story from its place”.

## Memory as a connection to place

Dimitriadi hopes that the artistic intervention could one day acquire a more permanent character and expand in the future as an effort to preserve the memory of the place. As she notes, in recent years there has been growing

interest in what are often described as “sites of memory” and in local histories that connect people with their roots.

“People increasingly look for their place. They want to learn how previous generations lived and to find a connection with the past.”

For her, the discussion around the project

remains relevant even today five years after it was first presented. “It still makes sense to talk about this exhibition because it touches on many issues such as confinement memory and the distance between intention and action. At the same time, it is an oral history that risks disappearing.”

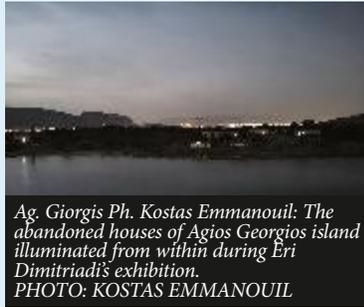
Her engagement with memory and place did not begin with Agios Georgios. In her thesis at the Athens School of Fine Arts she had already explored the so called “ship graveyard” in the harbor of Salamina, which she remembered from childhood as a landscape of abandoned vessels, that later disappeared before the 2004 Olympic Games.

Reflecting on her relationship with her place of origin, Dimitriadi says that distance often strengthens the need to return to memory.

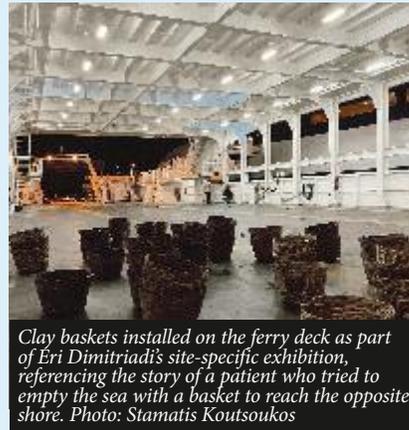
“I left Salamina when I was nineteen years old in order to study in Athens. As long as I felt that I had an immediate connection to the place I did not observe it closely. But once I truly moved away, I began to look for it more intensely. When you leave you search more deeply for your roots”.

She believes that this need is closely related to the experience of diaspora communities.

“People who live far from their homeland often want to learn stories about it. In a way you are now searching for those roots on their behalf,” she says.



Ag. Giorgis Ph. Kostas Emmanouil: The abandoned houses of Agios Georgios island illuminated from within during Eri Dimitriadi's exhibition. PHOTO: KOSTAS EMMANOUIL



Clay baskets installed on the ferry deck as part of Eri Dimitriadi's site-specific exhibition, referencing the story of a patient who tried to empty the sea with a basket to reach the opposite shore. Photo: Stamatis Koutsoukos

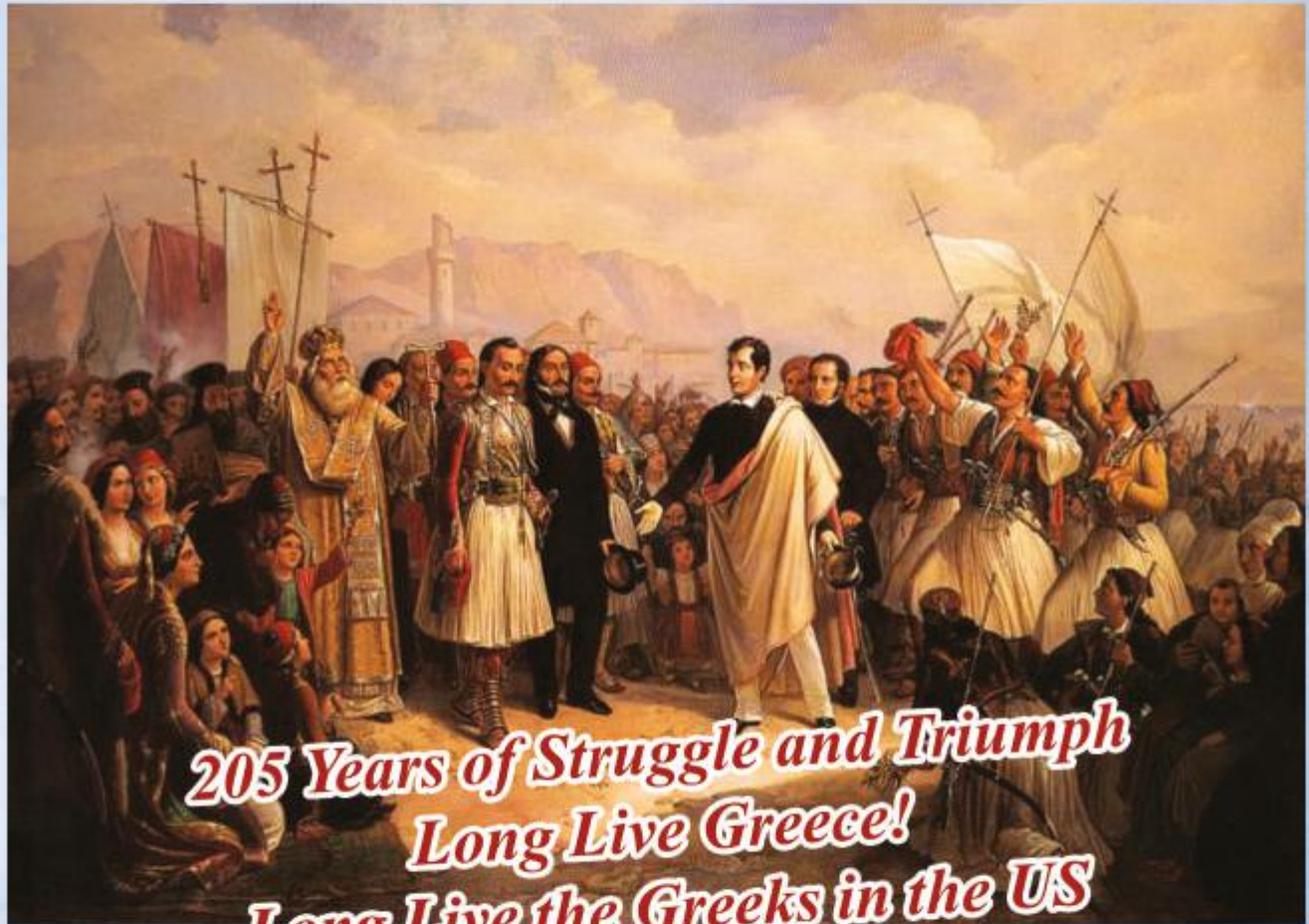
Visitors engage with Eri Dimitriadi's installation on the ferry deck during the site-specific exhibition about the memory of Agios Georgios island. Photo: Stamatis Koutsoukos



The ferry boat on the Perama-Salamina route that hosted Eri Dimitriadi's site-specific exhibition about the memory of Agios Georgios island in 2021. Photo: Eri Dimitriadi



"Look Well to the Spine for the Cause of Disease" - Hippocrates



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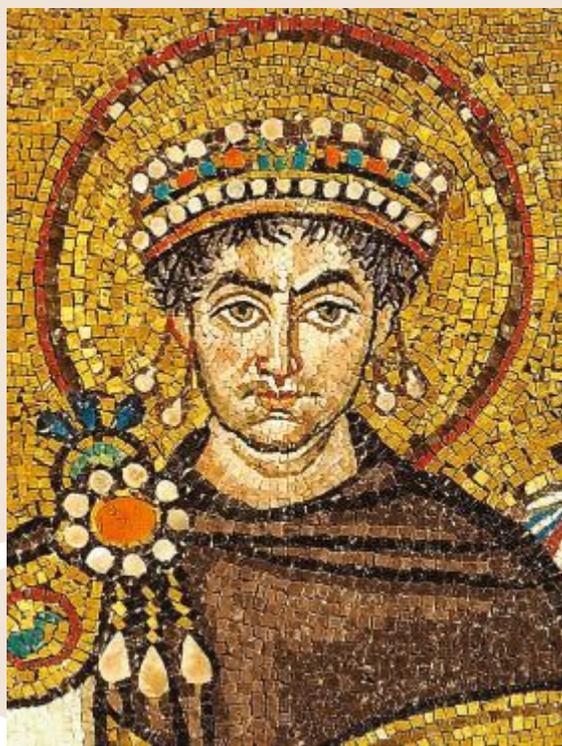
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# CLOSING THE ACADEMY: THE REAL STORY

by Dean Kalimniou\*

The assertion that Justinian closed the Academy of Athens in 529 has entered historical discourse as a proposition that appears self-evident precisely because it is seldom tested, functioning as a compressed narrative in which legal regulation, local circumstance, and philosophical succession are gathered into a single image of termination that acquires authority through repetition rather than documentation. The surviving evidence, when restored to its proper scale, describes neither an act of closure nor the extinction of philosophical instruction at Athens, but a reconfiguration of the conditions under which teaching could be conducted with support from a public purse already allocating resources according to shifting priorities and guiding ideologies.



By the early sixth century, philosophical instruction in Athens existed within the structures of late Roman civic administration and imperial patronage, and although the teaching circle active there identified itself with the Platonic tradition, its organisation bore little resemblance to the Academy of classical antiquity, since authority rested upon paedagogical lineage, reputation, and civic endorsement rather than statutory continuity. Leadership was vested in Damascius, whose position as head of the school is recorded by the historian Agathias, while the composition

of the circle reveals the geographical orientation of late antique philosophy, as its leading members originated from Syria, Cilicia, Phrygia, Lydia, Phoenicia, and Gaza, confirming that Hellenic philosophical culture had long since shifted eastward and that Athens functioned as one centre among many within a dispersed intellectual network rather than as a singular or dominant locus of philosophical life.

Any assumption of uninterrupted institutional continuity is further weakened by the earlier history of the site itself. During the siege of Athens by Sulla in 86 BC, the Academy was physically devastated, its groves laid waste along with the Lyceum, an episode recorded unambiguously by ancient sources.

Philosophical teaching resumed in Athens thereafter without reconstituting the Academy as a physical institution, and when Antiochus of Ascalon returned to the city in the decades following, instruction took place in gymnasia rather than at the Academy proper, which Cicero later describes as deserted. The “Academy” of late antiquity thus denoted an intellectual lineage rather than a restored institution, a distinction essential to understanding later claims of closure.

The Neoplatonic school at Athens represented a revival rather than a survival. Organised instruction re-emerged in the early fifth century under figures such as Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus, establishing a teaching circle whose authority rested upon philosophical succession rather than institutional inheritance. By the time Damascius assumed leadership in the early sixth century, the school’s orientation had shifted further, steering away from theurgic practice and ritual emphasis toward intensified philosophical study grounded in Aristotle, Plato, Orphic theogony, and the Chaldean Oracles. This reorientation reflects an attempt to preserve philosophical legitimacy under increasing external scrutiny rather than a simple insistence upon cultic observance.

Educational activity in late antiquity depended upon mixed economies of support, with publicly recognised teachers occupying endowed chairs sustained by civic or imperial funding, so that prestige, authority, and livelihood were intertwined with a city’s

capacity to maintain those arrangements and confer endorsement. Eligibility for such posts became increasingly dependent upon religious affiliation, and Justinian’s legislative programme, articulated most clearly in the Codex Justinianus, extended earlier Christian imperial policy by tying public teaching roles to orthodox confession and withdrawing state support from teachers who did not conform to the established faith. These measures regulated access to public office, public money, and civic authority, reshaping the practical conditions under which a teacher could appear as a civic functionary rather than as a private intellectual.

The manner in which this legislation operated is clarified by its silence. Neither the Codex Justinianus nor the later Novellae name Athens, philosophy, or any institution identifiable as an Academy, despite the remarkable specificity with which Justinianic law regulates professions, offices, salaries, and jurisdictions elsewhere, indicating that the measures were conceived as general regulations governing eligibility for publicly supported roles rather than as targeted interventions. When this framework was applied at Athens in 529, its effects were nonetheless immediate, since philosophical instruction there depended upon civic endorsement and imperial provision, so that loss of eligibility entailed loss of position, withdrawal of support, and with it the disappearance of a public voice. No decree survives ordering the closure of a philosophical institution, and no contemporary source records buildings being sealed or teaching being prohibited, because the intervention operated through administrative exclusion rather than physical elimination.

Later narrative sources preserve a specific local context for the application of this policy, indicating that professors associated with the Athenian philosophical circle required Christian students to participate in pagan rites connected with graduation or ceremonial observance, placing philosophical instruction in direct conflict with the religious identity of the civic environment and transforming pedagogy into a contest over public allegiance. The imperial response consisted in withdrawing public support from the teachers involved, addressing the conditions under which teaching could be publicly recognised rather than the substance of philosophical inquiry itself.

The selective character of this outcome

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becomes clearer when contrasted with the continued public support afforded to grammarians and rhetoricians, whose disciplines remained integral to imperial administration, legal practice, and ecclesiastical formation. Instruction in rhetoric and grammar aligned readily with the needs of governance, supplying linguistic, forensic, and exegetical skills applicable to courts, chancelleries, and episcopal schools, while philosophy occupied a less immediately utilitarian position within the late antique curriculum, its marginalisation reflecting a recalibration of educational priorities rather than a repudiation of classical learning as such.

The scope of the intervention remained limited. Other centres of philosophical activity continued without interruption, and Alexandria, as well as Antioch, retained their intellectual institutions throughout and beyond Justinian's reign, confirming that the measures formed part of a pattern of governance responsive to local conditions and conflicts rather than a universal campaign against pagan education or philosophical learning.

Urban conditions at Athens further shaped these developments. By the sixth century, the city had experienced prolonged demographic contraction, diminished municipal revenues, and a reduced political profile within the eastern empire, weakening civic capacity to sustain advanced instruction even before imperial support was withdrawn. The loss of funding therefore accelerated a process already shaped by local economic constraint, at a moment when symbolic prestige could no longer compensate for material limitation.

Following the withdrawal of support and the inability to secure alternative patronage within the city, a group of philosophers associated with the Academy departed Athens. Agathias provides the most detailed account of this movement, identifying seven philosophers, Damascius of Damascus, Simplicius of Cilicia, Priscian of Lydia, Eulamius of Phrygia, Hermias of Phoenicia, Diogenes of Phoenicia, and Isidore of Gaza, and recording their journey to the court of the Persian king Khosrow I in Ctesiphon in search of support. Their departure reflects the conditions under which elite intellectuals

operated in late antiquity, where legal standing, security, and patronage determined the viability of teaching and writing.

The philosophers' stay in Persia proved brief. Agathias reports dissatisfaction with the conditions encountered there and a petition for return to Roman territory, coinciding with diplomatic negotiations between the Roman and Persian empires and culminating in a peace settlement concluded in 532. A clause was included in the treaty providing that the philosophers should be permitted to return



and live in safety without compulsion to abandon their traditional religious practices, inclusion of which the Persian king made a condition of the agreement, elevating the fate of a small philosophical circle into a matter of imperial diplomacy.

Upon their return, the philosophers were received under Justinian's authority without record of punishment, imprisonment, or forced conversion, yet public support for their teaching positions was not restored. Philosophical instruction at Athens therefore lacked the legal and material conditions required for public operation, and the Neoplatonic circle ceased to function as a civic institution. Instruction persisted through private teaching, writing, and transmission beyond the framework of municipal

recognition, at a moment when demand for this form of paedagogical authority had itself diminished as intellectual energies increasingly gravitated toward theological, rhetorical, and administrative disciplines aligned with the priorities of a Christian imperial society.

Contemporary responses to the events of 529 reinforce this assessment. Apart from a notice preserved in the Chronicle of John Malalas, late antique sources do not record a dramatic termination of philosophical instruction at Athens, and the absence of extensive commentary or lamentation suggests that these developments were understood as part of ordinary administrative regulation rather than as an exceptional cultural rupture.

Philosophical activity in the sixth century continued in other centres and in other forms. Figures such as Simplicius produced extensive commentaries during this period that preserved and systematised earlier philosophical material, circulated widely, and exerted influence across cultural and confessional boundaries, while philosophical concepts, logical techniques, and ethical frameworks persisted within Byzantine education through florilegia, manuals, and exegetical traditions embedded within theological and rhetorical contexts that ensured their continued circulation.

As public support receded and civic interest cooled, philosophical teaching at Athens drifted beyond the perimeter of recognised public concern and survived, where it survived at all, through private effort and inherited loyalty rather than institutional commitment. Later generations preferred to remember this as an ending, though contemporaries experienced it as a series of reasonable adjustments, each defensible in isolation and none requiring announcement. Positions were allowed to lapse, priorities recalibrated, and assurances offered that nothing essential was at stake, until absence itself acquired the appearance of inevitability. Those observing the present attenuation of government support for Modern Greek language programmes in Victoria, accompanied by familiar expressions of regret and confidence in resilience, may recognise the administrative temperament at work and discover that the fate of Damascius and his circle no longer belongs entirely to late antiquity, having acquired the uncomfortable clarity of lived experience, out with a whimper rather than a bang, and without a whiff of martyrdom.



In 1994, Nic Faitos made a decision that would change the course of his life. After building a career in finance on Wall Street, he chose to leave the fast-paced world of numbers behind to pursue something far more creative—flowers. Together with his wife, Eva Faitos, Nic had already taken the first step with a small neighborhood flower shop near their home on Long Island. But his vision was bigger. That vision led him to the heart of Manhattan’s Chelsea Flower District, an area famous for its wholesale flower markets. At the time, retail shops were virtually nonexistent there. Surrounded by wholesalers, Starbright opened its doors as the district’s only retail storefront—a bold move that quickly set it apart. What Nic built wasn’t simply a flower shop. It was an experience.

### The Art of Reinvention

In the heart of Manhattan’s historic flower market, Starbright Floral Design has grown into something far greater than a traditional florist. Known for dramatic floral installations, custom arrangements, and large-scale event design, the studio has become a destination where flowers are treated not simply as décor, but as art. Visitors stepping inside the 7,000-square-foot showroom are greeted by a living gallery of color and fragrance. They are greeted by a vibrant tapestry of color—towering arrangements, lush greenery, rare blooms, and seasonal flowers sourced from across the globe. Every corner offers something new: exotic blooms, rare perennials, and creative arrangements that blur the line between floral design and fine art.

Behind the scenes, a team of about seventy employees—including five dedicated floral designers—works to bring each creation to life. The company’s reach now extends across all five boroughs of New York City and beyond, serving clients who seek both everyday beauty and unforgettable event décor.

### A Family Legacy in Full Bloom

Although the company has expanded significantly since its early days, Starbright remains a family-driven enterprise. Leadership has passed to the next generation, with Nic’s son Stephen Faitos helping guide the company’s future.

The continuation of family leadership has allowed Starbright to maintain the personal touch that defined its beginnings while embracing new trends in event design and floral installations.

### Floral Design for Iconic Brands

Starbright’s distinctive style has attracted a remarkable roster of clients. Global companies including Ferrari, American Express, Cartier, Louis Vuitton, L’Oreal, Delta Airlines, Google, and Pfizer have turned to the studio to create memorable floral installations

# Stephen Faitos:

## *Inside the World of Starbright Floral Design*

by Athena Efter

Tucked within the vibrant bustle of Manhattan’s historic flower district, Starbright Floral Design stands out as far more than a typical neighborhood flower shop. It has become a destination where floral artistry meets innovation. Known for its large-scale floral installations, corporate event designs, and innovative arrangements, the company has grown into a floral destination that blends artistry, craftsmanship, and global sourcing. What began as a modest family venture has

grown into a renowned floral design studio known for its breathtaking arrangements, dramatic flower walls, and large-scale installations for some of the world’s most recognizable brands.

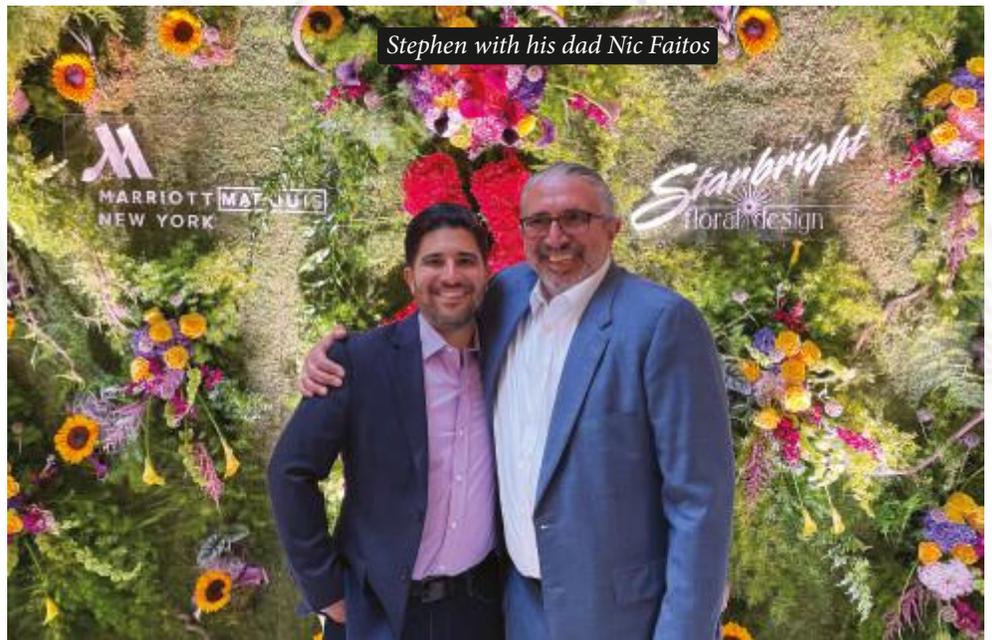
Behind the spectacular displays of roses, orchids, and seasonal blooms lies a story of passion, risk, and reinvention. But the roots of Starbright began far more humbly.

for product launches, corporate events, tradeshows, and brand activations. Other notable clients throughout New York City include Bergdorf Goodman, Gramercy Park Hotel, New York Marriot Marquis, Rosa Mexicana, and Elea, and Kyma. Starbright Floral Design is also a proud supporter of non-profit organizations, such as Gilda's Club and The Ronald McDonald House, making in-kind donations and offering discounted rates.

From glamorous product launches to public relations showcases, Starbright's signature installations—especially its elaborate flower walls—have become sought-after design elements in the event industry. Each project is custom-crafted, ensuring that every arrangement reflects the client's vision and identity while showcasing the studio's signature artistry.

### A Global Garden of Blooms

One of Starbright's defining strengths lies in its extraordinary selection of flowers. While the company makes a point of sourcing from regional farms whenever possible, its network extends around the globe. Flowers arrive from renowned growers in Netherlands, South Africa, New Zealand, France, Japan, and Italy, giving designers access to rare and seasonal varieties that elevate their work. The result is a floral palette as diverse and vibrant as New York City itself.



Stephen with his dad Nic Faitos

Starbright was named among the Top 50 Florists in the United States by Teleflora, a distinction that recognizes exceptional floral artistry and service within the industry. The company also received the Ultimate Florist distinction from BMW, highlighting its reputation for high-end design and luxury event aesthetics.

Starbright's work has also been showcased at the iconic Macy's Flower Show, one of the most celebrated floral exhibitions in the world. Being featured at this renowned event further solidifies the studio's status as a leading creative force in floral design.

Together, these honors reflect a legacy built on artistry, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to bringing beauty into every space Starbright touches.

### Where Passion Continues to Bloom

More than three decades after its founding, Starbright Floral Design continues to thrive in the city that never sleeps. From everyday bouquets to large-scale event installations, the company has become a trusted name in New York's design and event community.

Yet at its core, the philosophy remains simple: flowers should inspire joy, beauty, and connection. And despite the scale of its operations, the heart of the company remains the same: a deep appreciation for beauty, craftsmanship, and the transformative power of flowers.

For Nic Faitos, the decision to leave Wall Street for a world of petals and fragrance may have seemed unconventional at the time. But in the Chelsea Flower District, surrounded by thousands of blossoms each day, it's clear that sometimes the boldest moves lead to the most beautiful results. What began as a passion has grown into a legacy, proving that sometimes the most extraordinary businesses start with a simple love for something beautiful.

Starbright Floral Design is located on 140 West 26th Street. For online orders, event services, installations, and more information, you can visit [starbrighteventsnyc.com](http://starbrighteventsnyc.com).



### Honors & Distinctions

Over the years, Starbright Floral Design has earned national recognition for its creativity, craftsmanship, and impact on the floral design industry. From prestigious awards to collaborations with major brands, the company's achievements reflect decades of dedication to excellence.

Founder Nic Faitos has also been honored individually for his contributions to the field. He received a Lifetime Achievement Award from Morris Visitor Publications and the Hotel Association of New York City, recognizing his influence on floral design within the hospitality and event industries.

# HERITAGE GREECE®: A Once-in-a-Lifetime Odyssey of Self-Discovery—and Lifelong Journey



For many young people of Greek descent growing up in North America, Greece begins as an idea—formed through family stories, church festivals, inherited traditions, and fragments of history learned at home or in school. It is something admired and respected but often experienced from afar. For the students who participate in the Heritage Greece® Program, that idea becomes something far more personal: a lived experience that reshapes identity, deepens purpose, and for many, alters the course of their lives. “I didn’t really understand philotimo until I was surrounded by it,” reflected one alumnus, describing the uniquely Greek sense of honor, generosity, and responsibility to others that is absorbed through daily life rather than learned in a classroom.

The Heritage Greece® Program, an initiative of the National Hellenic Society (NHS), is a transformative educational and cultural immersion designed for Greek American and Greek Canadian college students. Its mission is both timeless and urgent: to help the next generation connect meaningfully with their heritage while cultivating pride, perspective, and a sense of responsibility to family, community, and society.

Since its founding, the program has sponsored more than 1,000 students, a milestone that places it among the most impactful heritage-based educational initiatives in the Greek diaspora. Demand continues to grow each year. Despite exceptional academic

credentials among applicants, NHS is routinely forced to turn away qualified students due to limited capacity. Last year alone, the average GPA of participating students was an extraordinary 3.8, reflecting both the competitiveness of the program and the caliber of the participants selected that will serve as future ambassadors of Hellenic heritage.

Hosted in Greece at leading academic institutions—including the American College of Greece in Athens, Anatolia College / American College of Thessaloniki, and College Year in Athens—Heritage Greece® blends academic rigor with experiential learning. Students earn transferable college credit while engaging deeply with Greece’s

ancient past and modern reality through classroom instruction, archaeological site visits, and discussions with scholars, public officials, and business leaders. Yet it is often the personal impact that resonates most powerfully.

“I feel more of a personal connection to Greece,” shared one student. “I now view Greece as a home rather than just an idea. Every place we went, every archaeological site we visited, every meal we shared exceeded my expectations. I can’t wait to return with my family.” For many, the experience also brings new meaning to lessons passed down through generations.

“My parents always stressed the importance of understanding our heritage, and now I understand why,” another participant explained. “Heritage Greece brought me closer to my family. They were proud and excited to see me connect so deeply with who we are and with other Greek American and Greek students.”

That intergenerational connection is central to the program’s purpose. George Marcus, co-founder of the National Hellenic Society, sees Heritage Greece® as a bridge between past and future.

“This program was created so that our young people don’t just inherit stories about who they are—they experience it for themselves,” Marcus said. “When students return, they carry Greece with them in a very real way, and that shapes how they live, lead, and give back.”

Students frequently speak of a renewed sense of pride and responsibility—both personal and civic.

“Being immersed in all aspects of Greece changed how I see the country and myself,” one student noted. “I have never been prouder to be Greek. This program showed me how integral Greek people and Greek values are to democracy and the modern world. I would not trade my heritage for anything.”





This year, that continuum expands further. Several students will be eligible for internship opportunities in Greece, allowing them to extend their stay by working with companies and institutions aligned with their academic majors and career paths. These placements offer not only professional experience, but a deeper immersion into contemporary Greek society—bridging heritage, education, and career development in a uniquely meaningful way.

Independent studies conducted by NHS confirm what alumni consistently express: Heritage Greece® has a lasting impact on students' identity, cultural pride, and civic engagement. Many alumni go on to become mentors, leaders, and benefactors themselves, paying forward the opportunity they were given.

At its core, Heritage Greece® is not simply about visiting a country. It is about understanding one's roots, honoring the sacrifices of those who came before, and carrying forward values that remain deeply relevant in an increasingly complex world.

The expectation placed upon students is modest yet profound: pay it forward—and use what they have gained to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

As Pericles once observed, what endures most is not what is carved in stone, but what is woven into the lives of others. Through Heritage Greece®, that legacy continues—more than 1,000 lives changed, and many more yet to come.

Heritage Greece® is offered as a gift by NHS and its many partners and benefactors. The program enjoys the proud support and affiliation of the Hellenic Heritage Foundation of Toronto, the Elios Foundation, the Elios Society, and numerous sponsoring organizations and individuals across North America.

Among its major benefactors are George and Judy Marcus, Drake and Maria Behrakis and the Behrakis Family Foundation, and the Lea Soupata and Sotiris Zervoulas Foundation, whose generosity has ensured that financial barriers do not prevent deserving students from participating. For Drake Behrakis, NHS Chair Emeritus, the program represents the most meaningful kind of investment.

“Heritage Greece® is not a short-term experience—it’s a long-term commitment to leadership, values, and identity,” Behrakis said. “When you invest in a student, you are investing in a family, a community, and the future of Hellenism itself.”

Recognizing the importance of sustainability, NHS has launched the Hellenic Legacy Fund, a bold initiative with a goal of raising \$10 million to permanently endow the Heritage Greece® Program and secure its long-term viability. The fund is designed to ensure that future generations will continue to benefit from the same life-changing opportunity.

In 2026 alone, NHS and its co-sponsors will fund 100 Heritage Greece® students across its host institutions. The organization’s vision is to grow that number exponentially in the coming years, expanding access in response to overwhelming demand.

Equally important is what happens after students return home. Heritage Greece® alumni become lifelong members of the NHS family, gaining access to mentorship, professional guidance, and career-advancing opportunities through a national and international network of leaders across business, public service, academia, medicine, technology, law, and the arts.

“This is not a program that ends when the plane lands back home,” said Lea Soupata, current Chair of NHS. “Our alumni remain connected—to one another and to NHS. We are deeply committed to supporting them as they grow personally and professionally, just as they remain committed to our shared values.”





# Mnemosyni's Musings...

You've heard of Mnemosyni, the Greek goddess of memory. Mythology buffs will know that she's also the goddess of storytelling—and mother of the Muses! So, it's only fitting to name a literary column in her honor. Here, you'll learn about authors, poets, books, and all things "Greek" literary.

by Maria A. Karamitsos

## New Fiction



Lots of great books came out so far this year. Can't wait to see what the rest of the year has in store. For now, check out these recently released novels by Greek and PhilHellene authors.

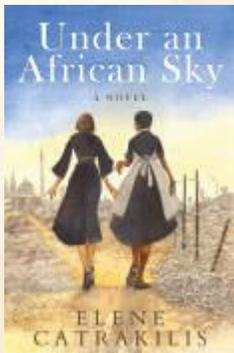
**The House of Hidden Letters by Izzy Broom; Berkley (March 17, 2026)**



New from the author of *My Map of You* (published as *Isabelle Broom*) comes "a beautiful and escapist novel full of heart".

When Skye wins a lottery to buy a run-down cottage on a Greek island for

only one euro, she jumps at the chance to leave the UK and make a fresh start. As she unlocks the tattered blue door of her new cottage with a sun-kissed sea glinting in the bay outside her windows, Skye immediately feels like she's found her true home. She and the other lottery winners are the first residents in these houses since the 1940s. But when Skye and her local contractor find a set of mysterious letters, they begin to unravel the history of the prior residents, and the truth about life on Folegandros during World War II.

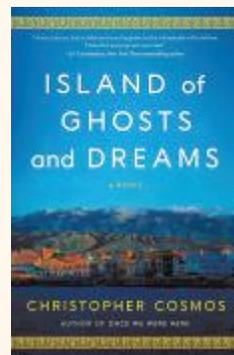


**Under an African Sky by Elene Catrakilis; Belvedere House (March 10, 2026)**

In this debut historical novel, travel to South Africa circa 1989, a deeply divided country on the

brink of change. There, two women from different backgrounds share an unlikely friendship. Sofia, a Greek-Cypriot immigrant, longs to keep her family close, but her children want to leave the country, upending the future she's envisioned. Grace, Sofia's housekeeper and trusted friend, pins her hopes on her son's education and a future where he'll no longer be treated like a foreigner in his own country.

When their children's lives become entangled in ways neither woman could foresee, the fallout threatens not only their dreams, but also the friendship on which they've come to rely. Into this turmoil, a priest from Sofia's past arrives from a remote Greek monastery. His quiet presence steadies Grace yet unsettles Sofia as long-buried secrets rise to the surface. But in this fractured world, where a nation and hearts are coming undone, can his prayers hold the pieces



together, or will the past refuse to let go of the present?

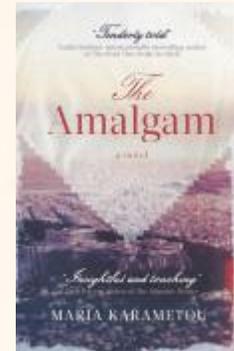
**The Island of Ghosts and Dreams by Christopher Cosmos; Pegasus Books (March 3, 2026)**

The latest historical novel

from the bestselling author of *Once We Were Here* takes us to Chania, Crete in 1941, ahead of the German invasion. Maria lives with her in-laws. Her husband, Dimitrios, has been away on the mainland, fighting with the Greek army. One day she finds a wounded British soldier on the beach and she and her family nurse him. Shortly after he leaves, the Germans invade Crete. Maria, her family, and the villagers are thrust into a battle for their lives—and their storied island.

Maria's husband returns, but there's danger. In defense, the Cretans have taken up arms—including a stockpile left by the British soldier. The men hide in the mountains and in caves, ones that the Germans are unaware of, and in rough

terrain. A minor incident occurs, and in reprisal, the Germans kill Dimitrios in front of his family then torch the village. Only Maria and a few young family members survive. She finds herself in a role she never imagined, as they're thrust into a battle for their lives, for Crete, and for history.



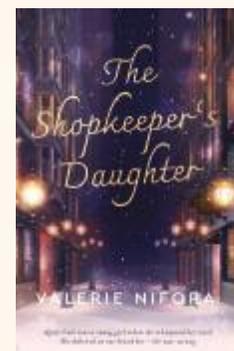
**The Amalgam by Maria Karametrou; Vine Leaves Press (March 24, 2026)**

This debut historical novel has been called "sweeping, intimate, and deeply human".

In Athens in 1984, Meta looks

to escape her tyrannical father and the future he demands. But then her grandmother, Metaxia, makes a dying wish: return a mysterious heirloom to her lost village in Asia Minor from which she was violently expelled during World War I. Meta makes a promise she doesn't fully understand.

In a desperate bid for freedom, she flees to America. Her father cuts her off leaving her penniless and hungry. She's all alone, clinging to her dream of becoming an artist. But she still hasn't fulfilled her grandmother's final request. It's not until years later that a shattering moment forces Meta to confront the life she has built and the history she has tried to outrun. So, she sets out for Turkey, a pilgrimage across continents and time, echoing Metaxia's own flight from violence. As their parallel stories converge, Meta must finally face the



truth: can we ever return to the places that made us, or only to the person we were meant to become?

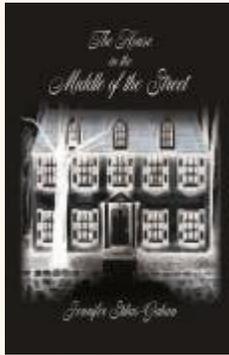
**The Shopkeeper's Daughter by Valerie Nifora; Author Academy Elite (March 31, 2026)**

From the award-winning author of *The Fairmounts* and *Mary Whitcombe* comes a new romantasy novella.

Cole's Sundry Shop sits on a quiet street in a forgotten corner of the village, full of porcelain teapots, satin curtains, and whispered legends. Within its walls lives Agnes, a devoted daughter whose life is bound by duty, longing, and the shadow of a love that may never have been real.

When a storm, a strange teal tin of tea, and a mysterious young man named Malcolm converge, Agnes's world is forever altered. Is he a fevered dream, a ghost called forth by enchantment, or the echo of her whispered wish beneath the bewitched winter snow?

As her father departs on a fateful journey, Thaddeus offers steadfast devotion. But Aunt Charlotte stirs jealous secrets. Agnes must navigate the fragile line between memory and illusion. Her choices will bind her not only to those she loves, but to the quiet mysteries that shape a life.



**The House in the Middle of the Street** by Jennifer Sklias-Gahan; Rare Bird Books (February 17, 2026)

This debut teen/YA novella conjures a haunting modern fairy tale of inheritance,

secrets, and the creatures we invite into our lives. When Rebecca and her husband inherit a stately old home, they imagine it as the perfect place to build their family. But as the seasons turn, shadowy visitors begin to arrive—children who are not what they seem, guests with appetites beyond bread. Bound by ancestral debts and ancient instructions, Rebecca and her descendants are drawn into a chilling cycle of desire, duty, and haunting. It's a gothic exploration of legacy, survival, and

the perilous cost of letting others in.

Lots of great books to add to your list. Happy reading! See you next time for more of Mnemosyni's Musings.

*Maria A. Karamitsos is a journalist, author, and poet. She's the founder & former publisher/editor of WindyCity Greek magazine and former associate editor & senior writer for The Greek Star newspaper. Maria also contributes to Greek City Times and TripFiction. Her work has been published in The Magic of Us-A Moms Who Write Poetry Anthology, The Pen Poetry Magazine, Voices of Hellenism Literary Journal, Highland Park Poetry, Recipes & Roots, GreekCircle magazine, The National Herald, GreekReporter, Harlots Sauce Radio, Women Who Write, KPTH magazine, and more. Maria has contributed to two books: Greektown Chicago: Its History, Its Recipes and The Chicago Area Ethnic Handbook. She's currently editing her 1st novel. mariakaramitsos.com*



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# The Quay

by James Terezakis

A lazy morning sun cast its shadow on "Quay Street." The 4-Kilometer boulevard that was adjacent to the waterfront at "Smyrna."

Smyrna, the jewel of ancient Anatolia - a polyglot population of 300,000, divided by Greeks, Turks, Armenians & Levantines.

In 1919, a fabulously wealthy city - the "Dubai" of the East. There were European-designed hotels, restaurants, cafes, boutiques, complimented by concert halls & theaters, with 22 daily newspapers.

Today, May 15 1919, would be a historic day. "Mother Ellas," with the blessing of the Great European Powers, would be sending 15,000 troops to "Smyrna" under the "Treaty of Sevres."

They had negotiated a protectorate over the territory of Smyrna. The Greeks would monitor the city. The orchestras and local bands played the "Hymn to Liberty."

The Greek citizens of Smyrna cried as soldiers disembark assembled. Across the crowd, people stood in awe. There has not been a Greek military presence in Anatolia for 500 years, since the Fall of Constantinople, on May 29, 1453.

Leading the parade were the "Evzones." The traditional Palace Guards in their white foustanelas and blue and white vests sporting their knives with the ancient swords. Following them the 8th Cretan Regiment accompanied with their Lyra-wearing black kerchiefs and white boots. They drew the most applause. Many people felt that Constantine Palaiologos XI was the last Emperor of Byzantium. The present King Constantine would re-establish through the "Megali Idea" --the new "Byzantine Empire."

"Kafenion O Ermis," or Café Hermes, along with Café Apollon, were the most frequented, visited and talked about cafes on the Quay. The "Café Hermes" catered to merchants, bankers, and Smyrna's cultural elite. They came for the best Turkish coffee, "kahvesi," with sweets like "lokum" and baklava.

With all the noise and festivity, the great merchant found a table. From Alexandria, Egypt, came Manolis Benakis, the great cotton producer and exporter. Sitting next to him was Vaglianos, a third-generation shipping tycoon, originally from Kefalonia. His grandfather led the movement to replace sailing boats with steamships.

The boisterous Socrates Onassis, premier tobacco grower and merchant, a fanatical nationalist and supporter of the "Megali Idea," walked in with his bodyguard and a beautiful French female companion. Dressed impeccably in a tailored suit, a cape, and a stylish fedora, was Basil Zacharoff.

Mr. Zaharoff, who had a controlling hand in "Vickers," a munitions and weapons company, had made millions in WWI, selling to all sides. All other fortunes were nothing compared to his.

All other merchants, bankers, and elites would freeze next to him. Socrates Onassis seemed a little jealous envious of Mr. Zaharoff. He sensed an ambiguity - a fear to commit to the Holy Cause. Gentlemen, this is a historic day for our country and civilization.

Mr Benakis nodded his head "yes" and Me. Vaglianos and the English cordiale agreed. The Levantine Mr. Forbes looked quietly



at his baklava and smiled. Mr. Zaharoff watched and stared at his lady friends' breasts. This angered Socrates more.

Socrates, with his alpha-male voice, screamed, "Can you believe this, gentlemen? All of Smyrna is celebrating the birth of the new Byzantine Empire - the "Megali Idea!"

Benakis nodded his head in approval. Mr. Forbes, the Greek speaking Levantine, also smiled in approval. Mr. Embiricos, heir to an old shipping family out of London also smiled an accepting smile. Mr. Zaharoff stood neutral, not committing to any position. This bothered Socrates -- he wanted commitment to his cause. Basil Zaharoff, who dealt in all the European capitals, refused to show his cards.

"Are there forces that are willing to put us into armed conflict and remove our dominance when we held back the Turks in 1453 for 57 days? What European allies sent soldiers to defend us? I think we should leave this alone. This Megali Idea will be the end of us in Asia Minor. Socrates and the others bend their heads in embarrassment.

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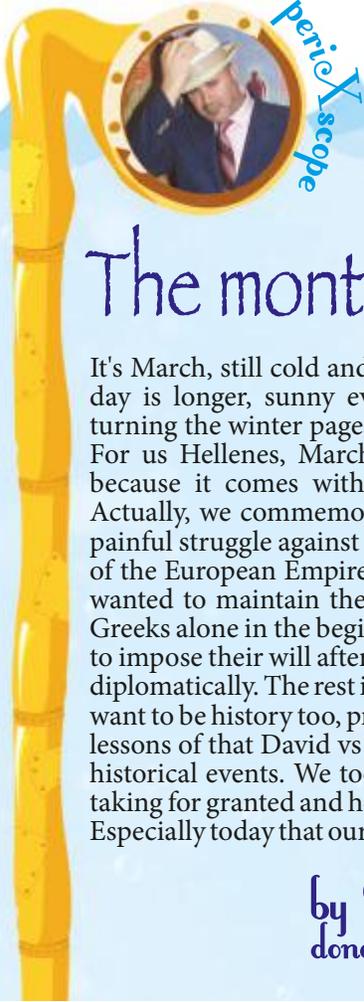
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# The month of freedom

It's March, still cold and the occasional snowfall, but the day is longer, sunny every now and then, it feels like turning the winter page, although you can never be sure. For us Hellenes, March is also the month of freedom because it comes with the Greek Independence Day. Actually, we commemorate the beginning of a long and painful struggle against the Ottoman Empire and the rest of the European Empires that through the Holy Alliance wanted to maintain the status quo. The Greeks and the Greeks alone in the beginning, said no and they managed to impose their will after years of fighting both in war and diplomatically. The rest is history, as we say, and if we don't want to be history too, prematurely, we must hold dear the lessons of that David vs Goliath struggle and not just the historical events. We too must cherish our freedom, not taking for granted and hold it always higher than comfort. Especially today that our world once more is a mess...

by **Demetrios Rhompotis**  
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**continued from page 38**

had a lot of fun working with Rebel Wilson. I love Rebel!"

On the current stage of his life, Hartley responded, "I take things day by day. I live by a code, an ethical code, and I sort of go by that. I just attack every day the exact same way. I try to be kind to other people, I try to be patient, I try to be understanding, and I try to have as much grace as I possibly can. That's all you can do as a human," he acknowledged. "I try to understand where people are coming from, and I always try to be mindful," he added.

Hartley had great words about Eric Martsoff and The Day Players Band. "The Day Players are great. They're an amazing band. Eric Martsoff is one of my best friends," he said. "Eric and I have been friends for a very, very long time. We got to know each other many years ago when we played brothers on the television show 'Passions.' Eric cracks me up. He is one of the funniest human beings I know," he elaborated.

"I learn from Eric all the time, the way he conducts his business and his personal life. People have a lot of respect for Eric and his whole family, his wife Lisa and the boys. When they walk into a room, it just makes the energy go up and it's a better place when they're all around," Hartley explained.

"That's a really wonderful family, and I love hanging out with them," he added.

On his definition of the word success, Hartley said, "At this point in my life, to be honest, success is looking at the people around me and doing the best that I can to make sure that they're happy."

"I am so fulfilled when I see people that I love and care about just really enjoying and having a good time in their lives," he admitted.

"My daughter means everything to me, and so does my wife. I still have my parents, which is really wonderful. They're doing well and they are thriving. Also, I value my siblings and my friends," he noted.

"Just making sure that, as busy as life gets with work and everything, you always find time to carve out time for your friends, and make sure that everyone is okay," he said.

"While I'm on set, I like looking around. I would look at our crew, and I would see people laughing and having fun, and that's a good mark to leave. I feel good about that," he added.

For his fans, Hartley expressed, "I talk to the fans all the time. I talk to them whenever they come up to me and whenever they have anything to say. I am always happy to hear

from them. I am the luckiest guy!"

"I have people that have watched me in daytime, superhero projects, I have people that love comedy, drama, and suspense. I have the 'Tracker' fans, the 'Smallville' fans, the 'Revenge' fans and I am just the luckiest man in the world," he acknowledged.

"I get to talk to people on a daily basis that love to talk about TV shows, movies, and their experiences. They all come up to me with a smile on their faces. Honestly, I think I have the greatest fans that you can possibly imagine," he elaborated.

Hartley remarked about these new episodes of "Tracker," "I think we nailed them! I think we built this story and there's a really great payoff at our mid-season premiere."

"Also, there is a payoff in the final three or four episodes this season," he foreshadowed. "I think this is the strongest 12-to-15-episode arc that we've ever had on the show, which I'm pretty proud of."

"So, hopefully, we can just keep this momentum going for the future," Hartley concluded.

To learn more about actor and producer Justin Hartley, you can follow him on Instagram.

# Justin Hartley of 'Tracker' - Season 3

by Markos Papadatos

Emmy-nominated actor Justin Hartley chatted with Markos Papadatos about starring in "Tracker" on CBS, where he plays Colter Shaw, and serves as an executive producer.

Byron Pulsifer once said: "Imagine, dream, and believe in yourself. With determination and belief, you will be surprised at what you accomplish." This quote applies to Justin Hartley. On Sunday, March 1st, "Tracker" Season 3 returned on CBS following a winter hiatus, where it will continue where it left off with Episode 10 titled "The Fallout" with additional weekly episodes still to come to complete its 22-episode season.

Hartley is looking forward to the new episodes on March 1st. "The show has been good! It keeps me busy, that's for sure," he exclaimed. "I'm looking forward to them very much. We've been off the air for a few months because we have to catch up... it takes us a lot longer to shoot these episodes than a week. So, when we do one episode a week for nine weeks in a row, we fall a bit behind and then we are all sitting there going, 'we don't have any more inventory,'" he explained. "So, we need to take a little time off and build that inventory back up. While we were off the air, of course, we were working the whole entire time. Now, we have plenty of inventory so we can keep going," he added.

"Fans can dive back in on March 1st, and we will give them new episodes week after week after week for the final 13 episodes that we have left for this season," he elaborated.

In a recent episode of "Tracker," titled "To the Bone," that aired on March 8th, Hartley's character (Colter) is in Queens, New York, where he visits Stepho's Souvlaki Greek Taverna, a local Greek restaurant owned by Stath (Joshua Bitton) and Antonia Pateras (Sarah Strange), where he investigates the sudden disappearance of their son Ben Pateras (played by Ben Krieger).

Hartley is drawn to playing Colter Shaw for several reasons. "I am drawn to the ever evolving and ever-changing world that he rubs around in," he said. "I have to read these scripts, and they keep me interested in how different they all are, and the challenges that they bring, and all the exciting things that Colter goes through."

On starring in the No. 1 show (non-sports) on primetime TV, Hartley expressed, "It feels good! It's also a bit humbling. It's also a big responsibility to make something that is very interesting. I've been on shows that a ton of people watch... and that are loved, beloved, and zeitgeisty," he noted.

"I've also been on one show that no one watched. You don't work harder on the ones that people watch vs. the shows that people don't watch. The work is the same intensity-wise," he acknowledged. "It's such a luxury," he admitted. "It's a wonderful thing. Also, it is such a pleasure to be on a hit show that everybody is watching, so we want to make sure it's perfect because a lot of people are watching it."

"People really care about 'Tracker,' and they tune in and they spend time watching us. It's a real honor and a pleasure to know that people are watching what you are doing," he said, effusively. "So, we think about that quite a bit."

On the lessons learned from the "Tracker" screenplay, he remarked, "I guess I learn things every week when we film a new episode. One of the things I learned is that I have an Energizer Bunny battery inside of me. I don't know what it is." "I love work," Hartley exclaimed. "I tend to work a lot of hours, and I don't really seem to get tired or sick of it. I enjoy it and I get motivated by my work. I am enthused to go to work, and I am motivated by the challenge. This reinforced that I have really chosen the right line of work for my life," he noted. "Acting is what makes me really happy."

On having Hudson Williams as a guest star on "Tracker" (where he appeared on Hartley's show prior to his breakout role on "Heated Rivalry"), Hartley said, "Hudson was so great! We are so lucky. We've had a ton of great guest stars that are very gifted."

"A lot of really talented actors that have come through in the past three (almost) years now," he said. "They bring a lot of heat and a lot of talent. When they come on set, they all deliver! So, we've been really lucky."

Hartley complimented his wife, actress Sofia Pernas for her portrayal of Billie Matalon in the show. "Sofia is pretty remarkable," he admitted. "She is a wonderful actor, and of course, the love of my life. So, any time that I get to spend with her is a pleasure."



"These hours that I pull are so demanding," he noted. "A lot of times we're apart a lot because I'm at work a lot, but when she comes to work and we get to spend time together, that's always fun. Sofia is such a talent, and I think her character, Billie, is really evolving," he said. "What the writers have done with the character lately, presenting her as someone that Colter can really trust and as a person he really cares about, has been pretty awesome as well. Sofia is just fantastic," he elaborated.

Hartley praised veteran Canadian actress Wendy Crewson for being "awesome" as his on-screen mother Mary Dove Shaw on "Tracker." On being a part of the action comedy "Bride Hard," he said, "It was good! I

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