



Cyprus' Consul General Koula Sophianou congratulates AGAPW for its panel on domestic violence. The panelists (L-R): Yi-Hui

Chang, Dr. Stephanie Spanos, Sethu Nair, Jennifer DeCarli and Aurelie Athan, PhD. Also seen is Katia Stefanatou.

AGAPW Shines Spotlight on Domestic Violence

By Constantine S. Sirigos
TNH Staff Writer

NEW YORK – “Domestic Violence, Gender, and Culture: Shining a Light,” was the title of a panel discussion and forum presented on October 17 by the Association of Greek American Professional Women (AGAPW) which was co-sponsored by the Sexuality, Women & Gender Project of the Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Affairs, Teachers College, Columbia University.

The event coincided with National Domestic Violence Awareness month and the Milbank Chapel Auditorium was filled with students as well as members and friends of AGAPW, who were welcomed by its founding president Olga Alexakos, PhD.

Cyprus' Consul General Koula Sophianou congratulated the organizers for the event that advances the critical goals of “raising awareness and educating people...young children, both boys and girls.” Anticipating some of the most fascinating parts of the discussion, she added “That is the only way to avoid domestic violence.”

Katia Stefanatou, an official of UNICEF and AGAPW Focus on Youth Committee member, served as the MC, and Aurelie Athan, PhD, Program Coordinator, Department of Clinical Psychology and AGAPW board member, was the moderator.

Athan framed the issues introduced the panel which consisted of Yi-Hui Chang, ATR-BC – Dean Hope Center of Educational and Psychological Services at Teachers College, Jennifer DeCarli, Executive Director Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, Sethu Nair – Manager of Communications & Outreach at Sakhi for South Asian Women and Stephanie Spanos, MD – Attending Psychiatrist, Hawthorne Cedar Knolls Girls' Unit.

The discussion opened with Athan's citation of the brutal sta-

tistics that stand as a challenge to people of conscience everywhere.

The World Health Organization reports that “between 50 and 70 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 70 years will have experienced some form of violence in their lifetime,” Athan said, adding however, that as sobering as those numbers are, hopefulness is embedded in them “because they show that it is preventable, depending on where you are in the world and your circumstances.”

Each of the panelists brought out important points and perspectives regarding the conditions and causes of domestic violence against women, a topic which comes under the umbrella of violence against women in general.

Violence against women is “widespread, pervasive, locally and globally...in our homes and on the streets...and takes many forms... but its most common form is intimate partner violence” Athan said.

Among the many topics raised that warrant further examination is the link between domestic violence and socioeconomic crises and civic unrest. Reports of domestic violence have risen 47 percent in Greece since the onset of the economic crisis.

Spanos brought up the disturbing but easily grasped observation that violence against women and children are tied together, which feeds into controversial theories about what causes some boys to become abusers of women, and the apparent pattern that abused boys tend to become the aggressors while abused girls have a greater tendency to become victims of abuse. Both abused boys and girls have higher rates of mental disorders and substance abuse.

Perhaps anticipating future discussion as a separate topic, Spanos said it has been found

that children exposed to violence experience anatomical changes to their brains. Pet scans reveal brain conditions in such children, who display “learning disabilities and an inability to control anger which is associated with PTSD,” which are similar to those children in war zones. She noted that it is believed that people with predispositions to bipolar disorder and schizophrenia can have those illnesses triggered by child abuse.

Spanos also pointed out the stunning fact that so many of the great works of literature that focus on children contain stories of child abuse.

ON THE GROUND REALITY TRUMPS THEORIES

But testimony from faraway places and distant times were displaced by today's sobering local realities. The audience was hushed as DeCarli noted that 70-100 women visit the New York City Family Justice Center – recently established in Brooklyn for victims of intimate partner violence – that she oversees.

The innovative center – eventually there will be one in each borough – places 26 non-profit and city agencies under one roof to provide women with information, counseling and other resources.

She shared her frustration with people who trivialize the issue. “I just don't get it. I would never stay in an abusive relationship,” she is often told.

The emotional, economic, and social complexities, including family and community pressure to remain in a dangerous marriage, should be obvious, but the most frightening element is the fact that “the time in a relationship when a woman is most likely to be killed is when she tries to leave.”

Nair addressed cultural issues and she also echoed what Athan said earlier, that “at its core, it's about power and control...Whether emotional, physical or sexual, these abusive be-

haviors are means for one person in a relationship to control another,” while Spanos elaborated on the mental illness component in the behavior of abusers.

Spanos, who took the opportunity to acknowledge the pioneering work of Dr. Maria Zachmanoglou with organizations like Elpidis and the new Agape Circle at Holy Trinity Cathedral, addressed the cultural issue by referring to the “family secrets” phenomenon that is all too well known in close-knit communities like the Greek Diaspora.

But it is not unique to the Greek world. Many cultures see domestic violence as private matters.

“It's almost part of our DNA...children instinctually protect their parents,” she said, evoking knowing looks.

Chang also spoke about community and family pressure on abused wives to remain in order to preserve the reputation of the family or the group. During Q&A it was noted progress is being made in helping women whose immigration status is dependent on abusive men.

The Q&A also turned the attention on the panel and professionals in the field of domestic abuses. The panelists acknowledged the strain they undergo when working with victims and the need for the professionals to get help, if only to be able to talk about what they are experiencing.

Chang said “on many nights you can't get a good night's sleep.” DeCarli spoke about how difficult it is to hear a victim say she still loves the abuser and is going back to try to work things out. In those circumstances she can only say “Great! And let's make a new appointment for next week.”

At one point, Athan spoke one of the most hopeful and powerful truths about what women suffer: “the power of naming it as abuse.”

GOINGS ON...

■ THRU NOVEMBER 2

TARPON SPRINGS, FL - Night in the Islands also will be offered Saturdays, Oct. 5, and Nov. 2 from 6-11PM the City of Tarpon Springs will present Night in the Islands – a free event on the world famous Sponge Docks. Enjoy Greek music, dancing, and dining! And we will offer an hour of free Greek dance lessons by the Levendia Dance Troupe from 6-7 PM. The event features live music by Ellada, an exciting Greek band composed of three of the most accomplished Greek musicians in the state. Ellada will perform nisiotika, the lively traditional music of the Greek islands, as well as old and new Greek favorites. Ellada includes Leonidas Zafiris, bouzouki; Elias Poulos, vocals; and Dino Theofilos, keyboard. The festival is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Come join us for authentic island fun in the warm Florida sun!

must provide us legal name, date and place of birth, to obtain clearance. The group will be limited to 35 and we are fast approaching the limit. Please act quickly. You can register on line at HAWC website www.hawc-net.org

■ NOVEMBER 2

NEW ROCHELLE, NY – The Nisyrian Society of New York is celebrating its 110th Anniversary on Saturday, Nov. 2 with a Gala and Dinner at the VIP Country Club, 600 Davenport Avenue in New Rochelle. Nisyros is a small island, but its community here in the United States is very large – especially in the New York metropolitan area – and they know how to celebrate! Whether Nisyrian or a friend of Nisyros, all our welcome! Cocktail hour begins at 6PM. Donation is \$100, Children under 13, \$50.

PORTLAND, OR – The Hellenic-American Cultural Center and Museum, 3131 NE Gilsan St. in Portland, will host the Legacy of Greece to Modern World Medicine on Saturday, Nov. 2, from 7:30-9PM, preceded by a reception from 6-7:30PM. The speakers are Emmanuela Appetiti, a research collaborator at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, who is a sociologist with a specialty in ethnoanthropology, and has done research at various institutions throughout the world; and Dr. Alain Touwaide, a research associate also at the Smithsonian, who is a Fellow at the International Academy for the History of Sciences, the Royal Medical Society, and various other scholarly institutions. Admission to the lecture is free. General admission to the reception is \$20, \$15 for seniors, and \$10 for students.

■ OCTOBER 6 – MARCH 2, 2014

WASHINGTON, DC – Heaven on Earth: Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections will be presented at the National Gallery of Art from Oct. 6 2013-Mar. 2, 2014. In the first exhibition devoted to Byzantine art at the Gallery, some 170 rare and important works, drawn exclusively from Greek collections, the exhibit will offer a fascinating glimpse of the soul and splendor of the Byzantine Empire. Recognized masterpieces, many never lent before to the United States, will be on view with newly discovered and previously unpublished objects from recent archaeological excavations in Greece. The exhibition is organized by the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture, and Sports, Athens, with the collaboration of the Benaki Museum, Athens, in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington, and the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. After Washington, the exhibition travels to the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, where it will be displayed at the Getty Villa from April 9 through August 25, 2014.

■ OCTOBER 25-27

PEORIA, AZ – Experience “A Taste of Greece!” There's nothing like Greek hospitality and there will be plenty of that on display once again at St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church's Taste of Greece Festival, at 7950 West Pinnacle Peak Road in Peoria. Friday, Oct. 25 5-10PM; Saturday, Oct. 26 11AM-10PM; Sunday, Oct. 27 12Noon-8PM. For more information, call (623) 486-8665, or visit the Church's website: stharalambos.org.

■ NOVEMBER 1-2

WASHINGTON, DC – “Heritage, Folklore, Family: Tales Yiayia Never Told you.” This is the topic of this year's Hellenic American Women's Council (HAWC) conference on Nov. 1 and 2 at the Ritz Carlton in Washington. It is a wonderful program that will be both informative and entertaining. It features three accomplished women – published authors: Eleni Gage, Henriette Lazaridis Power and Marilyn Rouvelas. The moderator, Thalia Assuras is a former major network anchor and correspondent of national acclaim. At the luncheon, we will honor the Honorable Fran Fragos Townsend with the “Aristeon” Award. Fran has indeed achieved excellence through public service at the highest levels of our government. She has made the community proud! The previous day, Friday afternoon, we will visit the FBI Headquarters, and will hear about the “Dangers of Social Media”. We will also take a tour of some of the famous/in-famous artifacts from major events in our nation's recent history. This is not open to the public. If you wish to attend, you

FLORAL PARK – The association Asgata “Cyprus” will hold its annual dinner dance on Saturday, Nov. 2 at Towers on the Green, 272-86 Grand Central Parkway in Floral Park. Cocktails at 7:30PM, followed by dinner. \$80 per person, \$20 for children 6-12, and free admission for children 5 and under. Proceeds to benefit needy children in Cyprus and to subsidize school lunches in Asgata, Vasa, and Sanida. For further information, please contact: Despina Axiotakis (201) 981-5674 or desaxio@gmail.com.

■ NOVEMBER 6

MANHATTAN – The Agape Circle's First Wednesday Series presents: “Finance and Relationships. Ten things you must know about money whether you are in a relationship or living alone,” Wednesday, Nov. 6 in the Archdiocesan Cathedral Ballroom, 337 East 74th St. in Manhattan. Bruce Carter, a seasoned financial expert, and John Valakas, MBA, a Greek-American financier, will be the hosts with active audience participation. Admission is free. Reception to follow.

■ NOVEMBER 8-10

FORT WORTH, TX – The Fort Worth Greek Festival, featuring Greek food, music, and dancing, now in its 46th year, will take place Friday, Nov. 8 through Sunday, Nov. 10 at the spacious fairgrounds of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, 2020 NW 21st St. in Fort Worth. Friday and Saturday, 10AM-10PM, Sunday, 11AM-3PM. Join us rain or shine. Indoor seating is available. General Admission is \$1. For more information, please call (817) (626)-5578 or email admin@StDemetrios.net.

■ NOVEMBER 15

MANHATTAN – The Hellenic Lawyers Association (HLA) is honoring Spiros Maliagos, President of TIG advisors, LLC at the Pierre Hotel, 2 East 61st St. in Manhattan, at its 25th Annual Dinner Dance Gala on Friday, Nov. 15th. The HLA will also be presenting the Attorney of the Year Award to Charles Capetanakis, Partner, at Davidoff, Hutcher & Citron, LLP.

«Athlitismos»

A New Special Edition from the National Herald



SPORTS FANS... IT'S ON ITS WAY.

The National Herald proudly announces the launching of its new Greek Special Edition, *Athlitismos*, appearing November 9th, 2013.

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November 9, 2013

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Vote on our website!

You have the chance to express your opinion on our website on an important question in the news. The results will be published in our printed edition next week along with the question for that week.

The question this week is: How important is it to you to choose a doctor, lawyer, or plumber who is Greek?

It is not important at all. I would choose who I think to be the best qualified person, regardless of ethnicity.

It is very important. That is the first thing I look for when making such decisions.

It is not extremely important for the person to be Greek, but it is a plus.

The results for last week's question: Given the recent arrests of Golden Dawn members, what do you think will be that political party's future?

38% voted: Their popularity will grow, as they will be seen as martyrs victimized by an oppressive government.

40% voted: Their popularity will fade, as they will be considered violent, extremist thugs.

22% voted: The arrests will not make much difference to most people, one way or the other.

Please vote at: www.thenationalherald.com