



**ARPA INSTITUTE**

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PRESENTS

Panel Discussion

**“The future of Armenian- Americans in Politics”**

**Friday, January 28, 2011 @ 7:30 PM, Merdinian Auditorium**

13330 Riverside Dr. Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Directions: On the 101 FY Exit on Woodman, Go North and Turn Right on Riverside Dr.

**Abstract:** The panel will deliberate the implications of imbalanced political representation by American Armenians in elective office positions in the US. The community appears to shy away from the classical paradigms to reach its goals and thus fails to be effective in addressing major issues. The evening should serve as a conduit to discuss and encourage dialogue and evaluations on the organizational dimension of the American Armenian community. Perhaps it is time to change our paradigms and strategies. Charles Darwin once wrote, “It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” In this modern age, the only constant is change, almost daily changes in technology, continuing changes in political, social and economic environments. Effective leadership requires change and without progressive change, leadership will fail. The ability of any community to be effective, stay current and relevant requires a core competence in knowledge management and adaptation to change. Executives of organizations use information and the knowledge of control systems to formulate strategy; that is, to determine if its opportunities and organizational capabilities and resources are appropriate and in balance. A lack of strategic knowledge about the capabilities of an organization or community and how they match its environment could be detrimental. For the Armenian community to have a stronger stance and more clout in the political arena it needs to have more representation in the public sector and elected offices.

This panel of political experts will present critical thoughts and solutions regarding the issues facing the American Armenian community. What are the kinds of changes that our community needs for effective leadership or common cause? This panel will address this question and present the relative importance of political influence, representation, taking part in the election process, and gaining more seats in public offices throughout the USA.

**Maria Armoudian** (Moderator) is a fellow at the Center for International Studies at USC, where she is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in political science and international relations. She is also the host and producer of the syndicated program, the Insighters and the Scholars' Circle, which airs on KPFK and WPRR and the author of the forthcoming *Kill the Messenger: Media's Role in the Fate of the World*. She served as an environmental commissioner for the City of Los Angeles for five years and in the California State Legislator for eight years on a variety of public policy issues, including environmental

protection, government oversight, poverty reduction, civil rights and corporate reform. As a journalist, she has been syndicated by both the *New York Times* Syndicate, the *Los Angeles Times* Syndicate and written for publications including *Salon.com*, *Alternet*, the *Los Angeles Daily News, Inc.*, *Daily Variety*, *Billboard*, the *Progressive* and *Business Week*. Maria is also a musician and songwriter. Her CD is titled *Life in the New World*. She has also earned several awards.

**Nayiri Nahabedian** (Panelist) is an elected Board Member of the Glendale Unified School District. Nayiri was born in Lebanon and moved to Glendale from the Boston area, graduated from Glendale High School and then attended the Glendale Community College. She received her Bachelor's in Psychology and Master's in Social Welfare from the School of Public Policy and Social Research, at UCLA. She worked for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services as a Children's Social Worker for five years. Since 2000, Nayiri has been a teaching faculty member at California State University, Los Angeles's School of Social Work. Nahabedian has served in several organizations, as vice-chair of the Commission on the Status of Women for the City of Glendale (2004-2007), co-chair of Community Action Against Bullying (2005-2007), chair of the Forum for Armenian Cultural and Social Studies, co-chair for Californians for a New Century Alliance (2000-2001), and as an executive Board Member for the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley. She also co-founded many community programs and organizations, including the Generation Next Mentorship Program, focused on providing mentorship to at-risk youth in Glendale middle schools.

**Ara Najarian** (Panelist) is an Attorney who started his law practice in Glendale in 1988 and has served on the Glendale City Council during 2005-Present and is the Current Mayor. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Economics in 1982 from Occidental College and his Law degree on 1985 from the University of Southern California. Ara has served as Past Chair of the Glendale Housing Authority, Glendale Redevelopment Agency, as Mayor of Glendale during 2007-2008, Past Vice-Chair of the Glendale Redevelopment Agency, Chair of the Housing Authority, Glendale Transportation and Parking Commission. He was appointed Vice Chair of the San Fernando Council of Governments, has been Chairman of the Metropolitan Transport Authority Board of Directors (2009-2010) and on the Glendale Community College Board of Trustees (2003-2005). He is a member of the Glendale Bar Association.

**Ardashes "Ardy" Kassakhian** (Panelist) was born in Boston, Massachusetts. He attended the University of California, Los Angeles completing his B.A. in history. At UCLA, as president of the Armenian Students Association, Kassakhian led the grassroots effort to oppose the establishment of a Turkish studies chair funded by the Republic of Turkey. He served as the Executive Director of Western U.S. offices of the Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region and worked with members of the state legislature and members of the U.S Congress on policy issues affecting the Armenian American community. He is a an alumnus of the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government State and Local Officials Executive Program and the UCLA Center for American Politics and Public Policy Washington, DC program. In 2005, at the age of 27, Kassakhian was elected City Clerk of Glendale, CA. He became the youngest Armenian-American elected to public office. He is married and lives with his wife in Glendale, CA.

**Katcho Achadjian** (Panelist) was born in Lebanon to Armenian parents. He immigrated to the United States, where through hard work and perseverance he was able to pursue the American Dream. A graduate of both Cuesta Community College and Cal Poly SLO, Katcho has lived on the Central Coast since 1971. He proudly earned his United States Citizenship on December 17th, 1982. A successful

business owner since 1978, Katcho employs thirty local workers at his three businesses. A dedicated community volunteer, Katcho has an exemplary record as a public servant to the community donating his time freely to worthwhile causes. He remains committed to giving back to a country and a community that have been so good to him. In his three terms as County Supervisor in San Luis Obispo County, Katcho has fought hard to protect taxpayers, property rights, and public safety while holding down the cost of government. Katcho and his wife Araxie will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary this year. They have a son, Hratch, and a daughter, Nyri.

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