UNITED YOUNG ARMENIANS REVIEW 2010

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Category: Opinions

- Aroutin Hartounian, Unified Young Armenians, 1 January 2011
- On behalf of Unified Young Armenians (UYA), I would like to take the time to wish our community a happy 2011 and a wonderful holiday season full of joy, health, and success. Additionally, I must thank all of our families, friends, sponsors, and those who continue to believe in us and our mission for well over a decade. It was this belief and trust that has allowed Unified Young Armenians (UYA) to grow and expand its programs. Also, let us wish for a safe service for the young Armenian men and women who risk their lives to protect the dual Armenian homelands of Republic of Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) Republic. They are the true heroes of the Armenian Nation. And finally, we cannot forget the American servicemen and servicewomen who are in the harm's way fighting for our adopted homeland, the United States of America. It is thanks to them that we have the opportunity to freely exercise our constitutional rights and even be able to extend a hand to those in our homeland, Armenia.

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For an independent youth organization, we have indeed accomplished a great amount. Albeit challenging at times, for over ten years we have carried the torch of the Armenian Genocide remembrance in the Southern California, having organized the largest Armenian Genocide related event outside the Armenian Homeland in the heart of Hollywood, California. We fiercely and effectively responded to those who unjustly attacked our community, and have done important work towards the cultural preservation among the Armenian children and the youth.

While our programs are many and our events numerous, there are ones that are certainly worthy of mention in our review of past year. The Little Armenia's annual April 24th march for recognition and remembrance of the Armenian genocide has stood as the culmination of the yearnings of the

Armenian people as well as their greatest show of unity outside Armenia. As a part of our human rights campaign, our members with the help of our great sponsors were able to shed light not only to the Armenian Genocide, but also to the brutal massacres of hundreds of Armenian men, women and children in Sumgait, Azerbaijan which took place at the dissolution of the Soviet Union in February of 1988. As the crown jewel of our year around programs, our free Armenian language, history, and culture classes on a weekly basis provide an opportunity for over 60 of the community's children to learn about their heritage and speak their mother tongue. Also in 2010, with the support of the community and assistance of friends of UYA, on the night of April 23rd, the Organization put together the first major outdoor Armenian Genocide commemoration event in the City of Glendale which attracted thousands and thousands of participants.

In addition to our regular programs, this year we were fortunate enough to have launched a successful coat drive campaign which aimed at providing warm clothing for the needy population of Armenia. This success was a fruit of the close cooperation between Unified Young Armenians (UYA) and United Shipping Group, which was yet another testament to the immense potential of the Armenian community. This partnership proved that as in the past, where the Armenian business class and its youth and intellectuals stand side by side, amazing results can be achieved. We were honored to have among many guests of the event, the Los Angeles City Council member Paul Krikorian, Glendale City Council member Laura Friedman, and Glendale Unified School District Board of Education member Nayiri Nahabedian.
After years of planning, in 2011 UYA will introduce new programs aimed at expanding its educational activities, broadening its local volunteer programs, and extending its reach globally.

But this could not have been done without those people who genuinely believed in the power of the young and educated Armenians. Because of their trust, we were even further empowered to keep on fighting for those ideals which we hold so dear. Because of their participation and support, UYA has been in the frontlines of the Armenian Cause. From shedding light to the evils of Genocide, child soldiers, molestation and abuse around the world, to having the chance to raise the people's concerns regarding geopolitical developments in various forums, we had the great fortune to serve our community and more. It is those people who we serve that make this volunteer work an immensely worthwhile and gratifying experience. As a result, we are extremely humbled.

Our sponsors played a crucial role our story of success. We thank them for putting their money where their mouths are. Every amount and every donation pushed us ahead a little further. It was their monetary investment in the next generation of the Armenian activists which will ensure that the Armenian culture will not be lost with the passage of the current generation, that the next generation will have the necessary tools to continue its professional and personal growth, and last but not least,

that the rights of the Armenian people will be protected.

uya_membersMost importantly, we must thank the pillars of Unified Young Armenians, our members. As a result of their selfless work and dedication, our community can proudly claim to have a socially responsible, politically active, and ideologically independent new generation. Many of them have made, and continue making numerous personal sacrifices for the collective good. It is the collective which they aim to strengthen. Fighting side to side with the generations before us, and doing so on an equal footing, I am confident that our members have reinvigorated the hope in a brighter Armenian future among many. I am proud of every single one of them, for if they did not make such sacrifices, no one else would have. Last but certainly not least, I will make a great mistake if I forgot the parents and loved ones of our members who also deserve an equal, if not a greater showing of gratitude for they also have forgone many family hours, trips, and even holidays because of the conscious decision made by our members to serve the collective.

These individuals are the ones who make UYA what it is today. As you can tell, and contrary to the popular myth, there is neither a secret organization nor a wealthy donor behind UYA. The concept is clear: Young, dedicated, and independent Armenians who believe in a set of ideals and are willing to fight to reach them; and a community which has believed in its youth and has passed on to them a sacred torch to carry. As the past decade, while we continue to work with many organizations which pursue similar or same goals and ideals as we hold, we will continue to remain completely independent. The goals we pursue are clear and mirror the Armenian national interests and are most wholly compatible with the interests of our adopted homelands. Our decisions, as they have been before, have not, and will not be dictated to us by others. They will only be made based on the best judgment of the young Armenians and we will remain responsible exclusively to our people.

We are humbled and grateful.

Once again, we wish you a happy new year.
Aroutin Hartounian
President
Unified Young Armenians (UYA)

Mission of Unified Young Armenians (UYA)