

## National Activism Among Assyrian Organizations and Individuals

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In unity we will survive and in division we are doomed. How many times have we heard this expression? The Assyrian communities now are unorganized; I wish we could learn from the ethics of the bee colonies. These communities, as any other community in the world, are diverse. They have the intellectuals, the professors, the doctors, the engineers, the lawyers, the handymen, the nurses, the mechanics, the writers, the poets, the homemakers, the retirees, the students, the businesspersons, etc. We cannot expect from everybody to be a politician. Each one of us has a specific role he/she needs to play. Similarly, the Assyrian communities have, like every other community, their civic and athletic clubs, political organizations, and other institutions to organize the affairs of the local community. When the activities of all these individual professionals and organizations are in harmony, nothing can stand in the way of the community's progress.

I understand that certain individuals have the capabilities to make a difference in the community as a whole, whether due to their wealth or sheer leadership skills. Still, and generally speaking, the work of an individual is not the same as that of an organization. A community cannot depend on one individual to sustain its survival for long. How many times have we seen individuals who made the difference in their communities only to pass away and see that whole work disappear in oblivion? Whereas the work of an individual, with some exceptions of course, is geared towards personal progress, wealth, and well being, the activities of an organization must be geared towards the prosperity (and this can mean many things) of the community as a whole. A healthy project must exist in the shape of a democratic and healthy organization, where its operations is sustained through the efforts of all members and when one passes away, others take that spot uninterruptedly.

Organizational success should be the result of following a methodical plan to fulfill an explicit commitment. Good Fortune may occur sometimes in an organization's path, however, that good fortune is not predictable or repeatable while success has a more consistent track record. Therefore, when an organization accomplishes something by fluke, it should not be a measure through which its success is weighted. Organizations must readjust to ever changing challenges our nation is facing. In world market competition, yesterday's remarkable success is in so many circumstances today's standard expectation. In politics, on the other hand, policies change more often than we think. Today's allies could be tomorrow's foe and yesterday's enemies are today's friends; it is all about good planning.

Sometimes, individuals are so set about certain matters affecting their lives that they resist change. People resisting change fear the potential for disruption and confusion that such changes may bring. They forget that a name such as Assyrian is embedded in history for 5000 years and it is almost impossible to erase. This applies to organizations as well. Resistance to change in an organization, particularly an organization that has recently achieved desired levels of success and prosperity, is very common. This resistance can often hinder and even sabotage the benefits any changes might afford. During this struggle to understand the benefits of cosmetic change, people panic and block their minds from seeing beyond the narrow window and into the bigger picture that is displayed beyond the two parallel walls in the center.

The old maxim, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," cannot be applied to the dynamic environment our people are living in today. We have to learn how to be flexible or we will break. This is politics, and today's politics requires from us flexibility.

Meanwhile, what do we expect from any serious and successful organization in the Diaspora? We expect certain fundamental things, such as:

\*Prepare Assyrians for tomorrow's challenges.

\*Diversify. Assyrians must learn how to invest in different aspects of their culture. Assyrians seems to be investing solely in churches for example. Whereas among the Jewish community, wherever three or four synagogues exist in a new community they build a Jewish center, we lack one Assyrian center in the 100,000 Assyrian community in Chicago where 10 churches exist. Another church is in the planning for the

Des Plaines and Niles area and another \$2 millions are expected to be raised soon! This is not balanced planning; this is deficiency and reflects lack of vision whether by church or civic leaders.

1. Set and plan short and long term goals and follow up on them in order to assure that such goals are not only ink on paper.
2. Encourage and promote unity of the different groups and denominations.
3. Prepare round the year seminars for the various Assyrian organizations and intellectuals to address issues at hand concerning the Assyrians throughout the world.
4. Interact with Assyrian students around the world and offer scholarships in Assyrian studies and political science.
5. Use modern technology to ensure that Assyrians get exposure in local, national, and international media.
6. Contact local politicians and civic leaders and familiarize them with the Assyrian question.
7. Contact world leaders and enlighten them about the Assyrian question and its global dimensions.
8. Prepare future Assyrian leadership by encouraging youth participation in special assemblies and seminars.
9. Set a specific budget for the publications of scholarly work by contacting world scholars and pay them to make such studies.

How many of the above are Assyrian organizations in the Diaspora involved in? In these crucial days and months in Assyrian national path, we witness on certain Assyrian media outlets continuous attacks on Assyrians in Iraq, their organizations there, and their leadership. Whereas Assyrian organizations must build credibility through their accomplishment of the above, they are building their credibility on belittling and attacking others! Is this the essence of successful political activities? I am not sure about you, but I believe that this is a sign of bankrupt mentality. Mr. Albert Gabriel and Fred Aprim worked for few weeks with certain California Congress representatives and succeeded to pass a Joint Resolution AJR 31 in California Assembly on June 24, 2003, to secure Assyrians' rights in future Iraq. Have the Assyrian organizations taken advantage of this historic resolution and build on it? Well, certain organizations are busy attacking the Secretary General of the ADM, Mr. Younadam Kanna, for seeking unity of our people in Iraq in these desperate times. Is this what political activism is all about?