

Special Presentation of Assyrian Studies Association

by Dr. Sargon Donabed



by Alexandra Lazar

Dr. Sargon Donabed, an associate professor of history at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island and board member of the non-profit charitable organization Assyrian Studies Association (ASA), co-hosted a special presentation with the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) about the history and ethnography of Assyrians.

Held in San Francisco, the presentation focused on ways in which every person in the Assyrian community can be a significant participant for collecting, safeguarding, and producing narratives of history and contemporary life for future generations to be proud of, confront, and learn from.

In his presentation, Dr. Donabed focused on the particular issue the Assyrian Studies Association is passionate about endorsing – the collecting, preserving and maintaining of the first of its kind Assyrian Heritage Archive, an online digital database that collects and preserves Assyrian-related works such as manuscripts, newsletters, biography's, photography's, poetry, art, and literature from around the world.

"Everyone and everything has a history. It all matters. It would be a monumental loss and failure on the part of cultural institutions if they were to let the stories of our Assyrian ancestors become footnotes. If we are to be prepared for the future and thankful for the present, we are to appreciate and learn from our past", said Dr. Sargon Donabed.

Working exclusively with Roger Williams University to digitally scan Assyrian materials into the Assyrian Studies Association database, Dr. Donabed discussed the ways in which Assyrians in the Northern California region (and those across the United States) can help build the archive. By sending personal materials of Assyrian poetry, literature, art, photographs, manuscripts, and biographies to the Assyrian Studies Association executive

director, Alexandra Lazar's email alazar@assyrianstudiesassociation.org, fellow Assyrians can help preserve the Assyrian heritage and culture.

Keeping with the discussion of preserving Assyrian heritage and culture, Dr. Donabed brought attention to how the Assyrian Studies Association functions as an instrument to advance studies on the Assyrians by being able to award grants to students and academic professionals researching about the understudied areas of Assyrian culture.

Starting in 2020, the Assyrian Studies Foundation is set to award up to two grants of up to \$2,000 to Assyrian authors in various disciplines working on books directly related to Assyrians and Assyrian studies; two grants of up to \$2,000 for authors producing children's books in Assyrian; and lastly, two grants of up to \$1,500 to academics researching understudied areas of Assyrian culture. Those who are interested in applying, and are working in a discipline directly related to Assyrian studies should visit www.AssyrianStudiesAssociation.com for more information.

"The grants are an incentive for scholars to blaze new paths in Assyrian Studies, finally a field that covers the Assyrian heritage over the *longue durée*," said Dr. Sargon Donabed.

Since the Assyrian Studies Association began this year, they have helped fund Assyrian graduate students and academics who have researched the Assyrians to attend the Middle Eastern Studies Association Conference in New Orleans this autumn, and is currently planning host their first symposium that would provide Assyrian students and academics actively researching about Assyrian-related issues to gather and collaborate on further research about the Assyrians.

