

**Andreas Dracopoulos: What is the purpose of the Greek American Community? (*a translation from the original interview which was conducted in Greek*)**

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**A conversation** with Andreas Dracopoulos, co-president of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, is always an invaluable experience. His fresh, unconventional thought opens up new horizons in the discussion, it makes you think, and it elevates the conversation to a whole new level. It stays with you for quite a while afterwards.

The entrance to the Stavros Niarchos Foundation offices in Manhattan is adorned with a bust of the Foundation's founder. The "presence" of the great Greek entrepreneur isn't limited to that, however. You can feel it in every corner of the frugal office space. Talking to Andreas Dracopoulos, an unsuspecting correspondent would hardly guess that the humble, sweet-spoken, unpretentious man who welcomed him is at the same time so influential, both through his role in the Foundation and through his strong, charismatic personality. I ought to confess that Andreas and I are friends. Transparency everywhere and in everything, as he himself always insists on.

I don't think, however, that I let that affect me. On the contrary, I worry that I might not do him justice, because of the self-control I'm exerting in preparing this piece, due to our friendly relationship. My closeness to him, however, gives me the opportunity to express the thought shared by almost everyone who's met him: That he stands out both as a man and as a Greek and that, along with all the other members of the Board of Directors and their colleagues at the Foundation, they have turned it into a model international philanthropic institution, making significant contributions worldwide while also focusing on Greece and Hellenic affairs at large. He is, without any doubt, one of the leaders of his generation and a true star of Hellenism.

The interview follows.

***The National Herald:*** You are known for your dedication to the goals and the principles set by the founder of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, and for the perfection that you seek in everything related to it. Your stance honors him and turns the love and pride you feel towards the late Stavros Niarchos, the man, into a legacy that will immortalize him.

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** In response to your statement, I would like to point out, however, that it is no coincidence that Stavros Niarchos didn't establish and run the Foundation while he was still alive. And I'll tell you what I think about this. To manage a charitable foundation effectively entails all the difficulties of a commercial enterprise, with two differences: On the one hand, there is no profit involved, therefore you don't have to worry about being profitable per se, but, on the other hand, you have the joy and the satisfaction one derives from being able to help, and for being in a position to contribute towards a better society.

Even though Stavros Niarchos founded the Foundation while still alive, he did not set it in motion during his lifetime, because he probably knew that it wasn't a simple matter and he wanted to focus exclusively on being successful as a businessman. Running a foundation is no easy task if you want to do it properly, effectively and in a meritorious way. The key, of course, is not to focus on what you might get out of it, but rather on how you can be of help to others.

But there is definitely no specific "model for success" in running a foundation. For example, Bill Gates resigned from Microsoft and is now exclusively involved in running the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. He wants to be "on top of things" daily and he wants to leave his personal mark. At the same time, he wants, of course, to experience the satisfaction that stems from witnessing the positive outcomes of his extraordinary donations. Recently, I read something interesting about Bill Gates. Apparently, he is trying as well to find a more effective way of achieving his philanthropic goals. He understands that the road that may lead to success in the business world is not necessarily the best road to attain "success" in the realm of philanthropy. What also interested me was Gates' and Warren Buffet's recent trip to China. The trip was undertaken with the very best of intentions in mind, for the purpose of "showing" their Chinese "counterparts" how to practice philanthropy. Needless to say, the Chinese reaction to this invitation was something like: "Great, come and talk to us, but don't try to prove that you know the (only) right way of practicing philanthropy. There are many different ways to help."

The “industry” of philanthropy is truly an industry in America because it has developed the required infrastructure. When you ask some people about their profession, their reply is that they work in the not-for-profit (philanthropic) sector. Which other country in the world has developed such an infrastructure for philanthropy? To put it simply, none!

In America, sometimes people wonder why similar things can't be done in other countries as well. I would like to argue that there is no other place in the world that has both the right foundations and the appropriate mentality that are necessary for philanthropy to flourish. And I mean this in both philosophical as well as practical terms. Outside America, philanthropy is often practiced on a very personal level and under very specific circumstances, whereas, in America, philanthropy has become a way of life.

For me, to engage in philanthropy is a very important undertaking, and it takes a lot of work and effort to do it right. You practice philanthropy because it is truly a part of you, because you want to, and, of course, because you can. On the other hand, you cannot impose it on someone else just because other wealthy people are pursuing it. Philanthropy must never be “imposed”, because then you risk stripping it of its essence. You must stay with the original Greek meaning of the word, “love for one's fellow man,” and feel it. Those who are in a position to give money must do it right, and as a result help improve society.

**N.H.:** How would you describe the mentality surrounding philanthropy in Greece?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** I'd say that generally speaking there exists a wrong way of thinking. There are also numerous obstacles standing in the way of “setting yourself up” properly in the area of philanthropic engagement. Bureaucracy and the absence of the appropriate legislation (percentage of a personal donation that is tax free, setting up charity organizations as non-profit companies with the right infrastructure) that would “support” philanthropy don't help.

When we began our work in Greece in the 1990s, we discovered that 10% of the total amount of each grant we made had to be paid into an “account” in the ministry as a sort of “extortion tax.” Which is why you need, most of all, the right mentality, facilitated by the appropriate infrastructure, so that philanthropy may flourish and be in a position to contribute, in its own way, to a better “tomorrow.” It will take a lot of work, not just in Greece but also in most of the world, with the exception of America, to make the contributions of philanthropy more effective.

**N.H.:** Today, Greece finds itself under extreme economic circumstances. Could philanthropy serve as a means to provide some relief for the part of the population that is most in need?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** It should, especially in the country that “gave birth” to the word *philanthropy* (φιλανθρωπία), and where there happen to live many people with substantial fortunes. What you have instead is a large number of individuals who have enriched themselves by exploiting the black market and by avoiding paying taxes. These people refuse to engage in any form of meaningful philanthropic action. There is nothing better than philanthropy to help Greece in such troublesome times.

Of course, there are certain people that say, “Why do you expect me to give money to charity and then watch it all go to waste? Why let others squander my contribution?” It's a vicious cycle, but we do have to consider who suffers the most for it at the end of the day. The answer of course is that those who suffer the most are those who are most in need, the people in Greek society that need urgently help of any kind.

If you look at large universities, museums, and other cultural institutions in America, you realize immediately that a large percentage of their substantial budgets come from private donations. This is because philanthropy works, both in practice and in principle. It just needs to be set up the right way, so that the proper infrastructure is secured and there exists the correct mentality. You don't go into philanthropy to get something out of it, but rather because you believe, you can, and you want to make a meaningful contribution.

That also applies to Greece. With the proper infrastructure in place, philanthropy is in a position to make meaningful contributions that “complement” the state. But it must not and cannot “replace” the

state since that may lead to a dependent relationship, which in the long term doesn't serve anyone in the right way.

I also believe – and we're doing it more and more – in challenge grants. The philosophy of these grants is that, apart from us, anyone who can contribute should contribute, especially when it comes to grants that ultimately support particular causes and specific “groups” of people. There are many who are in a position to help. What matters here is not the amount, but rather the participation.

In America, even the poorest of people give to charity, five dollars to the Red Cross, for example, because philanthropy is a way of life. Everyone can help, some by giving money, others by contributing their time, some by providing guidance and others by offering their expertise. Philanthropy can be achieved on many levels, and from that point of view giving money is perhaps the “easiest” way. And let's not forget, of course, about voluntarism, another form of “pure” philanthropy, which may be even more significant than philanthropy that is expressed through donating money, as it involves putting in your time and your soul. All those actions are at the end a way of life.

I'm afraid that in Greece, as in most of the world outside the United States, this mentality is often absent. There is, in fact, another mentality, one that assumes that you give either because you are naive or in order to gain something in return. In other words, philanthropy with this mentality is not effective or sustainable. Tax deductions cannot be the only motive for philanthropy. You also need the right “education.”

Outside of the U.S., it is hard to understand how philanthropy works, in practical terms, at least. Nothing happens easily or by itself. You cannot be on the board of a non-profit organization for the publicity, but instead because you work and because you are willing to contribute money, time and ideas. The more you think about it and the more you analyze this issue, the more you see that philanthropy, contrary to what they believe in Greece and most places outside of America, is a whole industry, which has several levels. Philanthropy is also more than anything else a matter of education. Money is not the only and defining factor.

**N.H.:** Had Stavros Niarchos talked to anyone about the Foundation, beyond what he mentions in his will?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** When we discussed this matter, Niarchos used to tell me that he felt (and was) a 'global citizen', in the true sense of the word, even though many accused him of avoiding taxes. The point, however, is not that he didn't abide by the tax laws, but that he was truly a global citizen and, as such, he could sidestep taxation laws legally. He had said to me, anyway, that he would leave a large part of his fortune to charity. Some do it in their lifetime, but he deliberately chose to do it after his death. He had no specific agenda in doing this, and he didn't do it for his own benefit or for the benefit of his descendants and heirs. He did it because he truly believed that charity was his chance to give back a part of the wealth he had amassed during his life, and in doing so to help his fellow man. What he had gained was not just money, but business acumen. Whether we like it or not, he was one of the greatest businessmen the world has even seen.

**N.H.:** What made him choose art and culture, education, health and medicine and social welfare as the main areas of the Foundation's philanthropic activities?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** The truth is that he chose several subcategories. And, now, through the Foundation's four grant-making areas, we try to meet a wide range of social needs. Other very successful foundations select one or two “targets” and approach them with specific, large grants. The great thing here is that there is no particular “model” for achieving one's philanthropic goals. For our part, we are glad that we're able to cover such a wide range. We try to help wherever there is need, and we are in a position to provide support, as long as we believe in the project's goals and there are people who can execute them well. That's very important. We undertake projects that vary in size, from very small to very large ones, such as the SNFCC (Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center) in Athens, which includes the new National Library of Greece, the new Greek National Opera and a very large park of over 40 acres, which is vital for Athens. It's our biggest project to date, with a budget of €566 million euro (approximately \$750 million dollars).

**N.H.:** The Foundation has, so far, made 1,900 grants in ninety countries, with total grant-making exceeding \$1.2 billion dollars.

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** The right projects, the right ideas and the right people have led us to ninety countries. The map was created by the projects themselves. There aren't many foundations with such an extensive and global grant-making activity. And, at this point, I'd like to emphasize the remarkable contribution made by all our associates in the Foundation's offices in Athens, Monaco and New York, who take pride in performing the whole range of our philanthropic work, and are very successful in doing so.

**N.H.:** Which one of your grants in the United States do you consider as the most important?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** That's a very hard question to answer, because it's difficult to substantiate which grants are more and which grants are less important. To us, every grant is important. We have been involved in a great number of projects. There are several reasons that drive us towards making a grant. We only announce the total amount of our grant-making activities. Often, a "small" grant may ultimately result in a bigger contribution to society than a "large" one. It's not the money that drives you to create the right project. Whatever you do, you must do it to help. The purpose of the Foundation must not be to perpetuate its existence, although, if all goes well, we intend to be around to offer our help for many years, many decades to come. You must undertake the right projects, put in your best effort, and help society as a whole. That's of the utmost importance. Everyone wants recognition, but it must be gained through the right projects, in order to prepare the ground for others who are in a position to follow your example.

**N.H.:** Do you try to keep operational expenses to a minimum?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** Certainly, given that our purpose is to contribute as much as we can. Philanthropy is like any other occupation and has the same characteristics as any other business. The only difference is that, at the end of the day, you don't see a profit as such. All you see is the list of grants, and from those you gain moral satisfaction.

**N.H.:** Who was Stavros Niarchos, as a man and as a businessman?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** Those of us who lived and worked side-by-side with him try to follow in his footsteps automatically, without thinking about it. We try to follow the lessons he taught us. The legacy of his way of thinking and the work he did demands that we try to do things right. Niarchos worked very hard right up to the end of his life. He read and he paid attention to every last detail. He wasn't a man of letters in the contemporary sense of the word. He had learned to work ever since he was very young. He had amazing intuition. He kept learning and he had the "passion" for seeking perfection, whether in the field of shipping, or the stock market, etc.

**N.H.:** What was your own relationship with Niarchos?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** There is no doubt that everything I have gained in my personal life I owe it to Stavros Niarchos. He believed in me since I was young. I was close to him during the last seven or eight years of his life, when, apart from being his employee and his relative, I also became his friend. He was, at the same time, my employer and my uncle, but we were also friends and enjoyed our time together. But all of this took place in the greater context of hard work and many continuous demands to strive for perfection.

When you expect a lot from yourself, you usually also expect a lot from those around you. But he never demanded anything of others that he didn't demand of himself. He did both the macro- and micro-management, and was into every last detail. He didn't have many people in management positions, because he knew that you couldn't have too many leaders in a corporate group of that kind. It was no accident that he was one of the most successful businessmen of the 20th century.

**N.H.:** What was his relationship with Onassis like?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** Much better than people think. There may have had their professional differences, but that was during the day. At night they had fun together, e.g., at the El Morocco club in New York, they took weekend breaks together, etc. So they had a much better relationship than people thought and than was reported by the Media. He'd said, in fact, that the two of us wouldn't have become what we are if we didn't have each other. You could say there was a healthy competition between them, which, at the end of the day, helped both of them.

**N.H.:** The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center in Athens is the flagship and the culmination of the Foundation's efforts.

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** The SNFCC is the culmination of the work we've done so far. Our aim is to carry on doing important work. But we're still young at this stage, 14-15 years old, and this is indeed our biggest and, arguably, our most important project. Life will go on and there will be other large projects. This is *de facto* the largest grant we've made so far. We were aware of a pressing need in the field of Education and Culture that demands the creation of a new, contemporary national library, and we eventually found the appropriate site for this project, which belongs to the State. We were originally talking about a grant of approximately €50-100 million, which then became two hundred million, and is now at €566 million euro. It's a huge project, and one of the largest grants ever made in Greece. To me this, grant is very important. Many, including Obama, have addressed the need to create private-public partnerships. At a time when needs, on a global level and in Greece especially, are huge, the public and private sector simply cannot cope on their own. Globalization has led to increased opportunities, but also to increased problems and needs. The right collaborations are essential for the good of society as a whole. I consider the SNFCC as an example of such collaboration since the state has donated the site where we are making this investment until the completion of the project. After that, it will be handed over to the Greek state in its entirety. We ask for nothing in return. The investment of €566 million euro (which will include a significant cash balance that will remain in the investing entity to be donated) is made in its entirety by our Foundation, which then will hand the entire completed asset/project to the Greek state for the benefit of Greek society at large.

**N.H.:** One could argue that it would make perfect sense, given the current economic situation, to ask for some sort of commitment on the part of the state?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** Our mission is to analyze and identify good projects to *invest* in. In this case, we have a project that includes the National Library of Greece, the Greek National Opera, and the Stavros Niarchos Park. These are important cultural and educational organizations for any country. As such, I believe that these organizations ought to be run by the state.

**N.H.:** Is the Foundation represented in the SNFCC's Board of Directors?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** Absolutely not (post delivery). If all goes to plan, we will have finished the project by 2015-16, and we will hand over the "key" and the managing investing entity of the project, which currently belongs to us and funds the entire project, to the Greek state. There is always the possibility of making additional financial contributions in the future, in the same way we could have contributed to such a project anyway, even if we hadn't been the ones to create it. In 2016, Greece will have a cultural center called The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, because it happened to have been created by means of a grant from our Foundation. That is as far as our intentions go, with regards to the grant. It's up to the state to work out how to manage and run such an organization correctly, openly, and efficiently. We have neither the desire nor the intention, or, come to that, the capacity, to "run" it after its completion. Besides, such projects should not be left in the hands of a private entity.

**N.H.:** Would you have undertaken a project of this scale if you had known of the economic conditions that prevail in Greece today?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** That's a difficult question. We did wonder whether we should be engaged in such a project at a time like this. On the other hand, look at America. When were similar projects undertaken? When were the bridges, the dams, and integral parts of the infrastructure of this country created? A lot of it happened during the Great Depression. Such projects provided jobs, dreams, and a sense of hope for the young people at least. We are thirsty for hope. There are thousands of things included in this project and they give you hope that there is still a positive future. The project allows us to hope that our country could become like other developed European countries with the appropriate social and cultural infrastructure. The Library and the park, especially, will be a breath of fresh air. I understand the rationale of your question - what's the Niarchos Foundation trying to do under these conditions? And there was a certain amount of apprehension. But we have made our decision, and I'm glad we're doing it because I truly believe that we are building something that will serve as the basis for a better tomorrow, and one must seize every opportunity to contribute towards that for the next generations.

**N.H.:** When will the grand opening be?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** In late 2015, if all goes well.

**N.H.:** There have been two different governments since the project was agreed upon. Has anything changed?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** We were welcomed both by Mr. Karamanlis and Mr. Papandreou. Their associates also seem to understand that we're not asking for anything. They also grasp the significance of the project in terms of creating a better infrastructure and a better future for our country. I think they can see that we are running things well. Both governments have been extremely cooperative. This isn't a political project by any means, but rather a national one. I am truly glad that both governments have been so cooperative because it indicates they have understood the national significance of the project.

**N.H.:** It was, of course, ratified by vote in the Greek Parliament as well.

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** Regardless of that, I find it very upsetting that the country's two left-wing parties are against the project, accusing the Niarchos Foundation of "stealing" the country's culture and so on. But we are moving forward, regardless. We know what the truth is, and we believe we are making a significant contribution to the country.

**N.H.:** We are all troubled by the situation in Greece. Who has the lion's share of the responsibility and what needs to be done for the country to recover?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** There is no doubt that all governments from the Metapolitefsi on (the period that begins with the fall of the Junta in 1974) bear a part of the responsibility. But let's not forget who elects those governments? By definition, all governments have been elected by us, citizens, democratically. Most governments since 1974 have basically failed. They have had no real perspective of the overall situation. They haven't addressed the real needs that Greece had and still has. We have failed, as Modern Greeks. The worst thing, in my mind, is that we've lost our *philotimo* (the word is practically impossible to translate - our innate sense of decency and duty, always trying your best to do the right thing -- come close to capturing its meaning) which had always been, throughout times, one of the Greeks' greatest strengths and guided us into doing the right thing. It's like we have given everything away, our history, the people we used to be, respect for the family, for our elders, for our teachers, for our duty, for doing what's right; we've lost our respect for others and, ultimately, for ourselves. If you lose your respect for everything around you and, ultimately, your self-respect, you have accepted defeat. And that is what has been happening in Greece in the last fifty years or so, and it gets worse with each passing year. Whether we like it or not, what Mr. Pangalos (VP of current government) says, that we all played our part in spending the money, contains a bitter grain of truth. It's not just about money. All of us spent everything and, for me, it's more than money, we lost our morals.

Essentially, Pangalos declares that we have all failed collectively as a nation. We lost our power and our *philotimo*. We got used to access to easy money, to not working, to blaming it all on someone else and never taking responsibility for our own actions. We lost track of our sense of accountability and duty and, at the same time, we were never accountable for anything. There is no such thing as a democracy without accountability and responsibility. That's how we reached the impasse that we find ourselves in today.

As for how we will get out of it, that's very difficult. We need to change our ways of doing things. The problem is that Greece, in the last few years, has been governed by a 15% minority, in the sense that you have a part of various political parties that actually "govern" us (never mind that they've hung us out to dry!) and there is a silent majority that cannot participate, doesn't want to get involved, is disillusioned, and is paying the price for it all. There is still hope because there is a new generation and the silent majority, who only want to be offered a sense of hope that things may get better. Mr. Papandreou and his close associates are trying very hard despite all the difficulties. They are trying to help people believe that although we find ourselves in a very difficult situation, there is still hope.

A sinking ocean liner cannot change direction quickly, in the same way that habits and mentalities cannot change overnight. It takes hard work, and many sacrifices. Even the best of politicians cannot change things when they're on a sinking ship that is letting in water in a thousand different places. I personally think that Papandreou is doing a very good job. People need to believe in him and help him. They need to believe that Greece can go back to the good old days. And that means going back to optimism, our *philotimo*, our pride, hard work, our principles, respect, and the existence of solid infrastructure. Our

*philotimo* may have sunk but there is hope; we just need someone to inspire it and that, of course, is a tall order when our ship is already sinking.

**N.H.:** How bad would it be for the country if the loan were to be renegotiated?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** The way I see it, you are in a position to negotiate only when you have the power to do so. When you have no control of the situation, a renegotiation is not so important in the greater scheme of things. What matters, at this stage, is that Greece doesn't leave the euro, because such an action could take us back many years. We may benefit in the short term (if we leave the euro), both in economic and psychological terms. But what happens after that? We are back to the same old bad habits. Our problem is not the drachma or the euro, but the mentality. If we were to go back to the drachma, we may feel like "smart guys" for a couple of years, like we slipped out of their grasp and saved ourselves. We saved ourselves from what, our own bad selves? But then we won't be part of Europe and we'll be left out of the markets. After two or three years of 'euphoria' we will come crashing down to reality, once again. We must not shift the responsibility to others, but take it on ourselves, because we got used to everything being easy and as a result we no longer respect anything. When you don't work hard, when you try to get away with as much as you can and let others carry the weight, after a while you'll find yourself back where you started, with all your lifelines used up. I think we need to stay with the euro, work very hard and change our thinking. I also think that if others see that we're really trying, they'll help us out. But first we need to show them that we've understood and accepted the mistakes we've made.

**N.H.:** You are on the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board of several important institutions, such as The Rockefeller University, the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, D.C. You are also a member of the International Council of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and a member of the Advisory Board of the Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics. What is your colleagues' perspective on Greece?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** They've never really spoken openly in a negative manner about Greece. Americans respect Greece, its history and its many contributions to our world, as we know it today. Those who have visited always speak highly of the country, its beauty and its hospitality. They're all saddened by our situation. But, of course, they also say, to be fair, "you're all to blame, to an extent." because what is going on today is without any doubt a matter of lack of responsibility and accountability. There are, of course, similar problems in America and many other countries worldwide, but we have been one of the worst and that's why we're in such a difficult position. There is also another approach, which I find interesting. What can we learn from what Greece is going through today? It is certainly unpleasant to be a global point of reference, to hear everyone warn against ending up like Greece. They love us, they recognize us, they respect us for what we have given throughout history, they want to help, but they have their own problems as well, and they are also strict with us, which is entirely justified. It's like a family, which has many children and one of them is always misbehaving. You tend to laugh with such a child a few times and you are also happy because you love him/her, but at some point you'll make it clear that an effort needs to be made, homework has to be done, the child has to go to school. If the other kids are going to school and this one goes out every night and the goal is to just have a good time and there is no listening to you, there will come a time when the child will pay for it. As Manto [a popular Greek singer] says: "everything is borrowed, and there comes a time when debts have to get paid."

Of course, the same thing happened to American consumers - endless borrowing - but there still existed an appropriate and a strong infrastructure in the U.S. that allowed the government to deal with the problem.

We were also unlucky because what we're going through now is happening at a time when many other nations are in a similar situation. From a certain point onwards, therefore, every man is left on his own. But I want to believe that if we truly want to change and work hard, there is hope that, the more we comply, the more willing others will be to help.

**N.H.:** You're back on the issue of mentality...

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** In order to change our mentality, the first thing we need to do is to understand who we are, what happened, what we've done, stop blaming others and look at what we've done, and how to clean up our act.

**N.H.:** Let's move on to local matters: When it comes to the Greek American Community, grants for Education are extremely important. What gaps do you see?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** As the Niarchos Foundation, we don't expect to see anything. Our aim is to help where we can and where we believe our help will make a positive difference. There is no doubt that my uncle was Greek, had a Greek soul and that he would like us to offer our help to anything connected to Greece. Personally, as a Greek, I'd like a more organized Greek American Community, but Greece itself has never really paid enough attention to the Greek American Community, as it must for the benefit of both, especially when it comes to a Community that is very important and exists within a very important country. It saddens me that I often read in your paper about problems, miscommunication, and the absence of leadership. The Greek American Community as a whole is kind of like a microcosm of Greece. And unfortunately, we sometimes can discern the problems that led Greece to the current situation in the Greek American Community as well. There are also other kinds of problems here, such as the absence of the right leadership that would harness the power of the Community and steer it in the right direction. A well-run Greek American Community could even help the "mother" country during these difficult times. And that goes for both the church and the political leadership. What's missing is the kind of leadership that would inspire the Greek American Community to do better, not just for Greece, but for the Community itself, for Greek education and for the Greek language. That way, the Community would evolve and improve. The main concern should be how to mature, how to improve and how to respond to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We mustn't be content with just 'surviving.' The issue of leadership is also a global problem. These days, we don't have the kind of leaders we used to in the past. And all this in an environment littered with new and very significant problems.

**N.H.:** Would the creation of foundations support the development of the Greek Community?

**Andreas Dracopoulos:** There are many who could help and there exists currently a trend for creating philanthropic foundations. For our part, as the Niarchos Foundation, we have contributed as much as we can, and there has been some positive response. Coming back to the question of leadership, one may wonder what sort of leadership we are looking for, and what is the purpose of the Greek American Community? That's a very important question that needs to be answered. And there's another, fundamental question. What is the aim of the Greek American Community, what is its mission, and what do we actually want, as a Community? We need healthy dialogue. And we need to place the matter in its true context. We'll never find the right leadership if we don't know what we want. We cannot ask for leaders if we don't know who are we, and what we want to do. Have we, perhaps, lost our way? Have we lost sight of what's important?

At the end of the day, you are whom you elect. America continuously brings all that to the surface and poses those questions endlessly, without leaving them unanswered. As a Greek American Community, we need to get started on that dialogue, on who we are and what we want. We need to define that, and then look for the right leadership. And the same goes for Greece, too, of course.