

## **Promoting Kurdish Identity through Art and Culture**

**By Najat Abdulla**

KNC-NA 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference

April 29, 2011, Calgary, Canada

I would like to express my gratitude for being able to speak here today and would also like to congratulate the Kurdish National Congress of North America on its 23rd annual conference.

Today I will speak about my ideas on how to promote Kurdish identity through Art and Culture. To achieve this, I will first ask the major questions that are being asked by the Kurdish community in the US. Then I will attempt to answer them with my own ideas for the promotion of US culture.

The first question that is being asked is “what actions should we take to promote Kurdish culture in the best way possible?” By introducing the rich historical culture in Kurdistan to different culture groups and communities around the world, initiating intercultural and interfaith exchange and dialog, and making stronger relations between American, other nationalities with Kurdish community, and as a department of culture we work hard to increase understanding between Kurdish and American culture.

Another question being asked is “why is an art festival significant at this time?” At this moment in world history we are experiencing great globalization and cultural exchange. An event such as an Art festival allow for the exchange of ideas necessary to bring humans closer in a way that is more intimate than merely using technology. By the way, when I mention art, I am referring to music, cinema, painting, drawing, and Kurdish traditional dance, and other things related to the term art in the classic sense.

The third question is about how arts and culture can help to serve the goals and mission of the Kurdish organization in terms of helping to resolve some of the greater issues Kurds are faced with. Any organization that represents Kurdish Culture around the World is important to strive to increase understanding and communication between our people and other cultures. I believe that some of the greater issues affecting the world today are sourced in lack of information and miscommunication.

However, art and cultural festivals could address this lack of information and communication directly, serving as a vehicle for intercultural exchange and the spread of our goals. We should start to think about organizing cultural festivals more often to promote our identity and educate the people around the global.

If we want the other nationalities recognizes us is important to start with the culture. People are interested in and can relate to culture. Cultural workshops, delegations from Kurdistan or to

Kurdistan, and other events will help us reach our organizational goals. If we are recognized by our culture, we can then spread information about issues we are faced with.

The final question I will attempt to answer is, “what are the positive effects an arts and cultural event can have on the attendees in terms of creating a culture of peace?” Since cultural exchange between people is a very important means of deepening understanding of each other and promoting international friendship and goodwill, it will in turn create a stronger culture of peace also.

Culture is not shared by everybody; but everybody has a culture. Everyone likes music and musical and dance performances can be understood by everyone in the world, no matter where they are from. If we can get our music, whether Lawk, Hayran, Dang Byzh, CheroK byzh, Lawynawe, or Sardunka recognized as being Kurdish, then Kurds will receive greater recognition as well. The same goes for dance: there are hundreds of Kurdish dances, such as lorky lorky, Chapayi, Suskayi, Shyxani, Klychany, Sypyi, Hajroka, Dalilam, Mlany. You name it.

On the same note, everyone can understand films and cinema. With this medium, we can show and promote Kurdish culture in 100 minutes. Painting can present not only our talent, but scenes from our lives as well. I’m not saying that we have never promoted our culture through the arts before, but I do believe we need to cooperate with each other to put on these events more frequently.

Once again thank you very much for this opportunity, and I wish you all the best. I have created a short DVD to highlight some of the work our art and culture department performs for your entertainment and information.

Najat Abdullah

Director for Culture and Community Affairs

Kurdistan Regional Government to the US