

American Psychological Association's 125th Convention
2-5 August 2017, Washington, DC
Dr. Ani Kalayjian

Over 12,000 psychologist, students, and early career professionals gathered in Washington, DC, for an exciting 125th APA convention. As in every APA Convention, it was challenging to select symposia and lectures from over a thousand programs, discussions, exhibits, presidential addresses, and receptions. It was exhilarating to meet friends I haven't seen since the last convention, and some others for many years. International guests came from over 60 countries, and although exhausted, I returned home exhilarated, fueled with up to date research, connected with many new friends, and strengthened previous relations.

Here is a glance of the meetings where I had to play a key role:

1. **International Division 52 Board of Directors Meeting, Wed. 2 August.**
Ani Kalayjian, Directors at Large



Board of Directors of International Division 52- 20th Anniversary celebration



2. **International Committee For Women, Annual Meeting at the International Psychology Division Hospitality Suite.** Chairperson: Ani Kalayjian



Members of Multicultural Committee



Celebration continues to the next day

3. Division 52, Symposium, First Victims of Conflict---Transforming Global Violence Against Women

Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Co-Chair with Georgiana Sofletea; "Transforming Trauma of Political Violence Against Women: Lessons From Africa" Gender-Based Violence and Refugee Women: An Endless Struggle Continuing Post resettlement in the United States. Panelists were Dr Ani Kalayjian on transforming the trauma in women in Africa, Blanka Angyal on our work in the Middle East, Georgiana Sofletea on refugee women, Dr. Nancy Sidun on transforming the suffering of those trafficked, and Dr. Florence Denmark was our discussant. Although the images were distressing, the interventions used were able to uplift us including the 7-step Integrative Healing Model.



Happy to complete a great panel



Dr. Denmark sharing her wisdom

4. Division 56, Symposium; Healing Trauma with Cultural and Creative Expression

This panel was not only full, we had dozens of people sitting all around the floors, as the 300 capacity was not sufficient. The experience of trauma is often preverbal and nonverbal, carried through the body's reactions. Narrative approaches, such as the expressive arts, symbolic movement, and mindfulness practices, help to express, contain and transmute trauma.

The arts provide a new, human, and cost-effective way to bring relief and to ease some of the human suffering associated with trauma. Traumatic events can be too overwhelming for the ego to assimilate or too unspeakable for words. The experience is shut away in the nervous system until a safe place allows feelings to flow again. The ability to shape raw affect into symbolic meaning builds safety and regulates emotions. The act of creativity builds on courage, risk taking, confidence, and strength, and it gives the participant a sense of mastery. The sense of identity it gives is one that is not built around being a victim or trauma survivor; rather, the new identity helps the person rebuild his or her life. The arts help trauma survivors almost literally become unstuck. The act of symbolization shapes raw emotions and provides aesthetic distance, so that the client can have access to his or her feelings while maintaining an observer stance. The therapeutic use of imagery, whether visual, auditory or kinesthetic, can help one communicate this experience. The arts provide nonverbal and symbolic ways to express trauma, helping to re-integrate broken parts of the self, the psyche, and the community, and evoke images of wholeness.

Cochairs: Ilene A. Serlin, PhD, MS, Independent Practice, San Francisco, CA; and Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD, Independent Practice, Washington, DC

Participants:

Lillian Comas-Diaz, PhD. Healing Trauma With Latino Creativity: Testimonios, Autohistorias and Arpilleras

Ilene A. Serlin, PhD, MS. Kinaesthetic Imagining: Dance Movement Therapy With Syrian Refugees

Thema Bryant-Davis, PhD, Pepperdine U. Expressive Arts & Trauma Recovery: Integrating Movement and Spoken Word

Ani Kalayjian, EdD, Teachers College, Columbia University. Creative Use of the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model

Discussant: Nadine J. Kaslow, PhD, Emory University School of Medicine • **CE Credits:** 1. No additional fees to attend .



From right: Ilene, Lillian, Ani and Thema



With APA President Antonio E. Puente

5. Division 01, Symposium, Human Strengths and Resilience- Cross-Cultural and International Perspectives

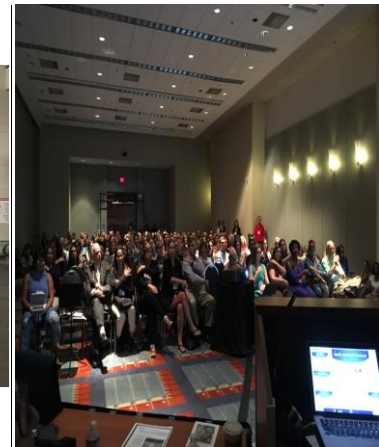
Presenters: Drs. Grant Rich (Chair), Jill, Naji, Judy, Ani, Jorge, & Suniti. I presented on, "Humanitarian Outreach for Haiti and Armenia: 7-Step Integrative Healing Model for Resilience."



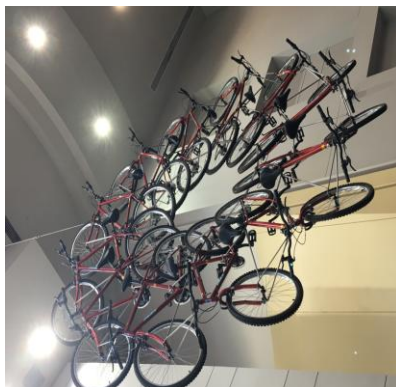
Panel on resilience



APA Convention Exhibit



Our dedicated audience



The art that we enjoyed



The rainbow after the storm



Int. Division Presidents: last 20 yrs

The next APA Convention will take place in San Francisco, in Aug. 2018, and we have already made tentative plans for joint interdivisional collaborative programs.

Remember: When one helps another BOTH become stronger.