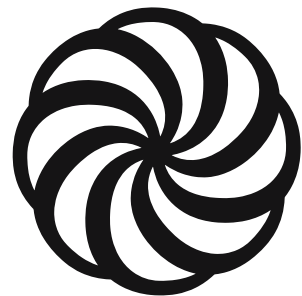




GALAS IN ACTION 2018-2023

A 5 YEAR REPORT



**BECAUSE OF YOU, GALAS HAS
HAD AN EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT
ACROSS LOS ANGELES
AND BEYOND.**

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FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

In 1998, a group of LGBTQ+ Armenians created GALAS LGBTQ+ Armenian Society to provide friendship and support, and to carve out a space within the diaspora **where our community would feel safe to be fully ourselves**. At a time when legal protections and cultural acceptance for LGBTQ+ people were scarce, the trailblazing members of GALAS demonstrated bravery and boundless care.

To our distinguished founders, early members and supporters, **we are here because you rose up and took action**.

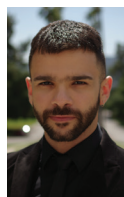
A quarter of a century later, fueled by the exemplary leadership and support of our community's visionaries, GALAS continues to serve as a safe haven for LGBTQ+ Armenians, and as a **resilient hub for progressive cultural shift and liberation for LGBTQ+ Armenians and LGBTQ+ communities in various diasporan cultures** across the United States.

As a leading voice of the LGBTQ+ Armenian movement, GALAS continues to take action to ensure our progress and safety every day. During the last 25 years, we have organized hundreds of events and programs, ranging from mental health support and education seminars to arts and cultural celebrations, serving **thousands of constituents**. This year, the urgency of our work has shown to be more important than ever, with the current attacks on LGBTQ+ communities.

Just within the last five years, powered by your investment, we:

- launched new projects, such as our K-12 education and outreach program, mental health and parental support services, and our annual Queernissage open-air market
- re-invigorated cornerstone offerings, such as the annual academic scholarships for Armenian students with demonstrated LGBTQ+ activism
- propelled the large-scale visibility of LGBTQ+ Armenians in media, the government, and traditional Armenian institutions

GALAS takes action to secure resources for LGBTQ+ Armenians, and to ensure our collective respect and dignity. Although our community continues to face challenges, your support allows for significant strides towards ensuring authentic inclusion and celebration of LGBTQ+ Armenians. **There is tremendous progress gained with our collective power. Thank you for continuing to take action with us.**



Erik Adamian
President of the Board of Directors

**BECAUSE OF YOU,
GALAS HAS HAD AN
EXTRAORDINARY IMPACT
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AND BEYOND.**

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, WE:

- Provided 10 scholarships to Armenian students with demonstrated LGBTQ+ activism
- Facilitated 30 mental health support groups for LGBTQ+ Armenians and their allies
- Hosted arts and culture programs engaging more than 1,500 community members
- Provided direct aid and resources in response to urgent community crises
- Began developing a multi-phased LGBTQ+ focused education program for K-12 schools, colleges and the general public, reaching hundreds of learners
- Drove community participation in LGBTQ+ related advocacy and volunteer projects at the Los Angeles LGBT Center, Project Angel Food, and several human rights marches
- Brought visibility to LGBTQ+ Armenian voices in publications and media outlets with a national reach

EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Our Education and Leadership Development program leads the charge on cultivating acceptance, inclusion and resources for LGBTQ+ Armenians in K-12 schools and colleges. Despite the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic and thanks to your support, GALAS has accomplished the following:

K-12 SCHOOLS

- Advocated at local school districts for LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula
- Began developing a multi-phased K-12 outreach program
- Conducted a preliminary qualitative survey of educators from local schools about understanding challenges faced by LGBTQ+ Armenian Students
- Created the GALAS Education and Outreach Committee, and designed K-12 school training materials
- Advocated with school districts and their board officials for the implementation of LGBTQ+ resources for Armenian students
- Received training on building LGBTQ+ inclusive schools and served as experts on communal dialogues on acceptance and celebration of LGBTQ+ students within the Armenian community
- Participated in LGBTQ+ youth outreach events
- Provided individual counsel and advisement for schools and districts

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

- Provided 10 academic scholarships for students of Armenian descent with demonstrated LGBTQ+ activism
- Presented at multiple colleges and universities on LGBTQ+ inclusion topics
- Served as experts, panelists, and presenters on LGBTQ+ Armenians at Southern California Armenian Student Association's regional summits

LARGER ARMENIAN AND ALLIED COMMUNITIES

- Organized a community Changemaker Leadership Forum on transgender activism and allyship featuring Lilit Martirosyan, the President of Right Side NGO, the leading transgender rights organizations based in Armenia
- Created and made publicly available educational resources on LGBTQ+ topics such as LGBTQ+ terminology and history
- Conducted presentations on health and wellness for LGBTQ+ Armenians, navigating the social pressures of the holidays as LGBTQ+ Armenians, understanding genders and pronouns, and more
- Provided leadership advancement opportunities to LGBTQ+ and allied interns by engaging them with culturally responsive programs that both serve the GALAS community and help build their professional development

In the upcoming years, GALAS is looking forward to expanding and elevating our education and leadership development programs to reach a larger segment of the Armenian community. With your continued support, GALAS will enhance our K-12 and college level offerings to ensure safety and support for LGBTQ+ Armenians, and to **educate the larger Armenian community about LGBTQ+ topics.**



An Armenian mother making soorj at our first Soorj Session



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Mental health support has been one of the pillars of GALAS's offerings to our community. GALAS's mental health and wellness offerings have provided critical support for our community during the last five years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

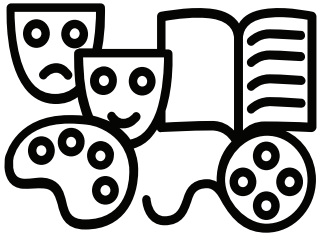
Within the last five years, GALAS has hosted more than 30 in-person and virtual mental health support groups. Facilitated by a licensed therapist, the in-person GALAS support groups (also known as Soorj Sessions) are guided group conversations to facilitate understanding among LGBTQ+ Armenians and their communities. In addition to mental health support groups, GALAS has provided an array of wellness activities, including meditation sessions, art and writing workshops, self defense classes, and hikes. In the coming year, we look forward to expanding our offerings to subsidized individual and group therapy and **mental health offerings across generations.**

COMMUNITY CRISIS RESPONSE

GALAS leadership prioritizes responding to our community's urgent needs for resources and advocacy. LGBTQ+ Armenians face a disproportionate amount of discrimination from the larger Armenian community within Armenia and the diaspora. In response, our **organized activism and thought leadership** ensures that our voices and needs are met.

GALAS has advocated at school districts for LGBTQ+ inclusion, facilitated mental health services for survivors of catastrophes, provided direct support to victims of anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes in Armenia, and published open letters and statements to demand justice for and elevate the voices of LGBTQ+ Armenians.





ARTS & CULTURE

During its quarter century of existence, GALAS has **become a flourishing hub of artistic and cultural expression**. Our Arts and Culture programming celebrates the **rich and vibrant Armenian traditions through queer re-imaginings**.

Our LGBTQ+ Armenian Art Exhibition and our Queernissage open-air market are two prominent examples of our Arts & Culture programs:

- In June 2018, in partnership with Roslin Art Gallery and Abril Bookstore, GALAS organized a first-of-its-kind art exhibition, titled “THE MANY FACES OF QUEER ARMENIANS: A Celebration of Queer-Armenian Art.” Held during Pride month, the exhibition featured artwork from queer and ally artists, and a series of six accompanying events including screenings, panel discussions and author talks. The exhibition was received tremendously well and was featured in several publications, such as LA Weekly, Los Angeles Times, and Asbarez.
- In 2021, GALAS began hosting its annual Queernissage open-air market, showcasing LGBTQ+ South West Asian and North African (SWANA) artists, designers, and creatives. Featuring the work of more than 30 LGBTQ+ Armenian and allied artists, Queernissage pays homage to “Vernissage,” the beloved open air market in Armenia that has been a gathering place for artists and merchants for decades.

In addition to curated artistic experiences, GALAS has hosted a series of cultural events that have **offered our community the chance to participate in cultural traditions that LGBTQ+ Armenians might be excluded from, such as Vardavar, Friendsgiving, and Christmas**.

LGBTQ+ Armenians are active participants in the Armenian diaspora; your continued support will ensure that Armenian culture and traditions are accessible for LGBTQ+ Armenians.



Vendors at our second annual Queernissage





WHAT'S AHEAD

During its first 25 years, GALAS has served as the leading resource for LGBTQ+ Armenians in Los Angeles and beyond and a shining beacon for our fellow Armenians who are seeking community and support. We have met the needs of our community through providing mental health resources, leading educational programs, creating spaces for cultural and artistic expression, and most importantly, serving as a **critical source for community care, belonging, and inclusion.**

Thank you for your fervent support of LGBTQ+ Armenians and for your dedication to equality.

The growth of our organization and increasing of our resources remain vital in sustaining our successes and building upon a truly equitable and inclusive world for LGBTQ+ Armenians. Your continued support will expand GALAS's work to enhance our education, mental health, and visibility work.

Armenia-based transgender activist Lilit Martirosyan at our first Changemaker Leadership Forum in Glendale, CA

TESTIMONIALS

I LOVE HOW DIVERSE [THE GALAS COMMUNITY] IS ACROSS ALL DIMENSIONS OF BEING ARMENIAN... WE CAN BE THE GLUE TO UNITY WITHIN OUR CULTURE.

EVERY TIME I MEET ANOTHER LGBTQ+ ARMENIAN, IT ADDS YEARS TO MY LIFE.

THIS IS A COMMUNITY THAT UNDERSTANDS DETAILS THAT THE BROADER LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY CANNOT.

ONE OF THE GREATEST PREDICTORS OF GOOD HEALTH IS SOCIAL SUPPORT AND GALAS IS THE PLACE TO RECEIVE THAT.



Some of the GALAS founding members and community members at our 20th Anniversary Gala



GALAS IN ACTION: 2018-2023

