

Yvette Jarvis  
Sp. Advisor to the Mayor on Immigration  
Fmr. City Councilor Athens Greece

### **Conditions Required for Effective Political participation**

- Effective participation in my opinion begins with immigrants as active equal partners in the decision making process. Immigrants must represent themselves at all of levels of the decision making process if not actively politically then in advisory positions.
- Laws that discriminate and prohibit voting rights must be repealed when possible and at best modified to allow documented immigrants the right to be elected and to vote.
- Programs should be developed to foster immigrant participation through training, empowerment, mentoring and network building programs.
- Recognition of the particular difficulties that visible minorities face in the dominate culture must be dealt with in specific ways as to empower those minorities most affected, women and children
- Political parties must actively recruit through open invitation minority participation. Mechanisms must be set into place to facilitate their acceptance into the party through mentoring programs .
- Awareness campaigns for the dominant society must be created emphasizing the contributions minorities have made to the benefit of the whole society with special attention given to the basic human rights of all individuals
- Youth councils, forums and mock parliaments can be created so as to foster a political orientation for minorities for preparation for political aspirations and participation

### **Some best practice recommendations**

Athens Mayor Nikitas Kaklamanis from his campaign promise made it clear that immigrant residents of the city of Athens would have equal access to all public facilities including halls, athletic facilities, squares, municipal clinics and social welfare programs.

Immigrant children have full access to public schools irregardless of the legal status of their parents through the junior high school level.

- The city boasts an international Radio station which broadcasts in 14 different languages. Athens International Radio is one of the most diverse in Europe
- An innovative language program which I developed as a city councillor for working mothers called «Mom Learns Greek » gives working

mothers the opportunity to learn Greek for free at convenient hours while offering creative arts programs for the children who need care. Mothers learn Greek in the municipal day care centers that their children attend thus acclimating them to the school setting and it's teachers. This instills pride in the children who see their mothers sitting in the same chairs they do while learning. It facilitates access to the school environment allowing the mothers to familiarize themselves on a weekly basis with the teachers. Lastly, endearing bonds are created between mother and child as mothers are now capable of actively contributing to their child's school life. Accreditation is given at the end of the course which allows them the language certificate for application for the long term residence permit. This program began as a pilot program in one day care center in 2008 and now is offered in all 7 districts of Athens. 400 women so far have taken part in the programs. The ministry of the interior has adopted the program and expanded it to another 7 municipalities around the Attica area this year.

- We recently formed the Immigrant Council comprised of proportionate representation of immigrant communities living in the 7 districts of Athens. The council is a mixture of immigrants, gov't and NGO's and serves as an advisory board to the city council on issues pertaining to immigrants
- We offer language and computer certificate programs for job training
- I run an anti racism football tournament, FARE (football against racism in Europe) for the last 4 years and UEFA sponsored project where children of all ethnicities come together and play solidarity matches and show racism & violence the red card
- We celebrate diversity through a multiethnic festival of nations. Immigrant groups perform dance and song sharing their culture with others in a festive atmosphere

Last, but certainly not least was the powerful statement made by the Mayor in personally appointing a visible minority to be his special advisor on immigrant affairs. If that wasn't provocative enough for you contemplate this, I am a member of the opposition party!

Thank you