

Princess Answers Why the Youth Matter

By: Emily Jaczko, MacArthur Scholar

On Tuesday, February 16, 2016, the UCF Global Perspectives Office hosted HRH Princess Theodora of Greece and Denmark, an award-winning actress and philanthropist. The Princess, also known by her stage name Theodora Greece, addressed over 300 LIFE members and students on the topic of “Youth Activism in Greece and Europe,” posing the question, “Is youth activism an effective way of changing the world?” The event was a special presentation of the LIFE Global Issues Series and took place in the Pegasus Ballroom.

Princess Theodora discussed her background and childhood. Her parents are King Constantine II of Greece and Princess Anne-Marie of Denmark, the last royal couple in Europe to marry from different countries. Because of a military coup in 1967 and the abolition of the Greek monarchy in 1973, Princess Theodora was born and raised in exile in London. In 2003, her family was granted permission to enter and leave Greece freely. Her parents live there now, and Princess Theodora expressed relief at finally being able to say that when she “goes home,” it is to Greece.

Princess Theodora talked about multiple crises affecting modern Greece, including youth unemployment and the refugee crisis. She said that her “heart is broken” by the way Greece is portrayed in the news as a result of its political and economic issues. Despite having its “most educated generation in history,” she expounded, one-third of Greece’s population is at risk for poverty. She commented on “brain drain,” in that “many young Greeks are leaving their country in search of something better.”



Princess Theodora addresses the issues affecting Greece. Amber Hair/Nicholson Student Media.

One step toward a solution, Princess Theodora cited, is a program organized by the European Students’ Forum called the [Youth unEmployment Project](#). This project promotes volunteer work and non-formal education as paths toward employability. Along that vein and inspired by her father’s patronage of [Round Square Schools](#), Princess Theodora spent a year teaching in Alice Springs, Australia, before pursuing Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in the United States.

When an audience member asked Princess Theodora to elaborate on her NGO involvement, she discussed a very new Greek-run organization called [Giving for Greece](#). This organization, funded through Greek donations, targets urgent and immediate needs in the country. Currently, the organization focuses on helping unaccompanied refugee children find guardianship, shelter, medical care, psychological support and clothing.

Asked for any words of advice for youth hoping to fight unemployment, Princess Theodora encouraged youth around the world to be more aware of what is happening, and to create jobs through their own enterprises and projects. As she concluded her presentation, Princess Theodora

emphasized, “I don’t have the answers, and I’m not trying to provide a solution.” Rather, she encouraged youth activism through finding something to believe in and doing something about it.