

## Congressman Charles Boustany

### Honorary Chairman of Tyre Day

"I want to thank all who have been involved in putting this very important symposium together.

It's so relevant to what's happening today, so important for us to reflect back an important history and lessons to be learned. I come here with a little bit of humility because there is tremendous expertise in this room. In a section of the library which is an incredible repository of knowledge that cannot be replaced anywhere. This is a fitting place to hold this type of symposium and again it is a daunting for me just to stand here in front of you and offer a few humble remarks.

My grandfather who at the ripened age of 15 arrived alone from Lebanon trying to find his sister in the state of Louisiana who had married someone here. I learned a lot from my grandfather who went from having nothing when he arrived to becoming very successful in business and banking and giving me, two generations later, this tremendous opportunity to stand before you, first as a very successful cardiac surgeon and now with a career in public office and I owe so much to him. But one of the most important things he told me, and imbued in me not only was the love of reading and reading history but he taught me about my heritage, I might not have known. The first time I ever heard about the Phoenicians, I was sitting on the lap of my grandfather when I was a young child, it is an intense sense of pride, it was amazing. And I remember he told me after the first world war he went back to Lebanon to find his mother, his father passed away in the interim time, he found his brother who was on the verge of starvation. But when you reflect on the Lebanese Diaspora it is quite amazing because there are people all across this country who have reached the pinnacle of their profession or chosen line of work whether it's the arts, sciences, the professions in medicine and law, education and so forth, it is quite amazing. I wasn't really aware of this until I actually got into the public office and began to meet so many across this great country.

But my grandfather taught me about history, and that love of history never went away, and I embarked on reading, and studying Mediterranean history and fast forward I took a course in ancient civilizations in college and there is a history professor there, long deceased, who had a profound impact on me despite all my education in science, just one class, furthered my love of history, took it to a different level, it taught me one thing that I had never forgotten, that history is a living thing, it's not old dates and artifacts that have gone away, and collecting dust. History is living, it affects us today, and I think that is incredibly relevant, that's why the symposium is so important, I will give you just a few more reflections on that before I close.

First of all, we all know of what's happening across the Middle East, with tremendous chaos and the difficulties, much of it playing out in Lebanon. Well, antiquities are being destroyed across the

world as a result of some of this. This is something that's not getting the kind of attention it needs, and hopefully this symposium with publicity surrounding it will put that into the public domain. We're all having conversations about that in congress. But it is so important to preserve these antiquities because they have impact on us today.

Let me just reflect for just a moment, on the city state of Tyre and what is now Lebanon, but was a Phoenician empire in days past. Tyre was regarded as the greatest maritime trading civilization in the world. And you all know the story of how the alphabet and so forth Trade is critically important, and its relevant today. This is a heated debate we're having in congress today on whether America will embark on a very aggressive trade policy and provide that kind of leadership to bring us together through commercial relationships: I think an avenue for peace, or will we back away from trade become more isolationists in our own views and basically give up American leadership globally. So what happened in ancient civilizations, when understanding the importance of trade was not quite so well understood, the creativeness, the creativity. The Phoenician civilization was quite amazing, and it was settled upon Tyre. So we have a lot to learn, by studying the history, learning from the mistakes that were made but also, the great advances that were made.

So I want to thank you all for putting this together, it is a very important symposium, thank you for your insights thank you for willing to put this together and I look forward to learning a whole lot more from all of you as u embark further on making this information public knowledge. “