



Media Contact:

Rena Lee
Director of Museum Experience
National Hellenic Museum
333 South Halsted Street
Chicago, IL 60661
Office: 312.655.1234 ext. 27
Cell: 224.565.2982
Email: media@hellenicmuseum.org

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Antigone Found Not Guilty After 2,200 Years
National Hellenic Museum Stages "Trial" With Top Legal Teams

CHICAGO, IL - Some of the most well-respected judges, a VIP jury and an audience of hundreds reached a "not guilty" verdict for the legendary Greek legal case against Antigone, as the National Hellenic Museum conducted the third of its popular "Trial" series. The "trial" took place March 10, 2016 and was held at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. The legal and judicial team included: Hon. Richard A. Posner, Presiding Judge; Hon. William J. Bauer; Hon. Charles P. Kocoras; Dan K. Webb (Winston & Strawn); Robert A. Clifford (Clifford Law Offices); Patrick J. Fitzgerald (Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP); and Patrick M. Collins (Perkins Coie).

Previously, the National Hellenic Museum also conducted the Trial of Socrates in 2013 and the Trial of Orestes in 2014.

These trials are a testament to the enduring relevance of the ideas developed by the Greeks nearly 3,000 years ago and are embedded into the foundation of modern lives and institutions today. Events such as these are at the very intersection of ancient and modern that the National Hellenic Museum strives to preserve and share through stories, exhibitions and programs.

In the Antigone Trial, the defendant Antigone is the daughter of Oedipus, fallen King of Thebes. The accuser is Creon, the new King of Thebes, and uncle to Antigone. The crime:

Defying the King's decree that forbade Antigone from burying her brother, a man proclaimed to be a traitor to Creon. Antigone's defense is that the law of the gods directed her to give her brother a proper burial – and the right to disregard the law created by her mortal uncle, the King. The twelve jurors and the audience were called on to hear the case for and against Antigone's conviction. At the end of the legal arguments, they voted either guilty or not guilty.

The prosecution's strategy was to insist that Antigone had acted with full knowledge of the law, and then later shown no remorse for her actions. Despite her insistence that she was following the gods' laws rather than man's, Creon was King, and his edicts were legally binding. The prosecution called on the jury to remember that despite their sympathy for the accused, their job was to uphold the law.

The defense cited Creon's illegitimate hold on the throne: he had become King unlawfully and therefore his edicts held no weight. They also appealed to Plato's Law; that the only true laws are good laws. If a law is poor or unreasonable, it is a citizen's duty to undermine it. The defense drew parallels between Antigone's actions and modern examples of civil disobedience, such as Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on a bus.

The audience responded loudly and favorably to the arguments. The defense got laughs and applause, often when they related Antigone's trial with the modern political climate. When the jurors began to explain their verdicts, the audience responded loudly. In the end the jury was split, with half the jurors declaring that although Antigone's case is deserving of sympathy, she did in full knowledge of her actions break the law. The other six claimed that Antigone's actions were to be lauded as thoughtful disobedience to an unreasonable law.

The audience's sympathy for Antigone was visible, especially considering how her story ends in the historic play. The crowd was highly engaged and participated fully in this mock legal process.

After the audience voted, tension held the room quiet. An old-fashioned set of hanging scales was used to weigh the voting chips—blue for 'guilty' on one side, white for 'not-guilty' on the other. When the chips were poured, the side for not guilty hit the table, and the room erupted in cheers. Not only had the defense appealed to the audience's reason, they had captured their hearts and imaginations as well. Even though the characters were fictional and the decision had happened more than two thousand years too late, Antigone's acquittal felt like a victory—for intelligent citizenship, for reason, and for compassion.

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Located in Chicago's Greektown, the sleek 40,000-square-foot National Hellenic Museum at 333. S. Halsted St. is both contemporary and timeless, connecting all generations—past, present and future—to the rich heritage of Greek history, culture, art and the Greek American experience. The National Hellenic Museum, previously known as the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center, has been fulfilling this mission since 1983.

For more information, visit <http://www.nationalhellenicmuseum.org> or call 312-655-1234.
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