

# HYE SHARZHOOM Armenian Action ՀԱՅ ՇԱՐԺՈՍՄ



39<sup>th</sup> Year

October 2017

Vol. 39, No. 1 (139)

Ethnic Supplement to The Collegian

## ASP International Conference at Fresno State September 22-23



Front row, left to right: Dr. David Gutman, Dr. Nilay Özok-Gündoğan, Dr. Janet Klein, and Varak Ketsemanian. Back row, left to right: Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, Dr. Ümit Kurt, Emre Can Dağlioğlu, Dr. Owen Miller, Dr. Uğur Z. Peçe, Michael Rettig, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, and Dr. Sergio La Porta.

MICHAEL RETTIG  
EDITOR

The Armenian Studies Program held a two-day international conference on “Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds: A People’s History of the Ottoman Empire” on the weekend of September 22-23. Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program, and Dr. Ümit Kurt, visiting postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, organized the

Conference to highlight Ottoman history from the peripheries, rather than from the position of power. Scholars presented their research on the experiences of Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds from the late 19th century to World War I.

The Conference was co-sponsored by the College of Arts and Humanities and the Department of History with support from the Thomas A.

SEE [ASP CONFERENCE PAGE 2](#)

## ASO Fall Semester Activities



Left to right: Kara Statler, Suzanna Ekmekchyan, Arthur Khatchatrian, David Safrastian, Marina Chardukian, and Davit Gevorgyan at the Armenian Independence Day celebration.

SUZANNA EKMEKCHYAN  
STAFF WRITER

Armenian Students Organization (ASO) festivities have officially begun for the semester. It started with the first meeting of the year held on

Wednesday, August 30. More than 20 members attended the meeting, where elections for new ASO officers were held with the following results: Kara Statler (President), Claire Kasaian (Vice President), Arthur Khatchatrian

SEE [ASO PAGE 6](#)

## Armenian Studies Program Eighth Annual Armenia Summer Study Trip 2017

PROF. BARLOW  
DER MUGRDECHIAN

The eighth Armenia Summer Study Program took place May 24-June 9, 2017, when thirteen students and group leaders Professors Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Hagop Ohanessian arrived in sunny Yerevan.

Fresno State students have the opportunity to take Armenian Studies courses where they learn various aspects of Armenian history and culture, but an academic journey to Armenia provides an opportunity to integrate that knowledge with the experience of visiting the country.

Participating in the 2017 program were Marina Chardukian, Dikran Dzhezzyan, Tatevik Hovhannisyan, Claire Kasaian, Esther Oganyan, Mary Oganyan,



The Armenia Summer Study Program participants at Khor Virap, Armenia.

Photo: Hagop Ohanessian

Shelbie Ohanesian, Mitchell Peters, Michael Rettig, Annie Rubio, David Safrastian, Kara Statler, and Marine Vardanyan.

Each Summer Study trip

is different, as Prof. Der Mugrdechian strives to make each trip unique in some way. This can

SEE [ARMENIA PAGE 4](#)

## “The Promise” Screened at Fresno State Sept. 29

ANNIE RUBIO  
STAFF WRITER



Carla Garapedian, sixth from left, at CineCulture.

Photo: ASP Archive

“Our revenge will be to survive.” These words, spoken in the movie *The Promise*, gave new life to the remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. *The Promise* premiered this spring, with impressive star power and a touching love story. Despite the fact that the main run of the film is over, it still remains a powerful tool for raising awareness of the Genocide.

Fresno State’s CineCulture

SEE [THE PROMISE PAGE 7](#)

## Der Mugrdechian-Three Talks in London & Oxford

STAFF REPORT

Armenian Studies Program Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian gave three presentations during a visit to the United Kingdom, August 6-15, 2017. His travels took him to Oxford and also to London where he was invited to speak twice.

On Tuesday, August 8, Der Mugrdechian gave a presentation in London on “Historic Armenia” for students of Dr. Krikor Moskofian’s Programme of Armenian Studies. These students had come to London to participate in the Programme’s Summer Intensive Courses in Western Armenian. The courses were offered at three levels: elementary (in July 2017), intermediate (in August 2017) and advanced (in June 2017). Der Mugrdechian’s

Photo: ASP Archive



Left to right, front row: Dr. Nélida Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian and Dr. David Calonne. Standing, left to right: Dr. Hagop Gulludjian and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

presentation discussed his recent journey to the eastern regions of Turkey, Historic Armenia.

His focus was on the remaining

SEE [DER MUGRDECHIAN PAGE 6](#)

Armenian Studies Program  
Book/Video/CD Archival Gifts

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Prof. Sergio La Porta, and the Armenian Studies Program would like to thank the donors, authors, and publishers for the following books, periodicals, videos, and archival gifts, either offered personally, or to the Program.

**Adrienne Alexanian, New York**, for a copy of *Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2017), 145pp., in English. This memoir recounts the life of Yervant Alexanian, a native of Sepastia, whose experiences as an army soldier provide unique insight into the Genocide. The book is edited by his daughter Adrienne Alexanian, with an introduction by Dr. Sergio La Porta, Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies at Fresno State.

**Dr. Hayk Demoyan**, Armenian Genocide Museum & Institute, Yerevan, Armenia, for copies of the *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies* (Vol. 1, No. 1, 2015 and Vol. 2, No. 1, 2015) and for a copy of his book *Armenian Sports and Athletics in the Ottoman Empire* (Yerevan: Armenian Genocide, Museum & Institute, 2015), 275pp., in English.

**E. Aras Ergüneş**, Hrant Dink Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey, for a copy of *Izmitli Ermeniler Konuşuyor* (The Izmit Armenians Speak), 133pp., in Turkish. Vol. 4 in a series of books on Armenians published by the Hrant Dink Foundation.

**Leon Garoyan, Ph.D.**, Davis, California, for a copy of his autobiography, *Return From Denial* (Davis, CA, 2016), 223 pp., in English. The memoir chronicles the family history of Leon Garoyan and the story of the Garoyan family’s immigration to America.

**Dr. Vatche Ghazarian**, Monterey, California, for a copy of Ազգային Պատուիրակության Գործունեությունը 1915-1916 (*The Activities of the Armenian National Delegation 1915-1916*) (Documents), Vatche Ghazarian, ed. and annotator, 480pp., in Armenian. This is a compilation of documents focusing on the activities of the Armenian National Delegation, under the leadership of Boghos Nubar Pasha. He has been appointed the chair of the National Delegation of Armenians in the negotiations with the European Powers for an improved status of Armenia. The primary sources for the book are correspondence, reports, and notes from the Nubarian Library in Paris.

**Allan Arpajian and Susan Arpajian Jolley**, Delran, New Jersey, for a copy of *Out of My Great Sorrows: The Armenian Genocide and Artist Mary Zakarian* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2017), 197pp., in English. Out of My Great Sorrows is the story of Philadelphia artist Mary Zakarian, whose life and work were shaped by the experiences of her mother, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. The story touches on may questions including ethnicity, gender, immigration, and assimilation.

**Lerna Karakutuk**, Istanbul, Turkey, for a copy of her book of poems, Երբսու Բարնվ (Goodbye) (Istanbul, 2017), 126pp., in Armenian, with the main theme of the Armenians in Istanbul, but also broader themes.

**Deborah Krug**, Winooski, Vermont, for an Armenian Alphabet flash card set.

**Dr. Rubina Peroomian**, Glendale, CA, for a copy of *My Father: A Man of Courage and Perseverance-A Survivor of Stalin’s Gulag* (2017), 257pp., in English. The book relates to the life of Baghdassar (Baghdik) Minasian, who was abducted by the Soviet NKVD from Tabriz, Iran, during the last years of World War II. It recounts his ten years of hard labor in Siberia, 1944-1954, his later release, and the difficulty of reintegrating into society after his release.

**Very Rev. Fr. Dajad Yardemian**, Los Angeles for the gift of *The History of Armenian Monasticism and the Rank of “Vartabed”s* (Burbank, CA: Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, 2015), 166pp., in Armenian, with an English synopsis and *The “Vartabed”s of the Armenian Church as Teachers of Faith and Theologians* (Los Angeles, 2016), 149pp., in Armenian with an English synopsis.



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Letters to the Editor

May 18, 2017  
Dear Hye Sharzhoom Staff,

... Your paper is professional. I enjoy reading it. More success to all who participated in making the *Hye Sharzhoom*.

Eleonore Aslanian, South San Francisco

May 19, 2017  
Dear Hye Sharzhoom,

Over the years I have enjoyed—truly relished—the contents of your paper. Keep up the good work!

Best wishes and many thanks,

Michele Sigler, London, England

California State University, Fresno  
Armenian Studies Program  
Spring 2018 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
<b>General Education-Breadth, Humanities, Area C2</b>				
• Arm 1B-Elementary Armenian (Class #32357)	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	B. Der Mugrdechian
<b>General Education-Breadth, Arts, Area C1</b>				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #33475)	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
<b>General Education-Breadth, Area D3</b>				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #33569)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	H. Ohanessian
<b>General Education-Integration, Area IC</b>				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #33600)	3	9:00A-9:50A	MWF	B. Der Mugrdechian
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #33592)	3	3:30P-4:45P	MW	H. Ohanessiann
<b>Upper Division Armenian Studies Course</b>				
• ArmS 108B-Arm History II (Class #32356)	3	9:30A-10:45A	MW	B. Der Mugrdechian
• ArmS 120T-Arm Urbanism (Class #36342)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	Kazan Visiting Prof.

For more information call the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669.

Get a Minor in Armenian Studies.

Check on requirements for the Minor in Armenian Studies in the current catalog.

<http://www.fresnostate.edu/catalog/subjects/armenian-studies/armenia-mn.html>

HYE SHARZHOOM  
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ASP CONFERENCE, FROM PAGE 1

Kooyumjian Family Foundation, the Leon S. Peters Foundation, and the M. Victoria Karagozian Kazan Fund for Armenian Studies.

Professor Der Mugrdechian provided historical context to the conference in his introduction. According to Der Mugrdechian, the Tanzimat Reforms in the nineteenth century disrupted the balance of power between the central Ottoman government and periphery. It gave hope to the oppressed but instilled jealousy in the ruling class. Der Mugrdechian stressed the importance of reexamining the relationship between Ottoman Turks and those they ruled by mastering the languages of the people, in

this case, Armenian, Greek, and Kurdish.

Nilay Özok-Gündoğan echoed this sentiment in her presentation, “Can One Save the Voices of the ‘Ordinary’ Kurds from the ‘Enormous Condescension of Posterity?’: Thoughts on Writing the Social History of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire.” According to Özok-Gündoğan, when historians write about ordinary people, they often describe them as mobs with little agency. They overemphasize the power the Ottoman government exercised over the provinces because they “take the wording of the text for granted” rather than examine Kurdish and Armenian sources. Varak Ketsemanian described a similar problem in his study on

“The Armenian Revolutionary Movement Between Ideologies and Paradoxes: A Case Study of the Hunchakian Party Program (1890-1896).” According to Ketsemanian, historians too often focus on the leadership of the Armenian Revolutionary movements rather than on ordinary members. Ketsemanian examined the Hunchakian party and the paradoxes between the intellectual ideologies and realities on the ground.

Owen Miller, in his presentation on “The Colonization of the Mountains: Sasun, Zeytun and Dersim at the End of the Ottoman Empire,” described the central Ottoman government’s

Dr. Sergio La Porta and Dr. Michael Pifer Teach Summer Classical Armenian Course in Collegeville, Minnesota



Students and faculty of the intensive Classical Armenian and Syriac courses taught in Minnesota.

Photo: ASP Archive

STAFF REPORT

This summer Dr. Sergio La Porta co-taught a 5-week intensive course on Classical Armenian (*krapar*) at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) of St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota. The class was funded and sponsored by the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and

Collection, located in Washington, D.C. Dr. La Porta was joined by Dr. Michael Pifer of the University of Michigan to instruct ten doctoral and post-doctoral students in elementary Classical Armenian. The course was taught alongside a similar class for Syriac. A requirement for admission to the program was that students had no knowledge of Classical Armenian and could not easily learn it at their host institutions. Dr. La Porta said that it was a phenomenal experience. “The students were fantastic,” he reported. “They worked really hard and thoroughly immersed themselves in the grammar and the language.” Dr. La Porta admits that both he and Dr. Pifer were slightly doubtful at first that they would be able to get through one year’s worth of Classical Armenian in five weeks, but they were amazed at how quickly the students progressed.

In fact, by the final week of class, they were reading digitized manuscripts from the HMML’s online library. Classes were held for eight hours a day, five days a week, and no one missed a class or came late. In addition, “they were not only extremely bright and diligent, they were also great fun and good people. Everyone got along and we just really enjoyed ourselves.” The students’ interests ranged widely and included ancient Iran, Christian theology, Late Antiquity, Crusader and Mongol history, art history, Byzantine literature, and pre-modern history. According to Dr. La Porta, the variety of their intellectual backgrounds alone highlights the importance of Classical Armenian for so many academic fields. One of the great joys for both teachers was that the students not only wanted to learn the language, but “as we moved along in the course, they wanted to learn more about the culture and about Armenian communities today.” The students also expressed a desire to continue studying Classical Armenian in the future. Both Dr. La Porta and Dr. Pifer hope that they will be able to lead a second summer course that will incorporate extensive discussion on methods of translation for Classical Armenian.

Students Enthusiastic to Learn Modern Armenian

STAFF REPORT

What brings twenty-one students from varied backgrounds to take a class together at Fresno State? For the Fall 2017 semester it was a common desire to learn modern Armenian in Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian’s elementary language class, Armenia 1A. Armenians and non-Armenians alike are learning the language spoken for more than three millennia, and in so doing they are also learning about Armenian culture. Prof. Der Mugrdechian, who has been teaching the elementary and advanced language courses at Fresno State for more than thirty years, enjoys having a diversity of students in his class. He shares the same enthusiasm toward learning the language that the students have.

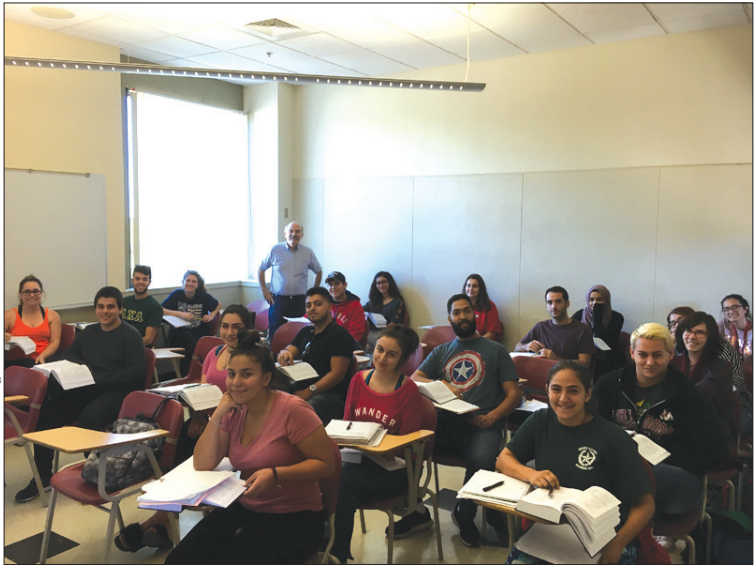


Photo: Michael Rettig

Twenty-one students are taking the Elementary Armenian language class with Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

Students have already learned basic Armenian phrases and are just completing learning the alphabet. Students in the Armenian 1A class were interviewed about the reasons they are taking the course and also what they have found most interesting in their studies. For Business major Cole Egoian learning Armenian has a personal meaning. “I took this class so that I can speak to my grandmother and father in Armenian. I think that the class is important because it will ensure the continuation of the language.” A similar sentiment was shared by Molly Gostanian, also a Business major, who took the

class to learn more about the language her ancestors spoke. “I like learning the Armenian alphabet the most. It is not the easiest alphabet to learn but it is very rewarding to see how much I have learned in a short time.” Business major Gregory Krikorian is also enjoying learning the alphabet. “The most interesting part of the course so far has been learning the Armenian alphabet,” he said. “An Armenian class is important so that the language can continue to be spoken.” David Safrastian, who is studying biology, wanted to take Armenian because he “wanted to learn this language to communicate with others and because it is his heritage.” Several non-Armenians are taking the course. “Learning about language is vital to understanding another culture,” said Linguistics major Daphne Russell. “The is especially true because of the large Armenian Disaporan community in Fresno.” For Pre-nursing major Adriana Sanchez, taking a language course is “critical to understanding others.” Sanchez says that everyone should learn to speak more than one language. “It is important to gain an understanding about other cultures. That way you can have both an understanding and a communication bridge to others,” said Pre-Nursing major Matthew King. “I love learning a new language.” The Armenian language class teaches not only about the language, as students also learn about Armenian culture and about the modern Republic of Armenia. This common learning experience is bringing more attention to the Armenian culture at Fresno State.

Atamian Presents “Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France”



Standing, left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta, David Safrastian, Cole Egoian, Marina Chardukian, Michael Rettig, and Kara Statler. Seated, left, Christopher Atamian and Prof. Hagop Ohanessian.

DAVID SAFRAZIAN  
STAFF WRITER

Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

“Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France: A Zenith of Diasporan Writing” was the first presentation in the Armenian Studies Program Fall Lecture Series. Writer, filmmaker, and translator Christopher Atamian visited Fresno State on Friday, September 8 to speak on a theme that is important and meaningful to Armenian history, culture, and literature. Atamian translated Krikor Beledian’s “Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France: 1922-1972,” which covers the lives and works of forty Armenian writers and Genocide survivors, from French to English. The book was published as volume 6 of the Armenian Series of the The Press at California State University, Fresno. Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian was the editor of this English translation. Poet and literary critic Beledian, who was born in Beirut has published over thirty works, most of which are in Western Armenian. According to Atamian, the Armenian literature produced in France in this period was experimental and groundbreaking. Writers such as Zabelle Yessayan and Vahan Tekeyan, survivors of the Armenian Genocide, had moved to Paris but still wrote in Armenian. In his book, Beledian gave an overview of the major French-Armenian writers and why their works are important to Diasporan Armenian literature. Atamian stated that translating works from other languages into English

broadens the reader’s horizons. He decided to translate this book because it is an important part of the literary world and not many know Armenian. The “Menk” literary movement was formed in France in the 1920’s. Atamian spoke about the significance of the “Menk Movement” and the poets and novelists who represented it. The writers struggled with their own identity, as Armenians, and as citizens of a new host country. The writers came as refugees where they absorbed the latest theoretical and literary movements, which then were reflected in their own literary work. In his lecture Atamian discussed Zabelle Yessayan (1878-1943), a leading feminist in the Ottoman Empire, who was sent by the Armenian Patriarch to report on the Adana massacres in 1909. Atamian concluded his presentation by reading passages from *The Bois de Vincennes*, a book by Nigoghos Sarafian, an Armenian writer and leader of the “Menk Movement.” Atamian would like more people to enter the translation field and proposed the creation of a “translation institute.” Atamian would also like to see a rebirth of Western Armenian as a language of not only communication, but also as a literary language. “Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France” is an important work that has been translated from French into English and Atamian’s presentation gave valuable insight into the work.

on official sources when studying these events, as the military elite tried to cover up the violence they committed. He stressed the importance of accumulating information from various sources, as “authoritarianism is ultimately the monopolization of legitimate truth.” David Gutman, in “The Sojourners of Harput (Kharpert): At the Intersection of the Local, Imperial, and the Global,” discussed the unique situation of Kharpert by examining Armenian migration. Gutman stated that

## Students Explore Armenia May 24-June 9, 2017 on Armenia Summer Study Program

### ARMENIA, FROM PAGE 1

be a visit to an unexpected place or a meeting with some interesting people. From their base in the Ani Plaza Hotel, the students began their visit with a walking tour of central Yerevan, home to many important sites. Walking through the city gave students the chance to interact with people on the streets or in the stores.

Activities were divided between day trips to sites around the country and staying in Yerevan to visit some of the myriad cultural sites. In their visits outside of Yerevan, students visited major regions of Armenia, from Haghbat and Sanahin in the northern regions, down to Tatev in the south.

Students were impressed by a visit to the TUMO Center for Creative Technologies, which provides innovative educational opportunities for children in Armenia. Thousands of children visit the after-school program, which focuses on four areas: animation, web design, filmmaking and game development. Each student creates their own personal plan, with independent learning activities. The Fresno State group was introduced to students who were developing robots and also visited one of the filmmaking studios. TUMO students also can participate in workshops led by TUMO's workshop leaders, preparing them for future jobs.

Later the same day Fresno State students visited the offices of Technology & Science Dynamics (TSD), a leader in the high-tech field. Just this summer TSD released the first smart phones and tablets made completely in Armenia. They are on the cutting edge of technology, especially in areas such as game development and in hologram technology.

One of the highlights of the stay in Armenia was a deeply moving visit to the Armenian Martyrs Monument and the Armenian Genocide Museum at



Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

**Left to right: Mitchell Peters, Marine Vardanyan, Tatevik Hovhannisyan, Michael Rettig, Annie Rubio, Marina Char-dukian, Claire Kasaian, Kara Statler, David Safrazian, and Prof. Hagop Ohanessian at Noraduz, near Lake Sevan.**

Tsitsernakapert. The Museum was remodeled and reimagined for the centenary of the Armenian Genocide in April of 2015 and students were impressed by the content and delivery of the Genocide story. Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute Director Hayk Demoyan met with the students to discuss current research efforts of the Museum. Six years ago the Armenia Summer Study Program participants had planted a tree in the Memorial Grove of the Genocide. This year's group was proud to see that the tree had grown and were happy to water it, thereby cementing their ties to Armenia.

Fresno and Yerevan have many connections and one is through the author William Saroyan. A visit to the headquarters of the Intellectual Renaissance Foundation, home to the Saroyan House project, proved to be of great interest. Students were treated to a presentation on the plans for opening the Saroyan House Museum in Fresno on August 31, 2018.

Another Fresno connection was the Varaz Samuelian Cultural Center located in the town of Artik, just south of Gyumri.

Samuelian is the artist who created the statue of David of Sassoon located in Fresno's Courthouse Park. The Cultural Center, built with funds from Samuelian's will, provides art lessons for the children of Artik. The Center is adorned with many of Samuelian's paintings and is a unique and beautiful connection to Fresno.

The group's trip coincided with a visit to Armenia by KSEE24 anchor and reporter Stefani Booroojian, accompanied by chief photographer Kevin Mahan. Booroojian and Mahan spent a brief but busy four days in Armenia. On the day before they left they met with the students and together they visited the Saroyan statue, spent time at Yerevan State University, and learned about the plans for the Saroyan House Museum in Fresno.

Booroojian and Mahan also joined the Fresno State group on a visit to Mer Hooys-House of Hope. Upon her return to Fresno Booroojian prepared an hour-long report on all of her activities in Armenia.

Educational moments included a special tour of the Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran (Manuscript Library). The

Matenadaran is the largest repository of Armenian manuscripts in the world. The Matenadaran and the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State have recently been cooperating on a variety of conservation and educational projects. Students were given a guided tour of the facility, visiting the impressive gallery of ancient Armenian manuscripts, as well as areas of the Library that are not normally open to tourists.

Spiritual ties to Armenia were strengthened by visits to the Mother Cathedral of Etchmiadzin for Divine Liturgy and a blessing from Bishop Moushegh Babayan, and a visit to the St. Hripsime and St. Gayane churches. Perhaps the most moving visit was to the Monastery of Tatev in the southern region of Armenia. The day long trip included stops at Khor Virap, where St. Gregory the Illuminator had been imprisoned, followed by stops at the Areni Winery and

Monastery.

Amberd and the Monastery of Saghmsovank in the Ashtarak region of Armenia provide stark contrast to the urban life in Yerevan. A hike part way up the mountain to Amberd was an enjoyable experience as was the trip to Saghmsovank. Next door to Saghmsovank an Armenian family provided coffee and Armenian pastry to the visitors in their beautiful backyard. It was a chance for students to experience village life.

One of the culminating experiences was a visit to the United States Embassy in Yerevan and a conversation with the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia, Richard M. Mills.

Ambassador Mills spent more than an hour with the group answering questions and explaining the goals of his office. Ambassador Mills spoke extensively about U. S. sponsored projects in Armenia, specifically



Photo: ASP Archive

**The group visited the headquarters of Technology & Science Dynamics in Yerevan, where they toured the high-tech company and learned about their research.**

at the Monastery of Noravank. It was early evening by the time students were sitting on the Wings of Tatev tramway headed to the Monastery of Tatev. It was a spiritual moment as the fog was moving in and the light rain that had been falling momentarily ceased.

Upon entering the Sts. Paul and Peter Cathedral, the group was blessed by Very Rev. Fr. Mikael Gevorgyan, abbot of the

in the areas of business investment and agriculture.

For students and faculty alike the journey to Armenia produced unforgettable memories, but more than that students found themselves transformed.

Many had a chance to reflect on their own lives in the United States compared to life in Armenia. All left Armenia determined to return one day and to put their input into the development of the country.

## Students Reflect on Their Experiences in Armenia



**Annie Rubio with Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.**

### ANNIE RUBIO

My first time in Armenia was truly a life-changing experience. Being half-Armenian, it was a wonderful feeling to take that piece of my upbringing and completely immerse myself in it. Once we started meeting people during our travels, my fears of feeling out of place disappeared. Everyone was always so welcoming and generous to us, even if we were complete strangers. Everywhere I turned, I could see monuments and landscapes that I had only

read about. However, no amount of studying could have prepared me for how amazing the country actually was.

This was especially true during our visit to Tsitsernakaberd. I was reminded of the horrors our people endured during the Armenian Genocide, and we still survived. I realized that everyone was affected by the Genocide—everyone has a story. It is impossible to think of Armenia without also taking into consideration the Armenian Genocide and its aftermath. Throughout our trip, I was reminded of how much the Genocide has affected our history. It is a tragedy that scars our history, but it is also a reminder of how strong we are as a country and a culture.

My favorite part of the trip by far was the time we spent at Mer Hooys-House of Hope. The girls were wonderful and shared so much with us. It was impossible not to smile when you saw them. Mer Hooys is a light in the lives

of these girls, and I am so blessed to have met everyone there. Even though we only saw them a few times, we bonded so quickly, and it broke my heart to leave them. I hope to continue to give back to them while here in America. They shared so much with all of us, and I want to share everything I can with them.

This trip to Armenia has been a wonderful, eye-opening experience. I hope to return one day in the near future and share my love for Armenia with others. Until then, I want to continue giving back to the Armenian community in any way I can.

### DIKRAN DZHEZYAN

The most significant impact of my visit to Armenia was the new sense of belonging that I felt once I immersed myself in the country's culture. I felt as though these were my people walking up and down the city streets. My cousins who live in Armenia also played a big role in

my understanding of what home actually meant. Visiting many of the locations I had read about in Armenian studies gave me the sense that much of this country seemed familiar.

My visit to Armenia has changed me in more than one way. First off witnessing the drastic difference in economic status between our two countries has humbled me and made me more earthly. Growing up my family didn't have much either, but I always kept my wits about me. I tried to be grateful for the many opportunities and privileges I had like a home, education, food, and even television.

One day I plan to be a doctor to serve the American people just as they served me. However I refuse to forget my people, and I hope that I can also return to Armenia and help those who need it.

In conclusion, my trip to Armenia has changed me as a human being. Just over the span of two weeks I discovered who I am and where my loyalty lies. I cherished a sense of nostalgia that comes with being a part of

one's culture. I found that being Armenian doesn't require that I suffer with my people, only that I recognize that there is suffering and I attempt to do something to change it. One thing is for sure though and it's that I loved visiting Mer Hooys and I hope that one day I will be a wealthy and successful doctor so that I can donate resources to keep the place running and maybe even help expand and create a boy's facility. I am truly grateful to have been a part of such an experience and without a doubt I plan to visit Armenia again in the future.

### CLAIRE KASAIAN

I had no idea what to expect when I got to Armenia. From what my friends had told me I knew it was going to be absolutely beautiful. The whole country in extremely beautiful and green. I especially though that Mt. Ararat was indescribable. It was absolutely breathtaking and I never got tired of looking at it.

Something else that I loved

SEE REFLECTIONS PAGE 5

# Visit to Mer Hooyo's-House of Hope in Yerevan Leaves Lasting Impression on Students

CLAIRE KASAIAN  
STAFF WRITER

Mer Hooyo's-House of Hope is a California-based non-profit organization that provides a home in Yerevan, Armenia, for girls from severely disadvantaged backgrounds. The Program was established in December of 2008 and is housed in the Nakashian Children's Support Center, a two-story renovated building in the suburbs of Yerevan, named in honor of its benefactors, the late John, Arpine and Jack Nakashian.

Mer Hooyo's operates in partnership with the Mother Church in Etchmiadzin and the Western and Eastern Dioceses of the Armenian Church of North America. Mer Hooyo's is dedicated to providing "a safe home, social and psychological services, and comprehensive education in academics and life skills training to young girls from disadvantaged backgrounds in Armenia."

Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State, was involved in founding Mer Hooyo's. He currently serves as Vice-President of Mer Hooyo's along with founders President Judge Adrienne Krikorian, Vice-President Dr. Garo Garibian, Secretary-Treasurer Dr. Varoujan Aldebarmakian and a dedicated Board. Prof. Der Mugrdechian's interest in the project stemmed from the fact that large portions of Armenia's population lived in poverty after the break-up of the Soviet Union, and Armenia's independence in 1991. According to Prof. Der Mugrdechian



Armenia Summer Study participants enjoyed several visits to Mer Hooyo's-House of Hope in Yerevan.

"poverty often leaves children in living conditions that make them unprepared for a productive life in society. Girls are usually the most vulnerable."

Mer Hooyo's currently houses 15 girls from the ages of 7 to 16 and 5 girls who are recent graduates over the age of 17. The Program provides counseling and spiritual support for the girls and their families so they can work through their struggles. The younger girls have regular visits from their families because Mer Hooyo's wants to unify families and bring them closer together in a safe environment. The girls at Mer Hooyo's attend a neighborhood school and are provided additional in-house academic counseling, as well as extra-curricular activities such as learning to dance, sing, and play soccer.

There is also a transitional living area for the girls 17 and older who have graduated from the Program. These girls, who

are either going to university or working, are not yet fully prepared to live on their own, or cannot afford it financially. The older girls give back to the Program by helping tutor the younger girls in religion, computers and academics.

During this past summer, Professors Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Hagop Ohanessian led a group of students on the Armenia Summer Study Program 2017. I was able to participate in the trip, and we visited Mer Hooyo's three times.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian stressed the importance of students interacting with local Armenians in addition to visiting historic sites. "Students can interact with and understand some of the issues facing the people in Armenia and develop a relationship with Armenia based on human interaction," said Prof. Der Mugrdechian.

My visits to Mer Hooyo's made a very deep impact on me. The girls were so happy and full of life, despite everything they have been through. Hearing some of their life stories and experiences broke my heart. Stella, who was the youngest girl in the Program, held my hand the entire time during one of our visits. She would not let go.

The girls loved to braid the hair of the girls in our group. We participated in several activities with the girls, such as playing dodgeball, Armenian dancing, playing cards, and taking silly selfies. The girls loved to play a game that was a mix of dodgeball and "Monkey in the Middle." They were playing dodgeball with a very hard basketball, so on our next visit we brought them a softer bouncy-ball and they were so excited.

After our visit, the girls asked us what our group would be called. When we told them we

could not think of a name, they told us our group name would be "Hrashkner" (The Miracles). Leaving the girls was definitely one of the hardest parts about leaving Armenia. Speaking on behalf of the students that went on the trip, I can say that the girls made a huge impact on all of us. Each of us left with a special place in our hearts for these girls and a desire to support the Mer Hooyo's Program in any way we could.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian said Mer Hooyo's has some immediate goals, such as stabilizing the annual budget through fundraising. "To do that, we must spread the word about our activities to get more people involved. Once that can be done and a steady income is reached, Mer Hooyo's would like to open a Program for boys."

For more information about Mer Hooyo's visit: <http://www.mer-hooyo's.org/> to see how you can become involved.



Claire Kasaian, center, on a visit with children from Mer Hooyo's-House of Hope.

## REFLECTIONS, FROM PAGE 4

about Armenia was how family is so important. Family always came first. I loved when we all came together and ate *khovrats* and it was fun to eat all together and to eat the food from our homeland. The food is so much better in Armenia than it is here. I love the family values that Armenians have because the family is so big and Armenians welcome everyone that comes to them and they will go out of their way to help an individual.

I would also love to help with the Saroyan House project. I think it is a wonderful idea to turn his house into a museum because he has had such an impact in Fresno and Armenia.

I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to go on this trip and it was the trip of a lifetime. I know I am going to go back to Armenia one day.

### SHELBBIE OHANESIAN

When I look back on my journey to Armenia a couple of things really impacted me. One was standing on the grounds of Holy Etchmiadzin and being blessed by the Catholicos and getting my gold cross blessed. Every time I wear my cross I think of this day and these memories. During these moments I was in disbelief that this was actually happening to me, that I



Shelbie Ohanesian and Michael Rettig at Garni.

was actually there. It is one thing to study the Armenian culture and the churches, specifically Etchmiadzin, and another to actually be in the country and inside this magnificent church.

One other memory that stands out to me was visiting the young ladies of Mer Hooyo's. I remember looking at the girls playing outside with smiles from ear to ear. After everything they have gone through they still have so much light in them. This House brings a sense of peace to these girls and I knew after leaving Armenia I needed to be a part of this organization that does so much good for so many girls. This made me realize how lucky I am and how fortunate I am to have what I have.

Before this trip, I knew Armenia was this beautiful

country that was a part of me and who I was. I knew that I had always wanted to go to Armenia but I thought that I would never have the opportunity. What I didn't realize until after this trip was exactly how amazingly beautiful this country is, how it made me who I am, and that I would not be ready to leave after 17 days. Seeing where your family originated and being in the land they lived is such an indescribable feeling. I felt connected to my great grandparents who had to leave their home during the Genocide. They, like most Armenians, fought to survive and lived to secure their children's future. I feel like visiting Armenia was almost like a thank you to my great grandparents. I was able to go back home in their place to see the beautiful land from which we came. For these reasons it was the trip of a lifetime.

### MARY OGANYAN

Going to Armenia I had no expectations of how it would impact me and change my mindset on most of the things I worried about in America. I thought of Armenia as an escape from all my worries in America for two weeks, and then I would go back to my normal life and duties. Little did I know that in America I was living in my own world and did not understand people who lived outside of it. I

was excited to see the land and meet the people.

Armenia changed my attitude about my life. You don't need materialistic things to be happy and that's what I learned from Armenia. I learned this in the first week I was there and it made me so much happier.

Armenia made me feel complete to the point that I did

not want to go back to America. But when I return, I want to help out as much as I can. I felt like everyone there wanted to make my trip to Armenia be the best it could and they did. They made sure I was happy and enjoying myself. This trip was beyond amazing and the best two weeks of my life. I enjoyed every second and I cannot wait to go back.



Back row, left to right: David Safrastian, Tatevik Hovhannisy-an, Mitchell Peters, Marine Vardanyan, Claire Kasaian, and Shelbie Ohanesian. Front row, left to right: Michael Rettig, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, and Annie Rubio. The group dressed in traditional Armenian clothing from various regions of historic Armenia for this photo taken in Yerevan.

Photo: Taraz Art Photostudio, Tashir Business Center, Yerevan

## Armenian Students Organization Elects New Executive Officers for the Academic Year

### STAFF REPORT

The newly elected Armenian Students Organization Executive Officers were interviewed upon taking their new positions.

#### KARA STATLER PRESIDENT

#### Why did you run for an executive position?

I ran for President because I really want to see this club succeed. I love being a part of ASO and have always loved going to meetings and socials. I am very excited to give new and returning students the same feeling that I get when I go to ASO activities.

#### What impact has being in ASO had on your college experience?

Being a part of ASO has changed my life. I have made so many great friendships and met the most amazing people. It has given me some great opportunities and I am truly grateful to be a part of this group.



Photo: Michael Rettig  
Front row, left to right: Claire Kasaian, Vice President; Kara Statler, President; Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Advisor. Back row, left to right: Arthur Khatchatrian, Secretary; Suzanna Ekmekchyan, Public Relations, and David Safrazian, Treasurer.

#### CLAIRE KASAIAN VICE-PRESIDENT

#### What are some goals you have for ASO this year?

Some of my goals are to get more

students involved with ASO and to involve ASO more with the Armenian community in Fresno.

#### What impact has being in ASO had on your college experience?

ASO has introduced me to so many people who now are some

of my closest friends. I have also been able to involve myself more with the Armenian community and being a part of ASO has given me so many amazing opportunities including traveling to Armenia.

#### DAVID SAFRAZIAN TREASURER

#### Why did you run for an executive position?

I decided to run for this position so I could make an impact in not only my life but in ASO. I am well suited for this position and am well organized so this was a great opportunity for me to start as an executive member.

#### What impact has being in ASO had on your college experience?

Being a part of ASO has made my college experience better, as I can make new friends and new experiences.

#### ARTHUR KHATCHATRIAN SECRETARY

#### What are some goals you have for ASO this year?

My goals are to bring in and unite more Armenian students into ASO and to make a difference at Fresno State

#### Why did you run for an executive position?

I ran because I wanted to get more involved with my Armenian community and this was the perfect opportunity.

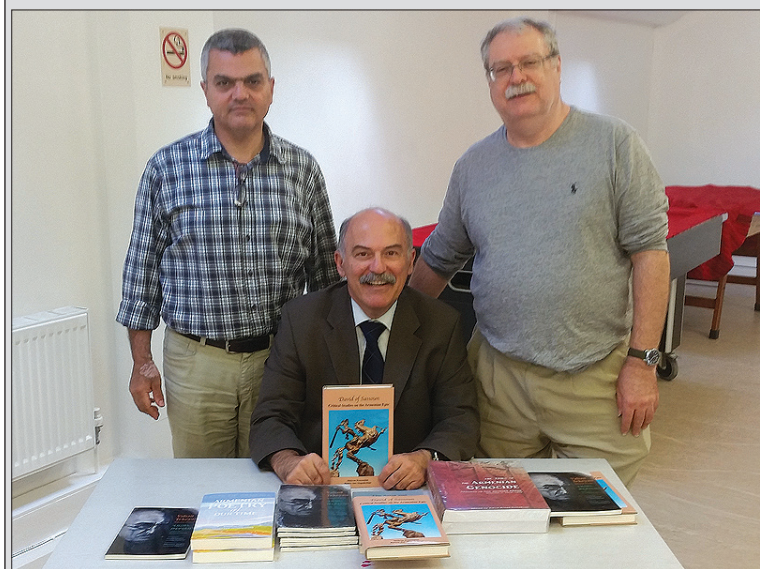
#### SUZANNA EKMEKCHYAN PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### What are some goals you have for ASO this year?

Some goals I have for ASO this year is to increase our presence on social media and in the community. I would also like for the members of ASO to develop great connections and build strong connections with each other.

#### Why did you run for an executive position?

I ran for the executive position of Public Relations due to my prior experience in social media marketing. I believed that I would be of great value to the team because of my knowledge in social media interactions.



Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, center, with AGBU London Chairman Ara Sarafian and Hayashen Director Misak Ohanian after Der Mugrdechian's August 13 presentation.

#### DER MUGRDECHIAN, FROM PAGE 1

Armenian landmarks and churches which dot the landscape.

The Programme of Armenian Studies (Հայագիտական Ուսման Ծրագիր) was established in 2012 to teach Western Armenian language, literature, culture, and history. It also promotes Armenian Studies in academic circles by hosting regular lectures.

From August 10-12 Prof. Der Mugrdechian was at Pembroke College, Oxford, where he presented a paper on "Armenian-American Literature of the Twentieth Century" in a panel held at the Association Internationale des Etudes Arméniennes (AIEA) 14th General Conference. Scholars from throughout the

world participated in the three-day conference, discussing topics as varied as architecture, medieval literature, and art. An elegant Conference dinner was held at The Hall of Pembroke College on Friday, August 11. The Conference was significant because not only were participants able to exchange ideas about their current research but because they were able to meet with colleagues that they are only occasionally able to see in person.

The AIEA also held its triennial general membership meeting where various reports on the Society's activities were presented and discussed.

The Conference was organized by Dr. Theo van Lint, Calouste Gulbenkian Professor of Armenian Studies at the

University of Oxford and by Dr. David Zakarian.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian's third presentation was held at the Centre for Armenian Information and Advice (Hayashen, London) on Sunday, August 13, and was sponsored by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). AGBU Chairman Ara Sarafian introduced Der Mugrdechian, who spoke on "The Enigma of Armenia's National Epic: David of Sassoon."

Der Mugrdechian's presentation brought up the main aspect of the enigma, namely that the Armenian National Epic was not recorded for more than a thousand years, until the late 19th century.

The enigma lies in the fact that the epic was not mentioned by the official literature of the Church or the government.

The Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State published "David of Sassoon: Critical Studies on the Armenian Epic," co-edited by Dickran Kouymjian and Barlow Der Mugrdechian, in 2016 as volume 4 of The Armenian Series of The Press at California State University, Fresno.

Following the presentation, Hayashen Executive Director Misak Ohanian gave guests a guided tour of the research facilities at the Hayashen Center.

Der Mugrdechian returned to Fresno for the beginning of the Fall semester at Fresno State, which began with the first day of instruction on August 22.

and became resentful. Local notables organized the Armenian massacres in Aintab and used the opportunity to confiscate Armenian wealth.

Uğur Z. Peçe's lecture, "From Ballots to Barracks: The Conscription of non-Muslims at a Time of Parliamentary Politics in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1912," examined debates surrounding Greek conscription in the Ottoman army using parliamentary records and Greek newspapers. Emre Can Dağlıoğlu, in "Intra-Imperial Space and



The Armenian Students Organization members at the first meeting of the Fall semester.

Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

#### ASO, FROM PAGE 1

(Secretary), David Safrazian (Treasurer), and Suzanna Ekmekchyan (Public Relations).

ASO Executive members are excited about the upcoming semester and are prepared to commit to their new responsibilities. The remainder of the meeting gave ASO members an opportunity to collaborate and develop ideas for social and community events. The meeting was incredibly successful due to the valuable input of each member.

Following the first meeting, members organized a clean-up of the beautiful Armenian Genocide Monument in the heart of the campus. This is something ASO believed was necessary due to the Monument's importance not only for ASO, but for the entire Armenian community.

On Armenian Independence Day, September 21, ASO set up a table at the Free Speech

Area. Members passed out informational flyers, candy, and ASO rubber bracelets. ASO members had a blast as they were educating the student population about Armenian Independence Day. It provided ASO members with the chance to proudly display their culture and ask others about what freedom means to them. Temporary Armenian flag tattoos were distributed to students passing by.

A barbeque party at Kara Statler's house was the first ASO social of the semester. Many members attended along with many new faces. The social had a good turnout and members enjoyed talking, laughing, listening to music, and eating some great food. The purpose of socials is for all the members of ASO to form close bonds with one another.

Many more events are being planned for the remainder of the semester.

#### ASP CONFERENCE, FROM PAGE 3

a majority of the estimated 35,000-40,000 Armenians who migrated to America between 1885-1908 were from Kharpert. Though migrating to America was illegal in the Ottoman Empire, Armenians in Kharpert could afford the sophisticated smuggling networks. According to Gutman, this attests to Kharpert's uniqueness, as the Armenians were more politically and economically stable and integrated than in other provinces. Because of this, Armenians bore

the brunt of the Genocide as local Turks sought to destroy this successful community. Ümit Kurt similarly noted the role Armenian prosperity played in social relations in his study on "The Breakdown of a Previously Peaceful Coexistence: The Aintab Armenian Massacres of 1895." According to Kurt, peace between the Armenians and Muslims in Aintab dissolved as wealth concentrated in the hands of Armenians. Muslims, as the dominant class, were unable to keep up with Armenian progress

Anti-Armenian Violence in the Ottoman Empire: The Aghtamar Catholicos Khatchadur III and the 1895 Van Massacre," examined how Khatchadour III accrued social capital in the periphery and mobilized it against the Patriarchate in Istanbul. Janet Klein concluded the Conference

with her novel study on "Armenian Minorityhood in Ottoman and Russian History and Historiography?", which compared the concept of "minorityhood" in Ottoman and Russian historiography.

A video of the Conference is on Facebook @HyeSharzhoom.

Thank You Annual Fund Donors  
(received as of October 12, 2017)

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Saroyan Family Foundation Establishes Scholarship

DIANA GASPARYAN  
STAFF WRITER

This fall a new scholarship will be available for Fresno State students through a generous donation by the Robert V. Saroyan Family Foundation. The scholarship award will benefit students enrolled in Armenian or Armenian Studies courses.

Each year, the Armenian Studies Program awards more than \$50,000 in scholarships to Fresno State students, both Armenian and non-Armenian, enrolled in Armenian Studies courses. Many of those students go on to pursue a Minor in Armenian Studies.

Having the resources to ensure that students are able to connect to Armenian culture and learn more about their heritage is a gift that donors to the Armenian Studies Program make possible. The Program creates a bridge for students to cross into the world of Armenia’s profound impact, and the scholarships are a way to encourage students to explore that world.

It is also through the generous support of community members that the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State continues to grow and thrive and has become one of the largest undergraduate Armenian Studies programs in the world.

As a political science major at USC, Robert Saroyan benefited from scholarships that gave him the support he needed to pursue and complete his studies. Now the successful President of the Valley Children’s Healthcare Foundation, Saroyan draws his inspiration from those whose support made it possible for him to graduate and hopes to make



Rob Saroyan

the same difference for others in a beautiful cycle of giving.

“If I can give back in some way, a big part of that legacy includes leaving my footprint to an important cause,” said Saroyan. He hopes his acts of generosity will inspire future generations to carry on the torch of philanthropy.

Saroyan chose to support the Armenian Studies Program because he believes, “it preserves

an important part of history not just for Armenians, but also highlights the contributions of our culture and the impact it had on the world.” Not everyone is aware of Armenia’s rich history and the successes of a small country such as Armenia. This is why having a Program dedicated to the study of Armenia and the Armenians is a wonderful resource all can benefit from.

The Armenian Studies Program is growing each year, making a significant difference with each step. Saroyan sees the potential in the Program, stating, “if the Armenian Studies Program carries the flag into the future and demonstrates to our fellow citizens that we are humble in our work, in our success, and in our studies, then that would be a great example.”

Students Learn About Opportunities in “Teach for Armenia” Program



Seated, left to right, “Teach for Armenia” representatives Khachig Choukhajian, David Hambaryan, and Narek Ghazaryan with Fresno State students.

Photo: Barlow Der Muqrdechian

STAFF REPORT

A team of three members of “Teach for Armenia” visited the Fresno State campus on Wednesday, September 27, to share their enthusiasm for the Program with students.

“Teach for Armenia” Public Affairs Director Narek Ghazaryan, Director of Recruitment David Hambaryan, and “Teach for Armenian” fellow Khachig Choukhajian were on a west-coast visit to universities and organizations to heighten awareness of the “Teach for Armenia” program.

“Inspire the Future” is the program’s motto, and their goal is to fill a gap in the education system in Armenia, which is facing a shortage of trained school teachers. The need is especially felt in many regions of Armenian outside population centers. Among the issues that these regional schools face are: low performance rates; teachers who feel helpless and have lost hope; and socio-economic problems.

“Teach for Armenia” plans to harness the talent and drive of university graduate students to enter the ranks of Armenia’s teachers in the most disadvantaged

regions of Armenia. An example is in Dilijan, where only one in four students who graduate high school go on to higher education and where 45% of the school aged children are disadvantaged.

Choukhajian related to students how the program had given him the opportunity to have a real impact in Armenia. A recent graduate of UCLA, he now teaches in the village of Medovka near the Georgian border. Here he has made the two-year commitment required to participate in the Program. “Teach for Armenia” also gives an opportunity to its teaching fellows to pursue a graduate degree—Choukhajian is getting his Master’s degree in History Education from a university in Gyumri.

The “Teach for Armenia” presentation highlighted the many opportunities the Program has for students. “Teach for Armenia” envisions an Armenia where all children, regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, have the opportunity to unlock their full potential through an excellent education.

If you are interested in joining the “Teach for Armenia” Fellowship please visit [teachforarmenia.org](http://teachforarmenia.org).

energy of this movement ensures that *The Promise* will continue to have an impact in the world.

As Garapedian concluded,

“as long as there continues to be denial, movies such as *The Promise* will have an important purpose.”

THE PROMISE, FROM PAGE 1

class partnered with the Armenian Studies Program to screen the film on Friday, September 29, during their fall lineup. A standing-room only audience of more than 300 was in attendance. Associate producer Carla Garapedian was present from Los Angeles to answer questions about the film and to relate some of the difficulties encountered during production.

Garapedian was very transparent about the future of *The Promise*, and how the producer’s vision influenced the production. “It was very important that the film have a long educational life.” With this in mind, the producers made the intentional decision of tailoring the film to earn a PG rating, so that it could ultimately be shown in schools.

However, this did conflict with the imagery that would usually be incorporated in a film about the Genocide. “We were making a movie that tells of horrible events,” Garapedian said, “but we couldn’t show the horror. We had to hint at [it].” Both she and director Terry George have past experience with making graphic documentaries. George’s film *Hotel Rwanda* received an R rating, and could not be shown in schools. Garapedian’s film *Screamers* also encountered the

same problem.

*The Promise’s* focus on the Armenian Genocide created a tense atmosphere before production even began. “Studios wouldn’t even accept a meeting about this film because of the topic,” explained Garapedian, “even though it was completely financed.” The \$90 million production was generously financed by the late philanthropist Kirk Kerkorian, ensuring that there was no financial risk for the production. The Turkish government put pressure on critics, actors, and even other governments to prevent the film from receiving support.

Garapedian and the team wanted as many Turkish actors as possible to have roles in the film, but many of those actors feared the backlash from their own country. Despite these challenges, the film premiered on April 21, 2017. The box office results may not seem successful from a Hollywood perspective, but in terms of awareness and education, the film is a success.

During the discussion following the screening, it was clear that many in the audience were interested in the history of the Armenian Genocide. Questions ranged from what were the motives of those who perpetrated the Genocide to why


the Turkish government continues its denial to this day. Garapedian delved into the history of the Genocide and explained her role as the “history wrangler” of *The Promise*. Her primary responsibility was to ensure that the film be as historically accurate as possible. The room lit up with inquisitive minds wanting to know more about the context of the film and the historical side of the story.

After several questions, the topic of Turkish denial was brought up. A member of the audience stood up, and identified himself and several others present as Turks. “The Turkish government may deny involvement in the Genocide, but we recognize it. We apologize for what our ancestors did to your people.” He went on to specifically identify himself as a Turkish Christian, who was working with a reconciliation movement called the Armenian Turkish Peace Initiative. After he concluded, the emotionally charged audience broke out into applause.

For many Armenians, this was something they never thought possible—an apology from a Turk. This event gives many hope that reconciliation between Armenians and Turks is a possibility in the near future. The


The California State University, Fresno  
Armenian Studies Program  
and the Leon S. Peters Foundation  
present

**“ARMENIA SUMMER STUDY PROGRAM 2017:  
REFLECTIONS”**  
by  
**Profs. Barlow Der Mugrdechian & Hagop Ohanessian  
and student participants of the Program**



The group met with the United States Ambassador to Armenia, Richard Mills, at the Embassy.

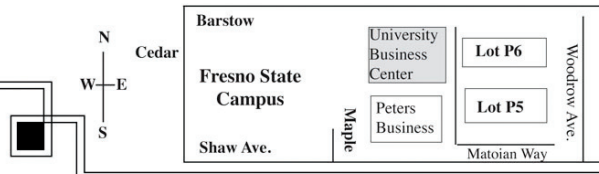
Professors Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Hagop Ohanessian led a group of thirteen students on the Armenia Summer Study Program, May 24-June 9, 2017. While in Armenia students visited the major cultural and religious sites in Armenia, including a visit to Holy Etchmiadzin. They visited the Armenian Martyrs Monument, and the Armenian Genocide Museum. A visit to Mer Hooys-House of Hope was especially meaningful. The group will share its reflections of the most memorable moments of the trip through videos and photographs. They will discuss the lasting impact of the trip to Armenia.



The Armenia group at Khor Virap.

**Tuesday, October 24, 2017  
7:30PM**  
**University Business Center •  
A. Peters Auditorium • Fresno State**

**Free admission. Parking in Lots P6 and P5 near the UBC.  
Use Permit Permit Code 273808 in kiosks to receive free parking permit.**



Armenian Studies Program, Fresno State • College of Arts and Humanities  
Department of Media Communications & Journalism • AGBU Greater Fresno Area • NAASR  
present a book reading by **ADRIENNE G. ALEXANIAN**, editor of

**Forced into Genocide** | **Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army**  
INTRODUCTION BY **SERGIO LA PORTA** | FOREWORD BY **ISRAEL W. CHARNY** | TRANSACTION BOOKS 2017

**Tuesday, November 14, 2017 7:30 PM**  
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The story of Yervant Alexanian...tells us the forgotten story of Armenians who served in the World War I Ottoman Army.  
— **ERIC BOGOSIAN**

**FORCED INTO GENOCIDE** is the riveting memoir of Yervant Edward Alexanian: an eye-witness to the massacre and displacement of his family and countrymen in Ottoman Turkey during World War I. Incredibly, Alexanian experienced the Armenian Genocide as a conscript in the Turkish army. His memoir is a one-of-a-kind “insider’s account,” documenting the Genocide’s astonishing cruelty but also its rare, unexpected acts of humanity. No comparable account exists in the literature of the Armenian Genocide. This edition, translated from Alexanian’s hand-written chronicle, includes rare documents and photos that the author preserved, a scholarly introduction, translator’s note, and other supportive matter.

“Moving, uplifting, and richly detailed...a gift to the Armenian community and, indeed, humanity.”  
— **DR. VARTAN GREGORIAN**

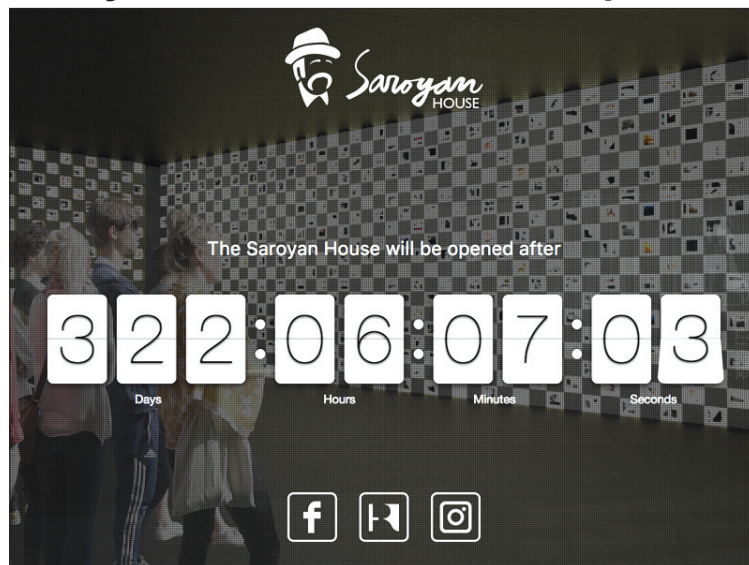
“Yervant’s story is an inescapable part of understanding another kind of suffering: the suffering of survivors.”  
— **DR. TANER AKÇAM**

“Unforgettable...His story is long overdue.”  
— **ANDREW GOLDBERG**

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About the author and editor of *Forced into Genocide*  
Born in Sivas, Turkey, **YERVANT ALEXANIAN** survived the Hamidian massacres as an infant to later fight for survival as a conscript in the Ottoman Turkish Army during the Armenian Genocide of 1915. He fled to America in 1920, where he spent his life advocating justice for his people.  
**ADRIENNE G. ALEXANIAN**, Yervant’s daughter, has spent years preparing her father’s manuscript for publication. She is an educator and a 2010 recipient of the Ellis Island Medal of Honor.

## Saroyan House Museum to Open in Fresno in 2018



### STAFF REPORT

Mark your calendars-Friday, August 31, 2018. That day will mark the 110th anniversary of the birth of Fresno native and internationally recognized author William Saroyan and will be celebrated with the grand opening of the Saroyan House Museum at 2729 W. Griffith Way in Fresno.

The Intellectual Renaissance Foundation, founded by Arthur Janibekyan, purchased Saroyan’s home in 2015, planning to transform it into a center for people from throughout the world to learn more about the life and work of William Saroyan.

Saroyan House Project director Avag Simonyan was in Fresno in October to initiate the renovations and will return to Fresno later this fall to manage the day-to-day activities of construction. Students who participated in the Armenia Summer Study Program 2017 visited the Saroyan House headquarters in Yerevan and were given an in-depth overview of the project.

Preliminary plans for the innovative House Museum have been completed with exterior work having already begun. Soon, interior reconstruction of the house will also take place. Meroujan Minasian of the Yerevan-based Storaket Architectural Studio, developed the plans for the Saroyan House Museum.

Karen Mirzoyan, curator and designer of the Saroyan House visited Fresno in April of 2017 to meet with local Armenians who

had known Saroyan. Mirzoyan also visited the office of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State where he was able to study the Saroyan collection held there and to discuss plans for the Museum with Armenian

Studies Program Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

A William Saroyan hologram is planned to be the centerpiece for the House Museum, providing an interactive interface for visitors with the writer.

Saroyan will be able to speak with the guests and show them around the House Museum.

The Saroyan hologram will perform a weekly “stand-up show” with guests, providing an interesting experience for the audience.

Saroyan’s characters will also appear within the walls of the House Museum, where the writer used to live.

More information about the Saroyan House museum is available through the following websites: Saroyanhouse.com; https://irf.am; and on Facebook @saroyanhouse.

**FRESNO STATE Armenian Studies Program, Fresno State & Hamazkayin Taniel Varoujan Chapter of Fresno PROUDLY PRESENTS**

**National Chamber Choir of ARMENIA**  
**Sunday, October 29th 2017, 6:00pm**  
The Concert Hall  
Fresno State East Music Building  
2380 E. Keats, Fresno, CA 93740  
FREE PARKING at the corner of Maple and Shaw Ave. Lot P1  
The Artistic Director and Conductor **Robert Mikeyan**

**Sofya Sayadyan** **Mavr Mkrtchyan** **Razmik Bagdasaryan** **Hovhannes Grigoryan** **Anahit Nersisyan**  
LOS ANGELES

Ticket price: **\$20 General admission, Free for students**  
For tickets or more information, call Nazik at 559-974-3089 or Baghos 559-392-3977

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