

HYE SHARZHOOM

Armenian Action

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39th Year

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Ethnic Supplement to The Collegian

Society for Armenian Studies Holds Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C.



Left to right: Dr. Richard Hovannisian, Asya Darbinyan, Varak Ketsemanian, Dr. Sylvia Kasparian, Ambassador Grigor Hovhannissian, Dr. Rouben Adalian, and SAS President Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian at the Armenian Embassy.

STAFF REPORT

Photo: ASP Archive

The Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) held a series of activities and a conference to mark its 44th Annual Meeting, held this year in Washington, D.C. The featured event was an international conference, “Transmitting Western Armenian to the Next Generation” that took place on Saturday, November

18. The innovative conference, co-sponsored by the Society for Armenian Studies (SAS) and the Armenian Communities Department of the Gulbenkian Foundation, was held at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, in Washington, D.C.

The SAS held its Annual Meeting on November 18,

SEE [SAS PAGE 7](#)

National Chamber Choir of Armenia Performs at Fresno State



The National Chamber Choir of Armenia performed October 29 at Fresno State.

DIANA GASPARYAN
STAFF WRITER

Gracing stages across the world, the National Chamber Choir of Armenia performed in Fresno State’s Concert Hall on Sunday, October 29. The Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State and the Hamazkayin Taniel Varoujan

Chapter of Fresno were co-sponsors for the event, which attracted an enthusiastic audience of more than 250. The internationally recognized 35-person choir has an extensive repertoire of songs, ranging from Bach and Debussy to Komitas and Tigranian. For the Fresno performance, the choir mainly

SEE [CHOIR PAGE 7](#)

Faculty and Students Report on Armenia Summer Study Trip 2017 to Community Audience

CLAIRE KASAIAN
STAFF WRITER

Professors Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Professor Hagop Ohanessian and students who participated in the Armenia Study Abroad Trip 2017, May 24-June 9, shared their reflections at a community lecture on Tuesday, October 24. Professor Der Mugrdechian introduced the students and thanked the Leon S. Peters Foundation and the Continuing Global Education Division at Fresno State for providing students with financial support to give students the opportunity to go on this trip.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian has led eight study-abroad trips to Armenia, beginning in 1988, with a total of 82 student participants.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian began the presentation with a PowerPoint that included maps and photos



Photo: Hourig Attarian

Left to right: Michael Rettig, Tatevik Hovhannisyan, David Safrazian, Claire Kasaiian, Annie Rubio, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Marine Vardanyan, Mitchell Peters, Shelbie Ohanessian, Dikran Dzhezyan, Marina Chardukian, Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, and Kara Statler.

from various regions of Armenia that the students visited. Dilijan, Haghartsin, the monastery of Geghard, the Temple of Garni, Holy Etchmiadzin, Lake Sevan,

Gyumri, and the monastery of Tatev were among the major sites visited.

Student participants of the trip
SEE [ARMENIA PAGE 4](#)

“Top Dog” Warren Paboojian Establishes Award

MICHAEL RETTIG
EDITOR



Fresno State Alumnus
Warren Paboojian

Photo: ASP Archive

The lasting impact that the Armenian Studies Program has had on its alumni is often reflected in the support these former students give to the Program. In the Fall 2017 semester, local attorney Warren Paboojian established the “Warren R. Paboojian Award” to annually recognize the Editor of *Hye Sharzhoom*. This award, funded by the Warren and Lesa

Paboojian Foundation, is the first designated to support *Hye Sharzhoom*.

Paboojian studied Journalism at Fresno State and graduated with his Bachelor’s degree in 1980. While a student, Paboojian wrote for *Insight*, the then Journalism Department’s newspaper, as well as the student-run *Daily Collegian*. When a group of his classmates, including Mark

SEE [PABOOJIAN PAGE 6](#)

Türkyılmaz Appointed as 14th Kazan Visiting Prof.

STAFF REPORT

Armenian Studies Program Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian announced Dr. Yektan Türkyılmaz has been appointed the 14th Henry S. Khanzadian Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies at Fresno State for the Spring 2018 semester. The Kazan Visiting Professorship was established through a generous endowment established by Henry S. Kazan. Dr. Richard Hovannisian was appointed as the first incumbent to the position in Fall of 2000.

Dr. Türkyılmaz’s area of interest is in the interplay between the political and historical processes in producing cultural meaning and collective identities. His research addresses collective violence, social movements, trauma, and the politics of historical memory in the former

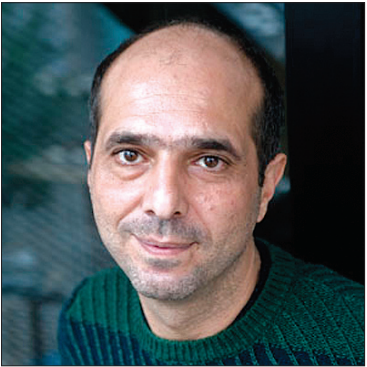


Photo: ASP Archive

Dr. Yektan Türkyılmaz

territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Dr. Türkyılmaz will be teaching a three-unit course in the Spring Semester, “A Social, Cultural, and Political History of Armenian Urbanism.” This course will survey the social, political, and cultural dynamics throughout the Armenian Renaissance — 1863-1918, exploring urban life in the three Armenian centers of modernization: Van, Tiflis, and

Constantinople. The seminar will elaborate on various intellectual trends and influences in these three centers involving two empires. This course gives a comparative and multi-disciplinary perspective on the trajectory of Armenian modernization and its intellectual and cultural consequences.

The course aims to offer students an assessment of the Ottoman Armenian communities on the eve of the catastrophe, providing them with a solid and critical understanding of the antecedents of the Genocide.

Dr. Türkyılmaz completed his doctoral dissertation on “Rethinking Genocide: Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1915” at Duke University in 2011. The dissertation is a study of the essential role of discourses

SEE [TÜRKYILMAZ PAGE 2](#)

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.

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. Volume 4 in a series of books on Armenians published by the Hrant Dink Foundation.

George Hintlian, Old City Jerusalem, for a copy of *Khatchkar: The Art of the Khatchkar* by Haroutioun Khatchadourian and Michel Basmadjian (Geuthner, 2014), 441pp., in French. This beautifully illustrated volume gives a detailed history of the Armenian Khatchkar (Stone-cross).

Ambassador Grigor Hovhannissian, Washington, D.C, for the book *Jean Kazandjian* (Los Angeles, 2008), 319pp., in French and English. This is an album devoted to the work of the noted artist Jean Kazandjian.

Gary A. Kulhanjian, Rancho Cucamonga, for a copy of *A Shirt for the Brave* by Hagop K. Beshlian, with an introduction by Gary A. Kulhanjian (London: Gomidas Institute, 2017), 88pp., in English. The book is an account of the life of Dr. Beshlian, who was conscripted into the Ottoman army in World War I, serving in Gallipoli, Poland, Iraq, and Palestine. He later returned to his birthplace of Urfa, but then immigrated to the United States after the Kemalists established control of the area.

Ara Madzounian, Los Angeles, for a copy of his new book, *Birds Nest: A Photographic Essay of Bourj Hammoud* (2017). The book is a photographic tribute to the residents of Bourj Hammoud, Beirut, Lebanon. Madzounian, an independent producer, director, and cinematographer, wanted “to create a lasting legacy about a place, which for more than 50 years served as cultural, intellectual and political beacon for the Armenian Diaspora.”

Dr. Vartan Matiossian and Dr. Artsvi Bakhchinyan, for a copy of *The Dancer of Shamakha: Life and Work of Armen Ohanian* (Yerevan: Publishing House of the State Museum of Literature and Art, 2007), 221pp., in Armenian, with English, French, Spanish, Russian, and Persian summaries. The book is devoted to the life of Armen Ohanian, an Armenian dancer, actress, writer, and woman of letters during most of the twentieth century.

Ara Sarafian, Gomidas Institute, London, United Kingdom, for copies of three new publications: *Van 1915: The Great Events of Vasbouragan* by A-Do (Gomidas Institute, 2017), 318pp. in English. It is the most detailed report on what happened to Armenians in the Ottoman province of Van in 1915; *Through the Depths: A True Life Story of the Armenian Genocide* by Souren Hanessian (Gomidas Institute, 2017), 74pp., in English, which tells the story of Hanessian’s deportation from Garin (Erzeroum) and subsequent journey until his arrival in the United States; and *A Shirt for the Brave* by Hagop Beshlian (2017), 88pp., in English, which tells the account of Beshlian’s life.

TÜRKYILMAZ, FROM PAGE 1

of victimhood in fueling ethnic conflict, and even, genocide. At the intersection of anthropology, political science and history, the project sheds new light on the always contentious and sometimes violent ethno-territorial struggles among Turks, Kurds and Armenians over the region of Eastern Anatolia dating back to the mid-19th century.

Drawing on three years of multi-sited archival, library and ethnographic research, he traced the historical trajectory of the conflict, and how competing conceptions of victimhood have emerged and circulated in the decades before the Armenian Genocide.

As part of his duties, Dr. Türkyılmaz will give three public lectures: 1) “Armenian Political Organizations/Community Institutions and the Ottoman State During the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1915)”; 2) Armenians on Records: Music Production from Homeland to Diasporas

(1900-1938)”; and 3) “Collective Anxiety and Competition from Justice: The Mysterious Murder Case of Melkon Mir-Sakoyan in Van, September 1913.”

The first lecture will address the radical shift of political hierarchy within the Armenian community of Van, and will demonstrate how a new matrix of power relations emerged vis-à-vis Armenian organizations’ respective connections with the Committee of Union and Progress, undermining the status of the Armenian Patriarchate.

Lecture two will explore the production of Armenian 78 RPM recordings in the Ottoman Empire (1900-1922), as compared with those produced in the United States.

His talk will address how the Genocide in the homeland and other political upheavals resonated in the records released in the diaspora.

Hnchak activist dentist Melkon Mir-Sakoyan was murdered under mysterious circumstances in 1913. Lecture three will focus

California State University, Fresno

Armenian Studies Program

Spring 2018 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
General Education-Breadth, Humanities, Area C2				
• Arm 1B-Elementary Armenian (Class #32357)	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	B. Der Mugrdechian
General Education-Breadth, Arts, Area C1				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #33475)	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
General Education-Breadth, Area D3				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #33569)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	H. Ohanessian
General Education-Integration, Area IC				
• Arm 148-Mastrcps Arm Cult (Class #33592)	3	3:30P-4:45P	MW	H. Ohanessian
Upper Division Armenian Studies Course				
• 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.

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

HYE SHARZHOOM

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on the background of that murder, with information drawn from official Ottoman documents, Armenian newspapers, and memoirs.

Dr. Türkyılmaz has completed post-doctoral research fellowships at Forum Transregionale Studien in Berlin, Germany, and at Duke University’s Department of Cultural Anthropology.

Dr. Türkyılmaz has conducted his dissertation fieldwork in Turkey, Armenia, the United States, and Austria and has taught courses at Bilgi University, Sabancı University, and Duke University among others.

He is fluent in Turkish, English, Armenian, Kurdish, and Ottoman Turkish.

Give Your Way to the Armenian Studies Program

There are many ways to support the Armenian Studies Program.

1) A gift today could come through the donation of cash, stock, or goods.

2) The Armenian Studies Program can also be supported in the future in estate plans.

Regardless of how a donation is made, each gift impacts the lives of students and faculty at Fresno State.

Armenian Studies Program

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Panel Discussion on “Armenian and Turks: Challenges and New Paths Forward Towards Reconciliation”



Left to right: Michael Rettig, Peter Safrastian, Suzanna Ekmekchyan, Arthur Khatchatrian, David Safrastian, Noel Nightingale, Kara Statler, Cole Egoian, Kathleen Chavoor-Bergen, Dr. Jay Pope, Ashkhen Chamasanyan, Marina Chardukian, and Claire Kasaian after the panel discussion.

Photo: Barlow Der Muqrdechian

are unlikely to bring peace between Armenians and Turks as long as there is animosity between people on the ground. Turkish and Armenian grassroots efforts are thus necessary to advocate for reconciliation and build future relationships. “Changing the hearts and minds of Turkish citizens is the only way to attain recognition, begin reconciliation, and sustain peaceful relations.”

The ATPI is one such organization dedicated to mending the divide between Turks and Armenians. Pastor Matthew first became aware of the Armenian Genocide when he was studying in England in the 1970s. It was there that he became a Christian, which altered his worldview.

When the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) started to assassinate Turkish diplomats, Matthew began to wonder what their motives were. Matthew, who was exposed to books in England that were not permitted in Turkey, began to read about the Armenian Genocide for the first time. “It was painful to realize my ancestors could have done such inhumane things to the people they had lived with for centuries.”

Pastor Paul’s childhood as a Kurdish Alevi (religious sect) helped him understand the Armenian issue. Paul recalled growing up fearful of government sponsored persecution of Alevis. His parents warned him not to tell anyone he was Kurdish or Alevi. “We grew up with the sense that being different in Turkey is not easy, so when I first heard about the Armenian issue, it wasn’t a surprise.”

While the Armenian issue was not discussed during Matthew’s schooling in Turkey, Paul remembered being taught that Armenians betrayed the Turks and were thus “defeated.” However, Paul’s parents and other local Turks described the Armenians as good neighbors and hard workers. “While Turkish Christians used to be the minority in Armenian churches, Armenian Christians are now the minority in Turkish churches. I would love to have more Armenians in my church so they can be an example to the Turks with their forgiveness, commitment to Christ, and steadfastness in the face of suffering.”

Both Paul and Matthew consider Armenians the forerunners of their faith and appreciate the warm reception they have received in Armenian-American congregations. It takes these personal relationships—built upon commonalities, such as religion—to bridge the deep schism between Armenians and Turks, thus paving the way for reconciliation on a larger scale.

they carry. He noted that the topic of forgiveness has been largely understudied in the field of Psychology, as the first book that received widespread attention on the topic was not published until 1984. Dr. Pope stressed that although forgiveness is an intangible social construct, its importance is in the effect it has on people.

“It is one thing to say ‘I forgive you,’” said Dr. Pope, “it is an entirely different thing to assess whether that is having a measurable effect on your life.” Dr. Pope noted research is revealing that the act of forgiving has numerous health benefits to those who practice it, while refusing to forgive one’s perpetrator induces stress, cardiac illnesses, and various other harmful manifestations. He argued that forgiving the Turkish people does not mean Armenians need to give up their desire for justice and recognition, only the bitterness they feel towards Turks. Forgiveness thus restores humanity to the Turkish people in the hearts of Armenians, without minimizing the crime of genocide.

Chavoor-Bergen similarly stressed the role forgiveness has in not only the process of self-healing, but also in preventing trauma from being perpetuated. According to Chavoor-Bergen, severe trauma could alter one’s DNA on a molecular level and thus be transmitted to future generations. She argued that it is important for Armenians to focus inwardly, as a culture and as individuals, in order to process trauma in a healthy manner.

Nightingale urged the audience to evaluate their attitudes towards Turks. “Hostility will hinder well-intentioned Turks from addressing the issue of the Genocide. Through forgiveness we can change the response of our oppressors.” According to Nightingale, political initiatives

MICHAEL RETTIG
EDITOR

The potential for reconciliation between Armenians and Turks seems distant given Turkey’s century-long denial of the deep wounds it inflicted on the Armenian people. Though the Turkish government remains constant in its policy of denial, a growing number of Turkish citizens have reexamined their government’s position on the Armenian Genocide over the past decade. In 2014, a group of Turkish and Armenian Christian pastors gathered in the United States to discuss the barriers dividing their people and the potential for reconciliation on the foundation of their shared faith. The Turkish pastors spoke to several Armenian congregations in California, asking for forgiveness for what their people did in 1915. Out of this meeting emerged the Armenian Turkish Peace Initiative (ATPI).

On Tuesday, October 3, the Armenian Studies Program hosted a panel discussion, “Armenians and Turks: Challenges and New Paths Forward Towards Reconciliation” to explore the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation between Armenians and Turks. The panel was chaired by Dr. Jay Pope, Associate Professor of Psychology at Fresno Pacific University, and included Kathleen Chavoor-Bergen, a school therapist in the Fresno Unified School District; Noelle Daoudian Nightingale, a conflict resolution trainer; and two Turkish pastors from the ATPI, who will be referred to by the pseudonyms Matthew and Paul, because of concerns for their safety when they return to Turkey.

Dr. Pope opened the panel by providing a theoretical background to the concept of forgiveness. Chavoor-Bergen and Nightingale followed with their unique perspectives on trauma and reconciliation. The panel concluded with a discussion between Dr. Pope, the audience, and the Turkish pastors.

In his introduction, Dr. Pope examined definitions of forgiveness and the implications

Nubar Library in Paris Subject of Presentation by Dr. Boris Adjemian



Left to right: Cole Egoian, Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, David Safrastian, Kara Statler, Dr. Boris Adjemian, Marina Chardukian, Michael Rettig, and Dr. Sergio La Porta.

Photo: Barlow Der Muqrdechian

DAVID SAFRAZIAN
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Boris Adjemian gave a thought-provoking presentation on “The AGBU Nubar Library in Paris: Safeguarding Western Armenian Heritage through Documentation, Research, and Publication” on Monday, October 9, as part of the Armenian Studies Program Fall Lecture Series. In addition, Dr. Adjemian spoke about “The Armenians in Ethiopia,” which was also the topic of his dissertation.

Dr. Adjemian is a historian and the director of the AGBU Nubar Library, founded by Boghos Nubar Pasha in 1928. The library serves to preserve the memory and heritage of Ottoman Armenians, especially after the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the dispersion of the Armenians. The library has a collection of over 40,000 books, 1,500 periodicals, and more than 10,000 archival photographs, produced from the 1890s to the 1940s.

Scholars, historians, filmmakers, and doctoral candidates often utilize the vast archives of the Library to conduct their research. The archives are divided into four parts: The Andonian Collection; the Archives of the Patriarchate of Istanbul; the Archives of the Armenian National Delegation, and the AGBU archives. The archives of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) represent a major resource for the study of AGBU and other philanthropic organizations’ activities for the welfare of and in aid of Armenian orphans and refugees after World War I, and particularly in the 1920s.

Since 2013, the Nubar Library has published a bilingual (French, English) multi-disciplinary journal, *Études arméniennes contemporaines*. This biannual journal is the first Armenian Studies periodical to be published online, where it is fully available in open access at <https://eac.revues.org/>, with the support of Cléo (Centre for open electronic publishing).

The Nubar Library’s website has a virtual exhibition on the Armenian Genocide of 1915, based on the exhibition initiated by the Mayor of Paris and presented at the Paris City Hall in 2015. The website for the Nubar

Library is <http://www.bnulibrary.org/index.php/en/>.

Dr. Adjemian’s presentation on the Armenians of Ethiopia was conveyed through the stories of individual Armenians who had made an impact in the country. One of these was a photographer by the name of Hrant, who had opened his photographic store in Addis Abbaba in the 1920s. The Armenians played a foundational role in the art of photography not only in Ethiopia, but in the Middle East.

The genesis of the Armenian community began with immigration to Ethiopia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The first major phase of Armenians was from the regions of Arabkir and Agn in the province of Kharpert. According to Dr. Adjemian, there were between only 150 and 200 Armenians in Ethiopia on the eve of World War I in 1913. After the Armenian Genocide, a second phase of immigration began, mostly of Armenians from Aintab. By the late 1920’s there were about 1,200 Armenians in Ethiopia, forming the high point in terms of numbers for the community.

Dr. Adjemian has been studying the Armenian community of Ethiopia for more than twenty years, and he fortuitously discovered several albums of photographs while working late one night at the Library. This brought to light the remarkable story of 40 Armenian orphan boys from the region of Van, who were living in the Araratian orphanage in Jerusalem. The crown prince of Ethiopia, Ras Teferi Mekonnen (the future Emperor Haile Selassie), was on a diplomatic tour of Europe in the 1920s, but his first stop was in Jerusalem to show his support for the Ethiopian Church.

While in Jerusalem, Ras Teferi also visited the Armenian Patriarchate and heard a brass band composed of the orphan boys, playing in his honor. He was so impressed that he requested that the band return with him to Ethiopia to become the official band of the Emperor and of the country.

The Armenian Patriarch agreed to this proposal, and so the 40 Armenian boys were sent

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Armenia Presentation Recalls Fond Memories



Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

Left to right: Mitchell Peters, Tatevik Hovhannisyan, Marine Vardanyan, Esther Oganyan, Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, Di-kran Dzhezyan, Shelbie Ohanesian, David Safrastian, Mary Oganyan, Claire Kasaian, Annie Rubio, Marina Chardukian, Kara Statler, and Michael Rettig at Saghmosavank.

ARMENIA, FROM PAGE 1

in the audience laughed as they recalled memories associated with each photo. Prof. Der Mugrdechian planned major day-trips around significant monasteries, which were not only interesting end-destinations themselves, but provided a reason to see the diverse regions of Armenia. Prof. Der Mugrdechian noted that many of the places students visited had long and intricate histories.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian explained that Yerevan celebrated its 2,799th anniversary in 2017. Students were able to visit the ancient Urartian fortress of Erebuni, which is considered the original site of the future Yerevan. “One of the things I wanted to get across to our students was the concept that Armenia is not just a modern place of restaurants and

cafés, but a place with a long and important history,” said Prof. Der Mugrdechian.

In addition to day trips, Prof. Der Mugrdechian took students to important sites within Yerevan, such as the Matenadaran (Library of Manuscripts), the Vernissage (outdoor market), museums, and historic sites. Students had some free afternoons and evenings to explore the city of Yerevan. The group stayed at the Ani Plaza Hotel, which because of its location was a convenient central starting point. “I think the students appreciated the fact that you could walk out of the Ani Plaza Hotel and in ten minutes be in the most active parts of the city,” said Prof. Der Mugrdechian.

Professor Hagop Ohanessian then shared his reflections of the trip to Armenia, his first in 10 years. Prof. Ohanessian described the many changes he noticed, such as

the changes to the infrastructure. As a Syrian-Armenian himself, Prof. Ohanessian related how grateful he was to be able to meet Syrian-Armenian refugees and learn about their experiences in Armenia. Many of them opened Western Armenian restaurants in Armenia. “Eating at these restaurants reminded me of the traditional foods prepared by my own family,” said Prof. Ohanessian. He was also able to reunite with his mother’s cousin and her family. In conversation with many of these refugees, Prof. Ohanessian noted that many of them remained homesick for Syria.

Prof. Ohanessian shared that the most rewarding part of the trip for him was witnessing the students’ reactions to the country. “They were curious and asked great questions wherever we went. They were able to put into practice all that they had learned in the classroom.”

One of the student participants, Marine Vardanyan, concluded by sharing the students’ point of view of the trip with photos and video. Other students were welcomed to give their reflections on the trip during Vardanyan’s presentation.

One of the students’ most memorable impressions was of their three visits to the Mer Hooys-House of Hope home for disadvantaged girls. Two students, Annie Rubio and Shelbie Ohanesian, related how those visits left a deep impact upon them. They both said that visiting the girls was one of the highlights of the trip. It is not hard to say that the students had a very memorable trip with memories that will last a lifetime.

Students Reflect on Their Experiences in Armenia



Mitchell Peters and Marine Vardanyan.

MARINE VARDANYAN

Visiting Armenia is always a special experience, but this trip in particular was one of my favorites. I was already well acquainted with the country and its customs, having been born in Armenia and having visiting many times. However, there is always something new to learn with each experience. The trip itself was more special to me this time because I was there with my fiancé and dearest friends. Embracing our roots and exploring the country, as well as participating in many exciting activities, strengthened my desire to be even more connected and engaged with the Armenian community.

I was most impacted by my experience with the girls of Mer Hooys-House of Hope. From my

first encounter with the girls who ranged from 8-14 years old, I was touched by their friendliness, trust, and eagerness to please their guests. I was overwhelmed by their ability to be so loving towards us, having only met us on two to three occasions. Each interaction was filled with positive emotions, smiles, and laughter. Playing dodgeball, dancing, and simply socializing with them made me realize how important it is for these young girls, who come from a variety of challenging backgrounds, to have positive role models in their lives. Had I not met these girls and learned about their stories, I would not be aware of how life really is for many young Armenians with disadvantaged backgrounds. This experience not only made me grateful for my own circumstances, but also evoked a strong admiration for the girls, who have done so well despite their adversities, and for all the individuals who work to empower them.

I hope to stay involved so that when I return in the future, I can support the valuable work done at Mer Hooys. The girls and I made a promise to one another to never forget each other, and I hope I can keep this promise by continuing to maintain a supportive connection with them.

My attitude and perception of Armenia has changed since this trip. Now, I no longer see my future visits as a “vacation.” Instead, I hope it can be an opportunity to serve and work towards improving the country and the lives of those who live there. Visits with a purpose are much more powerful because they not only bring fulfillment, but they also positively impact the lives of others. I would like to dedicate future trips towards working with Mer Hooys to help the girls of the program achieve successful and secure lives.

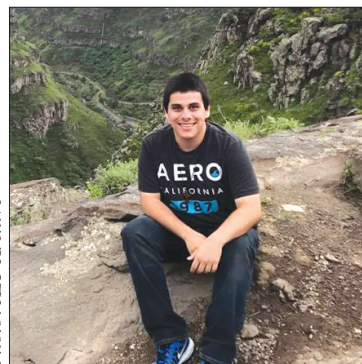


Photo: ASP Archive

DAVID SAFRAZIAN

Visiting Armenia was a great time in my life and I learned so many new things about the country and the history. The visit has had a big impact on my life and created fond memories that I will always remember.

The most significant impact

Adrienne Alexanian Presents on Father’s Memoirs at Fresno State



Left to right: Jim Melikian, Fresno State President Dr. Joseph Castro, Adrienne Alexanian, and Prof. Betsy Hays.

Photo: Tom Uribes, University Communications

ANNIE RUBIO STAFF WRITER

We cannot change the events that led to the Armenian Genocide in 1915. However, we, as Armenians, can choose how we are remembered in the years to come. Yervant Alexanian chose to be remembered as a prolific writer and activist, and was one of the few Armenian soldiers who were conscripted into the Ottoman Turkish Army in 1915 and who survived.

Alexanian’s memoir, *Forced into Genocide: Memoirs of an Armenian Soldier in the Ottoman Turkish Army* (Transaction Publishers, 2017), was edited by his daughter Adrienne Alexanian, who visited Fresno State for a book reading on Tuesday, November 14. *Forced into Genocide* has received praise from many prominent scholars and has been a valuable means for increasing awareness of the Armenian Genocide.

Dr. Sergio La Porta, Haig &

Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies at Fresno State wrote a moving introduction for the book, which was translated from Armenian into English by Simon Beugekian. Dr. Israel Charny, executive director of the Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide in Jerusalem wrote the foreword to the volume.

The lecture was a collaborative effort sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State, the College of Arts & Humanities, the Department of Media, Communications & Journalism, the Greater Fresno Area AGBU, the Knights of Vartan, and NAASR. Jim Melikian, aka “The Popcorn Man,” was instrumental in the planning and the promotion of the event, which drew an overflow audience of more than 200.

Yervant Alexanian was a prominent member of the Armenian community, and several of his articles had appeared in

SEE [ALEXANIAN PAGE 8](#)

of the visit to Armenia was the change in my personal life. During the weeks spent in Armenia, I felt more connected with my homeland than I ever have. Even though I didn’t know the language well, I never felt like I was out of place. I gradually have come out of my shell more throughout the trip and have continued that through my time back home.

I want to come back again and again to see this beautiful country.

I never realized all the connections that were in Armenia that involved Fresno and Fresno natives. Someday I would love to be involved in something in Armenia that will help people there. I love technology and science and volunteering at the Tumo Center would be wonderful.

I have learned more about Armenia and this not only makes me want to learn more and more, but now when I learn the history I can say that I have been there and I can make personal connections.

I expected to enjoy Armenia and was excited and thrilled that I would be going on an amazing journey. What I discovered is that I had the best time of my life. I wish I had been able to spend more time in Armenia. I hope I am able to go back many times in the future.

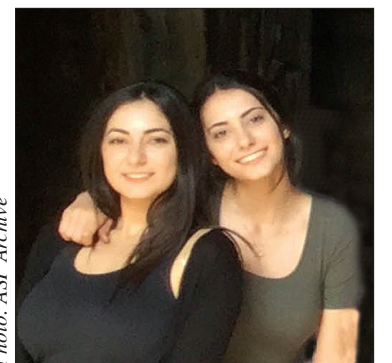


Photo: ASP Archive

Esther Oganyan, left, with Mary Oganyan.

ESTHER OGANYAN

Returning to America from Armenia was a challenge. My sister Mary and I didn’t want to come back as we were enjoying every second of the trip!

The most significant impact I walked away with was learning that people come from different walks of life, and it’s important to understand they are different and not judge but learn from them. I loved seeing the different regions of Armenia and seeing how people lived differently.

My feelings towards Armenia changed three-hundred and sixty degrees. The trip was overwhelming and amazing to say the least! I am so grateful to Professor Der Mugrdechian

SEE [REFLECTIONS PAGE 5](#)

Armenian Students Organization Enjoys Halloween and Thanksgiving Activities



Photo: ASP Archive

ASO members at the Halloween Party.

SUZANNA EKMEKCHYAN
STAFF WRITER

The Armenian Student Organization has had a busy month filled with many fun and exciting new activities. To celebrate Halloween, ASO organized a trip to Hobbs Grove, a popular Halloween haunted

corn-maze. When they weren't screaming from fright, the members were bonding with each other over the terrifying attractions. The experience was exhilarating and gave the members a fun way to get into the Halloween spirit. Continuing the Halloween festivities, ASO also organized a

scary-fun costume party. It was filled with spooky decorations and delicious food. All of those in attendance wore a variety of costumes and had a blast playing games. The Executive organized a game similar to "Heads Up," where members had to guess the Halloween character that was written on the card held above their heads. Everyone was talking and laughing, having the time of their life. The members spent the evening making memories that will last a life-time.

ASO welcomed in November and members voted to hold a "Friendsgiving" to celebrate Thanksgiving. The ASO Executive members reached out to ASO members and other students in order to encourage participation. The dinner was a potluck, with a wide variety of food items, making for an amazing dinner. The night was all about being thankful for having great friendships and reflecting about



Photo: ASP Archive

ASO enjoyed a "Friendsgiving" meal on Tuesday, November 21 at the Ekmechyan family home. This was the first time that ASO had planned such an event, which everyone enjoyed.

all that we are blessed with on a day-to-day basis. On December 15, ASO will hold their annual Christmas Party. There will be food, great music, dancing, a photo booth, a raffle, and a silent auction. ASO is planning for an unforgettable night for everyone. The tickets are \$25.00 and include a free raffle ticket. The Executive encourages all members to attend so that the club can have one final celebration for the end of the semester full of hard work and dedication.

REFLECTIONS, FROM PAGE 4 and Professor Ohanessian giving the students at Fresno State the opportunity to visit such a remarkable country and to show us places that we otherwise would not have ever been able to see. The early mornings and long nights were definitely a challenge but worth it beyond words. I continue to talk about the trip, the memories I've made, the people I've met and the countless laughs and joy I have experienced. My only regret was waiting this long to visit Armenia.



Photo: ASP Archive

MITCHELL PETERS

It was different this time around. Gone were the days of uncertainty and the search of finding my place in the Armenian culture. Since my last trip to this mystifying country, some twelve years ago, I've enjoyed an interesting journey through professionalism and love. I moved from Fresno to Los Angeles, from 2006 through 2008, then back to Fresno in 2014, and about a year later, drifted into the heart of Marine Vardanyan—my new companion in this voyage of self-discovery. Before Marine, I was alone, aimlessly searching for a connection with my ethnic roots, Armenian blood flowing through my veins, not truly understanding how that should make me feel. I was a third-generation Armenian American who grew up with the culture and spirit but still felt disconnected from it. We're all born into confusion, tossed into a world of love and chaos—or perhaps the other way around.

There is little time to reflect and find answers. It's even more difficult when one attempts to discover meaning alone. Circles, round and round. The daily struggle is easier now and a certain burden has been lifted. With Marine, who is now my wife to be, each passing day is filled with a cultural richness I thought would never exist. The void has been filled. But I digress. About halfway through our two-week trip in Armenia, I was standing near the elevator of the Ani Plaza Hotel mezzanine, on my way to eat another magnificent breakfast, when I overheard an Armenian-American girl talking to a friend about her final day in the homeland. It was her second trip to Armenia and she noted there was less pressure this time around to see everything—the endless ancient churches and other historical tourists sites. Hearing this, I realized I felt the same way. Instead of having the need to see every last place, I was able to sit back and soak it all in, feeling more like a native than a tourist. This wouldn't have been possible without Marine by my side, giving me a behind-the-scenes peek into the everyday lives of the Armenian people. Let me explain. One of the major disappointments of my first trip to Armenia was not getting the authentic experience of what it's like to live in Armenia. I was envious of my fellow students who visited family members' homes in Yerevan and got a glimpse behind the curtain. In the weeks prior to our most recent visit, Marine warned me that her family would want to spend as much time with us as possible. She wasn't kidding. Upon our arrival to Zvartnots International Airport, numerous members of her family greeted us at the gates, overjoyed with happiness. Her uncle and cousin were there, along with the cousin's wife and newborn son, along with some family friends whom I had previously met in Los Angeles. I

joked how Marine looked like a homecoming queen because of the lovely batches of roses they gave to her. That wasn't the end of the flower giving. Later, those same family members would invite us into their homes, take us out to nice restaurants and cafes, help us explore hidden regions, and do everything in their power to make us feel welcome and at home. This indeed proved what many had already told me: that Armenian locals are perhaps some of the most friendly and hospitable people on the planet. Marine's family and friends welcomed me with completely opened arms and made me feel as if I belonged. Of course, there are many great memories I have from this latest trip to Armenia, like the absolutely amazing view of Mt. Ararat from my hotel room window, the grand tour of the Ararat cognac factory, and our heartwarming visits to Mer Hooys, with the most inspiring young girls you'd ever meet, but it was Marine and the new doors she opened for me that made this trip to Armenia one I will never, ever forget.



Photo: ASP Archive

MARINA CHARDUKIAN

This was my first time going to Armenia and I can honestly say it was a trip I will never forget. We experienced so many special things, it's hard to put into words the things that have changed in me and as a group. We have become closer to our culture and closer as a group of individuals who are now friends.



Armenian Students Organization

Christmas Party

Friday, December 15 • 6:30PM

Photo Booth • Silent Auction • Dancing • Food • Raffle

Tickets are only \$25 per person

First Armenian Presbyterian Church Social Hall

430 S. First Street, Fresno

RSVP to fresnoaso@gmail.com

hyekfsr@gmail.com or call 559-916-0074!"/>

The whole country of Armenia, or at least the parts we visited, were so beautiful and did not compare to pictures at all. When I started at Fresno state it had not really crossed my mind that I would go one day to Armenia. I wanted to learn all I could at Fresno State by getting my Minor in Armenian Studies. When the opportunity to travel to Armenia was available, I took advantage and the experience has changed me for the better. I learned some simple things like there is a whole other way of life that we do not always see. But that comes with traveling to another country. This was different, these people came from the same place I did, we just ended up in different places in the world, different realities, different lives. This whole experience was exactly that, an experience that I will never forget. This was a learning experience, I enjoyed every minute of it.

NUBAR LIBRARY, FROM PAGE 3 to Ethiopia, forming the Royal Brass Band of Ethiopia. Accompanying the band was their conductor Kevork Nalbandian, who became the chief composer of the Ethiopian court and was asked by the Emperor to create the first National Anthem of Ethiopia. That National Anthem continued to be played until the Ethiopian revolution of 1974. Dr. Adjemian's presentation was informative and fascinating and shed light on a little-known but important Armenian Diasporan community.

President's Leadership Council Meets in October



Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, center standing, addressing members of the President's Leadership Council. The meeting was held in the Viticulture and Enology Center Conference Room.

STAFF REPORT

The President's Armenian Leadership Council held its first gathering of the Fall semester at the Viticulture and Enology Conference Room on October 4, 2017. Fresno State President Dr. Joseph I. Castro greeted the Leadership Council members, who were to receive updates from faculty and administrators.

The Leadership Council had a special treat in store as Kevin Smith of the Enology Program at Fresno State was present to discuss three different varieties of wines that were served along with lunch. The wines were a product of the Fresno State Enology program and Smith presented each wine with an explanation as to the origins of the grapes used in the wine-making process.

Dr. President Castro then discussed some of the new campus priorities for the year. He remarked on the progress the university has made in improving graduation rates and also noted that *Washington Monthly* had named Fresno State as the nation's number 17 best university.

College of Arts and Humanities Associate Dean Dr. Honora Chapman then highlighted some of the goals of the College and how community support is integral to the flourishing of academic programs. The

Armenian Studies Program is one of ten departments and programs housed within the College.

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program, gave an overview of the activities and accomplishments of the Program during the past year.

The Armenian Studies Program offered six courses in the Fall semester: in art, language, literature, culture, and history. All of the courses were well enrolled and there are a number of excellent students who are engaged in the Program and in the Armenian Students Organization.

The Armenian Studies Program has continued to enjoy the support from the Leon S. Peters Foundation for a fifth year and from the Bertha and John Garabedian Foundation. The Program has also received support from the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation for special events. This year a new scholarship fund was established by the Robert Saroyan Family Foundation and a new Warren R. Paboojian award was established for the editor of *Hye Sharzhoom* by the Warren and Lesa Paboojian Family Foundation.

The Armenian Studies Program has sponsored a variety of community events during the Fall semester including an international conference,

"Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds: A Peoples' History of the Ottoman Empire," a panel discussion on "Armenians and Turks: Challenges and New Paths Forward towards Reconciliation" and lectures by Christopher Atamian, Dr. Boris Adjemian, and author Adrienne Alexanian who spoke on her father's memoir, *Forced into Genocide*, before an over-flow audience. A special screening of the movie "The Promise" on September 29 and a concert by the National Chamber Choir of Armenia held on October 29 were both great successes. Faculty and students gave a well-received presentation on the "Armenia Summer Study Trip 2017" on October 24.

In the Spring semester of 2018 the Armenian Studies Program is already planning two special events. On Friday, March 2, 2018, the Program is bringing the Chilingirian-Bagratiuni-Hakobyan Trio to Fresno for a concert and the Program's 30th Annual Banquet is scheduled for Sunday, March 11, 2018 at Ft. Washington Country Club.

Last summer Prof. Sergio La Porta, Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies, taught a five-week intensive course in Classical Armenian at St. John's University in Minnesota and he announced plans for a second year of the class that will be held at Fresno State in June of 2018.

Debbie Adishian-Astone, Vice-President for Administration at Fresno State, gave an update on the Armenian Genocide Monument. She stated that an Endowment Fund had been established to provide support for maintenance of the Monument. The Fund will be administered through the Armenian Studies Program and the College of Arts and Humanities.

Dr. President Castro concluded the meeting by opening the floor to comments and questions from the members. The next meeting of the Council will be in March 2018.

Photo: Moon-Ja Yun

Intro to Arm. Studies Class Engenders Student Interest in Armenian Culture



Standing, Prof. Hagop Ohanessian with students of the Armenian Studies 10 class, who are learning about Armenian culture.

Photo: Michael Rettig

KARA STATLER AND
ARTHUR KHATCHATRIAN
STAFF WRITERS

This semester Professor Hagop Ohanessian is teaching Armenian Studies 10, Introduction to Armenian Studies, a class dedicated to giving Armenian and non-Armenian students the opportunity to become more familiar with Armenian culture and history. This introductory course covers topics from the conversion of the Armenian people to Christianity, to learning about Armenians in Fresno.

Prof. Ohanessian enjoys teaching the course because he has always been intrigued about the Armenian Diaspora and the contributions of Armenians in countries around the world. His Master's degree thesis was a survey of Armenian women in the United States in the 20th century, focusing on the Armenian Relief Society founded in 1910.

Ohanessian took the Armenian Studies 10 course when he was a student at Fresno State and he later graduated with a Minor in Armenian Studies.

"My own personal experience makes me more aware of what is happening in the world and so I want to help students make a similar connection," said Ohanessian. "I enjoy engaging students in discussion and I like to hear student perspectives."

Students are enthusiastic about the course and enjoy learning about Armenia and its people. They read books, engage in discussions, and watch documentaries to help them better understand Armenian culture and identity.

The Armenian Genocide

"Trial Lawyer of the Year." He was similarly selected the Cal-ABOTA (American Board of Trial Advocates) "Trial Lawyer of the Year" in 2017.

The award Paboojian is especially proud of is his selection as the College of Arts and Humanities' "2017 Top Dog Outstanding Alumnus." Each year, an alumnus from each of Fresno State's academic schools and colleges is chosen as "Top Dog" to honor outstanding accomplishments in their field and commitment to service in the community.

Paboojian's appreciation for his roots at Fresno State are

is a topic which is especially intriguing for students, because many of them hear about it for the first time in this course.

For Sociology major Alejandra Garcia the Genocide was the reason for her curiosity in the course. "I think it is interesting hearing about how people struggled during the Genocide and all of the issues that came with it."

According to Garcia, courses such as Armenian Studies 10 are important because "they give students an opportunity to learn about other cultures besides their own."

The favorite part of the course for Genevieve Nakimbugwe are the assigned readings from Armenian-American authors. "I didn't know anything about the Armenians before I took this class and I am learning a lot about Armenian culture." She also enjoys the new friends she has made in the class.

The students in the course reflect the diversity of the Fresno State campus. Many are interested in learning about the social experiences of the Armenians and especially learning about the prejudice and discrimination that the Armenians faced in Fresno.

Moné Harrison's interest was sparked because she had many Armenian friends, so she is happy to learn about the language and culture.

Harrison had previously taken a course on "Masterpieces of Armenian Culture," and that influenced her to pursue a Minor in Armenian Studies.

Armenian Studies 10 is a core course in the Armenian Studies Program, which inspires many students to pursue the Minor.

apparent in his nickname, the "Bulldog in the courtroom," and in his support for *Hye Sharzhoom*. He learned from his experience as a staff writer that finances are always an issue for student-run papers.

"I wanted to help ease their financial burden and acknowledge the work the Editor puts in to the paper," explained Paboojian. "The *Hye Sharzhoom* has a special place in my heart, and every time I receive it I am so glad to see that it is still around after 39 years. I think the world of Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian and his ability to keep the paper going for all these years."

PABOOJIAN, FROM PAGE 1

Malkasian, Bill Eryasian, and Barlow Der Mugrdechian, started the *Hye Sharzhoom* under the supervision of Dr. Dickran Kouymjian in 1979, Paboojian eagerly joined the staff.

"It was a way to write about Armenian events for both our campus and the community. We had not seen anything like that, especially on a college campus," said Paboojian. "My grandfather was the editor of an Armenian newspaper locally, and as time went on, I realized that journalism was something that I wanted to do."

Paboojian's first article, on the Armenian Community School of Fresno, appeared in *Hye Sharzhoom*'s second issue in Fall of 1979.

Writing in student-run papers helped equip Paboojian with the skills he needed to earn his Juris Doctorate degree at the San Joaquin College of Law, where he was inducted into the College's Hall of Fame for his



Dean Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, left, with Warren Paboojian at the "Top Dog" Alumni Award Banquet.

trial advocacy.

"In a courtroom, I have to communicate the story of my client to the jury. It's no different than writing a journalism piece," Paboojian explained. "My experience at Fresno State gave me the tools to communicate and to be successful."

Paboojian is now a partner in

the Baradat & Paboojian law firm, where he specializes in cases of catastrophic personal injury, wrongful death, medical malpractice, and wrongful termination.

In 2008, Paboojian was the first attorney in the Central Valley to become the Consumer Attorneys of California's (CAOC)

Photo: Craig Koltruss Photography

Thank You Annual Fund Donors

(received as of November 22, 2017)

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SAS Conference in Washington, D.C.



Seated, left to right, Jesse Arlen, Elizabeth Mkhitarian, Dr. Shushan Karapetian, Dr. Hagop Gulludjian. Standing, left to right: Dr. Myrna Douzjian, Dr. Vartan Matiossian, Ani Garmiryan, Dr. Sylvia Kasparian, and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.

Photo: Khatchig Mouradian

SAS, FROM PAGE 1

immediately following the Conference. Members were welcomed by SAS President Barlow Der Mugrdechian (California State University, Fresno), who presented reports on various activities of the Society. Earlier that same day, the SAS Executive Council had met to focus on strategic planning and to map out the future direction of the organization.

A reception, hosted by Grigor Hovhannissian, Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the United States, was held at the Armenian Embassy in Washington D.C., following the Annual Meeting. Community members and SAS scholars mixed in a warm atmosphere. In his remarks Ambassador Hovhannissian noted the important role that that SAS members play by their research and publications.

The Conference on “Transmitting Western Armenian” consisted of two sessions. The first, entitled “Teaching Armenian in a Diasporan Context,” was chaired by Myrna Douzjian (UC Berkeley). The session had presentations by Ani Garmiryan (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation), “It Takes a Village to Raise a... Language”; Sylvia Kasparian (Université de Moncton), “For a Multilingual Approach in Teaching Modern Western Armenian in the Diaspora”; and Jesse Arlen (UCLA), “Ո՞ր էն բանալիներդ—An Innovative Method for Teaching Western Armenian in the Diaspora.”

The second session was entitled “Creative Literacy and Heritage Language: The Case of Western Armenian” and also featured three presentations: Hagop Gulludjian (UCLA), “Promoting ‘Creative Literacy’”; Shushan Karapetian (UCLA), “Eastern Armenian Speakers as Potential Western Armenian Learners: Reflections on Second Dialect Acquisition”; and Elizabeth Mkhitarian (UCLA), “To Create and Belong: A Case Study of Creative Writing in Heritage Language Instruction.”

Vartan Matiossian gave concluding remarks for the Conference.

In addition to the Conference, the Society of Armenian Studies sponsored two panels as part of MESA. The first panel, organized by Owen Miller and Ümit Kurt, and entitled “The Great Fear of 1895: Armenian Reform, Rumor and Violence Across the Ottoman Empire,” took place on Sunday, November 19.

Three papers were given: Owen Miller (Union College), “George Perkins Knapp of Bitlis and Massacres of 1895”; Emre Can Dağlioğlu (Clark University), “Reform and Violence in the Hamidian Era: 1895 Anti-Armenian Riots in Trabzon”; and Uğur Peçe (Harvard University), “The Year of Rumor: Crete in the Shadow of the Armenian Massacres of 1895.” The discussant for the panel was Edhem Eldem (Boğaziçi University).

The second panel, entitled “Humanitarianism in the Ottoman Empire During World War I” was

Graphic Arts Students Compete in Saroyan Design

STAFF REPORT

Students in Prof. Rebecca Barnes’ Graphic Design 174 class were given an interesting challenge for the Fall semester. The challenge, proposed by Armenian Studies Program Coordinator Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, was to design a campaign to bring awareness for the opening of the William Saroyan House Museum in Fresno on August 31, 2018.

The goal for students was to design three components for the Saroyan Museum Project: a) a poster for the campaign, b) an informational mailer, and c) a social media campaign.

The results of the class project will be announced at the end of the semester and the winning design(s) will be used in the campaign to bring awareness to the grand opening.

Author William Saroyan was born in Fresno, California in 1908. He spent most of his youth



Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

Prof. Rebecca Barnes, far right, with students from the Graphic Design 174 class.

growing in Fresno, surrounded by family and friends. By age 32, in 1940, he had become one of America’s most well know writers and playwrights.

Saroyan purchased two homes in Fresno on Griffith Way, which became his living place and also workplace. One of these

homes has been purchased by the Intellectual Renaissance Foundation and is being renovated to create the William Saroyan House Museum.

The opening of his House Museum will keep the author’s legacy alive for future generations.

CHOIR, FROM PAGE 1

performed popular Armenian folk and classical pieces. The mood and emotion of each song was portrayed through the artistic performance of the singers.

The bright and upbeat pieces such as the wedding song *Sona Yar* and the folk song *Pingyol* energized the audience, whereas *Yel, Yel* and *Hov Arek Sarer Jan* evoked a more solemn mood among the listeners.

Conductor Robert Mlkeyan’s arrangements allowed each song to be presented with the depth and richness of a four-part choir.

One of the highlights of the concert was guest soloist soprano Anahit Nersisyan’s rendition of composer Parsegh Ganachian’s *Oror*. Her nuanced and delicate style brought the audience to their feet.

Another audience favorite were excerpts from Armen Tigranyan’s *Anoush Opera*, featuring solos by soprano Sofya Sayadyan, who brought the audience to tears with her performance.

At the conclusion of the concert, the audience demanded an encore with multiple standing ovations and Mlkeyan and the Choir responded with a beautiful

interpretation of *Erebuni-Yerevan*.

Initially called the Armenian Chamber Choir (ACC), the accomplished group was established by the “Vatche and Tamar Monoukian” Benevolent Association in 2000.

Under Mlkeyan’s leadership, the ACC was recognized as the finest chamber choir of Armenia, and in 2008 acquired the status of a state choir, and renamed the National Chamber Choir of Armenia.

Mlkeyan, the Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, is a recipient of the “Movses Khorenatsi” medal. After delivering the immaculate performance, he addressed the audience, stating “We didn’t anticipate receiving such a warm welcome from an audience in the United States. We will return to the motherland with satisfaction, fulfillment, and gratification and with plans to return.” Mlkeyan was very pleased that the audience appreciated the academic level of musicianship. “We must continue this noble work,” he concluded.

The National Chamber Choir of Armenia performed in Los Angeles and Fresno under

the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia. Louise Mardirossian Gill, who was a key organizer of the concerts was “very proud and honored to be organizing events of such high caliber.”

As with every large traveling group, the National Chamber Choir faced many challenges. “They travel to new countries, to new audiences, never knowing what to expect. The Fresno audience exceeded our expectations,” said Gill.

“I love to perform various pieces, but I mostly enjoy performing Komitas and wedding songs, especially with Mlkeyan’s arrangements,” said soprano Sofya Sayadyan.

She has been a part of the National Chamber Choir for six years, and is also a soloist for the Yerevan Opera Theatre. She has traveled throughout Europe, but it was her first time in the United States. “We are all very thankful for the heartfelt welcome, it was a joy to perform for the Fresno community.”

The performance of renowned groups such as the National Chamber Choir of Armenia add to Fresno’s vibrant cultural tapestry.



Photo: ASP Archive

Left to right: Dr. Edhem Eldem, Dr. Owen Miller, Emre Can Dağlioğlu, Dr. Uğur Peçe, and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian at the SAS sponsored panel on Sunday, November 19.

organized by Stacy Fahrenthold and took place on Tuesday, November 21. It included papers by Melanie S. Tanielian

(University of Michigan), “Nourishing Bodies and Souls: The Maronite Church’s Relief Effort in Mount Lebanon during

the Great War”; Stacy Fahrenthold (California State University, Stanislaus), “American Relief and Émigré Politics in the Syrian Mahjar”; Asya Darbinyan (Clark University), “Can Refugees Speak? Humanitarian Crisis at the Ottoman-Russian border (1914-1917)”; and Khatchig Mouradian (Columbia University), “Not like a Lamb to the Slaughter: Humanitarian Resistance during the Armenian Genocide.”

The SAS represents scholars and teachers in the field of Armenian Studies. It publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, available on its website: societyforarmenianstudies.com.

For more information about the Society, please contact SAS President Barlow Der Mugrdechian at barlowd@csufresno.edu.

ASP 2016-2017 Scholarships

The Armenian Studies Program awarded scholarships and research grants for the academic year 2016-2017 to forty students from twenty-three different endowment or scholarship funds for a total of \$54,000. These scholarships encourage students to pursue minors in Armenian Studies and to enroll in the various course offerings. We ask our students and our supporters to tell their friends and relatives about the Armenian Studies Program Scholarship Program and to encourage them to apply for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Applying has become simplified and is entirely online through the Program website at <http://www.fresnostate.edu/artshum/armenianstudies/students/scholarships-offered.html> and the University website at <http://www.fresnostate.edu>.

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Knights of Vartan Scholarship
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Christine Idjian, Abraham Tchapasian

The Armenian Series at Fresno State

General Editor: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian

#6. Fifty Years of
Armenian Literature in France-\$20
by Krikor Beledian

Translated from the original French into English
by Christopher Atamian.

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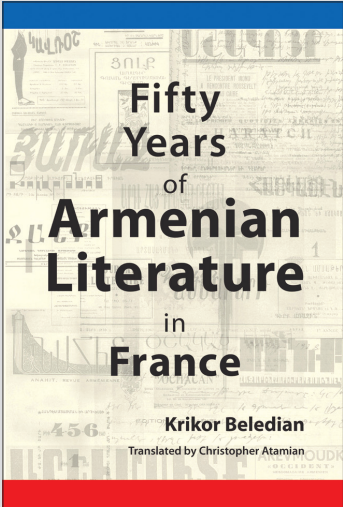
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Armenian Studies Program

30th Annual Banquet

Sunday, March 11, 2018

5:00PM • Reception
6:00PM • Dinner

Ft. Washington Country Club
Fresno



Dr. Mary Papazian, President of San Jose State University, center, was the featured guest at the ASP 29th Annual Banquet.

ALEXANIAN, FROM PAGE 4

Armenian publications. Upon her father’s death, Adrienne Alexanian discovered his memoirs and realized the importance of her father’s story. “I realized it was my responsibility, not only to him, but to my people, to have this published,” she stated.

Adrienne Alexanian’s thoughts were confirmed by several scholars, who remarked that there were few if any books on this aspect of the Armenian Genocide.

At her book reading, Alexanian noted that the massacre of the Armenian soldiers within the Ottoman army was a prelude to the events that followed in the Genocide. Her father, Yervant Alexanian, was one of the few conscripted soldiers who

survived.

“The day my father was conscripted,” said Alexanian, “he was prepared to die.” However, he was unable to save 51 of his family members who died in the deportation marches. He watched them disappear over a hill, never to be seen again, in what he described in his memoir as the “worst day of my life.”

Growing up, Alexanian never heard much about her father’s experiences in the Genocide. After reading the memoir, she understood how horrific and traumatizing his story was. “I realized it was a form of therapy for him—writing it down as opposed to verbalizing it to me.”

It also gave her the chance to understand her father, and why he cared so much for the Armenian community when he came to America. It was common knowledge that Yervant Alexanian would go out of his way to help Armenians who emigrated to America. He would drop everything to help them find jobs, apartments, even furniture if they so asked.

“I never understood why he would do that for strangers,” Adrienne commented. “It was because he was unable to save the members of his family.” His life’s work was to save Armenians, and with his memoir he will continue to help serve his people.

Adrienne Alexanian’s book reading left a deep impact. The detailed experiences from her father’s memoir, combined with the images from his journals, stirred up many emotions in the audience. It made the Armenian Genocide a personal experience by seeing the events through the eyes of a man who lived through it.

This memoir gives satisfaction to Armenians everywhere, by adding to the numerous eyewitness accounts of the Genocide that exist today.

“When you have so many memoirs, you can’t deny the Armenian Genocide anymore,” said Alexanian. Yervant Alexanian’s memoir will continue to help the Armenian community in the journey to end denial of the Armenian Genocide.

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