

# HYE SHARZHOOM Armenian Action ՀԱՅ ՇԱՐՀՈՕՄ



46<sup>th</sup> Year

May 2025

Vol. 46, No. 4 (170)

Ethnic Supplement to The Collegian

## Students Commemorate April 24 with Campus Activities



Students at the Armenian Genocide Monument.

CAREEN DERKALOUSDIAN  
STAFF WRITER

On Thursday, April 24, 2025, the Armenian Students Organization (ASO) gathered at noon in front of the Armenian Genocide Monument at Fresno State to remember and honor the innocent lives lost during the Genocide.

Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian  
As students and community members gathered and took their seats, local musicians Philip and Andrew Hagopian played somber music on the oud.

ASO Vice President Careen Derkalousdian began the program with an opening prayer. “Dear

SEE [APRIL 24](#), PAGE 8

## Prof. Der Mugrdechian Introduces Armenian Series Book for Tekeyan



Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian at the Tekeyan Cultural Association kinetson/book launch.

STAFF REPORT

On Sunday, April 27, 2025 the Tekeyan Cultural Association Metro Los Angeles Chapter organized a kinetson (book dedication) at the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church in Burbank, CA. Dr. Dora Sakayan’s book titled *Death Marches Past the Front Door: Clara and Fritz Sigrist-Hilty, Swiss Eyewitnesses to the Armenian Dante-Inferno in Turkey (1915-1918)* was the subject of the kinetson.

In his welcoming remarks, Master of Ceremonies and TCA

Metro LA Chapter board member, Mihran Toumajan, praised the National Council of Switzerland, which represents the people of Switzerland, for recognizing the Armenian Genocide on December 16, 2003. Toumajan remembered Swiss eyewitnesses, diplomats, physicians and missionaries by name, who helped save the lives of orphaned Armenian children, in particular. He also highlighted the names of organizations, such as the Conference of Swiss Armenian Aid, the Cantonal Aid

SEE [TEKEYAN](#), PAGE 4

## Armenian Studies Program 37th Annual Banquet Brings Community and University Together



Fresno State President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, center, with administrators, faculty, and Armenian Studies scholarship recipients.

Photo: ASP Archive

RACHEL YEPREMIAN-OWENS  
STAFF WRITER

On March 16, Fresno State students, family members, faculty, and administrators gathered at Fort Washington Country Club in Fresno for the Armenian Studies Program 37th Annual Banquet.

The Armenian Studies Program Annual Banquet recognizes scholarship recipients, and the Program was pleased to announce that \$110,000 in scholarships was awarded to 52 students for the 2024-2025 academic year. Twenty-three of those students are currently pursuing a Minor

in Armenian Studies, with five of them graduating in Spring 2025.

The Armenian Studies Program has organized over 20 events over the course of the academic year. Ranging from guest lectures by scholars, to film festivals, and book launches, the Program and its students are making great efforts keeping Armenian history and culture alive in Fresno.

“One of the things that I want everyone here to appreciate is that this type of Banquet that we are attending is quite unique,” said Dr. David Zakarian, Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies, who was the honored

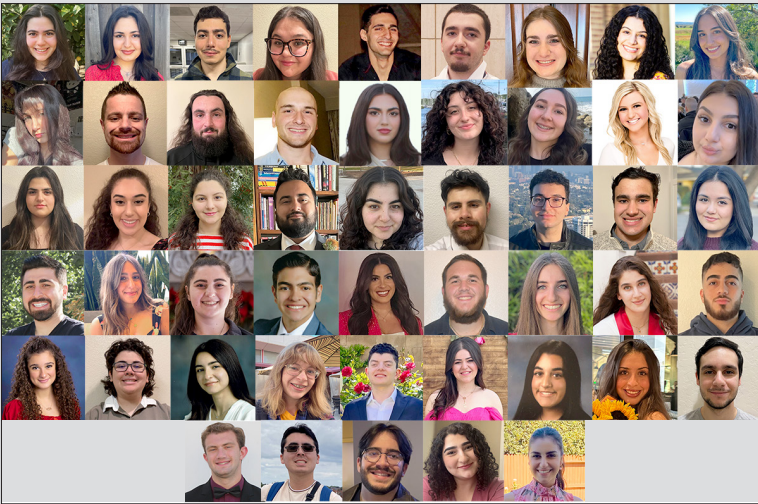
guest at the event. “Nowhere else in the world will you come across an event like this, where hundreds of talented students and their families, faculty members, the university President, the Provost, and the Deans are present, and they are all celebrating the Armenian Studies Program.”

Berberian Coordinator of Armenian Studies Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, who hosted the event, was recognized at the banquet for the 40th anniversary of his teaching at Fresno State.

University President Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Dean of the

SEE [BANQUET](#), PAGE 8

## Armenian Studies Awards \$110,000 in Scholarships to 52 Students



STAFF REPORT

Photo: Andrew Hagopian

The Armenian Studies Program awarded scholarships to fifty-two students from forty different endowment or scholarship funds for a total of \$110,000 for the academic year 2024-2025.

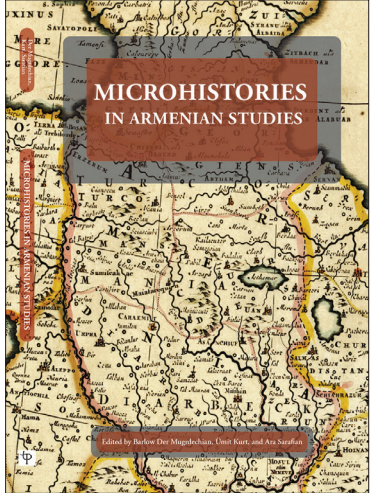
In addition to providing needed financial support, the scholarships encourage students to pursue a Minor in Armenian Studies and

to enroll in the various course offerings.

We ask our students and our supporters to tell their friends and relatives about the Armenian Studies Scholarship Program and to encourage them to apply for the 2025-2026 academic year (application period will open in October of 2025).

SEE [SCHOLARSHIPS](#), PAGE 7

## Microhistories- Volume 22 in the Armenian Series



STAFF REPORT

The Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State is pleased to announce the release of its latest publication, *Microhistories in Armenian Studies*, volume 22 in the Armenian Series of The Press at California State University,

SEE [MICROHISTORIES](#), PAGE 2



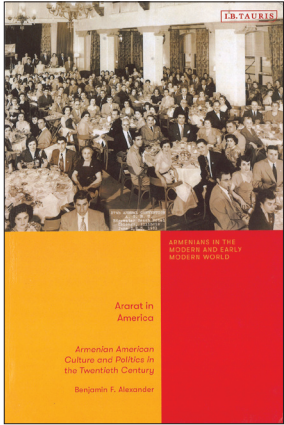
Armenian Studies Program  
Book/Video/CD Archival Gifts

Th 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.

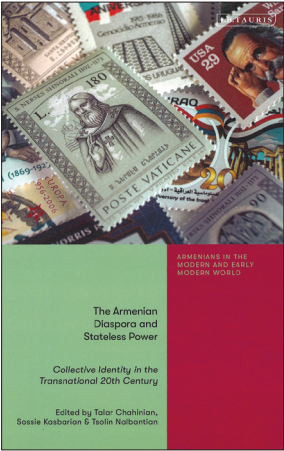
David Karamian, Oakland, CA, for a copy of his book, *Armenia – The Lone Stone: Invincible Through the Ages* (Oakland, CA: NorArtGallery LLC, 2022) 358 pp., in English and Armenian. This book is filled with black-and-white and color images taken over a 17-year period, of the most stunning monasteries and monuments in Armenia and Artsakh. Each location’s history is presented in English and Armenian. The book contains poetry, artwork, and a narrative of the author’s discovery of his homeland and culture.



Dr. Bedross Der Matossian, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, for copies from his editorial series “Armenians in the Modern and Early Modern World”: *Ararat in America: Armenian American Culture and Politics in the Twentieth Century* by Benjamin F. Alexander (London: I.B. Tauris, 2024) 252 pp., in English. This book examines the role of community leaders and influencers in fostering not only a sense of Armenian identity but specific ethnic-partisan leanings within the group’s population against the backdrop of key geopolitical events from the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide to the creation of an independent and then Soviet Armenia. *Syrian-Armenian Women Migrants in Armenia: Gender Identity, and Painful Belonging* by Anahid Matossian (London: I.B. Tauris, 2025) 216 pp., in English. This



book traces the experiences of Syrian-Armenian women refugees in Armenia as they navigated their changing and gendered identities from their adopted ‘homeland’ to their socially constructed new ‘ancestral’ home. *The Armenian Women’s Movement in the Late Ottoman Empire: Modernity, Nationalism, and Gender* by Hasmik Khalapyan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2025) 212 pp., in English. This book analyses the history of the women’s movement among Ottoman Armenians. *The Agony of a People: Haig Toroyan’s Eyewitness Account of the Armenian Genocide* by Zabel Yesayan translated by Arakel Minassian, Maral Aktokmakyan, and Tamar Boyadjian (London: I.B. Tauris, 2025) 201 pp., in English. *The Armenian Diaspora and Stateless Power: Collective Identity in the Transnational 20<sup>th</sup> Century* edited by Talar Chahinian, Sossie Kasbarian & Tsolin Nalbantian (London: I.B. Tauris, 2024) 316 pp., in English. This book explores the Armenian experience in the 20th century to examine how Armenian diaspora elites and their institutions emerged in the post-genocide period and used “stateless power” to compose forms of social discipline.



MICROHISTORIES, FROM PAGE 1

Fresno.  
Based on five probing papers delivered at an international conference organized by Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the Armenian Studies Program and Dr. Ümit Kurt in 2023, this volume showcases new themes and innovative approaches in contemporary Armenian Studies: Armenian refugees during the Syrian Great Revolt in 1925-1926 (Victoria Abrahamyan), the life and travails of Ottoman agronomist Ohannes Toros Doumanian (Samuel Dolbee), the economic destruction of Aintab Armenians during WWI (Ümit Kurt), the liquidation of Armenian Community Leaders from Sivas at Kötü Han in 1915 (Robert Sukiasyan), and a reported battle in Morenig, 1915 (Ara Sarafian).  
“I was pleased with the original conference in 2023,

and even more so with the articles which are appearing in this publication,” said Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the Armenian Studies Program and general editor of the Armenian Series. “Such projects push the boundaries of Armenian Studies.”  
Previous conferences and publications include *The State of the Art of the Early Turkish Republic: Historiography, Sources and Future Directions*, *The Committee of Union and Progress: Founders, Ideology, and Structure*, and *Armenians and Kurds in the Late Ottoman Empire*.  
*Microhistories in Armenian Studies* is available for purchase through Abril Bookstore, NAASR Bookstore, or Amazon.  
Information about Armenian Series books is available at <https://cah.fresnostate.edu/armenianstudies/resources/armenianseries/index.html>.

California State University, Fresno

Armenian Studies Program

Fall 2025 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
<b>General Education-Breadth, Subject Area 3B, Humanities</b>				
• Arm 1A-Elementary Armenian	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	D. Zakarian
(Class #72630)				
<b>General Education-Breadth, Subject Area 3A, Arts</b>				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
(Class #73954)				
<b>General Education-Subject Area 4B, Social and Behavioral Sciences</b>				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies	3	9:00A- 9:50A	MWF	H. Ohanessian
(Class #73249)				
<b>General Education-Integration, Subject Area UD3, Arts and Humanities</b>				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Culture	3	9:00A-9:50A	MWF	D. Zakarian
(Class #73652) <b>Digital Synchronous</b>				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Culture	3	2:00P-3:15P	TuTh	D. Zakarian
(Class #73306)				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Culture	3	DGT CAMP		H. Ohanessian
(Class #73966) <b>Asynchronous</b>				
<b>Upper Division Armenian Studies Course</b>				
• ArmS 108A-Arm History I	3	9:30A-10:45A	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
(Class #73567)				

GET A MINOR IN ARMENIAN STUDIES

CONTACT PROF. BARLOW DER MUGRDECHIAN

HYE SHARZHOOM

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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.

Hye Sharzhoom is an ethnic supplement of *The Collegian* and is the newspaper of the Fresno State Armenian Students Organization and the Armenian Studies Program and is funded by the Associated Students. Articles may be reprinted provided *Hye Sharzhoom* is acknowledged. *Hye Sharzhoom* welcomes prose, poetry, articles and other material from its student readers. For further information concerning the newspaper or the Armenian Studies Program contact us at:

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Dr. Suciyan on “Kept with Care: Letters From Purgatory”



Left to right: Dr. David Zakarian, Nicholas Jendian, Dr. Talin Suciyan, and Ani Sargsyan.

Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

ANI SARGSYAN  
STAFF WRITER

On Friday, March 28, 2025, the Armenian Studies Program welcomed Dr. Talin Suciyan, Kazan Visiting Professor in Armenian Studies, for her third lecture of the semester titled “Kept with Care: Letters from Purgatory.”

Dr. Suciyan discussed a series of letters written between 1913 and 1917 from Arabgir to Philadelphia, between Kevork Shamlan, and his younger brother Mardiros, and 19-year-old son, Arakel. This was the first time that the letters were publicly presented. Mardiros and Arakel migrated to Philadelphia due to the harsh and unstable conditions for young men in the Ottoman Empire. By studying the letters and exploring the world they spoke of, conditions of Armenians in the Ottoman provinces were revealed. The anxiety of a father who sent his son away for his safety was a consistent topic throughout Dr. Suciyan’s research.

The project was made possible through Susan Shamlan-Pogharian and her family who kept these precious letters. Susan’s aunt, Maritsa Shamlan, the eldest child of Arakel Shamlan, was the original custodian of the letters. Dr. Suciyan explained the process of digitizing, reading, and transcribing the letters and meeting weekly, over a period of a year, to read them with Susan Shamlan-Pogharian, Susan Arpajian Jolley, and John Paulson.

The letters mainly feature the correspondence between Kevork and his son Arakel. They both left their hometown and made the long and risky journey to the United States as migrant workers, because of long-standing abusive and oppressive taxes that they could no longer pay. The worries and concerns for his son’s safety and the longing to be reunited with him are reflected in each of Kevork’s letters. Dr. Suciyan shared some direct quotes from some of these letters, reflecting these strong feelings, especially when Kevork finally heard back from his son. In one letter Kevork expresses his anxiety about his son Arakel’s long journey and the fact that he has not heard from him for almost a month. “Night and day in my dreams, one part

of the house was burned. This is the enemy’s work of course,” said Kevork. “Then I would wake up and there is nothing. Finally, these nightmares ended, I was thinking something must have happened either to my brother or to my son, Arakel. Yet blessed is the God who turns darkness into light. Your letters have comforted us by all means.”

The relief from hearing back from his son each and every time was something that kept them alive, in a sense. In one instance, when Kevork sent a letter addressing both his brother and son, but only his son responded, Kevork sent another letter saying “We received a letter that only Arakel wrote. You didn’t even sign your name. It made us anxious that you didn’t put your name. Please, after this, in every letter, write two lines to console us.” This sentence highlights the uncertainty Kevork felt when not receiving any updates or signs of life from his brother.

There is another theme that is reflected in the letters – reassurance. Kevork never fails to let his brother and son know that those left in the Ottoman Empire are fine. This emphasizes not only the importance of his familial love and devotion, but also the fear of what is to come. Dr. Suciyan mentioned how even though they would always assure each other that everything was alright, that had to mean that everything was not. One letter, written in Turkish in Ottoman script, made it clear that letters were examined by Turkish officials before being sent out. Therefore, one had to read between the lines to understand what the reality was on the ground, when they kept on repeating that “everything was fine.”

Toward the end of the lecture, Dr. Suciyan shared the family tree that they were working on to identify who the letters belonged to. Dr. Suciyan was also able to share a photo, taken of the Shamlan descendants holding up a century-old hand-woven divan cover sewn by Kevork Shamlan.

The Shamlan family archives have been waiting for 112 years to be read, understood and appreciated. Indeed, they represent unique knowledge that one cannot find in the history books; the knowledge of an approaching catastrophe, the

Dr. Bedross Der Matossian Presents Lecture on “Denial of the Armenian Genocide in the Digital Age”

CAREEN DERKALOUSDIAN  
STAFF WRITER

“As much as the Internet is developing,” said Dr. Bedross Der Matossian, “denial is developing with it.”

On Friday, April 11, 2025, Dr. Der Matossian presented a lecture on “Denial of the Armenian Genocide in the Digital Age: Re-fashioning the ‘Events of 1915’ on the Internet and Beyond.”

Dr. Der Matossian is a Professor of Modern Middle East History and the Hymen Rosenberg Professor in Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. His presentation was part of the Spring Lecture series of the Armenian Studies Program and was supported by the Florence Elaine Hamparson Armenian Memorial Fund.

Dr. Der Matossian began his lecture by stating that the internet is a double-edged sword. While it has the potential to educate the public, it can also serve a more sinister purpose – to disseminate hatred, bigotry, and denial of genocides.

In defining denial, Dr. Der Matossian stated that “Denial is not only the reluctance to acknowledge the historical injustices of the past, but it further aims at killing the dead and their memory over and over, inflicting pain on the survivors and their descendants, and demonstrating that future acts of violence are possible in a climate of deception and impunity.”

Common arguments used by Armenian Genocide denialists include questioning the concept of genocide, debating evidence, denying attacks on victims, practicing nationalist hubris, and attributing the death toll to natural factors or attacks by Kurdish tribes.

Before the “Digital Age,” denial encompassed the production of print and audiovisual propaganda, the desecration of genocide monuments, and the exertion of pressure on governments to avoid using the word genocide. The first denialist publication dates to 1916 and is titled *Ermeni Komitelerinin Âmâl ve Harekât-ı İhtilâliyesi: İlân-ı Meşrutiyetden Evvel ve Sonra* (The Armenian Revolutionary Aspirations and Movements: Before and After Proclamation of the Constitution). This fraudulent book contains 300 images, including photos of Turks posing with a considerable number of weapons which they falsely claimed belonged to Armenians. Dr. Der Matossian explained that these weapons were often collected to promote the propaganda that Armenians were planning a major uprising against the Ottoman empire.

Another notorious case of denial was in 1934, when Franz Werfel’s masterpiece novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, was on its way to being produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM),

knowledge of the everydayness of violence, and how Armenians in the provinces have lived and

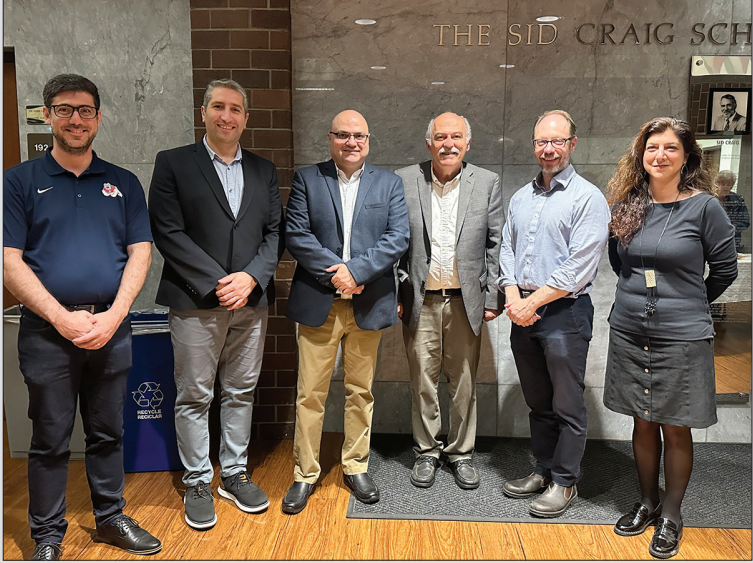


Photo: Natalie Agazarian

Left to right: Dr. Hagop Ohanessian, Dr. David Zakarian, Dr. Bedross Der Matossian Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Dr. Sergio La Porta, and Dr. Talin Suciyan.

a major Hollywood film studio, when production was brought to a screeching halt by the Turkish government. Dr. Der Matossian pointed out the true weight of this incident by noting that the Armenian Genocide was covered daily in newspapers and actively discussed at major universities during that time. This demonstrates the raw power of denial, which can mask even the most apparent and evidential truths.

Now in the “Digital Age,” with more weapons of denial in their arsenal, the Turkish government and non-state actors may post, comment, and publish digitally, allowing them to share their denialist propaganda across a broader audience.

The year 1989 marked the beginning of digital denial with the first manifestation of denying the Armenian Genocide in an online discussion forum. During his research, Dr. Der Matossian discovered several key novelties of internet-based denial, including the wide availability of classic denialist texts online, use of graphical and artistic approaches, anonymous entities running websites, and extension to social networks such as Instagram, X, and Facebook.

In a recently published article, Dr. Der Matossian classified denialist websites into three categories: official (government-run), non-official (organizations and associations), and anonymous. He argued that the most significant denialist website is that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, which has a whole section titled the “Controversy between Türkiye and Armenia about the Events of 1915.” They cite denialist literature and relativize suffering, claiming that the Armenian Genocide was a war with casualties on both sides. Most appallingly, the website defends the “relocation” of Armenians as a safety measure to protect them from the so-called war zone. In reality, this euphemism refers to the mass deportations and death marches into the Syrian desert of Der es-Zor, to which Armenians were forcibly subjected by the Ottoman Turks. By using

coped with this culminating violence over the years, which finally put an end to their lives.

deceptive language, this website twists a horrific truth into a false narrative.

Two of the most popular non-governmental denialist websites are those sponsored by the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) and the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA). Both websites refuse to use the word genocide and provide links to denialist literature. The most sophisticated anonymous website is Fact Check Armenia (FCA), which was launched in 2015, on the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. FCA’s high-quality videos disguise its bogus content as it uses a fact-checking format to spread misinformation and denial.

Denialists also prowl on social media. One of the most well-known denialists is Dr. Justin McCarthy, an American historian with extensive ties to Turkish institutions. He is often criticized by scholars and organizations for his denialist views and pro-Turkish bias, which he proudly shares on his Facebook account.

Dr. Der Matossian went on to discuss “The Promise,” a popular film about the Armenian Genocide. Before the movie’s release in the United States, the film received more than 50,000 1/10 ratings on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) website. Stefan Ihrig, a Genocide scholar, remarked that “We are witnessing yet another anti-Armenian denialist campaign playing out abroad, far away from Turkey, in open, democratic societies...Few movies have ever experienced such a pre-release buzz on IMDb.” In response to “The Promise,” the Turkish government released a film called “The Ottoman Lieutenant,” which depicted the Genocide as unorganized killings rather than the planned atrocity that it was, further denying and minimizing the truth that is the Armenian Genocide.

Despite the ever-evolving denial tactics, there is still hope for Armenians. To combat genocide denial, Dr. Der Matossian encouraged people to expose and counter arguments academically, using digital tools to educate society about the dangers of denying historical atrocities.

Yet, they never forgot to assure their loved ones, that “everything was fine.”



Congratulations to Armenian Studies Minors and Graduating Seniors of 2024-2025



DAVID ASHKHARIAN  
Biology  
Minor in Armenian Studies

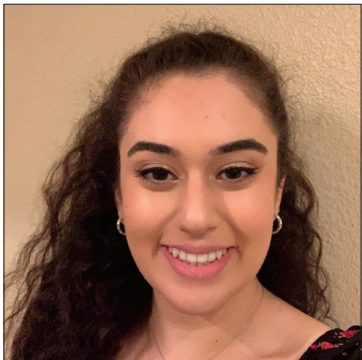
**What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?**  
My favorite class was the Arts of Armenia, ArmS 20. I found it incredibly fascinating to explore how faith in Christianity inspired so many beautiful pieces of artwork, church architecture, and more – both in Armenia and abroad.

**What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?**  
The most valuable experience was the interactions and connections I made with fellow students and faculty. I know many of these relationships will last a lifetime, and I am extremely grateful to the Program for making that possible.  
**What are your plans after graduation?**  
I plan to pursue my entrepreneurial passions with another fellow Fresno State graduate – who also happens to be part Armenian – and to build a business of our own.

CHARLES GARABEDIAN III  
Agricultural Business  
Minor in Armenian Studies



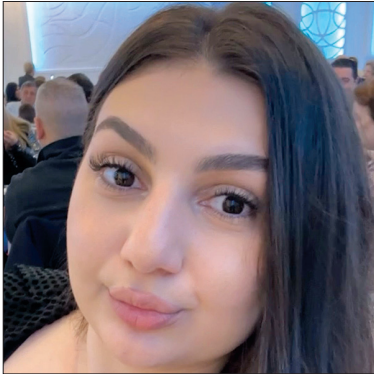
**What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?**  
To learn more about my heritage. As an Armenian, I felt a strong personal connection and responsibility to learn more about my heritage in an academic setting. I grew up hearing some history, but I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of where we come from, what we have been through, and how that shapes our identity today. I also wanted to learn the Armenian language since it plays an important role in Armenian identity. Taking these courses felt like a way to reconnect with my roots and honor the resilience of our ancestors.  
**What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?**  
Although I have enjoyed all of the classes, my favorite activity was traveling to Armenia with Professor Barlow and ten other students in the summer of 2023. It was my first time traveling to the homeland and I had an amazing experience. From visiting iconic landmarks to tasting the delicious cuisine, it was meaningful to connect with my heritage and explore the culture firsthand. I would like to thank Professor Barlow and the Armenian Studies Program for organizing such a tremendous trip.  
**What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?**  
I deeply value the profound connections I formed with both the faculty and my fellow students. Professors Der Mugrdechian, Hagop Ohanessian, and David Zakarian were instrumental in developing my understanding of Armenian history, art, language, and literature. Their knowledge and dedication enriched my academic journey.  
**What are your plans after graduation?**  
I plan to pursue a career in the agricultural industry since my major is agricultural business. My goal is to be part of the sales team for a company in that industry. I am also interested in starting my own business someday, but I am still exploring different industries and ideas to find the right fit for me.



CAREEN DERKALOUSDIAN  
Biochemistry  
Minor in Armenian Studies

**What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?**  
My favorite Armenian Studies class was ArmS 108A – Armenian History I: Ancient and Medieval taught by Professor Der Mugrdechian. I enjoyed learning about our rich history, such as the ancient kingdom of Urartu and Armenians’ interactions with other civilizations. What particularly left a lasting impression on me was

learning about the Christianization of Armenia and how brave martyrs like St. Hripsime paved the way for God’s truth to touch the hearts of our people and illuminate our nation.  
**What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?**  
I was able to participate in the 2023 Armenia Summer Study program. This trip was my first time visiting my homeland, and I had the privilege to see our rich history, beautiful nature, and meaningful landmarks in person.  
**What are your plans after graduation?**  
I will be attending medical school in the Fall to fulfill my dream of becoming a physician. I am excited to embark on this journey, and I am eager to remain involved in the Armenian community!



IZABELLA PAPIKYAN  
Business Administration-Marketing  
Minor in Armenian Studies

**What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?**  
When I transferred to Fresno State in the Spring of 2023, I discovered several Armenian courses available that my community college did not have. I am always eager to learn more about my heritage, so I signed up for Armenian 148. I enjoyed learning about Armenian literature and proceeded to take more classes in the upcoming semesters.

**What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?**  
My favorite Armenian class was Armenian Studies 20-Arts of Armenia, which is an introduction to Armenian architecture, painting, sculpture, ceramics, metal work, and textiles. In this course, I especially enjoyed learning about Armenian manuscripts preserved in various parts of the world, one of which is Venice, Italy. I had the opportunity to visit Venice, and I am grateful to have taken a class that introduced me to these beautiful manuscripts, which I was fortunate enough to see in person.  
**What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?**  
I value the community and how united everyone is. Especially as a new transfer to Fresno State, I made so many friends and attended numerous events with them, which has made my college experience so fun. I am forever grateful for all the memories made within this program and recommend everyone who will be attending Fresno State in the future to get as involved as possible.  
**What are your plans after graduation?**  
I plan to start my Master’s of Business Administration in Los Angeles, because I want to become a professor and be back in a university setting where I will teach several business and marketing courses. It is a dream of mine to accomplish this.

ANI SARGSYAN  
Communication Science-Speech Pathology  
Minor in Armenian Studies



**What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?**  
The last time I took an Armenian class was at the Charlie Keyan Armenian Community School, so I knew that I wanted to expand my knowledge of Armenian culture and history. Also, the sense of community and belonging this program offers students is undeniable; I wanted to be a part of it in some capacity.  
**What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?**  
One of my favorite courses in the Armenian Studies program was Arm 108B – modern Armenian History. It was definitely the class that captivated me the most. Each day it deepened my understanding of the past, and I learned about the lasting impact on the future.  
**What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?**  
I value all the amazing people I met and the connections made. The experience of being involved in the Armenian Studies Program truly shaped my college experience for the better. I am grateful for the professors who put in all their time and effort to make sure things are always moving forward.  
**What are your plans after graduation?**  
I have been accepted into the Master’s program in Speech-Language Pathology at Fresno State, so I will be returning in Fall 2025 to finish up my studies and pursue my goal of becoming an Speech-Language Pathologist.

COMPILED BY LORI AGAZARIAN  
STAFF WRITER



Graphic by Anastasia Eritzian

<b>TEKEYAN, FROM PAGE 1</b> Committee for Armenia, and the Swiss Aid 1915 for Armenia, which mobilized the people of Switzerland to raise significant relief funds – amounting to hundreds of thousands of Swiss francs – not only during the genocide, but also, in the case of the Conference of Swiss Armenian Aid, during the Hamidian Massacres of 1895-1896 and the Cilician Massacres of 1909.	Dr. Sakayan’s book was presented by co-editor and keynote speaker Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Berberian Coordinator of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State. Prof. Der Mugrdechian noted that Swiss eyewitnesses, civil engineer Fritz Sigrist, who worked on the Berlin to Baghdad Railway, and his wife, Clara Hilty, a nurse, chronicled the unfolding of the Armenian Genocide. The mass deportations	literally passed by their front door in Cilicia for three years. Fritz Sigrist unsuccessfully appealed to German and Turkish authorities in an attempt to save the lives of Armenians, some of whom worked on the construction of the railway. Prof. Der Mugrdechian credited the couple for saving the life of Haigazun Aramian, the railway’s warehouse manager. Prof. Der Mugrdechian stated that Clara recorded the atrocities, first in her journal, and later as	a memoir or special eyewitness account. On his part, Fritz wrote two stories and a letter about the atrocities. Prof. Der Mugrdechian commended the author, Dr. Dora Sakayan, for meticulously deciphering Swiss archival documents. He stressed the importance of Sakayan’s research and translations of the Sigrist-Hilty couple’s written testimony from Gothic and Old German to English. Prof. Der Mugrdechian dedicated his presentation to the	Swiss and Armenian people. The Counselor of the Consulate General of Armenia in Los Angeles, Nazeli Hambarzumyan, provided brief remarks in Armenian and English. She noted the importance of the book, and the heroic deeds of Swiss eyewitnesses and humanitarians in saving lives and providing relief assistance to Armenian survivors.
SEE <b>TEKEYAN</b> PAGE 6				



Pianist Svetlana Navasardyan Performs in Concert on Campus



Left to right: Tiroui Melkonian, Prof. Andreas Werz, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Marine Vardanyan Peters, Tatevik Hovhannisyan, Svetlana Navasardyan, Chuck Jamgotchian, Sylva Guluzian, Zohrab Atarian, and Karoun Boyadjian.

NATALIE AGAZARIAN  
EDITOR

Photo: ASP Archive

With a measured breath, the tender, yet commanding touch of the Armenian pianist Svetlana Navasardyan sent the Fresno State Concert Hall into a resonance of flourishing melodies. For the next two hours, the audience was swept into a colorful realm of intonation, phrasing, and texture. With her strong presence and masterful precision, Navasardyan didn't simply play – she performed.

The Philip Lorenz Keyboard Concert Series, the Fresno State Armenian Studies Program, the Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union Greater Fresno Chapter co-sponsored Navasardyan's performance at the Fresno State Concert Hall on Sunday, March 23, 2025.

Navasardyan is a graduate of the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory and has performed in international festivals and major concert halls throughout the world.

Born in Alaverdi, Armenia, Navasardyan's musical and academic influence from both her mother and her father supplemented her exceptional career and musical pursuit.

"My memory of my parents carries me into the Alaverdi of my childhood – the place that gave my dreams their wings to fly and to which my parents remained committed all their lives," said Navasardyan, while reflecting on her musical journey.

The program began with Haydn's Sonata in C Major, Hob. XVI: 35 (Allegro con brio, Adagio, and Finale: Allegro), immediately developing a sense of play between the clarity and complexity within the score and revealing Navasardyan's nuanced and imaginative approach.

This style is embraced in the following selection, Brahms' Eight Piano Pieces, Op. 76 (Capriccio in F-sharp minor, Capriccio in B minor, Intermezzo in A-flat major, Intermezzo in B-flat major, Capriccio in C-sharp minor, Intermezzo in A major, Intermezzo in A minor, and Capriccio in C major), as the music gradually expands from

a soft to tense dialogue. Even in the rhythmic and unpredictable phrases of Chopin's array, Navasardyan maintained her refined style, playing effortlessly and gracefully throughout the melancholy, yet joyful tunes. Continuing to blend folk traditions with classicism, Navasardyan introduced Komitas' "Seven Dances" in a raw, reflective, and celebratory manner, delving into her cultural roots and maintaining a sensitivity to that.

Not only did the artist present a wide-ranging selection of repertoire, but she thoughtfully organized her set in chronological order, guiding the audience on a journey through time as well as sound.

Beginning with the classicism of the 18th century, moving into the expressive and romantic styles of the 19th century, and finally transitioning to the relative modernism of the early 20th century, each piece served as a snippet of the cultures integrated within each respective era.

Most notable of her performances were the conversations between the sound and the silence, transcending the scores beyond its notations and into an arena of artistry.

The beauty remained in the contemplation of her scores – how the audience was left not only hearing, but listening, remembering, and desiring each note. This impression certainly moved the Fresno community, as Navasardyan concluded her set with two encores.

Navasardyan's profound knowledge and interpretation of scores has rendered her many honors and awards, including People's Artist of the Armenian SSR, the St. Mesrop-St. Sahak Medal bestowed by Catholicos Garegin II in 2015, and the Order of Honor of the Republic of Armenian in 2016.

As the final note of the afternoon faded into silence, what lingered was the echo and endurance of human spirit, and the overwhelming emotions of witnessing a timeless craft.

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Award-Winning Film "My Sweet Land" Screened at CineCulture Film Series on Campus

RACHEL YEPREMIAN-OWENS  
STAFF WRITER

"What is so sweet in this land that we continue to come back?" said Vrej's grandmother. It was a question she constantly asked herself and her family members and was a central focus of the film "My Sweet Land."

The award-winning documentary "My Sweet Land" was screened before a large audience at 5:30pm on Friday, April 25, through the collaboration of the Armenian Studies Program and the CineCulture program at Fresno State.

The film was directed and produced by Sareen Hairabedian, a 2023 Creative Armenia-AGBU Fellow and filmmaker. The documentary follows the story of 11-year-old Vrej and his family as they are forced to pick up and flee to Armenia from their Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) home at the start of the 2020 Artsakh-Azerbaijan war.

Vrej is a charismatic young boy who dreams of growing up and becoming a dentist so he can one day return to his home village of Martakert and help the people of the villages. Artsakh is Vrej's "sweet land."

He cherishes the region, the people, the history, and his home village. However, as he walks around the mountainous terrain of the region, he sees mines from past wars, unrecognizable attributes that he never would have imagined his land could possess, but still radiates so much beauty in ways indescribable.

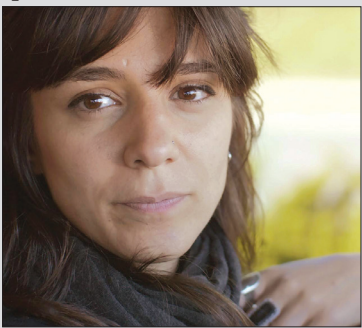
Hairabedian's first time visiting the Nagorno-Karabakh region took place in 2018. She was passionate and determined to tell the story of Artsakh; she wanted to observe and document the ways the children in Artsakh were growing up.

From the ways that they played, to their education systems, to their home life, it was a story worth telling.

Having come in 2018 with photo reference of a mass wedding of 700 couples that took place in Artsakh, Hairabedian saw several families that she had the privilege



Photo: ASP Archive



Director Sareen Hairabedian and how to remain composure when in the midst of a war zone, come the day they would have to defend Artsakh.

Communities like these have no other option. People like Vrej and his family don't know how to live any other life. This is their place and these are their people.

During the Zoom discussion with Hairabedian after the screening, various audience members expressed their reflections and also asked questions about the film.

Hairabedian addressed that her family history also had experiences of location displacement.

They were displaced from Van, Western Armenian to Palestine, Lebanon and eventually Jordan. For this reason, she knows how it feels to experience such a thing and wanted to be sure she did justice in telling Vrej and his family's story.

"I think it's so important that we take the time and humanize and really see what happens behind these closed doors and what changes and the price that is being paid by the most vulnerable victims of war and conflict," said Hairabedian.

Despite political pressures from society and media, Hairabedian remains persistent in her efforts to have her film reach as many platforms as possible.

Armenia, specifically Artsakh, is not a major focus of the national and international media. Armenians have seen proof of this time and time again.

This is why Hairabedian is making history in her creative field of filmmaking. Her brand, Hai Creative, radiates the pride that is being an Armenian and the resilience it takes to be brave and bold like Vrej.

Thirteenth Genocide Awareness Week at Arizona State University Features Panel on Artsakh

STAFF REPORT



Photo: ASP Archive

Standing, left to right: Dr. Timothy Langille and Dr. Henry Theriault. Seated, left to right: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Ani Hovannisian, and Dr. Simon Maghakyan, after the panel on "Nagorno-Karabagh: Destruction of Indigeneity."

Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian participated in the 13th Annual Genocide Awareness Week program, held at Arizona State University, March 31-April 3, 2025. This year's conference, "Remembrance, Memorialization, and Repair," featured a panel on Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabagh, on Thursday, April 3.

The session on "Nagorno-Karabagh: Destruction of Indigeneity," featured three panelists: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State; Dr. Simon Maghakyan, Oxford University; and Dr.



David Karamian Presents New Book “Armenia: The Lone Stone”

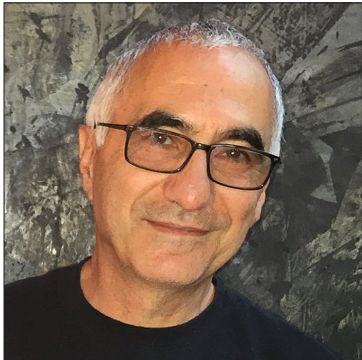


Photo: ASP Archive

David Karamian  
NATALIE AGAZARIAN  
EDITOR

“My camera is one of my best friends; I always take an extra day or two wherever I travel to document what I see. Every place I went to in Armenia I documented and put them in my computer hoping I would get to do something special with them one day,” said David Karamian.

On Friday, March 7, former engineer, photography enthusiast, and “creative visionary” David Karamian presented his book, *Armenia – The Lone Stone: A Traveler’s Guide to Tradition and Modernity*, as part of the Spring Lecture Series of the Armenian Studies Program. Designed as a comprehensive resource for both Armenians and non-Armenians, the book prepares readers for their journeys abroad by offering historical context, cultural insights, and practical advice for experiencing Armenia’s unique blend of ancient tradition and modern life.

Growing up in a region with few Armenians, Karamian embraced opportunities to speak publicly about Armenia’s rich artistic heritage, breathtaking landscapes, and enduring traditions, often serving as one of the few voices sharing authentic Armenian stories in his community. Over time, these experiences deepened his sense of responsibility, not only to celebrate Armenian culture, but to provide others with genuine exposure to it. His work reflects a commitment to ensuring that Armenia’s identity is accurately conveyed to the world, bridging gaps of understanding and inspiring a deeper appreciation among both travelers and diasporans.

“We need to reach out to non-Armenians, especially at this point in our history. Let them know about *our* history, *our* culture... all our contributions to the world,” said Karamian. “We are not doing that well. All people know about Armenians is the Genocide.”

The book is thoughtfully organized into four sections, making it an easy guide for

travelers. Section 1 covers everything you need to know before arriving in Armenia, including what essentials to pack and how to prepare for a trip. Section 2 focuses on experiencing the best of Yerevan, offering recommendations on how to fully enjoy the capital’s culture, cuisine, entertainment, and historical sites. To navigate life outside the city center, Section 3 highlights road trips, hidden gems, and “real iconic places” that showcase Armenia’s rich natural beauty. Section 4 offers suggestions for leisure activities for families and children, providing ideas for family-friendly experiences. “It provides a lot of information about where you can go in the country and what is available there,” Karamian remarked on the contents of the book.

In addition to travel information, the book includes sections dedicated to key moments in Armenian history, highlighting the country’s 3,000-year-old heritage alongside its modern society. Karamian also provides practical information for travelers, covering topics such as currency, transportation options, how to seek medical assistance, and essential Armenian phrases – all the “basic fundamentals” needed to connect with the local community.

Karamian read several passages from his book, eloquently describing the quiet richness of local life in Armenia. “Yerevan is not just a place to see; it’s a place to experience,” he emphasized. He spoke about the vibrant energy of the city’s streets, alive with the sounds of traditional music and the melodies of the *duduk*.

Karamian highlighted the simple, memorable moments – from spontaneous conversations with taxi drivers to late nights spent listening to live jazz – capturing the full emotional experience of being immersed in Armenian culture. Karamian reminisced of his own travels, stating that “those experiences are the moments that you get to feel the essence of the people and remember for a lifetime.”

In his presentation, Karamian demonstrated his deep knowledge of Armenia’s landscape, art, and culture, as well as his passion for sharing it with a broader audience. Most importantly, he emphasized his commitment to making both ancient and modern Armenia relevant and accessible to non-Armenians. “The book is not just a travel guide,” he explained. “It’s about the genius of the people. Why not celebrate what we’ve contributed to the world?”

Dr. Hakem Al-Rustom Discusses Enduring Erasures of Armenians in Modern Turkey

ANAHID VALENCIA  
STAFF WRITER

Dr. Hakem Al-Rustom, Ma-noogian Professor of Modern History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, gave a lecture titled “From Natives to Foreigners: Enduring Erasures of Armenians in Turkey” on Friday, March 21, 2025, at Fresno State.

The presentation was organized by the Armenian Studies Program and the Ralph Shabazian Armenian Memorial Fund.

Dr. Al-Rustom grew up in Cairo, Egypt and is the author of the forthcoming book, *Enduring Erasures: Afterlives of the Armenian Genocide* (Columbia University Press, Sept. 2025). His lecture was centered around the concept of “denativization,” a topic explored in his new book. “Denativization,” as Dr. Al-Rustom explained, is “the process by which Armenians were erased and deemed foreigners in their homeland following the Armenian Genocide.”

“It is an ongoing structure that continues to this very day,” stated Dr. Al-Rustom. With the events taking place in Artsakh from 2020 until the present, his statement holds significance beyond mere remembrance.

Dr. Al-Rustom recounted how he was approximately 700 feet away from the site of Hrant Dink’s assassination in Istanbul in 2007, which prompted his quest for answers and ultimately the writing of his book.

Dr. Al-Rustom began the lecture by telling the story of Houri, a woman from Sassoun. “As soon as we met, she told me, my own heritage is dying, the Armenian dialect of Sassoun is slowly being forgotten,” Dr. Al-Rustom said.

“Her grandparents faced annihilation, her parents endured forced displacement and she herself lives with the weight of these histories, both inherited and ongoing in the present.”

Houri’s story was used to convey the exclusion felt by many Armenians from both their oppressors and Armenians themselves.



Left to right: Dr. Hagop Ohanessian, Dr. David Zakarian, Dr. Hakem Al-Rustom, Dr. Talin Suciyan, and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian.  
Photo: ASP Archive

Al-Rustom explained that Houri’s Sassoun dialect of Armenian was considered “fake Armenian” by members of her own Armenian community.

“What makes an Armenian an Armenian – these are always questions that are important to remember, [and] that history is repeating itself in unfortunate ways,” said attendee and Armenian General Benevolent Union Executive member Linda Shekerjian after the lecture.

This is part of the concept of “denativization” – to feel separate from one’s own people because of differences in language and geography. Some may even argue that this system has been set in place by the oppressor to divide a people, in this case, the Armenians.

“We have to understand that there are multiple ways of being Armenian,” said Dr. Al-Rustom. “Also, the fact that some Armenians lost the language has to do with the genocide, so it’s an implication that many people in the diaspora have to live with.”

Dr. Al-Rustom also related the story of a man named Ara, who is from the village of Everek near Kayseri in Turkey. Ara, though he tried, could not find his home village because the Turks attempted traces of it. The church in Everek, as Dr. Al-Rustom would discover, was converted from Sourp Toros to a mosque, Fatih Camii.

“Ara said, even if there are a few thousand remaining Armenians left in Istanbul today, the Armenians will continue to constitute a threat,” Dr. Al-Rustom stated.

Dr. Al-Rustom explained that, because of this so-called threat, Turkey will continue to rescript the past and remove Armenians from the picture, casting Armenian heritage as simply “Anatolian” history. “Turkey is built on the ruins of Armenians,” he said.

Dr. Al-Rustom mentioned a Turkish journalist who claims to be “sympathetic” toward the Armenian Genocide, yet continued to use language that refuses to blame the Turkish government.

This unfortunate reality was discussed not to paint Armenians as helpless, but rather to emphasize their unwavering endurance that has survived through centuries of persecution.

By connecting the atrocities of the Armenian Genocide to current struggles faced by both Armenians living in Armenia and those in the diaspora, Dr. Al-Rustom left the audience feeling empowered, touched, and bonded as a people.

Dr. Al-Rustom’s genuine expression of his research emphasizes the idea that Armenians will continue to live united through the generations, just as they have done for preceding centuries.

GAW, FROM PAGE 5

Henry Theriault, Worcester State University and was moderated by Ani Hovannisian.

St. Apkar Armenian Apostolic Church of Scottsdale, Arizona, the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State, and the Zoryan Institute, were co-sponsors of the panel. Fr. Zacharia Saribekyan, pastor of St. Apkar Armenian Church, has played an important

role in making sure the Armenians always have a place in Genocide Awareness Week.

As part of the Genocide Awareness Week, programs are also held at Scottsdale Community College.

A special film screening of the documentary film “The Hidden Map,” by Ani Hovannisian, was shown on Friday, April 4, to an audience at Scottsdale

Community College. The event was organized by Dr. Lisa Marsio, Professor of Anthropology at Scottsdale Community College. Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian introduced Ani Hovannisian, whose film became recognized nationally through its airing on PBS.

The full program for the Genocide Week is available here: <https://shprs.asu.edu/GAW>.

TEKEYAN, FROM PAGE 4

Retired Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Armenia, Valery Mkrtumyan, a former Consul General of Armenia in Los Angeles, also attended the *kinetson*.

Franco Zimmerli, the Honorary Consul of the Consulate of Switzerland in Los Angeles, was

recognized at the event as an “Honored Guest” by the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter. In his remarks, Consul Zimmerli praised the book’s author, Dr. Sakayan, and co-editor Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian for publishing the book and making it accessible to the public. Consul Zimmerli stressed that the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians was “a

dark chapter in history,” and how inspiring it was to read about the heroic deeds of the Sigrist-Hilty couple to risk their own lives, in order to save several Armenians, including Haigazun Aramian, during their time in Cilicia.

Rev. Fr. Nzhdeh Keshishyan, Pastor, Armenian Church of North Hollywood, represented Archbishop Hovnan Derderian,

Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church.

Fr. Keshishyan praised Prof. Der Mugrdechian for his informative presentation, and commended the TCA Metro Los Angeles Chapter for organizing the *kinetson*.

The program concluded with the *kinetson* itself led by Fr. Nzhdeh and accompanied

by Prof. Der Mugrdechian and representatives of the Tekeyan Cultural Association.

Also participating in the *kinetson* were special guests, including retired Professor of History at Glendale Community College, Levon Marashlian, and the Director of the Ararat-Eskijian Museum and Research Center, Maggie Mangasarian-Goschin.



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Thank you to Ali Peyvandi and Fort Washington Country Club for their support. Thank you to Sosse Yanez, Andrew Hagopian, Lisa Galvez, Jefferson Beavers, and the ASO for their assistance. Thank you to an anonymous donor for providing the wine for the reception.
<b>Dinner wine provided by ArmAs Winery</b>

SCHOLARSHIPS, FROM PAGE 1

Applying has become simplified and is entirely online through the University website at <https://studentaffairs.fresnostate.edu/financialaid/scholarships/scholarshipapplication/index.html>.

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Armenian Students Organization Members Enjoy Spring Semester Activities at Fresno State

CAREEN DERKALOUSDIAN  
STAFF WRITER

The Armenian Students Organization (ASO) has enjoyed a fun and productive Spring semester! In January, the Executive Board planned a “Trivia and Game Night” complete with board games, pizza, and a specially designed Armenian “Jeopardy” Tournament. ASO members formed teams and brought out their competitive spirit as they learned more about Armenian history and culture while sharing laughs and heated debates.

In February, the ASO celebrated Fresno’s Armenian history as they toured the historic Saroyan House Museum, the same house where Armenian author William Saroyan once lived. Now functioning as a museum, the house has been transformed into an interactive experience that highlights Saroyan’s accomplished life and literary works.

Students immersed themselves in history as they viewed a hologram depicting Saroyan and photos from his life.

The ASO kicked off the month of March with a Movie Night, showing the film “Gyank u Griv” (Life and War), directed and written by Mher Mkrtchyan. With nearly 50 community members in attendance, the event was a great success in bringing Armenians together to celebrate a cinematic

**Knarik Clara Margossian Armenian Memorial Scholarship**  
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Andrew Hagopian, Nicholas Jendian, Karina Messerlian, Izabella Papikyan, Tyler Peterson  
Deran Poochigian, Hovanes Semerdjian, Talia Solak, Peter Yepremian



Photo: ASP Archive

ASO members enjoyed a hike at Lewis Creek.

masterpiece. The film follows a young man named Tigran, as he navigates friendships and romance and overcomes his own fears while fighting in the Artsakh War. The film was deeply moving, evoking tears in some moments and laughter in others, bringing the audience together in a shared emotional journey. Dr. Talin Suciyan led an insightful discussion of the film after.

The ASO hosted another event in March, organizing a hike at Lewis Creek. Those who participated were in awe of the lush greenery and beautiful waterfalls.

“My favorite event this spring semester was the ASO hike. We saw some good views, enjoyed getting out of Fresno for a bit, and shared a meal after,” remarked ASO secretary Ani Sargsyan.

“The hike was very fun, pretty, and not too difficult,” said ASO treasurer Jonathan Chardukian. “It was a great opportunity to spend time with other ASO members and had a good pay off of a waterfall view.”

In addition to holding monthly events, the ASO was hard at work designing commemorative T-shirts for the 110th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. They were also working tirelessly on their new campaign “Generation Justice,” to raise awareness of the Genocide.

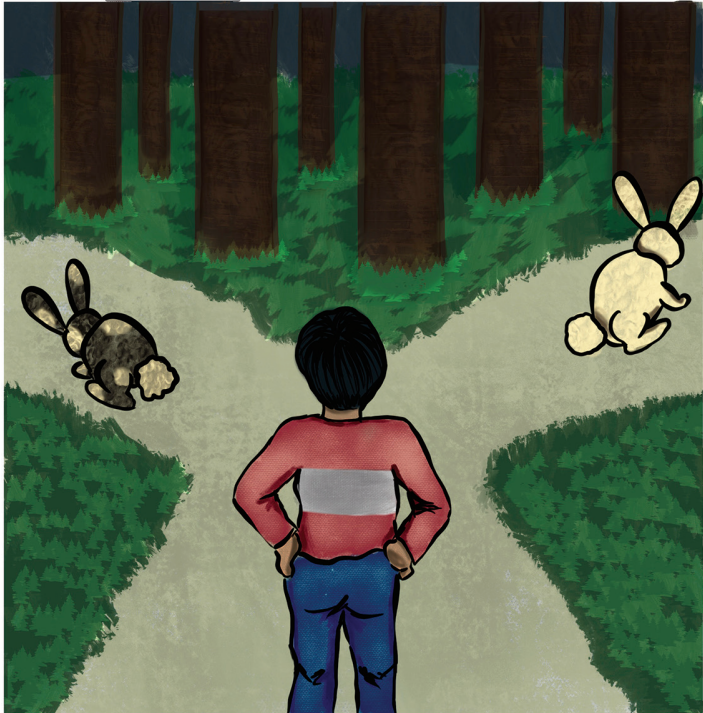
The ASO plans to end the year strong with a pool party in May for members to come together and celebrate the end of the school year.

Stay tuned for more details and follow us on Instagram for updates! @fresnostateaso.

Armenian Proverbs

By Anastasia Eritzian

Երկու նապաստակի ետևից ընկնողը ոչ մեկին չի բռնի:



Chasing two rabbits won’t catch either.

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**James L. Melikian & L.A. Brothers Armenian Scholarship**  
Jordan Mazmanian

**Knights of Vartan, Yeprad Lodge, Fresno State Scholarships**  
Brianna Nishanian  
Sevag Poladian





ASP Minor recipients with faculty and administrators.

BANQUET, FROM PAGE 1

Photo: Andrew Hagopian

College of Arts & Humanities Dr. Honora Chapman, Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities, Dr. Matthew Darling, Interim Dean of the Kremen School of Education and Human Development Dr. Sergio La Porta, Executive Director of University Initiatives Dr. Gil Harootunian, Director of the Fresno State Humanics Program, Dr. Matthew Jendian, Kazan Visiting Professor, Dr. Talin Suciyan, and Armenian Studies Professor Dr. Hagop Ohanessian were among the special guests who were in attendance.

“We are so honored in the College of Arts & Humanities to be the home of Armenian Studies,” said Dean Chapman. “Armenian Studies embodies everything that the Arts & Humanities values about expressing oneself through the arts and you see it in the Program.”

The evening began with a reception, before students gathered with faculty and administrators for a group photo. Prof. Der Mugrdechian then introduced Rev. Nerses Balabanian, pastor of Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, who gave the invocation for the evening.

Dr. Hagop Ohanessian introduced Dr. Sergio La Porta who gave his remarks. During Dr. La Porta’s comments he announced a surprise—recognition of Prof. Der Mugrdechian for his fortieth year of teaching at Fresno State. Former students Marine Vardanyan Peters and Tatevik Hovhannisyan, both of whose

lives were greatly impacted by Prof. Der Mugrdechian, presented him with a special gift, a Noah’s Ark centerpiece by Michael Aram. They also put together a video to celebrate Prof. Der Mugrdechian’s anniversary. The video included comments from both former students and fellow faculty members, truly showing how much Prof. Der Mugrdechian has shaped the Armenian Studies Program into what it is today.

“We thought this was a beautiful symbol of our appreciation for him because you truly have shaped us into the individuals that we are today,” said Marine Vardanyan Peters. “With the Noah’s Ark, [we thought] it represents a safe harbor and that is what Professor Barlow is to us.”

Prof. Der Mugrdechian then introduced Fresno State President

APRIL 24, FROM PAGE 1

God, we pray for Your comfort and healing on this difficult day,” she said. “May we understand that in this world we will have trouble but let us take heart because You have overcome the world... We praise You that there is still a strong Armenian presence in this world and ask for Your protection and Your blessing to grow and multiply. In Your Mighty Name we pray, Lord Jesus. Amen.”

Dr. David Zakarian, Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies, was then introduced by ASO President Harutyun Amirkhanyan. Dr. Zakarian gave a powerful speech, urging that the atrocity which began in 1915 is called by its true name: Genocide.

“Every Armenian family has its own unique path of survival... But also, let us not forget those whose paths ended in silence,” Dr. Zakarian said. “They fell, and they cannot raise their voice, and it is our responsibility and duty to speak for them, to remember them.”

David Ashkharian, President of the Marketing Club and an active ASO member spoke next. He described the significance of remembering the Armenian Genocide and achieving the justice Armenians have so greatly deserved for these past 110 years.

“When we forget the past – or worse, ignore it, we allow injustice to continue,” said Ashkharian. “Denial is not just silence, it is violence... We are “Generation Justice,” and justice



Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

ASO April 24 keynote speaker Dr. David Zakarian.

is not just about punishment, it is about truth, healing, and dignity.”

ASO President Harutyun Amirkhanyan then spoke, chronicling Armenia’s history, beginning with its peak prosperity under King Tigran the Great and then the gradual trend towards subjugation as empires and kingdoms desecrated Armenia and its people. He referred to Armenia’s long history of genocide and the recent ethnic cleansing of Artsakh.

“Why are most Armenians sad? Does the tragedy pass on to the next generations?” asked Amirkhanyan. “What can be done to shake this unjust status quo?” He concluded his remarks with a vision of hope for the future.

“Let us take an oath,” said Amirkhanyan. “If we are bound by blood and united by cause, our goal is to see Armenia prospering and independent, and

as long as our hearts beat, we shall contribute to our nation and demand justice.”

Audience members were then invited to lay flowers at the Armenian Genocide Monument and to pay their respects.

The ceremony concluded with a silent march across the Fresno State campus, where participants held posters and marched in solidarity to honor the lives lost during the Genocide and to raise awareness of its continued denial.

May we persist in lifting up our voices and working towards recognition and healing as we unite to demand justice for our ancestors.

In the words of Armenian poet Baruyr Sevag:

Կանք, պիտի լինենք ու դեռ շատանաւք: (Gank bidi leenok ou ter shadanank)

“We exist, we will exist, and we will continue to grow.”



Photo: Andrew Hagopian

ASO officers were recognized at the Banquet. Left to right: Ca-reen Derkalousdian, Ani Sargsyan, Jonathan Chardukian, Harutyun Amirkhanyan, and Sylvie Khatchikian.

Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, who has been a close friend of the Armenian Studies Program for many years.

“As president, it is my job to look at the university from a broader view and when I do that, it is very clear that the Armenian Studies Program is the jewel of Fresno State,” said Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval.

Students, families and faculty enjoyed their dinner along with friendly table conversations. Prof. Der Mugrdechian then recognized officers of the Armenian Students Organization (ASO): President Harutyun Amirkhanyan, Vice-President Careen Derkalousdian, Treasurer Jonathan Chardukian, Secretary Ani Sargsyan and Public Relations Officer Sylvie Khatchikian, who each received a certificate of recognition for their dedication to the student-led organization.

Five graduating students, David Ashkharian, Careen Derkalousdian, Charles Garabedian III, Izabella Papikyan, and Ani Sargsyan, each of whom

had earned an Armenian Studies Minor, were then recognized and given the opportunity to share brief remarks about the Program and how it has impacted their lives, not only as students, but as Armenian community members.

“If you take a step back and really think about it, just the idea of being able to take a class at your university about your culture, whether it is art, history or language, is really significant and in our case rare,” Sargsyan said.

“It’s something that can be easily taken for granted and I am so glad to have been part of something like this program. I can confidently say that it has shaped my college experience for the better.”

Fresno State’s Armenian Studies Program has been something that has not only unified Fresno’s Armenian students, but also Fresno’s Armenian community as a whole.

The Armenian Studies Banquet has been a rewarding tradition for many years.

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