

HYE SHARZHOOM

Armenian Action

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37th Year

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Ethnic Supplement to The Collegian

ASO Observes 101st Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide



ASO Armenian Genocide Commemoration at the Monument.

ARAMAYIS ORKUSYAN
EDITOR

Each year, the Fresno State Armenian Students Organization (ASO) hosts commemorative events in memory of the Armenian Genocide, in order to raise awareness about it and to bring justice to its victims and survivors. This year, the ASO commemorated the 101st anniversary of the Genocide with the slogan “Remembering our past, Forging our future.”

The week of commemorative events began on Monday, April 18 at the Free Speech platform in the center of campus. Students passing by would have their photo taken behind a cutout of a traditional

male or female outfit. In addition, ASO members set up a display of *duduk*s, Armenian books, and Armenian artwork to showcase the richness of the Armenian culture. They also passed out informational pamphlets about the Genocide.

Continuing the week of events, ASO hosted a screening of *The Cut* on the evening of Wednesday, April 20. The movie portrayed the story of a man who survives the Armenian Genocide and goes on a quest to find his twin daughters, from whom he had been separated. Following the screening, the audience walked to the Armenian Genocide Monument, where

SEE GENOCIDE PAGE 8

La Porta and Hagopian Honored with “Men of the Year” Award



Left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta and Richard Hagopian.

STAFF REPORT

On Saturday, April 16, Dr. Sergio La Porta was honored as one of the recipients of the 2016 “Men of the Year Award” by the Knights of Vartan Yeprad Lodge and the Daughters of Vartan Alidz Otyag. He shared this distinction

with renowned *oud* player Mr. Richard Hagopian.

The award was presented in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Brotherhood of the Knights of Vartan. In addition, County Supervisor Henry Perea, on behalf of the Fresno County

SEE LA PORTA PAGE 2

Student Achievements Celebrated at Armenian Studies Program Twenty-Eighth Annual Banquet

DIANA GASPARYAN
STAFF WRITER

The Armenian Studies Program 28th Annual Banquet was held on March 6 at the Ft. Washington Golf and Country Club, and brought together many of Fresno State’s distinguished alumni, faculty, and students. More than 220 guests gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of the students and the success of the ever-growing Armenian Studies Program. Among the guests at the Banquet were Dr. Joseph I. Castro, President of Fresno State; Dr. Lynnette Zelezny, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, the new Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities; Dr. Honora Chapman, Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities; and Richard M. Mills



Left to right: President Dr. Joseph I. Castro, Provost Dr. Lynnette Zelezny, Dean Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Menas Arisian, Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, Lauren Chardukian, Zhora Pogosyan, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Dr. Sergio La Porta, and Associate Dean Dr. Honora Chapman.

Jr., the United States Ambassador to Armenia.

Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program,

opened the event by thanking the donors and students without whom the Program would not

SEE ASP BANQUET PAGE 7

Ambassador Evans Discusses “Truth Held Hostage”

ARAMAYIS ORKUSYAN
EDITOR



Left to right: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Ambassador John M. Evans, and Ara Sarafian of the Gomidas Institute.

Former United States Ambassador to Armenia John M. Evans was a guest speaker for the Armenian Studies Program Lecture Series on Monday, April 25. Throughout his career, Ambassador Evans served in diplomatic posts in Tehran, Prague, Moscow, Brussels, St. Petersburg and Washington, and served as Ambassador to Armenia from 2004 to 2006, when he was dismissed from his position for using the word Genocide to describe the Turkish government’s

SEE EVANS PAGE 5

Genocide Conference Explores New Perspectives

MICHAEL RETTIG
STAFF WRITER

The Armenian Genocide, an atrocity denied by Turkey, was the topic of a major conference bolstering the historicity of what happened in 1915 against denialist claims. On the weekend of March 18-19, the Armenian Studies Program hosted an international conference, “Empire, Politics, and War: The Armenian Genocide within the Context of the Ottoman Empire,” bringing Armenian, Kurdish, and Turkish scholars from around the world to Fresno State.

The Conference was sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program

SEE CONFERENCE PAGE 8



Back row, l. to r.: Dr. Sergio La Porta, Ümit Kurt, Dr. Khatchig Mouradian, Dr. Yektan Türkyilmaz, and Yaşar Tolga Cora. Front row, l. to r.: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Dr. Stephan Astourian, Anna Aleksanyan, and Varak Ketsamanian.

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.

Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Old City Jerusalem, for copies of three issues of *Sion*, a publication of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, 2015, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In Armenian and English.

Alexis Demirdjian, The Hague, The Netherlands, for a copy of a new book *The Armenian Genocide Legacy* (Palgrave, 2016), 369pp., in English, edited by Alexis Demirdjian. The book contains articles from twenty scholars throughout the world, and includes a chapter by Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian on “The Theme of Genocide in Armenian Literature.”

Dr. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, Boston, MA, for a copy of her new book *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post Genocide Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2016), 222pp., in English. The book offers the first in-depth study of the aftermath of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and of the Armenians who remained in Turkey. Dr. Ekmekçioğlu investigates how Armenians who remained in Constantinople recovered their identity within the drastically changing political conditions.

Ambassador John M. Evans and Ara Sarafian, Washington, D.C. and London, for copies of *Truth Held Hostage: America and the Armenian Genocide. What Then? What Now?* (Garod Press, 2016), 174pp., in English and *Therefore, God Must Be Armenian* (Gomidas Institute, London), 76pp., in English, a collection of sixteen talks given by Ambassador Evans on Armenian issues between 2007-2012. *Truth Held Hostage* is the story of Ambassador Evans’ courageous use of the word Genocide, and the consequences for him. It includes his thoughts on Genocide recognition and the future.

Arshalous Louise George, Fresno, for a set of Armenian language and Armanian themed books.

Dr. Vahram L. Shemmassian, Northridge, California, for a copy of his new book, *The Musa Dagħ Armenians: A Socioeconomic and Cultural History: 1919-1939* (Beirut: Haigazian University Press, 2015) 376pp., in English. The book reconstructs the history of Musa Dagħ in the important period following the Armenian Genocide. It includes never before published photographs and primary source material.

Ara Sarafian, Gomidas Institute, London, United Kingdom, for copies of the following books: *Azo the Slave Boy and his Road to Freedom* by Papken Injarabian (2015), tr. by Elisabeth Eaker, 157 pp., in English; *Avedis’s Story: An Armenian Boy’s Journey*, by Avedis Albert Abrahamian (2014), 110pp., in English; *Misak: An Armenian Life* by Karen Jeppe (2015), tr., edited, and introduced by Jonas Kauffeldt, 159 pp., in English; *Journey to Ararat by Friedrich Parrot* (2016), tr. by William Desborough Cooley, 311 pp., in English; and *My Father’s Destiny: The Golgotha of Armenia Minor* by Jean V. Gureghian (2015), tr. by Diran Meghreblian, 174 pp., in English. All of the books were published by the Gomidas Institute.

Dr. Abraham Terian, Fresno, for a copy of his new book *The Festal Works of St. Gregory of Narek*, Annotated translations of the odes, litanies and encomia (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 407pp., in English. This is the first translation in any language of the surviving corpus of the festal works of St. Gregory of Narek.

Dr. Edda Vardanyan, ACHCByz, and the **Dolores Zohrab Liebmman Fund**, for a copy of *Horomos Monastery: Art and History* (Paris: ACHCByz, 2015), 544pp., in English and French. This volume provides a fresh look at one of the most important Armenian monastic sites. Six authors have contributed to the volume, which includes photographs.

ValleyPBS, Fresno, for a DVD copy of the documentary *Valley of Hope: The Armenian Journey from Terror to Triumph*, produced by Sarah Soghomonian and ValleyPBS. The DVD was made to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

LA PORTA, FROM PAGE 1

Board of Supervisors, presented Dr. La Porta and Mr. Hagopian with a Resolution attesting to their accomplishments.

The sold-out event, replete with music and dancing, was held at Pardini’s Catering and Banquets and was coordinated by Dr. Dennis and Rita Shamlian.

Proceeds from the event will help sponsor a concert during the Fresno Philharmonic Music Director Search Season 2016-2017, led by conductor Aram Demirjian, in February 2017.

Dr. La Porta said he was moved and humbled by the award. “I am truly grateful for this honor from the Knights and Daughters

of Vartan, especially as they have contributed so much to the preservation and development of Armenian culture. And to receive it alongside someone as talented as Mr. Hagopian is very special for me.”

Dr. La Porta remarked that he was also excited to learn that the evening would help support Mr. Demirjian’s appearance in 2017 and that he was looking forward to the concert.

Congratulations were given during the evening by Grand Commander Steve Kradjian, Commander Marshall Moushigian, and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia, Berj Apkarian.

California State University, Fresno
Armenian Studies Program

Fall 2016 Schedule of Courses

Course	Units	Time	Day	Instructor
General Education-Breadth, Humanities, Area C2				
• Arm 1A-Elementary Armenian (Class #72321)	4	10:00A-11:50A	MW	B. Der Mugrdechian
General Education-Breadth, Arts, Area C1				
• ArmS 20-Arts of Armenia (Class #73114)	3	11:00A-12:15P	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian
General Education-Breadth, Area D3				
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #73685)	3	8:00A-09:15A	TuTh	H. Ohanessian
• ArmS 10-Intro Arm Studies (Class #76217)	3	3:30P-4:45P	TuTh	S. La Porta
General Education-Integration, Area IC				
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #73684)	3	2:00P-3:15P	MW	S. La Porta
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #73686)	3	3:30P-4:45P	MW	H. Ohanessian
• Arm 148-Mastrpcs Arm Cult (Class #76218)	3	3:30P-4:45P	TuTh	H. Ohanessian
Upper Division Armenian Studies Course				
• ArmS 108A-Arm History I (Class #72323)	3	9:30A-10:45A	TuTh	B. Der Mugrdechian

For more information call the Armenian Studies Program at 278-2669.
Get a Minor in Armenian Studies.

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

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.

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

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Visiting Scholar Ümit Kurt Defends Dissertation

STAFF REPORT

Ümit Kurt, Kazan Visiting Research Scholar in the Armenian Studies Program at Fresno State for the 2015-2016 academic year, successfully defended his dissertation *Destruction of Aintab Armenians and Emergence of the New Wealthy Class: Plunder of Armenian Wealth in Aintab (1890s-1920s)* at the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University on Tuesday, April 19. Kurt’s doctoral committee consisted of chief advisor Dr. Taner Akçam, Dr. Richard Hovannisian, and Dr. Hans-Lukas Kieser.

Dr. Kurt will spend the 2016-2017 academic year as a post-doctoral fellow at the Harvard University Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He is one of several young scholars pursuing groundbreaking dissertation projects under the direction of Dr.



Photo: ASP Archive

Left to right: Dr. Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt.

Akçam. Recent graduate Dr. Khatchig Mouradian and Kurt are young scholars who received their PhDs in Armenian Genocide Studies and their success represents a huge step forward in the field.

“Without the endless support

of Prof. Barlow Der Mugardechian, Prof. Sergio La Porta and the Armenian Studies Program, as well as the Armenian community in Fresno, this work would not have been accomplished. I am totally grateful for their valuable support,” stated Dr. Kurt.

Lost Works of Armenian Poet Misak Medzarents Discussed by Dr. Russell of Harvard University



Photo: Hourig Attarian

Left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta and Dr. James Russell.

MICHAEL RETTIG
STAFF WRITER

Misak Medzarents is known as one of the pioneers of Western Armenian poetry. As a romanticist, most of his poetry was more positive than that of his contemporaries. However, Medzarents’ poetry also contained a political aspect that has previously gone unnoticed. On Thursday, March 17, Dr. James Russell discussed the political leanings of Medzarents in his lecture “Misak Medzarents the Revolutionary: Last and Lost Poems” as a part of the Armenian Studies Program’s Spring Lecture Series, supported by the Leon S. Peters Foundation and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR).

Dr. Russell, Mashtots Professor of Armenian Studies at Harvard University, has spent most of his career studying ancient Armenia. He began his lecture by describing the endangered state of the Western Armenian dialect, which led to him to begin to shift his focus from ancient pre-Christian Armenia to modern Western Armenian literature; specifically to Misak Medzarents, one of the most prominent Western Armenian poets.

“His mastery of the language as well as his complexity and

originality are comparable only to Bedros Tourian for this period of Armenian literature. When we read Medzarents, we are not looking at his work just as literature, but as part of the inheritance of an endangered civilization, one that can easily become lost, if we don’t keep it alive.” It was in the process of translating his poetry that Dr. Russell first became aware of Medzarents’ political leanings.

Medzarents lived in a tumultuous period which influenced his political thought. He was raised in Pingian, an isolated village largely independent from Turkish intervention. “The Armenians here lived in security and without any sense of inferiority or danger, which is unusual in the middle of Anatolia,” stated Dr. Russell. However, the village was attacked during the Hamidian massacres of 1895-1896, forcing Misak and his mother to move to Sivas. Medzarents was once again confronted with violence when the son of a Turkish butcher stabbed him in the back simply for being an Armenian. Although he survived, the wound remained to weaken him both physically and emotionally for the rest of his short life. Despite this hardship, most of Medzarents’ poetry was “relentlessly cheerful.”

Dr. Russell described

Medzarents as a “technician” of the Armenian language. He was known for incorporating all of the senses into his poetry as well as skillfully playing on words. For example, the Armenian word for “rain” (*antsrev*), is very similar to the Armenian word for “sun” (*arev*), which is simply three central letters in “rain” removed. This enabled Medzarents to play on words when he wrote this line from his poem “Song of Life” (*Gyanki Yerkuh*): “The rain comes down; yet tears of rain predict their own conclusion. Our word for rain contains the sun’s name as its ending, and crying fades away to smiles.”

In 1902 Medzarents moved to Istanbul where there was a vibrant Armenian intellectual community that boasted several Armenian newspapers and bookstores. Armenians also smuggled foreign newspapers from abroad because of the heavy censorship in the Ottoman Empire. These foreign newspapers enabled Medzarents to be kept abreast of what was happening in the world. He became concerned for the rights of the Armenians and wrote political poems, which were censored and burned by the Turkish government. Medzarents also became friends with several members of the Dashnak party, such as Vahram Tatoul. Dr. Russell pointed out an example of the politicization of Medzarents’ poetry in the poem *Yerk*, in which he used the capitalized word “Revenge” (*Vrej*). According to Dr. Russell, this exemplified how Medzarents “was not just a symbolist poet, not just a romantic, but he was part of this time. It’s not enough to survive a massacre, you have to take revenge.”

Yerk was published posthumously by Vahram Tatul in the political newspaper *Aztag*. Tatul published a note with the poem which referred to Medzarents as his “comrade,” suggesting that Medzarents was a Dashnak. According to Dr.

“Survivors into Minorities” Subject of Talk by Dr. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu



Left to right: Michael Rettig, Prof. Barlow Der Mugardechian, Dr. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, Dr. Sergio La Porta, and Prof. Hagop Ohanessian.

Photo: Hourig Attarian

ELINA KARAPETYAN
STAFF WRITER

After the devastation of the Armenian Genocide in 1915, Armenians who remained inside the borders of Turkey were left to reconstruct their lives and identities amidst politically hostile conditions. Among the community’s most influential people were feminist women who “articulated an Armenianness sustained through gendered differences.”

The treatment of the remaining Armenians, their response to the Turkish regime, and feminism was the subject matter of a lecture by Dr. Lerna Ekmekçioğlu entitled “Survivors into Minorities: Armenians in Post-Genocide Turkey” presented on Monday, April 18th, sponsored by the Armenian Studies Program and with the support of the Leon S. Peters Foundation.

Dr. Ekmekçioğlu’s talk was based on the research for her book *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey*, which was released by Stanford University Press in early 2016.

Subsequent to World War I, the victorious Allied powers occupied Ottoman territories, and as a result, Armenian survivors returned to their hometowns in the hopes of establishing a sovereign Armenia. In her talk, Dr. Ekmekçioğlu, McMillan-Stewart Associate Professor of History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, explained how the Turkish Nationalist forces ultimately triumphed, and in response, by 1923 the Allies retreated from Turkish territory.

The Turkish Republic was founded in 1923 leaving Armenians once more to maintain their society and values in a country that characterized them as traitors. “Armenians already knew that what was happening to their community, to their nation

at large, was a systematic and unprecedented attack,” said Dr. Ekmekçioğlu.

Armenians talk about survival and recovery through a familial language, and it was widely accepted that the institution of the family was to play a crucial role in national restoration.

“In a reversal of the former patrilineal rules,” said Dr. Ekmekçioğlu, “after the Genocide every baby born to an Armenian was considered a full fledged Armenian by the Armenian Patriarchate. It didn’t matter if the father was of Muslim descent.”

This emphasis on family life and the well being of children was a reflection of post-Genocide demographic anxiety; at this time, the Armenians were compensating after the war, by building strong families and having more children.

“By relying on their past and making good use of whatever freedoms they had, Armenians retained self governance within their community. They found a way to continue living and thriving in Turkey,” stated Dr. Ekmekçioğlu.

Women came to play an incredibly important role in the rebuilding of the Armenian nation.

Among many influential women, Hayganush Mark, was a prominent public figure who was a feminist, activist, and editor of the widely read and praised *Hay Gin* (Armenian Woman) journal. These women reinforced “Armenianness” that was carried out through gendered discrepancy. “

But even as women were being celebrated for their traditional roles, a strong feminist movement found opportunity for leadership within the community” said Dr. Ekmekçioğlu.

Dr. Ekmekçioğlu’s research provided new insights into a period of Armenian history that has been under-studied.

Russell, “you wouldn’t use this word if he weren’t, especially in an official publication.” This link between Medzarents and the Dashnak party has been largely ignored due to the fact that most of the research on him was done in the Soviet Union, which was opposed to the Dashnaks.

Medzarents’ life was cut short at a premature age due to tuberculosis. Dr. Russell pointed

out that it is very likely Medzarents would have been rounded up with the Armenian intellectuals of Istanbul and killed on April 24 had he lived seven years longer. “What kind of a choice is it when one has to say that a 22 year-old genius is lucky to die young? What we can do as readers is to preserve the one place where they have immortality, which is their poetry.”

Congratulations Armenian Studies Minors and Graduating Seniors for 2015-2016

MENAS ARISIAN

**Business Administration- Entrepreneurship
Minor in Armenian Studies**

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

My passion to learn more about my Armenian culture and history encouraged me. It is interesting and important for me to be more knowledgeable about my heritage and where I come from. The history of the Armenian people is deep and has been around for a long time which motivates me to want to know more.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

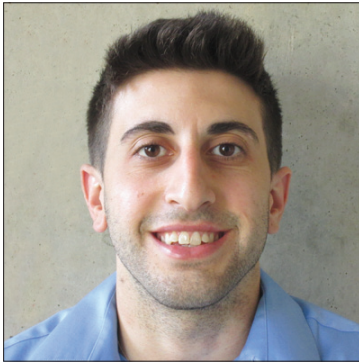
My experiences with pursuing a minor in Armenian Studies has been incredibly fulfilling. What I value most is the journey: creating relationships, learning about my culture, class trips, Armenian Students Organization events, strengthening my Armenian language, and everlasting memories made in the classroom.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

I have to say that my favorite Armenian Studies experience was our class trip to Armenia in the summer of 2014, where we toured our motherland and had the opportunity to see in person what we had learned about in the classroom. I will never forget this trip, which was eye-opening and extremely fun.

What are your plans after graduation?

I plan to further my education and continue growing my real estate business. I have aspirations of earning an MBA, and later a PhD in Economics from UCLA. Once I fully complete my education, I wish to be involved in more business opportunities together with my real estate investments and brokerage. My ultimate goal is to open a Christian based non-profit organization or foundation that helps people all across the globe.



ARAMAYIS ORKUSYAN

Mathematics

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

I deeply value everything the Armenian Studies Program does for its students and the Armenian community. The Program has given me opportunities to learn about my culture. It also created an environment where I was able to meet other Armenian students and build a social community that has helped strengthen and preserve my culture.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

The Armenian Studies Lecture Series was my favorite part of the Program. Guest speakers often discussed aspects of the Armenian culture that I knew nothing about. Going to the lectures was always a humbling experience because I thought I knew a lot about my culture, but I always learned something new at each lecture and left inspired to research and discover more about my culture.

What are your plans after graduation?

I am planning on taking a few extra courses in computer science through Fresno State's Open University Program, and applying for a graduate program in computer science the following year. From there, I hope to become a software engineer.



ALEXA UDE

Business Administration-Marketing

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I am half Armenian and I have always wanted to learn more about Armenia and its history, so once I enrolled at Fresno State I started taking some Armenian Studies courses.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

I enjoyed all the Armenian Studies classes I took, but my favorite Armenian Studies event was the unveiling of the Armenian Genocide Monument last year. It was incredible to see the large amount of people from the community that showed up to see the unveiling of this beautiful monument.

What are your plans after graduation?

I plan to work at JP Marketing, a local advertising agency here in Fresno.

LAUREN CHARDUKIAN

**Biology
Minor in Armenian Studies**

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I wanted to learn about my Armenian heritage. My previous knowledge about Armenian history, language, art, and architecture was close to nothing. I believed that the best place to learn about it was a formal education by taking Armenian Studies courses.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

What I valued the most from my experiences in the Armenian Studies Program was meeting new people, other students, visiting professors, and people in the community. I would never have met people that I enjoy being with, without being in this Program.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite class/activity was when I traveled with a group of students to Armenia in the summer of 2014. That was amazing! I was able to see and experience things that were mentioned in classes and I was able to apply what I learned in class.



BREANNA AIVAZIAN

Liberal Studies

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I have taken four Armenian Studies courses throughout my time at Fresno State and was encouraged to do so because I take deep pride in my culture and wanted to gain a better understanding and insight about the art, literature, faith, and history of my people.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite Armenian Studies course I have taken was Arts of Armenia because I really enjoyed studying several of the Armenian churches. Armenia was the first Christian nation, and because of that I believe God blessed us with the most beautiful churches in the world. I hope to visit Armenia someday very soon so I can visit these churches, especially Etchmiadzin.

What are your plans after graduation?

My plans after graduation are to receive my Multiple Subject Credential and begin my career as an elementary school teacher. In the future, I also plan on receiving my Masters in Curriculum and Instruction.



SOSSE KENDOYAN

Biology

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I wanted to take an Armenian course to learn more about Armenia, my history and my culture.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

In the Armenian Studies Program, I learned more about my identity as an Armenian born in Lebanon and currently living in the United States. Learning more about my ancestor's history helped me connect with my roots.

What was your favorite Armenian class, activity or event?

My favorite class was Armenian Studies 10 taught by Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, and my favorite event was the Armenian Genocide commemoration event held at the Genocide Monument.

What are your plans after graduation?

My plan is to get into medical school and become a doctor.

BENJAMIN TANIELIAN

Biochemistry

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I was curious about and interested in learning more about Armenian culture and history.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite events were the lecture series put on by the Armenian Studies Program because I learned a lot of new things, and gained new perspectives about some of the topics that I already knew about.

What are your plans after graduation?

My plan after graduation is to attend West Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine.



ZHORA POGOSYAN

**Biology
Minor in Armenian Studies**

What encouraged you to take an Armenian Studies course?

I was encouraged to take a course because I wanted to learn about my culture and language. I am happy that I did this because it was far more rewarding than what I could have anticipated.

What did you value most from your experiences in the Armenian Studies Program?

Most of what I valued from the Armenian Studies Program was the depth of knowledge that I gained about my country's history. This was a fulfillment at a very deep and satisfying level that I will cherish for a long time.

What was your favorite Armenian Studies class, activity, or event?

My favorite Armenian Studies class is the Armenian Studies 120 Topics course, where a visiting professor teaches for one semester each year. I get to enjoy a different perspective on the Armenian culture and history as related by different teachers.

What are your plans after graduation?

I plan to get a job and remain in touch with the Armenian community as much as possible.

Photos: Cary Edmondson, University Photographer, Fresno State

Claire Takahashi, Student Photographer, Fresno State

Barlow Der Mugrdchian, Armenian Studies Program

A full listing of all graduates will appear in the 2016 Commencement Program.

ASO Stays Active and Involved During Spring Semester



ASO members at the Woodward Park social.

LUCIE EKEZYAN
STAFF WRITER

Keen on making the school year enjoyable for its members, the Armenian Students Organization (ASO) hosted a Woodward Park social on February 27, as warm spring weather graced the Central Valley. With food, games, sports, and great company, a day at the park lifted spirits and strengthened ties for the members. “My favorite event so far was the Woodward Park social because it was the perfect time to have a day where we can take a break from the craziness of our classes and really enjoy each other’s company while playing fun games,” said ASO executive Elena Sarmazian.

While socials are a great part of ASO, a greater aspect is ASO’s involvement in causes

that make a difference throughout the community. On March 17, ASO members volunteered at ValleyPBS during the broadcast of *Valley of Hope: The Armenian Journey from Terror to Triumph*. The airing of the documentary was part of the ValleyPBS March Pledge Drive and the ASO worked at the phone bank answering pledge calls. “I loved participating in the PBS pledge drive,” said Anoush Hakopyan. “It was an opportunity to volunteer for an event where people contribute to a worthy cause.”

During Spring Break, ASO hosted another social on March 25 at the residence of ASO Secretary Michael Rettig. Members came together and enjoyed a fun night with food, games, and *s’mores*. While the good spirits continued throughout the break, members

prepared for events to be held in April.

After returning from Spring Break, ASO members showcased the Armenian culture on April 1 during “Amerasia Week” hosted by the Amerasia Club. ASO Treasurer Aramayis Orkusyan performed the traditional Armenian song “*Hovern Engan*” on the *duduk*. Following the musical performance, dancers from the Armenian Dance Studio, led by instructor Karine Hovhannisyan, performed an Armenian dance.

“We must represent the Armenian culture. We have a responsibility to do so especially as we are the only Armenian dance group in Fresno. The community needs to see our beautiful culture and dances,” remarked Hovhannisyan.

Adhering to the goal of raising awareness about the Armenian culture and the Armenian Genocide, ASO hosted commemorative events throughout the week of April 18–22.

These events included a cultural photo booth, passing out of informational pamphlets on the Genocide, a screening of the film *The Cut* followed by a night vigil at the Armenian Genocide Monument, and a one-hour commemoration that included musical performances, reading of testimonials, and a keynote speech delivered by Dr. Matthew Jendian, Chair of the Department of Sociology.

Photo: ASO Archive

CineCulture Features “Our Village” in Film Series

DIANA GASPARYAN
STAFF WRITER

Each Friday night, Fresno State’s Mass Communication and Journalism Department screens cultural films as part of their CineCulture film series and class, designed to promote cultural awareness through diverse movies. It is open and free of charge to students, faculty, and the public.

As part of the Spring 2016 film line-up, CineCulture partnered on Friday, April 1 with the Armenian Studies Program to co-sponsor the screening of *Our Village*, which explores the problem of disintegration of Armenian village life through a mix of comedy and drama.

CineCulture has had a long-standing collaboration with the Armenian Studies Program, bringing such popular films as *Grandma’s Tattoos and Aram, Aram* to campus. Dr. Mary Husain, who teaches the CineCulture class and Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian of the Armenian Studies Program have been working together to bring the newest in Armenian themed films that also engage students to think about various issues.

Director Yelena Arshakyan was invited from Yerevan to be present at the screening and to be the discussant. Reflecting on the decisions that led her to produce *Our Village*, Arshakyan stated “I wanted to create a film that tells the story of what is



Left to right: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Yelena Arshakyan, and Dr. Mary Husain.

happening in Armenian villages today.” Arshakyan explained that the population of Armenian villages is rapidly declining, due to emigration. Younger generations do not wish to stay in villages and undertake the physically demanding jobs and responsibilities of village life when they can easily move to the city and earn an education and to get a job.

Shot in Dsegh (birthplace to famed poet Hovhannes Toumanian), the film depicts life in the fictional village of Nushikavan. The grief of one couple in the village is portrayed as their son has moved out of the village to Russia, married a Russian woman, and returns for a visit, but without their grandchild. In another example, Mihran’s daughter Karine runs away from

the village to start a life with her husband in Yerevan.

“Although the characters and place are fictional, the problems and the subject matter behind it are still real to all Armenians,” stated Arshakyan. A large audience of over 275 was present for the screening and they had an opportunity to ask questions to the director.

Despite aspects of sorrow in the film, the strong Armenian sense of comedy still shone. “I would hope that the audience feels the heartache of the villagers, yet enjoys the lyrical comedic aspects of it,” said Arshakyan.

First released in June of 2014, *Our Village* was screened at the 18th Annual Arpa Film Festival in Los Angeles and earned the “Best Feature Film,” at the Pomegranate Film Festival in Toronto.

Photo: Hourig Attarian

Sergei Babayan in Concert



Left to right: Keyboard Concert director Andreas Werz, Sergei Babayan, Dr. Sergio La Porta, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, and Prof. Hagop Ohanessian.

Photo: Veronique Werz

KATRINA BISSETT
STAFF WRITER

On Wednesday, March 9, the Armenian Studies Program and the Philip Lorenz Memorial Keyboard Concert Series once again joined forces to bring a fantastic gift to the people of Fresno. Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program, and Professor Andreas Werz, Artistic Director of the Keyboard Concert Series, have collaborated many times in the past to bring world-class musicians such as Vardan Mamikonian, Şahan Arzruni, and the Khachaturian Trio to the Keyboard Concert Series. This season, their collaboration brought internationally renowned pianist Sergei Babayan.

Babayan regularly performs across Europe and the United States and performed in the Keyboard Concert Series once before in 2014. Babayan is the artist-in-residence at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he has been a member of the faculty since 1992, and since 2014, he has been on the faculty at the Juilliard School.

Babayan’s concert spanned a variety of pieces. The first half of the program included works from a wide range of musical styles, from “Vallée d’Obermann,” composed by the classical era’s Franz Liszt, to “Melodiya,” a piece composed by contemporary Russian pianist Arcadi Volodos. Babayan’s playing style clearly displayed his passion for the music and a subtle sense of showmanship that comes from years of public performance. He

revealed excellent versatility to the audience, beginning with compositions by Liszt, filled with melancholy and quiet rage, then moving to Robert Schumann’s “Variations on a Theme by Clara Wieck in F Minor,” which called for a delicate balance of intricate passages and nearly overwhelming emotion.

The second half of the recital consisted completely of the works of J.S. Bach. Babayan performed the twelve preludes from Book 1 of Bach’s *Twelve Preludes and Fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavier*. The *Twelve Preludes* were particularly enjoyable, as Babayan seemed to perfectly encapsulate the sonority of Bach’s work, as well as the playful, experimental spirit that accompanied the creation of the work after the invention of the well-tempered clavier. This program was a special treat as Babayan himself finds great joy and love in the music of Bach. He expressed great reverence for the impressions found in the music, saying, “Bach gives you inner peace... it combines the earthly with the spiritual, the heavenly.” It was apparent through his playing that these are not empty words; it did indeed seem that the divine and the earthly were mixing in the concert hall.

After the concert, audience members described the performance as “wonderfully varied,” with the pieces “beautifully interpreted.”

Sergei Babayan is a performer and an educator at the highest level, whose love for his craft compels the audience to love it as well.

EVANS, FROM PAGE 1
policy of extermination of Armenians in 1915.

Ambassador Evans was in Fresno to promote his new book *Truth Held Hostage: America and the Armenian Genocide—What Then? What Now?*, published by the Gomidas Institute. Ara Sarafian, head of the London-based Gomidas Institute, was also in attendance at the lecture. The book has received much acclaim, with Pulitzer Prize-winning author Peter Balakian calling it “the most important work about the Armenian genocide by a US diplomat since Henry Morgenthau’s groundbreaking *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story* in 1918.”

Speaking before nearly 300 people, Ambassador Evans openly gave the audience insight into the United States policy on the Armenian Genocide, the ethical challenge he found himself in, and his decision to speak out, which he discusses in great detail in his book. He first used the word “genocide” in 2005 when he returned to the United States to visit Armenian communities, report on the state of Armenia, and answer questions that concerned diasporan Armenians.

Reflecting on his tour of the diaspora, Ambassador Evans stated, “I knew what I was supposed to say. And I knew that

Fresno State Hosts Spring 2016 Mediterranean Seminar



Left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta, Dr. Brian Catlos (University of Colorado, Boulder), and Dr. Sharon Kinoshita (UC Santa Cruz).

STAFF REPORT

On Friday, April 8 and Saturday, April 9, Fresno State hosted the Spring 2016 Mediterranean Seminar. The Seminar brought together twenty scholars from around the country, together with ten Fresno State faculty to workshop three papers on “Politics, Identity, and Religion” in the Mediterranean world.

The papers included one by Fresno State Professor of Classics and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, Dr. Honora Chapman on “Josephus at the Crossroads in the Roman Oikoumenē”; one by Prof. Christina Maranci of

Tufts University entitled, “The Monument and the World: Zuart’noc’ and the Problem of Origins”; and a paper by Prof. Alison Vacca of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, entitled, “Bughā and Bagratunik’: Caliphal Military Campaigns in the Caucasus in the 3rd/9th Century.”

A keynote address was delivered by Prof. Michael Morony (UCLA) on “Coincidence or Cause? The Crisis of the 11th Century.” Respondents to these papers included Prof. Fred Astren of San Francisco State University, Prof. Sharon Kinoshita of UC Santa Cruz, and Prof. David Wacks of the University of Oregon. The papers were

followed the next day by a series of roundtables on broad questions concerning Mediterranean Studies including discussions on how monotheistic was the Mediterranean, whether the sea is necessary to our conception of the Mediterranean, and whether Mediterranean Studies may be useful to fields outside of the Mediterranean.

A presentation by the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library on the status of their collection was also given by Daniel Gullo, curator of the Malta Collection.

Dr. Sergio La Porta was very pleased with the outcome of the Seminar, saying “the program was filled with lively discussion that continued well beyond the sessions. It was a great opportunity for these scholars to meet as well as exchange research projects and ideas.”

The Seminar was supported by the Armenian Studies Program of Fresno State with additional funding by the Provost’s Office of Fresno State, and the Phoebe McClatchy Conley Endowment for the Classics at Fresno State, and co-sponsored by the Society for Armenian Studies. Additional support was provided by University of Colorado at Boulder and the Institute for Humanities Research at UC Santa Cruz. More information on the Mediterranean Seminar can be found at www.mediterraneanseminar.org.

Photo: Aramayis Orkusyan

“Genocide Awareness” Events at Two Arizona Colleges Attract Interest



Left to right: Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Ümit Kurt, Fr. Zacharia Saribekyan, and Prof. John Liffiton in Scottsdale, Arizona.

STAFF REPORT

“Genocide Awareness” was the focus at two Arizona colleges the week of April 11-16. Scottsdale Community College and Gateway Community College of Phoenix organized a series of activities that featured speakers on genocides of the 20th century, including the Armenian Genocide.

Armenian Studies Program Director Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian and Kazan Visiting Research Scholar Ümit Kurt were invited special guests at each venue.

Prof. Der Mugrdechian and Kurt spoke at three events at Gateway Community College on Wednesday, April 13. Students heard a presentation on Armenian/Kurdish topics at 12:30pm, followed by a panel discussion on the Armenian Genocide and the Armenians in the Middle East, hosted by Prof. Donald Hall, who is a member of the International Education Committee, which organized the day’s events. In the evening, the documentary “The Armenian Genocide” was screened followed by a discussion with students and community members.

On Thursday, April 14, Prof. Der Mugrdechian and Kurt were interviewed on radio by Assyrian radio personality Mona Oshana. The focus of the one-hour discussion was the Armenian Genocide and Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo from the University of Melbourne spoke about the Assyrian Seyfo (genocide).

Scottsdale Community College’s “Genocide Awareness Week,” organized by Prof. John Liffiton, featured speakers on the Assyrian case for Genocide, as well as speakers on American

Americans, the Holocaust, and a legal panel on International Tribunals and Criminal Courts.

On Friday, April 15, Prof. Der Mugrdechian presented a paper on “The Armenian Genocide after 100 Years: Denial and Its Consequences,” and Kurt spoke on “The Spirit of the Laws: The Plunder of Wealth in the Armenian Genocide.”

The Armenian Studies Program loaned a poster exhibition on the Armenian Genocide that was displayed at Scottsdale College for the entire week. The exhibition featured text and photos detailing the history of the Genocide.

The Genocide was also featured at the Saturday “Workshop for Educators” conducted by Sarah Cohan, Educational Consultant for The Genocide Education Project, and by Prof. Der Mugrdechian who discussed video and online tools for the teaching of Genocide, and also spoke about the importance of oral histories as a way to engage students.

Cohan’s presentation enabled teachers to prepare lesson plans and to utilize diverse resources to teach about the Genocide. Local area middle and high school teachers from several local area school districts participated in the workshop.

The St. Apkar Armenian Church of Scottsdale was a generous supporter of the week’s activities and organized a thank-you luncheon for all of participants at the church on Sunday, April 17. Fr. Zacharia Saribekyan, pastor of St. Apkar, has played an integral role in the continuing inclusion of the Armenian Genocide in the “Genocide Awareness Week,” now in its fourth year.

Kazan Visiting Professor Dr. Ervine Gives Lectures

STAFF WRITER

Dr. Roberta Ervine, Kazan Visiting Professor of Armenian Studies at Fresno State, gave a series of three public lectures in the Spring 2016 semester, under the general theme of “In the Harsh Light of Genocide: Insights of Selected Armenian Thinkers.”

Dr. Ervine’s research in preparation for the lectures focused on questions those who survived the Genocide asked in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophe. These questions reflected deep, human, and Armenian matters and reveal a range of experience and willingness to engage with difficult issues

In her first lecture on February 29, Dr. Ervine spoke on “Armenians on Immortality,” exploring how the Genocide forced Armenians to reconsider their human experience in the light of mass death and dislocation. Where could the Armenians look for inspiration and consolation in the aftermath of the Genocide?

Dr. Ervine’s presentation on March 30, “Armenians on What Matters Most,” explored the thinking of post-Genocide writers, who had to ponder a way to preserve the Armenian identity. Among the characteristics they identified were adaptability, a moral compass, in harmony with traditional Armenian cultural values, and the necessity to be creative.

Her final lecture on April 27 covered the topic of “Holy Vengeance: Three Hierarchs of the Genocide Speak to America’s Armenians.” Three leaders of



Left to right: Dr. Sergio La Porta, Aramayis Orkusyan, Dr. Roberta Ervine, Sevag Sanikian, Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Prof. Hagop Ohanessian, and Flora Istanboulian.

the Armenian Church, Yeghishe Tourian (Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem), Karekin Hovsepian (Primate of the Armenian Church of America, 1938-1943 and later Catholics of the Holy See of Cilicia), and Papken Guleserian (Locum Tenens in the Armenian Church of America), thought deeply about the foremost issues of the day. Their writings reflect a message to today’s Armenian-Americans. Each of the high-

ranking clergy was creative, inspirational, and hard-working, providing a model for Armenians throughout the world.

In Catholicos Hovsepian’s words, “Armenian people, believe in your past, in your history, in the God of your fathers, in their immortal and alive soul, and you will not die. Believe that you will live and act with that believe, work and hope... and you will not die.”

EVANS, FROM PAGE 5

there were no outright lies in those lines. For example, we were supposed to say ‘No American official has ever denied the facts of what happened in 1915.’ But taken as a whole, these talking points were deeply deceptive, and I knew that.” Ambassador Evans was faced with a great ethical dilemma. He knew the historical truth of the Genocide from his readings and study of history. “This is not a question anymore. If you talk to the experts, if you talk to the historians, it’s not an open question, there’s a consensus

on this,” said Ambassador Evans. However, the Armenian Genocide was and continues to be a taboo topic in the government. “The issue was so taboo that they didn’t even really need to tell us not to use the word because we all knew that we weren’t supposed to get near the word,” explained Ambassador Evans.

After his use of the word “genocide,” Ambassador Evans did not immediately resign from his position, although that was the expected response. Instead, he returned to Armenia and continued his job for another 18

months until he was recalled and replaced. “I wanted to make it uncomfortable for them. If I had just turned tail, resigned, and gone away, it would have simply reinforced the taboo. Taboos have to be punished just to prove that they still exist, but if the person that broke the taboo turns tail and goes away, it even reinforces the taboo more,” commented Ambassador Evans.

In *Truth Held Hostage*, Ambassador Evans not only discusses his journey to becoming an Ambassador and defying his government, but also

offers several short and long-term solutions to the issue informed by his insight from first hand experience.

“I think books like these represent an opportunity to influence people in political power. We talk about historical works, but this is a book written by a politician who was in the United States government, and his insight, as you’ll read about in the book, represents a very important part of that,” concluded Prof. Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program.

Photo: ASP Archive

Photo: Hourig Attarian

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More than 50 students attended the Annual Banquet with family and friends. ASP Scholarship recipients were recognized.

Photo: Hourig Attarian

ASP BANQUET, FROM PAGE 1

exist. Der Mugrdechian noted that the Armenian Studies Program has consistently grown over the years, and this growth can be seen in the increased number of students enrolled in Armenian Studies courses and the increase in the amount of donor money in the form of scholarships available for students enrolled in Armenian Studies courses. “This year, more than \$55,000 in scholarships was awarded to 52 students,” said Der Mugrdechian.

Similar sentiments were shared by Dr. Sergio La Porta, Haig and Isabel Berberian Professor of Armenian Studies, who continued to emphasize the importance of students and their accomplishments. “The Annual Banquet is a special event. It is when we get together as a unique community to look back and celebrate the achievements of the most important part of the university—our students. For faculty there is no greater satisfaction than to see our students’ work and accomplishments recognized and appreciated,” said Dr. La Porta.

Equally deserving of recognition is the Armenian Studies Program itself. Dean Jiménez-Sandoval and Associate Dean Dr. Honora Chapman discussed the important role of the Program within the College of Arts and Humanities. The Armenian Studies Program provides Fresno State’s diverse student population with education in communicative skills, humanistic values, and cultural awareness, which are all goals the College of Arts and Humanities strives to achieve.

“The Armenian Studies Program is now enrolling more students than ever before; it is the biggest [Armenian Studies] Program in the country,” said Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval. Aside from its academic benefits, Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval also reflected on the importance of the Program for the Armenian community. “A civilization and a society are known to be successful only

when they invest in the arts and humanities. A society which does not teach its past, its culture, its poetry, its architecture, is a society that is doomed,” stated Dr. Jiménez-Sandoval.

Attending the Armenian Studies Program Banquet for the third consecutive year, President Castro continued to show his strong support for the Armenian Studies Program and the Armenian community. “The Armenian Studies Lecture Series has certainly brought a variety of world class programs and events to our campus for students and the community. We are working hard to deepen our connection with the community and our Armenian Studies Program is certainly a wonderful model for that,” said Dr. Castro. He also remarked on the Armenian Studies students, stating “We are so proud of the students here today, and proud of all of our Armenian-American students who are consistently among the very best at Fresno State.”

Following the guest speakers, graduating seniors earning a Minor in Armenian Studies, ASO Executive officers, and recipients

of Armenian Studies scholarships were individually acknowledged and awarded certificates. More than fifty students attended the Banquet with family and friends. In addition, three graduating seniors earning a Minor in Armenian Studies—Lauren Chardukian, Zhora Pogosyan, and Menas Arisian—also received special graduation stoles designated for the Armenian Studies Minor. They were each given the opportunity to express their feelings about their involvement with the Program.

The Armenian Studies Program closed another year of academic and cultural excellence. Reflecting on his time at Fresno State and as part of the Armenian Studies Program Zhora Pogosyan stated, “We are lucky to have Professor Der Mugrdechian, Professor La Porta, their tireless efforts with the Armenian Studies Program, and all those who support it. The Program has rewarded me with knowledge about my culture and a desire to elevate myself for the purpose of elevating my community, my country, and my university.”

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Ambassador Mills Meets With
Armenian Studies Program and ASO



Left to right: Lauren Chardukian, Michael Rettig, Aramays Orkusyan, Tadeh Issakhanian, Benjamin Tanielian, U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills, Anoush Hakopyan, Lucie Ekezyan, Elena Sarmazian, and Diana Gasparyan. Ambassador Mills was in Fresno for two days and visited with community members. He attended the Armenian Studies Program 28th Annual Banquet on March 6.

Photo: Barlow Der Mugrdechian

TADEH ISSAKHANIAN
STAFF WRITER

Students and faculty were given a unique opportunity on Sunday, March 6 to meet and speak with the current U.S. Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills. The Armenian Studies Program faculty and several members of the Armenian Students Organization had a once in a lifetime opportunity to sit down with the Ambassador and discuss a range of topics concerning Armenia and the work Ambassador Mills is doing in the region.

The Ambassador began his meeting with the students by first identifying his four main priorities: to work towards the building of bilateral economic ties between the U.S. and Armenia, partnering with Armenia to fight corruption, developing and strengthening civil society, and better explaining U.S. foreign policy to the people of Armenia. Of these four priorities the Ambassador focused on two in particular, the first being the prevalence of corruption within Armenia and the negative impacts this has on all aspects of the country. The focus for the Ambassador is to help Armenia develop and strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Armenia in order to allow these bodies to have the technology, resources, and political will needed to attack corruption.

The second priority the Ambassador expanded on was the need for better explanation of U.S. foreign policy to the people of Armenia. He explained that many times due to media influences and a general lack of exposure and knowledge to U.S. foreign policy from U.S. sources, the people of Armenia often don’t have an accurate understanding of what the U.S. position and involvement is in the region and around the world. Ambassador Mills expressed that this is something that needs to be addressed through his office and that the burden of better explaining U.S. policy to the

people of Armenia falls on his shoulders.

Near the end of the meeting with Ambassador Mills, students asked questions on topics related to Armenia. The questions ranged from the booming tech industry in Armenia, to Russian/Armenian relations and their impact on U.S. diplomacy. Students also brought up Genocide related questions focusing on the President’s unwillingness to use the word Genocide and the impact the students felt this had both on Armenia and the region. The Ambassador graciously addressed each question and provided the students with first hand insight into the U.S. State Department’s and President Obama’s stances on these topics.

It was a great experience for the students to have the opportunity to meet with Ambassador Mills and be exposed to the goals, the policy, and the thinking behind numerous aspects of U.S.—Armenia relations.

The Ambassador joined the students, faculty, and donors later that evening at the Armenian Studies Program 28th Annual Banquet where he again emphasized his priorities for Armenia and commended the work the Armenian Studies Program has done at Fresno State.

Richard Mills was nominated by President Barack Obama in July of 2014 to be the U.S. Ambassador to Armenia. Prior to his appointment, Ambassador Mills spent twenty plus years as a Foreign Service Officer in a number of different capacities throughout the world, beginning in 1988 in Paris as a consular officer and staff assistant to then U.S. Ambassador to France Walter Curley. From there, he was appointed as a Foreign Service Officer in Dublin, the United States Mission to the United Nations in New York, Islamabad, Riyadh, London, Baghdad and Valletta. Most recently, prior to his nomination as Ambassador to Armenia, Ambassador Mills served as the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, a post he held from 2012–2014.



Photo: ASP Archive



Dr. Matthew Jendian

Photo: Hourig Attarian

Left: ASO members at the night vigil held at the Armenian Genocide Monument.

Photo: ASP Archive



The ASO promoted the Armenian culture and distributed informational brochures on Armenian Genocide Week activities.

CONFERENCE, FROM PAGE 1

at Fresno State and co-sponsored by the Society for Armenian Studies, as well as the College of Arts and Humanities, with the support of the Leon S. Peters Foundation and the Thomas A. Koouyumjian Family Foundation.

The Conference was the joint idea of Professor Barlow Der Mugrdechian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program, and Professor Ümit Kurt, Kazan Visiting Scholar from Clark University. Kurt explained that the goal of the Conference was not only to discuss the Armenian Genocide, but also to “contextualize it within the framework of late Ottoman history and WWI.” To do this, Prof. Der Mugrdechian and Kurt invited young up-and-coming scholars to share their research.

“It is really a new generation. We wanted to bring young scholars together,” said Prof. Der Mugrdechian. Kurt shared this vision for the conference stating that “it was groundbreaking in terms of getting outstanding young scholars together who meticulously examined the Armenian primary materials.”

The Conference was divided into two parts; Friday evening focused on the events leading up to the Genocide, and on Saturday the Conference focused on personal experiences of the Armenian Genocide through memoirs.

Dr. Stephan Astourian, Director of the Armenian Studies Program at UC Berkeley and the moderator of the first evening, set the groundwork for the Conference with his keynote address discussing the

historiography of the Armenian Genocide, as well as examining gaps in certain areas and what progress needs to be made on the “road ahead.”

Dr. Astourian highlighted several aspects of the Genocide that need to be further researched, such as the complexity of Armenian life in the Ottoman Empire. “For instance, Armenian Ottoman life in a coastal town in Cilicia might differ radically from that of a small town in Diyarbakir province. It is not the same Armenian life.” The way historians discuss the Armenians should reflect this complexity rather than lump them into one category.

Varak Ketsamian’s lecture on “The Hunchakian Party and the Assassination Attempts against Maksudzade Simon Efendi and Khoren Ashekan” reflected this complexity. Ketsamian opened his presentation by highlighting the differences between Armenian lives in the Ottoman Empire. “There existed a significant gap between the Armenian notables of Istanbul and the provincial Armenians who thought they were strongly underrepresented.” His lecture focused on the dynamics between these provincial Armenians, who mostly joined the Hunchakian Party, and the notables of Istanbul. The first panel concluded with talks given by Anna Aleksanyan, “From Adana to Bolis: Zabel Yesayan’s Letters to Tigran Yesayan in 1909,” and Dr. Yektan Turkyilmaz, on “War and Genocide: Rethinking WWI and the Path to the Armenian Catastrophe.”

The Saturday panel focused

on memoirs, such as Yaşar Tolga Cora’s talk on “An Armenian Officer in the Ottoman Army during the Genocide: Memoirs of Kalusd Surmenian.” Cora’s presentation provided insight into the experience of an Armenian officer in the Ottoman army who was able to avoid massacre and retain his position throughout the Genocide. Dr. Khatchig Mouradian followed with his lecture on “Concentration Camps during the Armenian Genocide: Power, Collaboration, and Resistance.”

Professor Der Mugrdechian shared the story of his maternal grandmother in “A Survivor’s Memoir: Siranoosh My Child.” Siranoosh survived the deportation march from her native city of Tokat and eventually reached the United States. Kurt concluded the panel with “Survival Struggles of Aintab Deportees in Salamiyya: Testimonial Accounts of Genocide Survivors Krikor Bogharian and Der Nerses Tavukjian.”

The Conference demonstrated that despite the progress made in the study of the history of the Armenian Genocide, there is still much to be uncovered by the next generation of scholars.

All of this research supports the historicity of the Armenian Genocide, which is not just an Armenian issue, a Turkish issue, or a Kurdish issue, but a historic fact that should be divorced of politics. The Conference provided a prime example of how young Armenian, Turkish, and Kurdish scholars could come together as people and discuss the historical fact that is the Armenian Genocide.

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