



Armenian Cultural Conservancy NEWSLETTER

Editor's Reflections

by Mary Mirigian Ekmalian

Fall is here! We are excited to share a crisp, autumn evening with you...please join us at our 2nd Annual Armenian Cultural Conservancy Banquet on Saturday, September 23rd (*see back cover for details*).

School is in session! We welcome the Charlie Keyan Armenian Community School's newly-appointed principal, Nora Kassajikian, to the San Joaquin Valley, and commend the school board for their selection. The Fresno Armenian Community offers its gratitude to retiring principal Zar Der Mugardechian who devoted her first six years of retirement to being the full-time principal at CKACS working to bring the school to its present outstanding status. CKACS is celebrating their 40th anniversary and we are looking forward to their community performances throughout the year.

The Armenian Cultural Foundation (ACF) is hosting the upcoming Armenian Food Festival on September 30, and I have recently been asked what the difference is between the ACF and the Armenian Cultural Conservancy (ACC). The Conservancy's mission statement is "to collect, preserve and interpret the evidence of the Armenian experience in Central California in an enduring institution of learning." The Foundation's mission is "to enrich life, build Armenian identity, and facilitate connections within Armenia and Armenians." Whereas the ACC is a local endeavor, the ACF includes several international organizations which are housed in the Garo & Alice Gureghian Armenian Community Center in downtown Fresno. Both the ACC and the ACF are committed to promoting our Armenian culture and heritage.

Speaking of promoting, the film "The Promise" is now available for purchase on Amazon or iTunes (thepromisetoact.org) and all of the proceeds will be donated to charitable organizations dedicated to humanitarian efforts. Atrocities to human rights are still occurring around the world, so please also consider supporting education initiatives via thepromisetoeducate.org.

If you visit our website, you see it is under construction. We are pleased to announce Deacon Van Der Mugardechian has volunteered to assist me and Larry Johnson (our webmaster) to update our website with informative content and current events. Most notably, we are making available a community calendar for the benefit of coordination; we kindly invite all Armenian organizations to submit dates and also to reference when setting their events.

A Reminder: If you prefer to receive our newsletter on-line, please send in your e-mail to maryekmalian@att.net. If you wish to be removed from our mailing list, please call Linda in our office: 559-226-1984.



PHOTO BY ALAIN EKMALIAN

From left: Moderator Marshall Moushigian, Esq., panelists associate producer Dr. Carla Garapedian, Prof. Jack Geiger, Hon. Houry Sanderson, and Dr. Matthew Jendian.

Fresno and Community Conversation Significance of Film "The Promise" Discussed

By Michael Rettig

The highly anticipated nationwide release of "The Promise" in April sparked a flurry of excitement in the Armenian-American community. Armenian organizations across the country rallied in support of the first major Hollywood film to tell the story of the Armenian Genocide to a wide audience. Because of this energy, the film has continued to be a topic of discussion three months after its release. "The Promise" undoubtedly increased awareness of the Genocide, but it is important for Armenians to keep the issue at the forefront of public discourse.

On Tuesday, June 27, the Armenian Cultural Conservancy of Fresno hosted a panel discussion on "The Promise" to analyze the importance and lasting impact of the film. The event, cosponsored by St. Paul Armenian Church, was moderated by local attorney Marshall D. Moushigian and included filmmaker Dr. Carla Garapedian, associate producer of "The Promise"; Dr. Matthew Jendian, Professor and Chair of the Sociology Department at Fresno State; the Fresno County Superior Court Justice Houry Sanderson; and Professor Jack Geiger, professor of Theater Arts at West Hills Community College. The panelists delivered opening remarks and then engaged in a lively discussion with the audience before concluding.

A common theme throughout the evening was the question of whether "The Promise" was an effective

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“The Promise”

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vehicle for educating the general public about the Armenian Genocide. According to Professor Geiger, the film’s love story enabled it to attract a wider audience. “If it were only about the facts of the Genocide, it would have been a documentary,” said Professor Geiger. “Like all great stories, the movie incorporates themes we could relate to against the backdrop of significant events.”

Dr. Jendian echoed this sentiment in stressing the unique role that drama plays in fostering empathy in a way history books and documentaries do not. According to Dr. Jendian, the purpose of the film was not to explain why the Genocide happened, but to show the events that took place and stimulate conversation. Successful drama invests the viewer in the characters and inspires them to further research the film’s topic. Dr. Jendian used “The Promise” as an educational tool by assigning his students to write reflections on the film for extra credit. “Their responses revealed a much more nuanced view of the Genocide than our intellectual study in the class produced,” said Dr. Jendian. “They were deeply moved.”

Dr. Garapedian noted that director Terry George was adamant that the film garner a PG-13 rating so it could be shown in classrooms. The panelists unanimously agreed that the film was artistically and educationally more effective because of its subtle dealing with the violence. Professor Greiger appreciated that “The Promise” did not rely on sensational violence to tell its story. “I don’t think anyone who saw the movie left with any doubt about the brutality of the treatment of the victim. Despite this, they were able to keep the PG-13 rating, enabling it to be used for educational purposes.”

One scene that stood out to Judge Sanderson was the arrest of more than 200 Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul. “When you systematically arrest the leaders of a society, it clearly depicts the genocidal intent of the perpetrators,” stated Judge Sanderson. “The film makers were able to portray that event while leaving most of the violence to the imagination.”

The audience was especially curious about the film’s cast, both how they were impacted by the experience and how their involvement affected popular opinion. According to Dr. Garapedian, lead star Christian Bale immersed himself in the history when he



PHOTO BY ALAIN EKMALIAN

Three generations of attendees sharing comments with panelist Carla Garapedian.

You can “Keep the Promise” and “Donate to Educate” by visiting [AGBU's thepromisetoeducate.org](http://AGBU's.thepromisetoeducate.org)

Please see the back panel for more information

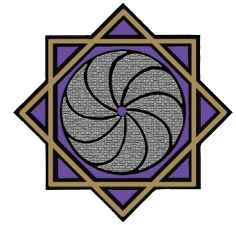
accompanied her to the Ararat Eskijian Museum in Los Angeles. There he learned more about the Genocide and the producers’ vision for the film. Bale demonstrated his passion for the role when he appeared on multiple talk shows with fellow co-stars Oscar Isaac and Charlotte Le Bon to promote the film, thus increasing public awareness.

Dr. Garapedian revealed that the producers wanted to cast as many Turkish actors as possible, but many of them refused due to fear of reprisals from the Turkish government. However, Dr. Garapedian noted the actors who played the carriage driver Mustafa and the deputy governor who helped protect the orphans were both Turkish. Dr. Jendian, whose paternal grandmother was adopted and cared for by a Turkish family, appreciated that the film depicted such noble Turks. “Everyone in a society does not embrace Genocide,” said Dr. Jendian. “Without people with a heart for others, many of us would not have survived.”

Reflections such as this panel demonstrate that the Genocide is not only an Armenian issue, but a universal issue that must be continually engaged with. “The Promise” is an important milestone in the effort to educate the public and achieve nationwide recognition of the Armenian Genocide.

Michael Rettig, is a graduate student of history at CSUF, Editor of Hye Sharzhoom, and a descendant of an Armenian Genocide survivor.

To collect, preserve and interpret the evidence of the Armenian experience in Central California in an enduring institution of learning.



Armenian Cultural Conservancy Logo

The six- and eight-pointed stars have a long history in pre-Christian Armenia and have been adopted in Church architecture and decorative arts. They are thought to have magical powers and are used extensively in astronomy and sacred art. The logo’s wheel of eternity signifies life; the eight-pointed star represents the eight architectural pillars of the Armenian Church; the color purple represents the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide; the gold color is the richness of the Armenian culture.

This logo was created by Alain Ekmalian.

A special thank-you to Allan, Rosemary and Megan Jendian for their editorial assistance.

Armenian Cultural Conservancy

2930 North West Avenue
Fresno CA 93705-3901
559-226-1984

ACC Community Calendar

Fri., Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m., author and translator Christopher Atamian of New York will speak about "Fifty Years of Armenian Literature in France," CSUF Armenian Studies Program, Alice Peters Auditorium, free to the public.

Sun., Sept. 10, after Church Service, St. Mary Ladies Society Brunch in Celebration of Grandparents' Day, Majarian Hall, \$12 adult, \$8 child under 10. 559-528-6892.

Thurs., Sept. 14, 4:00-9:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Ladies' Guild Fundraiser Dinner at Cool Hand Luke's, \$20, must pre-purchase by Sept. 11, 559-486-1141.

Thurs., Sept. 21, 7:00 -9:00 p.m., "All Things Pomegranate" exhibit opening reception with artist Rubik Kocharian, Armenian Museum of Fresno, Exhibit Hall, 550 E. Shaw Avenue, 559-224-1001, display through December 21, free to the public.

Fri., Sept. 22-23, CSUF Armenian Studies Program International Conference "Armenians and Greeks: A People's History of the Ottoman Empire," Alice Peters Auditorium, free to the public.

Sat., Sept. 23, 5:00 p.m., Armenian Cultural Conservancy 2nd Annual Banquet, Fresno City College Outdoor West Quad, Keynote Speaker Lena Maranian Adishian, founder of "The 100 Years, 100 Facts Project," \$50, students with ID \$25, 559-261-1026.

Sun., Sept. 24, after Church Service, St. Mary Faith of Zion, Lunch, Games and Music by Richard Hagopian, Majarian Hall, \$12 adults, \$8 kids 10 and under, 559-528-6892.

Fri., Sept. 29, 5:00 p.m., CineCulture and Armenian Studies Program, screening of "The Promise," Peters Education Center Auditorium (West of Save-Mart Center in the Student Recreation Center Building), Discussion with Associate Producer Dr. Carla Garapedian, free to the public.

Sat., Sept. 30, 10:00 a.m. – Midnight, Armenian Cultural Foundation Grand Armenian Festival Prpoor, \$5 admission, blessing of prpoor (grape molasses) 6:30 p.m., California Armenian Home Grounds, 6720 E. Kings Canyon Road, Fresno, 559-360-0852.

Sat., Sept. 30, evening, Hye Camp E.P.I.C, Dinner Fundraiser, St. Paul Haig Berberian Hall. For info: HyeCamp.com/epic

Sun., Oct. 8, 8:00 a.m., 21st Annual Armenian Relief Society, Sophia Chapter's "Show Me the Finish Line Fun Run/Walk, Woodward Park, Race Director: Kenneth Takeuchi, for more information e-mail arssophiachapter@gmail.com.

Sat., Oct. 14, 11:30 a.m., Holy Trinity Ladies' Guild fashion show featuring A Feliche Boutique Fall Collection, \$50, 559-284-8478.

Sat., Oct. 14, 7:30 p.m., Zvartnots Dance Ensemble, Paul Shaghoian Concert Hall, to benefit the California Armenian Home, General \$50, Reserved \$65, online tickets through 10/12 at www.itsmyseat.com/Zvartnots or 559-284-3810 or 559-439-6139.

Sat., Oct. 21, First Armenian Presbyterian Church 120th Anniversary Banquet, 559-237-6638.

Sat., Oct. 28, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Harvest Banquet, 559-229-2915.

Thurs., Nov. 9, First Armenian Presbyterian Church Merchant's Lunch, 559-237-6638.

Sat., Nov. 11, evening, St. Paul Armenian Church, Annual Banquet/1st Prime Rib Dinner, Haig Berberian Hall. 559-226-6343.

Sat., Nov. 18, 11:00 a.m., Ani Guild Patron Member Luncheon (with \$125 membership), Sunnyside Country Club, 559-432-4741 or 559-285-3241.

Sun., Nov. 19, 1:00 p.m., Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church 117th Annual Banquet, 559-486-1141.

Sun., Nov. 19, after Church Service, St. Gregory Armenian Church of Fowler, Harvest Banquet, 559-834-2919.

Sat., Jan. 13, 2018, SAVE THE DATE, Armenian Cultural Conservancy Winter Tea, details to follow.

Thank You to Our Recent Donors

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Michelle & Stan Diebert in memory of
Matthew Maroot, 10-year anniversary
of his passing

Lucille Gahvejian in memory of Jack Gahvejian

Other Donations

Michael & Barbara Bujulian
Kathleen Elia

Yes! I want to become a member of the Armenian Cultural Conservancy

- Student membership.....\$20
- Individual membership.....\$50
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All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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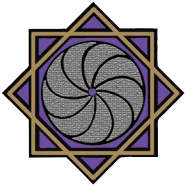
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mail to: 2930 North West Avenue
Fresno CA 93705-3901

**You can help. Become a member.
Spread the word.**

Host or assist with an event.

*"For when two of them meet
anywhere in the world,
see if they will not create a New Armenia."
– William Saroyan, 1936*



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Fresno, California 93705-3901

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Did You Know?

You can “Keep the Promise” and “Donate to Educate” by visiting AGBU’s thepromisetoeducate.org. While human rights issues and related history are included in the social studies curricula of many public schools in the U.S., the Armenian Genocide goes largely ignored. Currently, the Armenian Genocide is not a required subject in history courses, and the lack of educational resources leaves it on the sidelines.

Your donation will increase awareness about the Armenian Genocide by ensuring that schools are sent age-appropriate materials to be integrated into their curriculum including a DVD of *The Promise* to initiate dialogue in classrooms.

A minimum contribution of \$100 will provide 5 public institutions with our Keep The Promise Educational Package, which includes:

- A copy of *The Promise* on DVD
- Letter from filmmaker Terry George
- Tailored thematic study guide to the film
- Armenian Genocide curriculum guides
- List of relevant resources and contact

There is an online petition started by Christopher Rocha to urge the City of Fresno to designate Armenian Town as an Historical District, which will preserve and honor a rich segment of Fresno’s early ethnic history, as well as provide the potential for cultural heritage tourism. For ten years the paperwork has been done, but the Planning Department has not taken it to the City Council for approval. To sign the petition, search for “Armenian Town petition” and click on change.org.



Heritage Fresno’s Armenian Cultural Conservancy
in coordination with
The Foreign Language Department of Fresno City College

invites you to participate in the

Armenian Cultural Conservancy 2nd Annual Banquet

Saturday, September 23, 2017

5:00 p.m. Social • 6:00 p.m. Banquet

Fresno City College Outdoor West Quad

Keynote Speaker: Lena Maranian Adishian
Founder of “The 100 Years, 100 Facts Project”

Master of Ceremonies: Michael Rettig
Editor of Hye Sharzhoom

RSVP Required, call: (559) 226-1984
Open to the public upon reservation