



Culture  
Heritage  
History  
Language

Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota  
Established 1980

No. 152 Summer 2018

# MinneHyeLites

## ACOM Annual Summer Picnic



Join us **SUNDAY, JULY 29 at 3:30 p.m.** at the Como Park West Picnic Shelter for our annual picnic! We will have games, activities, entertainment, and great conversation! It's a potluck, so bring your favorite dish to share. ACOM will provide soda, plus some grilled meats. Grills will be available if you want to bring your own kebabs or burgers! If you would like to bring a lawn chair or two, please do! In case of inclement weather, picnic will be inside the shelter at Como Park.

LOCATION: Hamline Avenue & Midway Parkway, St. Paul, MN 55108

### Bedros Keljik, rug dealer and immigrant from Armenia, wove an inspiring Minnesota tale

By: Kurt Brown March 24, 2018

His boots ground down as soldiers with pointed sticks jabbed at him for resting. He was forced to march 40 miles a day. So Bedros Keljik, a 15-year-old Armenian thirsting to emigrate to America, shredded his shirt and wrapped the strips around his inflamed feet.

“A terrible journey, and I shall never forget it,” Keljik told the New York Times five years later, in 1894. “The sun beat down upon us, the ground was scorching, but we had to march on. In two days our boots had been worn off, and the hot ground being unbearable, we had to tear off our clothes and bandage our feet.”

A few days later, Keljik and two older brothers were tossed in a prison on the banks of the Euphrates River — “one great dark hole, no distinction being made between murderers, thieves,



PROVIDED BY GRANDSON THOMAS KELJIK  
Bedros Keljik 1874-1959 Armenian emigre and rug dealer Bedros Keljik named one son Emerson, left, after poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, d

or so-called political prisoners.”

Fast forward a decade. After stints on the East Coast, Keljik opened a downtown St. Paul rug cleaning and repair shop in 1900. He'd soon count as customers railroad tycoon James J. Hill and the Mayo family in Rochester.

“He used whatever he could — his accent, his wit — to find an edge, and he never grew discouraged,” said Thomas Keljik, 69, who was 10 when his grandfather died in 1959.

Tom and his brother, Mark, have shared their grandfather's inspiring immigrant story in a new 40-page article in the University of Minnesota's Modern Greek Studies Yearbook.

“He succeeded from the start in

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

## Bedros Keljik, rug dealer and immigrant

this venture and in a short time began selling Oriental rugs. The growth of his business has been phenomenal, and he has attained an important position ... His rugs are known over the entire Northwest.”

— *St. Paul Rotarian, 1915*

“It blows my mind to learn what he did as a 15-year-old kid who spoke no English when he first arrived,” said Tom, a retired high school teacher living in St. Paul.

Nearly 120 years after Bedros launched his rug business, Mark still runs the family’s carpet business — now an Uptown fixture at 4255 S. Bryant Av. in Minneapolis.

Born in 1874 in the Ottoman Empire (now Turkey), Bedros Keljik was the eighth of 11 children raised in the strict Armenian Apostolic Church, an ancient Christian community dating to the end of the third century.

In the late 1800s, Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II pushed a nationalist agenda, pressuring Armenians and other Christian minorities to clear out of a region bordered by the Caspian, Black and Mediterranean seas, where they’d thrived for 3,000 years.

My favorite anecdote in the Keljik brothers’ riveting story about their grandfather involves a boyhood memory Bedros often shared with sons Emerson and Woodrow.

His grandfather, Sahag, gave Bedros a coin to spend on a trip to the market. He considered the walnuts, raisins, apricot leather and other Turkish delicacies before picking pistachios.

“I held the nickel in my fist very tightly,” Bedros told his boys, but “when I opened my hand to pay, the nickel had vanished. Do you know what this means? Don’t hold onto anything too tightly.”

It would become a parable that defined him.

“There were many times when it appeared that Bedros Arakel Keljik had lost everything,” his grandsons wrote, detailing his first failed attempt to emigrate, his unemployment and homelessness in Boston and his New York business going belly-up during the Depression.

“We are certain that he felt the pain, but he shrugged it off and went back to work, full of optimism for the next challenge,” the Keljiks wrote. “He did not hold on to his nickel — his past — too tightly.”

That first try at emigrating included a 10-day, 450-mile trek on horseback to catch a boat. Bedros

and his brothers had money to bribe officials to gain passports. But not enough.

“We were arrested and thrown in prison,” he said in 1894. Handcuffed and handed over to soldiers, they were escorted home to the village of Harput near the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in modern-day Turkey.

When his bleeding feet healed — “still determined to come to America” — Bedros headed for the mountains, bribed other officials, and sailed on a French steamer to Egypt and then New York.

His success as a rug dealer began with a display of his trademark gumption after losing his \$4.80-a-week factory job in Boston during the financial panic of 1893. That’s when he noticed a Turkish prayer rug hanging upside down in a Boston rug shop and went inside to tell the owner of the mistake.

The impressed store owner not only hired him but helped him gain admission to the prestigious Boston Latin School. He dropped out but later enrolled in a Chicago law school.

Bedros moved to Minnesota in late 1899, convinced that the burgeoning Twin Cities promised an untapped market for Oriental rugs.

Renting a small shop in downtown St. Paul for \$15 a month, he began cleaning and repairing rugs. He got his big break when a prominent lawyer sold him a dirty old rug for \$5. A week later, the attorney walked by the shop and saw a lustrous rug in the window.

“How do you like your rug now?” Bedros asked. Stunned, the lawyer couldn’t believe it was the same rug and invested a few thousand dollars to grow Keljik’s business.

Bedros married a woman named Zabel in 1911 and they had three children. By 1920, he opened a second shop — this time in Minneapolis. His rugs would soon cover hardwood floors across the region.

Always restless, Bedros moved to Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, where the stock market crash in 1929 derailed his operations. He returned to Minneapolis in the 1930s, working nearly every day until lung cancer killed him just before his 85th birthday in 1959.

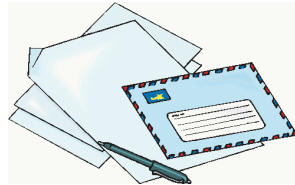
*Published in Minneapolis Star-Tribune 3-25-2018*

### Famous legacy

Bedros Keljik’s great-grand-daughter, Yara Shahidi, is a popular teenage actor, best known as Zoey — one of the kids on the popular ABC sitcom “Black-ish.”

**ACOM WEBSITE**

Remember to continue to check our website:  
[mnarmenians.org](http://mnarmenians.org)

**CONGRATULATIONS**

To Sarah Schmidt Erickson on starting her new job at the University of Minnesota in the Biomedical Engineering Department, where she works on some of their grant proposal, contracts, and purchasing. We wish you the best of luck, Sarah !

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE GRADUATES**

Elementary

High School

College

Best wishes from ACOM for a bright, prosperous and fun future!

High School Graduates:

*Kira Nyholm* who will be attending a Post-Secondary Transitions program that focuses on work skills

*Sam Nyholm* who plans to attend Dunwoody Technical College.

*Owen Phineas Johnson* — *Azad & Karen Mesrobian's grandson* — 'graduated from Columbia Heights and will be attending Hamline University.

**THANK YOU**

ACOM Board, Thank you so much for the gorgeous flowers that you sent to us! They are so pretty and brighten up the dullness of winter.

Our little grandson's name is Agni Dabnin. Both of our son Christopher's grandfathers were named Laurence/Lawrence, so the middle name will be meant to honor them. We had the opportunity to meet the little guy in March!! Thank you so much for remembering this joyous occasion with us!

*Ericksons*

Terry, thanks for the well done "Remember 1915" ACOM button handed out during Tom Keljik's talk on April 24th. I appreciate the time you spent on it and the design.

Kisher Pari

*Francis B*

My most sincere and appreciative THANKS to the members of **ADE** (Armenian Dance Ensemble) for their reliability and commitment to the mission of the group. They regularly attend rehearsals, help sew costumes, give people rides, make good suggestions, and most of all, come to the dance performances throughout the year. Special thanks to Lynne G and Marcie M for being our official

videographers for the Festival .

*Nairy*

Here are ADE members:

Gina B

Mari D M

Cynthia E

Reena G

Ed K

Theresa M

Kathleen D

Bradley E

Armineh K

Alarica H

Terry M

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY**

To Sarah Wiersbeck with our warm wishes. We hope you had a wonderful day.

**ARMENIAN DANCE ENSEMBLE - FESTIVAL OF NATIONS**

The ladies in ADE wore new costumes this year that were patterned after a similar but different color outfit worn by a dance group in Armenia. The addition of the peacock made the costume look absolutely outstanding. As we all know, the peacock is a symbol of eternity in the Armenian culture, so it was quite befitting to display it on the beautiful red dresses.

*The comments received were so encouraging:*

Kudos ! The red costumes are striking

*Andrea J*

it was fun to be there, and I got to volunteer with Janet, too. The costumes are pretty spectacular!

*Lynne G*

A big BRAVO to the dance troupe

*Francis B*

Thank you for the ticket, and a front row seat to excellent dancing and GORGEOUS costumes. :-)

*Marcie M*

Bravo to all! Pamela and I were impressed by both the elegance and energy of your dance performance this afternoon. We also enjoyed the silk exhibit, and learned new things there.

*Joachim S*

**SYMPATHY**

Rev. Harry H. **Maghakian** passed away on Tuesday, May 15, 2018. A Presbyterian minister, he was ordained in 1962 and served until 2014. ACOM extends its sympathy to the Maghakian family.

ACOM also sends its condolences to Art Kourajian on the loss of his brother, Charlie **Kourajian** of Jamestown, ND, May 19, 2018 at the age of 90. He was very involved in his community, along with being an active member of the Basilica of St. James and as an elected government offi-

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Armenians at the 2018 Festival of Nations

The 2018 Festival of Nations held in St. Paul at the beginning of May is now history. The Festival has been running since 1932 and the Armenians are one of the twenty nationalities represented from the beginning. The Festival of Nations has inspired people throughout the region to discover more about our world and embrace the rich cultural diversity brought to us by immigrants from around the globe.

This year ACOM sponsored two groups at the Festival: a Demo booth in the Bazaar area that demonstrated Armenian Silk work and the Armenian Dance Ensemble of Minnesota, which presented dances of Armenia. This year, the ladies wore new costumes and presented an original choreography for the music Blossoming Cherry (Dzaghgadz Baleni).



Janet Rith-Najarian designed the Demonstration booth and staffed it with a number of volunteers from the Armenian community. The exhibit showcased the importance of Silk and Silk work for Armenians. A significant draw to the exhibit was the display of silk worms eating their way through many mulberry leaves. This has always been a major attraction for the thousands of students (and adults) who attend the Festival on Thursday



and Friday. The story of the Silk Road was illustrated with scarves, hats, dolls and maps. Volunteers interacted with Festival participants in explaining the many aspects of the displays. Kudos to Janet for her dedication, creativity and knowledge in presenting this aspect of Armenian life to the public.



The Armenian Dance Ensemble presented a number of dances at this year's Festival with a total of 9 performances over the 4-day run. The group performed two dances for each of the student days

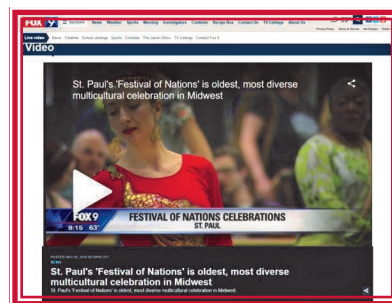
on Thursday and Friday. Tarakema, a graceful women's dance and Yarkhushta, a military type dance typically done mostly by men as a readiness for combat. As a new feature this year, the Armenians taught the students an Armenian dance at the end of the 1



o'clock set on Thursday. We needed two circles to accommodate the number of students who participated. For the World Stage performances, the group performed a set of two dances from modern and historic Armenia. The first, Dzaghgadz Baleni (Blossoming Cherry), is a new dance for the women in the group choreographed by Nairi Digris, Director of the group. The women's costumes (designed after some of the modern costumes worn in Armenia) were made by the ladies and were new this year; they were a striking hit. The solid red flowing long dresses with a Peacock appliqué and matching trim were quite impressive. The peacock was added on the front of the dresses as it represents eternity in the Armenian culture. The second dance was from Historic Armenian in the area of Erzerum. This dance started slowly and then finished with a faster paced, energetic footwork.



The Ensemble also presented a set of 4 dances in the Atrium performing area and taught an audience participation dance. As a surprise, **FOX 9 News** was taping a segment on the Festival and our group appeared in the News Video. Alarica H. was given some great close-ups in the clip. A great job by the Dance Ensemble.



Link to Video (if still valid) <http://www.fox9.com/news/331881502-video>

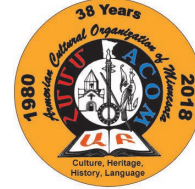
## **ACOM 2018 PAID MEMBERS**

If you have not yet renewed your membership, and would like to do so, please use the form on the back of the Newsletter to mail your check. Let us know if you are interested in receiving a copy of the Board Member biographies. Email your request to: [hyebar@yahoo.com](mailto:hyebar@yahoo.com)

Andeweg, George, Jeanne  
 Angel, Michele Byfield, Bill  
 Aram, Connie, George  
 Aroutiunian-Usitalo, Steven, Margarita  
 Arslan, Arnold  
 Asgian, Phil  
 Azarian, Martin, Donna, Adrianna  
 Balian, André  
 Bobgan, Harold  
 Bulbulian, Francis, Barbara  
 Daniels, Kathleen; Myers, Marcie; Mari  
 Digris, Nairy; McGibbon, Terry; Hassetts  
 Erickson, Bradley  
 Erickson, Leroy, Cynthia  
 Erickson, Mitchell; Schmidt, Sarah  
 Favre, Margaret, Jim  
 Gauro, Boghos, Lana & family  
 Gildensoph, Lynne  
 Hajinian, Peter, Brooke, Charlie, Ike  
 Hakobyan, Artur; Papiyeva, Nina & family  
 Hayes, Adrienne, Jim, Michelle, Lila, Jackie  
 Howard, Molly; Lincoln, Nash & family  
 Izmirian, Peter  
 Johnson, Andrea, Lowell  
 Kardashian, Patty, Vigen  
 Kardashian, Vali  
 Kaye, Alfred  
 Keljik, Mark ; Grantz, Caren  
 Keljik, Tom; Collins, Jennifer  
 Khachatorian, Armineh, Gary  
 Kourajian, Arthur  
 Kourajian, John, Myrna  
 Najarian, John, Mignette  
 Matossian, LouAnn  
 Meketarian, Marty, Mara, & family  
 Mesrobian, Azad, Karen & family  
 Ohannesian, Judy; Tiffany, Doug  
 Parker-Der Boghossian, John; Pounds, Jim  
 Plummer, Elizabeth  
 Poritsky, Joan  
 Reimers, Viola  
 Savayan, Peka, Maria; Anderson, Steve  
 Savelsberg, Joachim, Pamela  
 Vaubel, Tash, Carol, Jamaica  
 Warner, Elizabeth  
 Wiersbeck, Mark  
 Wiersbeck, Sarah  
 Ylitalo, Caroline & Dave, Andy, Max

## **ARMENIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA (ACOM)**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**



- 1) To provide programs and events which encourage its members to learn Armenian culture, language, history and heritage.
- 2) To provide programs of Armenian culture, language, history and heritage for the general Minnesota area.
- 3) To provide an environment which encourages participation of all Armenians, their relations and friends who have an interest in Armenian culture, regardless of religious, political or social differences, and to promote harmony among its members.
- 4) To provide periodic gatherings and meetings for the cultural furtherance of the Armenian people, their relations and friends who have an interest in Armenian culture within the general Minnesota area.

### **CONSTITUTION**

The Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota (ACOM) preserves and promotes Armenian culture, language, history and heritage in Minnesota and the upper Midwest. Founded in 1980 and headquartered in St. Paul, ACOM is the oldest and largest Armenian organization in the state.

ACOM welcomes everyone, regardless of ethnic, religious, or political affiliation, who takes an interest in Armenia and Armenians. Our members include first-generation through fourth-generation Minnesota Armenians, their families, and non-Armenian friends of the community.

ACOM's numerous cultural and social events include Armenian dance parties (barahantess), guest speakers, Armenian language classes, folk dance lessons and performances by the Armenian Dance Ensemble of Minnesota, chamber music concerts by the Armenian Music Ensemble, art shows, summer picnics, and craft sales. ACOM also sponsors all Armenian activities at the International Institute's Festival of Nations, a major regional folk festival held annually in St. Paul. Minnesota Armenians were founding participants in 1932; today, the Festival is ACOM's most visible public venue.

The ACOM office and most activities are in the historic St. Sahag Armenian Church building, at the intersection of Dayton and Howell, in the Merriam Park neighborhood of St. Paul. As an independent, 501 (c)3 non-profit organization, ACOM is supported primarily by membership dues and private donations. Gifts to ACOM are tax-deductible to the extent permissible by law.

# Armenian Dance Ensemble of Minnesota

If you have in interest in Armenian dance, if you have danced in the past, or have never danced but really would like to learn and participate, this would be a good time to give it a try. All the dances are taught, and costumes provided. It is a volunteer activity and we only ask for your time commitment. Rehearsals are typically held on Sundays at 1:00 pm in Roseville. Remember: you do not need to be Armenian to become a member of the dance group, just a desire to learn and enjoy Armenian music and dance. **Rehearsals will resume JULY 8th !**

**Note:** if you wish to perform with the group, you need to purchase your own “character shoes” and be ready to wear makeup and perform without eyeglasses.

For additional information, call Nairy:

651-639-9346 or email: [hyebar@yahoo.com](mailto:hyebar@yahoo.com)



The Armenian Dance Ensemble has been representing Armenian Culture through Dance and Music for over 25 years. Our performances cover a range of Armenian Historic and Modern dances and always include some background narrative on Armenia. This last year the group has performed in many venues—from Festival of Nations and MN State Fair (our largest shows) to smaller gatherings at community centers, senior residences, nursing homes, outdoor parks and church Festivals. Our group is one of the featured pictures on the Festival website this year ([www.festivalofnations.com](http://www.festivalofnations.com)) We also performed at the Festival held last fall at the Armenian Church and plan to do it again this coming September. Overall, we had more than 15 performance days in 2017.



## ACOM Library

Did you know that ACOM has a library? Over the years (38 and counting!) members have donated many books to ACOM, covering a variety of different subjects. Recently, the library has been re-organized and catalogued (well, most of the books, still working on the Armenian-script ones.) We have accomplished the goal of having the list of books available via the ACOM website and allow members to check books out by submitting requests through the web, email or phone calls. Alternately, if you have access to the “**Goodreads**” website you can look for the member “Armenian Minnesota” and check out the bookshelf “[acom-library](#)”. If the book is listed on the bookshelf “checked-out”, then somebody else has it. Otherwise, it’s available for check-out.

If you would like to check a book out, send an email to [Leroy.erickson@minnmicro.com](mailto:Leroy.erickson@minnmicro.com). He will make arrange-

ments to meet you somewhere to hand the book over and get it back when you’re done.

Currently we have 82 books available. There are about another two dozen books in the library, but they are printed in Armenian script and Leroy has not had the opportunity to get the names and titles translated so that they could be added to the catalogue. Sometime in the (near?) future that will be done. Also, ACOM has many video and audio recordings. These will be added to the catalogue and also made available.

If any of you have any old books that you think other ACOM members might be interested in reading and you would like to donate them to the library, we would be happy to accept them.

So, happy reading!

**Leroy Erickson**

## ARMENIAN GENOCIDE COMMEMORATION

ACOM held a presentation/talk on April 24th, 2018 at the St. Anthony Park library in St. Paul commemorating the Armenian Genocide of 1915. Souvenir buttons with the ACOM logo, the Genocide forget-me-not flower and the text “*Remember 1915 The Armenian Genocide*” were distributed to all the attendees. More than 40 people were in attendance including many odars who were first timers and had never attended any Armenian events.

Tom Keljik was the featured speaker and his topic was: “Why did the Genocide happen? What were the

events leading up to the Genocide”.

Tom also gave members of the audience colored cards with various pieces of information about times, places, and actions of historical significance leading up to the time of the Genocide. He used these during his talk, further involving the audience in the presentation.

An audio recording is currently available for the presentation. The talk was a bit under 1 hour in length. Click on the link below to hear the audio.

[Link to Audio File](#)

(Continued from page 3)

cial, served on numerous government committees in Jamestown. He loved his family, his church, his work, and Jamestown.

Charlie's service to the city of Jamestown spanned more than 40 years. In 1974, he was elected to the Jamestown City Council, and then he served as Mayor from 1997-2006.

Condolences to the **Ghannoum** & Melkonian family on the loss of their grandmother in Syria.

We are sad to announce the death of Pamela **Savelsberg's** mother, Aline Feldman, who passed away peacefully surrounded by family. Aline was a great artist, and some of her work can be seen on her website. [Website Link](#)

**WISHING THEM SPEEDY AND COMPLETE RECOVERY**

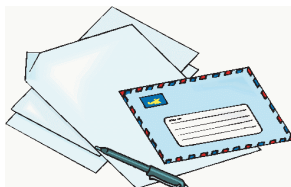
Kristapor Souslian (back at work now)  
 Peter Goshgarian  
 Natasha Vaubel (back at work now)

Aram and Ruth Charchian 's daughter-in-law Rachel was diagnosed with leukemia last May and immediately started comprehensive treatments. She had a bone marrow transplant from her brother in February and is recovering well at home.

**ACOM ANNUAL REPORT**

What an impressive year.  
 Joan P

Thanks for the report. Another great year.  
 Judy O



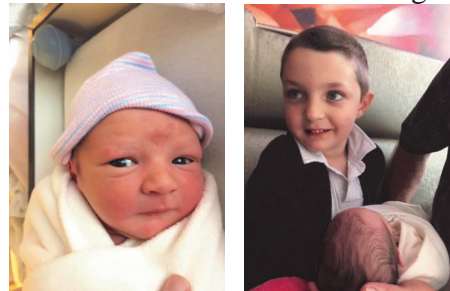
Thank you, well done.  
 Marty M

**MORE CONGRATULATIONS**

To Andrea and Lowell Johnson for their 20th wedding anniversary. They got married at Gammelgården museum, the outdoor Swedish museum in Scandia. They celebrated their anniversary there on Saturday June 23. Wishing you both a long life of happiness and good health.

**THANKS**

Thank you ACOM board for the amazing fruit basket! We got it inside out of the heat, and it's lovely. Isaac "Ike" Walter was born Saturday evening, June 2, 2018, coming in at 7lbs 14oz and 21" long. He looks a lot like his brother did at birth. Everyone is home now and doing well. Charlie is thrilled to be a big brother.



Thank you again, *The Hajinians*

**NEWSLETTER**

Nairy, Terry & all who contributed to the ACOM Newsletter #151. I finally got a chance to read the Newsletter from cover to cover. Bravo!! Thank you for a job well done. Shnoragalem,  
 Francis B



**ACOM Current Events Calendar—July-August**

Date	Time	Place	Event
7/9 - Mon	5:30 PM		Board meeting
7/14 - Sat	1.30 PM	Cherrywood Pointe, - Roseville	ADE
7/14 - Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon's home	Cinema Saturday
7/26 - Thu	3:00 PM	Cherrywood Pointe - Lexington	ADE
7/29- Sun	3:00 PM	Como Park	Annual Picnic
8/5 - Sun	All Day	Racine, WI	St. Mesrob Armenian Festival in Racine
8/11 - Sat	7:00 PM	Digris/McGibbon's home	Cinema Saturday
8/13 - Mon	5:30 PM		Board Meeting
8/20 - Mon	7:00 PM	Centennial Lakes Amphitheater	ADE
8/26 - Sun	12-5 PM	State Fair - Intl Bazaar	ADE (4 - 1/2 hour performances in time period)

## Reflecting on Fatma Müge Göçek's Visit to Minnesota

By Tom Keljik

It's late morning as I sit by the pool in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Naïry had asked if I would write a bit on my reflections on Professor Fatma Müge Göçek's visit to Minnesota and this seems like the perfect time and place to do so. In the previous day, Jennifer (my wife) and good friends - the Singh's - made a car trip to Taos, New Mexico, earlier in the day encountering one beautiful 16th century church after another along with native peoples' lands, their historic sites as well as spotting numerous casinos from the highway. While their historical confrontation with "invading peoples" has been devastating, their culture and peoples continue to live - in some degree on the soil of a portion of their historical lands. The native peoples, with revenue from the casinos and other sources have been able to strengthen their ties to the past and share them willingly with the hoard of tourists all too eager to learn about these ancient peoples. What does this have to do with capsulizing impressions of Professor Göçek's visit to Minnesota? More on that later.

I was fortunate to have been invited to a lunch attended by Fatma M. Göçek - Sociology Professor, University of Michigan, Joachim Savelsberg - Professor - Center for Genocide Studies, U of Minnesota, Julien Zari-fian - visiting Professor from Paris, Naïry Digris and Terry McGibbon.



Later that evening, Göçek conducted a lecture centered on her findings of studying the memoirs of key Turkish

figures involved in designing and executing the plans for the extermination of the Armenians. Most striking to me was how this exceptionally brave and persevering scholar came to shape her academic quest in a most unusual topic for a person of Turkish heritage.

Her journey in this task was rooted in her personal experiences and intense interest and scrutiny of elements of justice, fairness, equality and freedom across the spectrum of the Turkish nation. This historical study has led her to understand that the modern Turkish state is built on a large myth that once exposed will rock the foundational building blocks of its nationhood.

During her talk, she revealed she had an intense interest in finding the story of her grandmother's ancestry to

understand the past. Her seminal work *Denial of Violence - Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence against the Armenians 1789-2009*, deals with this occasion in the preface.

She writes - *In 2002, I decided to take my first trip to*



*that village, almost a century after my great-grandfather had departed from it. At the time, I invited my friend Hrant Dink to accompany me there, but he*

*could not due to a prior commitment. Instead, he suggested I go with Baron Sarkis Seropyan, the owner and Armenian section editor of the Agos newspaper. . . . I want to draw attention to how our searches into the past and what we recovered were so dramatically different. Upon arriving at my great-grandfather's village, I was able to locate some distant relatives still living there who showed me around the village, pointing out the house my great-grandfather had been born in, the religious primary school he attended, the water fountain the family had built for the village, and the huge brass candleholders they had donated to the mosque. All was intact. I found out that our family of Sunni Turks had originally come to the region from the Caucasus in the sixteenth century. The village was initially Armenian, but its inhabitants had vacated it centuries ago on their own volition, moving on to the larger town of Egin for trade. After a pleasant visit, we proceeded to Egin, this time to recover what we could of Baron Seropyan's past. There were no visible signs of Armenian presence in the town that, prior to 1915, had at least been 30 percent Armenian. The one remaining church had been transformed into a museum, the priest's house into a municipal building, and a mansion into a military recruitment center. As we walked around, Baron Seropyan taught me how to identify the buildings of Armenian origin through their stone work and ornate iron doorknobs, two skills the Armenians had once excelled in. When we inquired about the Armenian cemetery, we were directed to the town dump, only to discover a single broken khachkar (Armenian cross-stone) buried in the garbage.*

(Continued on page 9)



Reflecting on Fatma Müge Göçek's Visit to Minnesota (cont.)

(Continued from page 8)

The two distinct ways in which our two parts had survived, mine totally intact through the centuries and his almost fully destroyed, demonstrated to me that history is always written by the victors. And the destruction of the losers was not only physical but social, spatial, and cultural. This vivid difference stayed with me throughout the following four summers as we visited one former Armenian settlement, monastery, and church after another, always to find them in ruins. As I watched Baron Seropyan trying desperately to capture with his camera the image of every broken stone once carved by the Armenians, I started to surmise what it must be like for him to now live as a minority on what once was his ancestral land, witnessing from one year to the next its continuously dwindling remains. . . . Such destruction, however, not only destroyed the social and economic fabric of Asia Minor for a century but also ruined the moral fabric of the Turks; the perpetrators of the genocide had lost their moral compass and with it their society's trust in justice and humanity prevailing over all else. For decades to come, the republic inherited this damaged moral fabric as a state interests easily prevailed, destroying whatever attempted to challenge it.

After a relaxing morning in Santa Fe, we will probably head back out on the road to explore more of the rich history of the various peoples that have inhabited this land over the centuries. I think we will spend a day at the Pueblo site outside of Taos.

Dr. FATMA MUGE GOÇEK

Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan, came to the University of Minnesota through the Annual Arsham and Charlotte Ohanesian Chair lecture and spoke on Monday, April 30, 2018 on the Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and the Collective Violence against the Armenians (1789-2009). A reception and book signing followed Dr. Göçek's talk.

Dr. JULIEN ZARIFIAN

Fulbright Visiting Scholar at USC Shoah Foundation, University of Clergy-Pointoise in France, gave a public lecture on May 2, 2018. His presentation was also part of the Arsham and Charlotte Ohanesian talks and took place at the Social Sciences Building at the University of Minnesota.

OTHER ITEMS OF NOTE

A NICE SURPRISE VISIT

On Sunday, April 29, 2018, a few of us in the Armenian community attended the church service at Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis where Reverend James Gertmenian was preaching at the 10.30 service. Jim had retired and moved to Maine three years ago, but was visiting the Twin Cities, and when we heard he was in town, we were happy and excited to see him and listen to his wise words. Jim Gertmenian had been the former Senior Minister at Plymouth Congregational Church and co-founder of Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative and was an ACOM member while he lived in Minnesota.

ACOM SUMMER POOL PARTY

Hosted by Leroy and Cynthia Erickson

Summer is here again and so was the ACOM Pool party at the Ericksons. A large group of people attended and enjoyed burgers, brats and beverages provided by the Ericksons, along with a variety of delicious food provided by the rest of the attendees. The day was perfect, temperature in the low 80s with just a hint of a breeze and enough sun to enjoy but not enough to cook the guests. Some people actually swam in the beautiful pool but most were just content to relax and enjoy each other's company. Many thanks to the Ericksons for opening their home and pool for this event and thanks to all who attended.



## TENTH IN A SERIES

### What was it like growing up

#### Armenian in ....

The tenth session in the ongoing series "What Was It Like Growing Up Armenian In ..." Featured: Tom Keljik who grew up in the Twin Cities.



Armineh Khachatoorian who grew up in Iran.

Reena Ghannoum who grew up in Syria.



The event was held at the Merriam Park Library in St. Paul and was open and publicized to the general public as well as to the Armenian Community. The three presenters gave their interesting perspectives on growing up in their communities. Tom, who like many children of immigrants, was not immersed in the culture until he was older and began to discover the stories about his parents and older relatives. Armineh grew up in an Iran that was still welcoming to Armenians and there was always an Armenian presence available to her. Reena grew up in Syria and also had many Armenian friends and neighbors. During the last few years the troubles in Syria were escalating but she was still at ease in her home area. The session was moderated by ACOM President Nairy Digris. As always, the session prompted a lively discussion afterwards. Of the 27 attendees, there were two attending who were outside of the general Armenian community, but were very interested in the session and hopefully came away with a greater understanding of Armenians and their lives.



## FORGET NOT THE TRUTH - TANER AKÇAM HONORED FOR ARMENIAN GENOCIDE RESEARCH

By Sarah Erickson

Armenian Genocide scholar and great friend of ACOM, Taner Akçam, was honored at the World Without Genocide annual fundraising gala on May 14<sup>th</sup>, a trip that was partially made possible through funding from ACOM. Members of the ACOM and WWG boards attended dinner with Dr. Akçam on Sunday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at Kindee Thai restaurant. Attendees had the chance to speak candidly with Dr. Akçam about his new book, *Killing Orders: Talaat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide*, his work

this year in Paris, and his upcoming travels to promote his book.

Dr. Akçam received World Without Genocide's "A World of Upstander's Award" for his "lifelong commitment to seek the truth, to




remember the past, and to end genocide denial." He delivered a fantastic and impassioned speech emphasizing the need for the United States to put political interests aside, acknowledge Turkey's perpetration of the Armenian Genocide, and combat denialism.

ACOM also donated numerous items to the gala's silent auction, including a beautiful quilt made by our very own Andrea Johnson. The proceeds from the silent auction will be used to fund World Without Genocide's educational programming including its Benjamin B. Ferencz Fellowships in Human Rights and Law, which are awarded to law students, and scholarships that make it possible for low-income students to attend World's annual Summer Institute for high school and college students.

ACOM board member Sarah Erickson was also honored at the gala and received WWG's Alice Musabende Outstanding Citizen Award for "continued commitment to genocide prevention and human rights protections locally and globally."

[Link to Dr. Akçam's Remarks](#)



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