



The Global Armenian Diaspora

Combining Thought and Action

Saturday, April 29, 2023

Hilton LA North Glendale Hotel

Between Cultural Preservation & Multicultural Armenianness

Cultural preservation (հայապահպանում) in the Armenian diaspora refers to the efforts and practices of the intergenerational transmission of the Armenian language, history, and traditions through formal and informal pathways. Multicultural Armenianness encompasses the diversity of ways of being, feeling, thinking, and acting Armenian, as well as the various practices of performing diasporic Armenianness. From a global and future-oriented perspective, this panel will explore ways in which the efforts of cultural preservation (հայապահպանում)—with Armenian language transmission at the core—can be reconciled with forging more inclusive connections between and among multilingual/multicultural Armenian populations. Without juxtaposing cultural preservation against multicultural Armenianness, the goal of this panel is to start a discussion on how to continue the efforts of cultural preservation while also embracing multicultural Armenianness.

Dr. Vahe Sahakyan



An interdisciplinary scholar affiliated with the University of Michigan-Dearborn Armenian Research Center. He holds a Candidate of Sciences degree in Sociology from Yerevan State University (2002) and a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (2015). He taught at the Department of Sociology at Yerevan State University from 2001 to 2008, and at the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor between 2010 and 2017. During the past decade, he has conducted multi-sited empirical studies of the Armenian diaspora as part of his doctoral research, and later as a member of the Academic Advisory Board of the Armenian Diaspora Survey. He is broadly interested in the studies of diaspora, transnational migration and transnationalism from both theoretical and comparative perspectives. In 2022, he compiled and edited *Spyurkagitutyun: Knnakan antologia [Diaspora Studies: A Critical Anthology]*, a volume bringing together Armenian-language translations of 19 fundamental articles and book chapters in *Diaspora Studies* by renowned Western scholars, and published by Yerevan State University Press.

Dr. Shushan Karapetian



Director of the USC Dornsife Institute of Armenian Studies. She researches, teaches, and writes about the Armenian experience, particularly focusing on competing ideologies at the intersection of language and the construction of transnational identity. She received a PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures from UCLA in 2014, where she taught Armenian Studies courses for over ten years. Her dissertation, “How Do I Teach My Kids My Broken Armenian?: A Study of Eastern Armenian Heritage Language Speakers in Los Angeles,” received the Society for Armenian Studies Distinguished Dissertation Award in 2015. In 2018, she was the recipient of the Russ Campbell Young Scholar Award in recognition of outstanding scholarship in heritage language research. She is the host of the popular IG/YouTube Word of the Day series through which she teaches Armenian in a fun and engaging manner. She is also host of the podcast series, *Language Therapy with Dr. K*, which looks at language, in all kinds of contexts, with an Armenian twist.

Dr. Alina Dorian

School of Public Health where she also serves as Associate Professor. She holds a BS from UCLA in Biological Sciences and a PhD from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Dorian has managed the development and implementation of projects for a multitude of partner agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and many other governmental and non-governmental agencies. She presently serves as a Public Health Commissioner for the County of Los Angeles. Before coming to UCLA, Dr. Dorian served as the Senior Health Associate at the American Red Cross in Washington, D.C. For over 30 years, Dr. Dorian has been working in Armenia and Artsakh, as she authored Artsakh's first National Health Plan and was awarded USAID grants to implement nationwide primary health care programming in Artsakh through the American Red Cross, International Committee of the Red Cross and the American University of Armenia (AUA). She was granted the "Medal of Gratitude" by the President for her substantial contributions to Artsakh. Recently, she has been the Principal Investigator for several on-going programs addressing COVID-19 as well as national disaster preparedness and response for the Republic of Armenia, in collaboration with AUA and the Ministry of Health. For 10 years, Dr. Dorian proudly served the Principal and Head of School for the Rose and Alex Pilibos Armenian School, working closely with students, faculty, alumni and the community to cement Pilibos as a premier academic institution in Los Angeles.



Communities, Host Societies & Diasporan Connections

Armenian diasporan communities are spread in many countries across the world. Each community has found its own means to maintain its group identity by adjusting its activities and objectives to the regulations of the host state and the customs of the host society. However, these communities also continue to consider themselves as part of one Armenian Diaspora. The maintenance of mutual awareness and joint activities by these communities are believed to be vital to preserve the feeling of Armenianness as a common identity among new generations of Armenians now living divided by numerous state borders. What can the experience of each community inform the others? More importantly, how should various forms of links across different Armenian Diasporan communities be maintained considering regularly changing circumstances in each country and across the world? What changes are needed at this stage and in the near future to improve the probability of the attainment of these objectives?

Dr. Ara Sanjian

An Associate Professor of History and the Director of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He received his master's degree from Yerevan State University (1991) and his PhD from the School of Oriental and African Studies, the University of London (1996). Previously, he was the Chairman of the Department of Armenian Studies, History and Political Science at Haigazian University in Beirut. His research interests and publications focus on the post-World War I history of Armenia, Turkey and the Arab states of Western Asia.





Dr. Hayg Oshagan

A professor at Wayne State University and is the founder and Executive Director of New Michigan Media, the network of ethnic media in Michigan. Oshagan has been editor of the Armenian Review, the Armenian Weekly, Director of the ARS Armenian Studies Program, member of a number of Michigan Governor Commissions, member of Vehapar Aram I Diaspora conversations, co-Chairs the Detroit City Council Immigration Task Force, the Novi Armenian Community Center project, was a former member of the ARF Eastern US Central Committee and the ARF Bureau, and is a frequent public speaker.



Dr. Razmik Panossian

Director of the Armenian Communities Department at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. He is the author of the critically acclaimed book, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars*, and various other academic publications on Armenian identity, Diaspora, and politics. Prior to his appointment at Gulbenkian in 2013, he worked at a Canadian governmental agency in Montreal devoted to international human rights promotion and democratic development. He obtained his PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2000, where he subsequently taught.

What is Armenia for the Diaspora?

Since Armenia's independence over three decades ago, the Armenian diaspora has been going through institutional transitions and reassessment of what it means to be a diaspora.

Armenia has caused a positive disruption—it has significantly altered the way diaspora institutions and diasporans think, plan and work. However, even as the independence of the

Republic of Armenia reenergized and rejuvenated Armenians around the world, the conceptions, definitions, understandings of "Armenia" are multiplex and fluid. What is

Armenia for the Diaspora? "Fatherland", "homeland", "country", "state", "place", "birthplace"...? This panel will unpack some of the critical questions in Diaspora's perceptions, relations, and engagement with Armenia.

Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian

A sociologist and an expert on the contemporary Armenian Diaspora. Since 2012 he is Associate Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford and Associate Professor of Armenian Studies, IMAS, Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales. He is the director of the Armenian Diaspora Survey, a major research project, funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, studying public opinion in the Diaspora. Dr. Tchilingirian is the author of monographs, book chapters, academic studies and articles (www.hratch.info). His latest publication is a chapter entitled "Reverse Engineering: A State-Created 'Albanian Apostolic Church' in Caucasian Albania. An International Handbook, edited by Jost Gippert and Jasmine Dum-Tragut (De Gruyter, forthcoming in July 2023). He has lectured internationally in leading universities, academic institutions and international NGOs on minorities in contemporary Middle East, inter-ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus, the Diaspora, and the Armenian Church. His television, radio and newspaper interviews have appeared in international media outlets, including BBC News, Al-Jazeera, The New York Times, Financial Times, Armenia's Public TV HI, Armenian Public Radio, Radio Vaticana and a host of other media.



Sara Anjargolian, Esq.

Born in London, grew up in California, and has lived and worked in Armenia for over 12 years. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of California, Los Angeles with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Public Policy and received a law degree from the University of California, Berkeley. During her legal career in the U.S. she served as a trial lawyer for the U.S. Department of Justice and deputy city attorney/policy advisor to the Los Angeles City Attorney. Anjargolian co-founded the non-profit social enterprise Impact Hub Yerevan in 2014 and served as its chief executive until joining the Republic of Armenia government in 2019. She also served on the Impact Hub Global Board of Directors. Anjargolian's tenure in Armenia has also included a Fulbright scholarship, lecturing at the American University of Armenia, and working as a multimedia journalist focused on social impact projects. Anjargolian is the former Head of Office/Chief of Staff at the Republic of Armenia's Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, a position she held for over 2 years. She currently works as a consultant on several public sector reform initiatives in Armenia.



Dr. Sossie Kasbarian

Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Stirling, Scotland. She is co-editor of *Diaspora- A Journal of Transnational Studies*. Her research interests and publications broadly span diaspora studies; contemporary Middle East politics and society; nationalism; transnational political activism; refugee, displacement and migration studies. She is the author of many academic articles and book chapters (see her faculty page). Dr. Kasbarian is the editor (with Anthony Gorman) of *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualizing Community* (Edinburgh University Press 2015); co-editor (with Talar Chahinian and Tsolin Nalbantian) of *Diaspora and 'Stateless Power': Social Discipline and Identity Formation Across the Armenian Diaspora during the Long Twentieth Century* (forthcoming); and is currently working on her monograph, *The Armenian Middle East: Remnants, Resilience and Reconfigurations*. Her most recent publications include 'Fault lines and Fractures in the 2020 Artsakh/ Nagorno Karabakh War - silence, absence and erasure in Middle East Studies' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* and "The Armenian Middle East - Boundaries, Pathways and Horizons" in *The Routledge Handbook on Middle Eastern Diasporas*.



What's Next? Getting from Here to There

The panelists will discuss some of the ideologies, procedures and behaviors through which institutions and organizations in the Armenian diaspora have tried to define and accomplish their objectives. They will also consider and discuss how organizations can renew themselves, while other participants in the public sphere advocate for new organizations and goals. The panelists may also explore theories and practices of analysis, decision-making and action.



Dr. Khachig Tölölyan

A retired Professor of the Humanities who taught at Wesleyan University in Connecticut for 47 years. He has published many scholarly articles on such topics as literature, Armenian terrorism and diaspora studies. He is the founding editor of *Diaspora: a journal of transnational studies*. He served on the Boards of the Armenian Assembly and the Zoryan Institute and published well over a hundred articles in Armenian. In 1980 he published a book in Armenian, *Սփիւռքի Մէջ* (Տպարան Յառաջ, Փարիզ):



Dr. Hagop Gulludjian

Dr. Gulludjian holds a doctorate of Letters and an MBA. He has published on medieval Armenian poetry, heritage language and language vitality, interactions between virtuality, culture and diasporas, and Diaspora Armenian literature. Currently, he is the inaugural holder of the UCLA Kachigian Lectureship in Armenian language and culture. He has an extensive consulting background, having assisted both private and government entities on technology policy issues.



Salpi Ghazarian

Until very recently, Salpi Ghazarian was the director of the USC Institute of Armenian Studies. Prior to that she held positions in Armenia's Foreign Ministry, served as editor of *Armenian International Magazine*, hosted a bilingual Armenian radio program, and is co-founder of *CivilNet*, a trilingual global news and public affairs platform.



Dr. Vahram L. Shemmassian Moderator

Professor and the director of the Armenian Studies Program in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures at the California State University, Northridge. He holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He has conducted extensive research in forty governmental, institutional, and organizational archives in the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Armenia on the Armenians of Musa Dagh and Armenian Genocide survivors in the Middle East at the end of World War I. He has published a number of scholarly articles in peer reviewed journals and as book chapters, delivered lectures and keynote speeches at community events and in universities, and participated in and organized international conferences. He has also published two books: *The Musa Dagh Armenians: A Socioeconomic and Cultural History, 1919-1939* (2015), and *The Armenians of Musa Dagh: From Obscurity to Genocide Resistance and Fame, 1840- 1915* (2020).



During the past several years, the leadership of Armenian religious, political and civil organizations of the Western United States have been engaged in a healthy environment of collaboration. In a spirit of unity, these structures have planned and implemented in the name of our greater community interests, in defence of our rights and demands as Armenian-Americans, and in furtherance of the welfare of Armenia and Artsakh, all the while facing and overcoming any and all challenges collectively.

Undoubtedly, the best and most successful manifestation of the aforementioned collaboration and collective will were the Armenian Genocide Centennial commemorative events, during which the Community witnessed unprecedented collective efforts and results. Parallel to the Centennial commemorative events and in the years succeeding them the community organizations went on creating several joint working committees on various occasions. The spirit in which these committees operated, further asserted the need for increased joint and collaboration efforts.

Furthermore, it is evident that the Armenian-American Community in the Western United States continues to grow exponentially, as its qualitative reach and abilities expand with each passing day.

Therefore, encouraged by the success of collaborative action, always mindful of the urgency of attaining national unity, and recognizing the necessity of gathering Armenian resources in service of our collective agenda, the signatory entities below have resolved to form a coordinating Council to pursue the Armenian Community's collective interests, and to further facilitate collaboration amongst them in the future.

The Council is to be known as the "Pan Armenian Council of Western USA." The Council was initiated by representatives from the signatory organizations below, which have throughout the years, and each in its own right, gained the support of our Community. Additionally, other community organizations which desire to be part of this collective effort, and have a minimum of 300 active members, are hereby invited to become members of the Council.

The advisory nature of this Council and its decisions are not binding on any of its member organizations. Thus, the Council's existence does not confer upon the Council any authority over the activities of its member organizations.

The Council is driven by the principle of securing maximum participation and inclusion of all segments of our community, always mindful of protecting and advancing the principle of collaboration and good faith. Furthermore, the signatory organizations acknowledge the necessity to function in an environment of mutual respect and of compromise.

The mission of the Council is: To implement and realize projects of pan-community nature; To encourage and assist projects which advance the collective interests and the rights Armenian communities across the Western United States; To undertake steps to resist actions and efforts which are contrary to the collective interests and rights of Armenians; To gather and apply the Armenian Community's resources for the benefit of the Community's interests, as well as the welfare of the Republics of Armenia and Artsakh; To always be mindful of the collective health and protection of the Armenian Community.

Active and influential Armenian individuals who have a presence in the community shall be periodically invited, so that they may bring their advisory expertise, or other unique resources, all for the purpose of contributing and promoting the success of the above referenced activities, and for fulfilment of the Council's objectives. With the larger principle of inclusiveness guiding us, and with the clear intent of not leaving any organization or individual Armenian out of our collective effort, the Council shall periodically organize community-wide meetings and conferences based on previously set agendas, during which all interested parties shall have the opportunity to address matters of importance to the Community. Based upon the aforementioned spirit of unity, as well as the above referenced mindset, perspective, and objectives borne out of a spirit of Armenian solidarity, We, organizations and structures of the Western United States, hereby pronounce the commencement of a new and bright journey of collaborative effort and of Armenian unity.

Registration	9:00AM
Welcome Remarks	9:30AM
Introduction	9:35AM
Keynote Speech Stateless Power, Diasporic Strategies Dr. Khachig Tölölyan, Wesleyan University	9:45AM
Panel 1: Between Cultural Preservation and Multicultural Armenianness Dr. Vahe Sahakyan, University of Michigan - Dearborn Dr. Shushan Karapetyan, University of Southern California Dr. Alina Dorian, University of California - Los Angeles	10:15AM
Coffee Break	11:30AM
Panel 2: Communities, Host Societies, and Diasporan Connections Dr. Ara Sanjian, University of Michigan - Dearborn Dr. Razmik Panossian, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Dr. Hayg Oshagan, Wayne State University	11:45AM
Lunch	1:00PM
Panel 3: What is Armenia for the Diaspora? Dr. Hratch Tchilingirian, University of Oxford Sara Anjargolian, Esq., Independent Consultant, Public Sector Reform in Armenia Dr. Sossie Kasbarian, University of Stirling	2:00PM
Coffee Break	3:15PM
Panel 4: What's Next? Getting from Here to There Khachig Tölölyan, Wesleyan University Dr. Hagop Gulludjian, University of California - Los Angeles Salpi Ghazarian, University of Southern California	3:30PM
Concluding Remarks	4:45PM