CELEBRATING, PLANNING ZORYAN'S FUTURE

Posted on February 22, 2016 by Keghart

keghart.com

Category: Opinions

Staff

TORONTO, Feb. 20--More than 110 genocide scholars, activists, authors community leaders, and supporters from Canada and the United States gathered here today for Zoryan Institute's "dinner of gratitude," as the institute's board of directors devoted the weekend to planning its next five to ten years. Among the participants and attendees to "An Evening with the Zoryan Board of Directors" were genocide expert and author Roger W. Smith, Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, Simon Payaslian, Julie Gilmour, Rouben Adalian, Ted Bogosian, Levon Chorbajian, Bedross Der Matossian, Alan Whitehorn, Varouj Aivazian, Aris Babikian, Atom Egoyan, Raffi Bedrosyan, Arsineé Khanjian, and Berge Papazian.

Reminding the audience that the institute is at the cusp of its 35th anniversary, Chairman Smith cited some of the more prominent activities of the Zoryan Institute, including the publishing of the award-winning "Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies" and the "Genocide Studies International" journal, in addition to the Genocide and Human Rights University Program which has been in operation for the past 15 years and has graduated over 400 students from 40 countries. Smith said the purpose of the program is to encourage the new generation of genocide scholars in their studies.

Staff

TORONTO, Feb. 20--More than 110 genocide scholars, activists, authors community leaders, and supporters from Canada and the United States gathered here today for Zoryan Institute's "dinner of gratitude," as the institute's board of directors devoted the weekend to planning its next five to ten years. Among the participants and attendees to "An Evening with the Zoryan Board of Directors" were genocide expert and author Roger W. Smith, Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, Simon Payaslian, Julie Gilmour, Rouben Adalian, Ted Bogosian, Levon Chorbajian, Bedross Der Matossian, Alan Whitehorn, Varouj Aivazian, Aris Babikian, Atom Egoyan, Raffi Bedrosyan, Arsineé Khanjian, and Berge Papazian.

Reminding the audience that the institute is at the cusp of its 35th anniversary, Chairman Smith cited some of the more prominent activities of the Zoryan Institute, including the publishing of the award-winning "Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies" and the "Genocide Studies International" journal, in addition to the Genocide and Human Rights University Program which has been in operation for the past 15 years and has graduated over 400 students from 40 countries. Smith said the purpose of the program is to encourage the new generation of genocide scholars in their studies.

Elisa von Joeden-Forgey pointed out that the highly-respected "Genocide Studies International" journal, combined with its predecessor, Genocide Studies and Prevention, has, so far, published 26 issues. Simon Payaslian observed that without Zoryan there would have been no "Diaspora" journal. Eighteen volumes or 54 issues of that journal have been published so far. Julie Gilmour also talked about the many successes of the Zoryan two-week "Genocide and Human Rights University" summer program and stressed that Zoryan teaches "us to know what is the right thing to do." Bogosian presented short video clips about Zoryan's role in bringing German scholar Wolfgang Gust's book about the Genocide of Armenians to life, clips from the forthcoming sequel to his earlier "An Armenian Journey" documentary.

In discussing the institute's contribution to Armenian Studies, Rouben Adalian said that Zoryan had organized or sponsored 165 lectures, 20 international conferences, seven symposia, and 51 publications (in nine languages). He added that six editors and 60 scholars are on the advisory and editorial boards of the two journals. In summarizing the Zoryan mission, Adalian said that the institute's five pillars are "quality, weaponized knowledge to combat denial, bringing scholars with vision to prominence, and courage."

Film director Atom Egoyan, author Aram Adjemian, lecturer/journalist Raffi Bedrosyan, and community leader Berge Papazian offered testimonies about Zoryan's impact, contribution, and legacy to the Armenian nation and to humanity.

Talyn Terzian-Gilmour, outreach officer at the Zoryan Institute of Canada, said the institute is a "non-profit organization devoted to scholarship and public awareness relating to issues of universal Human Rights, Genocide, and Armenian Studies."

She pointed out that the institute doesn't just look back at history, but uses it in illuminating current events. "Last year, the Zoryan Institute was instrumental in mobilizing a network of legal scholars to counter Genocide denial, anti-Armenian racism and incitement of violence by partnering with two major Turkish human rights organizations to submit evidence to the European Court in the Switzerland vs. Perincek case," said Terzian-Gilmour. Thanks to Zoryan's efforts, many of the judges affirmed that the mass deportations and massacres of the Armenian people from 1915 onwards were genocide. "Zoryan is now leading another ground-breaking initiative, as it partners with the law faculty at McGill University to hold a conference this March which will delve into the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding Canada's treatment of its indigenous peoples and the meaning and consequences of 'cultural genocide," she said.

During the board of directors' meeting, Greg Sarkissian, president of Zoryan, suggested that the first step is to engage youth by addressing current challenges such as population growth, environmental

degradation and the increasing risk of insecurity and mass violence and genocide world-wide.

Given the current mass transnational migration crisis in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, board members agreed that the scope of research in the area of Diaspora studies should be expanded.

The board also adopted a series of cutting-edge projects that included new research, several conferences, educational programs, and the digitilization of archival and other materials pertaining to Zoryan's scholarly activities.