

FALL LIVENED BY FOUR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL EVENTS

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Keghart.com and AGBU in Canada joined forces to present four social-political and cultural events in Toronto and Montreal in mid- to late fall.

The first event on the line-up was the launch, at Toronto AGBU's Rembrandt Hall, of an anthology of Lebanese-Armenian educator, poet, journalist, and community leader Vahe-Vahian's personal, public and literary letters titled "The Poet's Heart". The letters, which date from the '30s, cover the next six decades. The 800-plus page book, compiled by Aram Sepetjian, was introduced by well-known Canadian-Armenian intellectual [Viken L. Attarian](#) of Montreal. Among attendees were former students of Vahe-Vahian. Copies of the book were sold out within minutes.

The second event on the Keghart.com-Toronto AGBU fall calendar was "Diaspora Armenian Political Apathy: Myth or Reality?" panel discussion on Oct. 27. Panelists Aren Bedrosyan, Edward Yaghledjian, Dr. Minas Kojayan and Viken Attarian agreed that there was "apparent" apathy, cited the reasons for it, and offered ideas on how to empower Diaspora Armenians to get involved in politics in the countries where they have settled.

Among the reasons cited for lack of engagement in politics was fear, especially among many Middle East Armenians, who have traditionally considered politics a dangerous arena. Lack of infrastructure, resources, and communal divisions were also considered crucial reasons for Diaspora Armenians' political impotence locally and the absence of Armenian politicians at municipal or provincial and state levels. A single-minded focus on the Genocide has limited our horizons and "ghettoized" Diaspora communities, the audience was told.

Several of the panelists said yet another reason for the dearth of Armenians in the political sphere is parental insistence that their offspring pursue medicine, law, engineering, and accounting as their careers.

The four panelists agreed that Diaspora communities should focus on macro politics rather than be identified as a single-issue (the Genocide) community. To make a political impact and have Armenian presence in the political sphere, Armenians and their representatives should be engaged in the political, social, economic, and cultural affairs of the countries they reside in, the panelists concurred.

The third and fourth events (Oct. 28 in Toronto; Oct. 30 in Montreal) were the Canadian launch of Dr. Minas Kojayan's "Along the Paths of Anguished Past" (**Մորմորող Անցեալի Արահետներով**), an account of the author's trips to Cilicia and Western Armenia in the summers of 2011 and 2012. Dr. Kojayan, author, long-time teacher and journalist, supplemented his account of his trips with a



dramatic slide show in Tunisia. English language editor of Keghart, reviewed the book prior to Mr. Kojayan's speech. His description of the physical-artistic qualities of the book intertwined with an analysis of its multi-layered content in a narrative style, easy to grasp, in an original nontraditional fashion was much appreciated by the audience.

In addition to being journalism, a travel and pilgrimage book, "Along the Paths of Anguished Past" is essentially a political document. As such, it is a call to Armenians to assert their past and future ownership of their Western Armenian homeland (nearly 80% of historic Armenia), maintained the author. He strongly advised Armenians to make tangible connections to Western Armenia by visiting their occupied homeland. Seeing the enormity of the loss would strengthen "our resolve to see that the land is returned to us," said Mr. Kojayan.

When Armenians visit Western Armenia and Cilicia they shouldn't feel as if they are tourists visiting a foreign land. It's their home, their land, their lakes, mountains and rivers that they are seeing, said the author. "I hope the book inspires in readers a desire and resolve for a permanent return to the land where Armenians have lived for at least 4,500 years."

Since Western Armenia is overwhelmingly populated by the Kurds, "we have to enter into talks with the Kurds. We need a new kind of dialogue. We have to build bridges. We should assist them in their struggle of independence, and eventually receive part of Western Armenia through their support," said Mr. Kojayan.

"There are new realities in Turkey. Turkey is like a volcano now. It can erupt any time. We should revise our relations with the various levels of Turkish society in light of Hrant Dink's assassination and the resulting public outcry," pointed out the author and added that for most of the above reasons he plans Turkish and English versions of the book. Proceeds from the sale of the Armenian version would help defray translation and publishing costs.

At both events in Toronto and in Montreal the books were sold out within minutes after Mr. Kojayan's talk and slide show.

