

NJDEH, NIKOL AND I

Posted on December 4, 2010 by Keghart

I disapprove of
what you say, but
I will defend to
the death your
right to say it.



Voltaire

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Vahe Apelian, USA, 4 December 2010



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LeBron James, the famed basketball player returned to his hometown Cleveland, against the jeers and not the cheers of the city inhabitants, to play against his hometown team he used to play with. Every time he shot the hoops, an incredible number of executions were carried in his brain in angle, trajectory, force etc in fractions of nanoseconds.

Why do I say this? Because this is affecting our communication here on Keghart as well as anywhere else of course in the cyber world. We use aliases for anonymity. However, push comes to shove that does not safeguard our privacy. Privacy is a legal given and has to catch on to the fast changing cyber world, but the technology is there of course.

We do not routinely see each other in the cyber world, save on video conferencing. Scientists claim most of our communication is non-verbal. A father's simple question to his child "did you study today" will have different connotations to the child depending on his father's facial expression, tone of voice, physical demeanor, or the twinkle in the eyes. None of these are in the cyber world as we chat or exchange opinions.

Words are evolving too. They do not necessarily mean what they meant decades ago. I say these things because Njdeh Apigian stirred the pot in a way that Keghart community had not experienced before. I have been reading Keghart since its inception. I am sure the next controversial issue is in the making. I commend Njdeh's tenacity and his interest in the affairs of Armenia. He is much more informed than I am. Having said that, I am not endorsing his views that Nikol Pashinyan got what he deserved.

Having admitted that I am not as well informed as Njdeh is, I will not debate or rather I cannot debate on the merits of Nikol Pashinyan's incarceration. This is rather an introspective search as to why I endorsed the appeal. Honestly, upon reading "Free Journalist Nikol Pashinyan" appeal I had no clue that he had taken an active part in the March 8 disturbances. Seeing the appeal in several languages gave more credence to me. Why did I endorse the petition then?

I endorsed it on the principle that an editor of an Armenian newspaper should be free to express his opinions. Also, over the years I have developed an inclination to assume that courts in Armenia are puppets at the hands of the regime and act unjustly against those who oppose their policies or conducts. Also, the appeal said, free the journalist.

I wonder now, after having read more than I had envisioned that the case of Nikol Pashinyan entailed, and for the sake of debate, is Nikol Pashinyan a journalist in the sense I understood the word, or is he an advocate having taken an active part in March 8 demonstrations as Njdeh claims? I do not expect that an editor of newspaper not to have his own personal views. Naturally he or she does and steers the newspaper along social and political views he or she and the editorial board advocate. However, once the editor organizes or is one of the organizers of a demonstration and active participant in steering a demonstration, the rules of fair journalism change in my view as does the role of an editor, especially as tragic as the March 8 demonstrations turned out to be.

Recently Glen Beck of Fox News in USA organized a gathering in Washington DC. Glen Beck is a prominent personality in the news world but I am not sure however if Glen Beck is a journalist, or an editor. He wears more than one hat. A new genre of newscasters are appearing whom we call talk show hosts although they pertain to television or radio reporting. I bet, had the editor of Washington Post organized such a gathering, or been one of the organizers or active participant of a demonstration that ended up in a tragedy, it would have created serious controversies and even may have endangered the standard of reporting the respected daily commands or expected to command despite the fact that the paper may or may not endorse the policies of the current administration.

All these random thoughts converge to one important reality to me. Internet age has changed and is changing the rules of the games much faster than we perceive the change. We read fast, react fast. Sitting behind the monitor we envision the reported news with our mental prism, which may not be necessarily correct or right.

Reading is reading, one may argue whether it is on the Internet or from the pages of a book. However, the reality is not so, in my view. There is an element of casualness that comes with reading the news on Internet than it comes from reading the pages of a newspaper. A host of news gets reported and not all of them necessarily command the same degree of social impact. CNN may report Kim Kardashian and the lingering effects of the aftermath of Haiti earthquake under the same header. Thus we face reading the trivial and the non-trivial in one breath or glance if you will. Then

again Njdeh in Canada gets his news from the on line version of the Armenian newspapers and I may be of the generation that is trying to fit in the new realities of the Internet age.

Having read the arguments that Njdeh makes, all I can say now is the following. I am not in a position to render a judgment and I should have not rendered a judgment to his case as fast as I did. Was Nikol Pashinyan found guilty by a trial of a jury of his peers? I do not even know that. That brings another issue as I in Diaspora, living with my own every day to day realities attempt to come to terms with realities of the Republic of Armenia well beyond the sentiments I harbored at one time for a free and independent republic. However, one-thing gives me comfort in endorsing the appeal, Nikol Pashinyan should not have been coerced in any form or shape.

