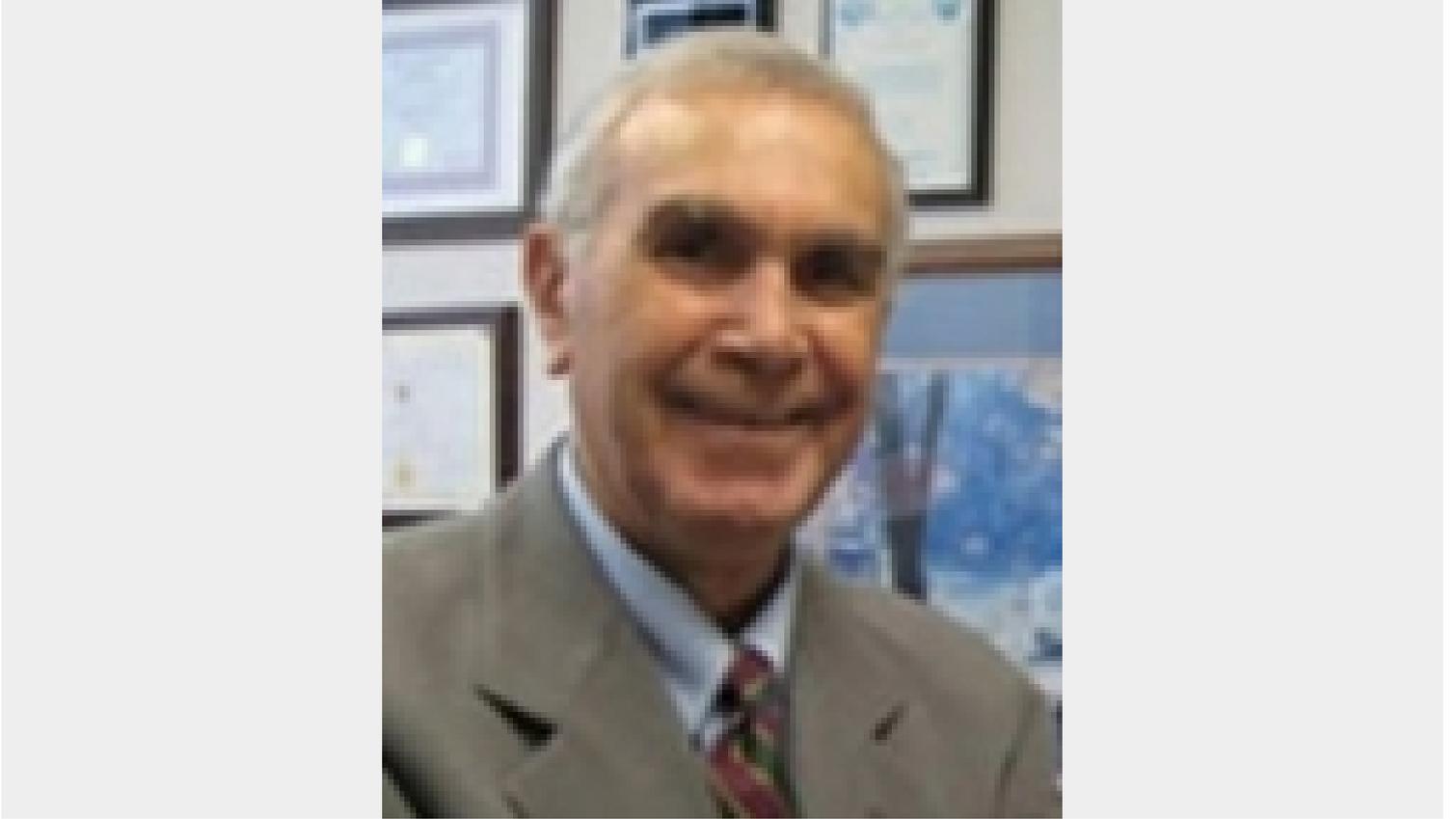


PROMOTING LOYALTY AMONG ARMENIA'S YOUNG

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Z. S. Andrew Demirdjian Ph.D., Los Angeles, 14 February 2019

In an earlier article ([The Importance of Being Loyal...to Armenia](#)), we traced the practice and concept of loyalty through four major epochs and said the following have been observed: loyalty has always been part of the epic of man and has often been equated to patriotism. Moreover, loyalty does not come about naturally. It's partially instinctive.

To heighten it, loyalty must be cultivated during childhood by parents, teachers, and other members of society. Armenia requires teaching of chess mandatory in schools. Likewise, we should emphasize the teaching of loyalty in schools. That is the only way to keep our young from leaving Armenia. Armenia is teetering on the brink of depopulation. We need to take drastic measures now.

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The Statistical Committee of Armenia recently issued a report, indicating that Armenia's population supposedly had declined by 13,000 (an underestimation perhaps influenced by the outgoing regime) from 2017 to 2018. On January 1, 2017, the population was at 2,985,011 and on January 1, 2018, the number had fallen to 2,972,007. A 0.4355 percent decline may sound trivial, but coupled with low fertility rate it spells disaster for the future of our homeland.

What are some true and tested ways of cultivating loyalty in Armenian children? The first step is to make teachers, parents and policy decision makers become aware of their power to contribute to raising children who would become loyal to Armenia and plan to stay in their native land to improve it. Here are seven teaching methods to improve loyalty in children:

Service Learning. Schools in Armenia can develop the art of loyalty in our children by incorporating the subject "service to the community (i.e., state)" into the curriculum for "service learning." Various research studies on the impact of service learning have concluded that students who participate in high-quality programs become more civically engaged. Since simply doing community service is not enough, children should be prepared to "understand, internalize, and cherish the virtue of doing something worthwhile for the community."

Instilling Virtues. Plato stated, "Education in virtue is the only education which deserves the name."

Many philosophers have maintained that education is the conduit for a virtuous society.

The Founding Fathers of the United States believed citizens must be educated and be virtuous for the smooth working of democracy. President James Madison, the primary author of the U.S. Constitution, warned, "To suppose that any form of government will secure liberty or happiness without virtue in the people is a chimerical idea."

Parenting. Parents should be the ultimate teachers of values (loyalty, honesty and truthfulness) to children. Children trust their parents and therefore they would be more susceptible to being positively influenced by them.

Parents guide their children in the latter's early age. However, if children in Armenia are constantly subjected to complaints about the economy, about the government, about the climate, etc. of Armenia, they internalize these negative and even toxic feelings. How can we instill loyalty in our children in an atmosphere of constant complaints?

Community Role. It takes more than parents to raise a child. The members of a child's social environment will have an influence on him or her. Grandparents, friends of the family, clergymen, teachers, Boy Scout leaders, and the media, have a role in the upbringing of a child.

Because of modern day distractions such as radio, TV, computer, etc. the need for the community role in raising a child has been greater now than ever.

The time pressures of modern society make the parent's teaching of virtue to their children difficult. The problem is compounded by the fact that children are overwhelmed by conflicting and violent messages. Children spend on the average of 1,500 hours per year watching television, but less than 40 hours per year engaging in conversation with their parents. These figures prove that parents cannot alone handle the responsibility of their children's development. Since children spend about 900 hours per year in school, the lion's share of communicating values to their students nowadays falls on the shoulders of teachers.

Character Education. Teachers have the pivotal role in shaping the character of their students, but unfortunately, they receive inadequate instruction in character-building education. Character education involves the personal growth of the children.

Teachers, school administration, parents, and the community must work together to formulate the approaches and the objectives to be achieved regarding the values the children should be taught. The true meaning of character is the ability to "know what is good, to want what is good, and to do good."

President Theodore Roosevelt warned, "To educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society." Edward Wynne, an expert on education at the University of Illinois wrote: "We can assume that renewed attention to character development will be good for pupils, their families,

educators, and the nation. For, in the end, the welfare and the very existence of our society do not so much depend on the IQs of its inhabitants, as on their character."

Morality. The concepts of core values discussed here are interrelated. Building character and imbuing morality in our children may be regarded as one process. Morality is about the distinction between what is right and wrong and what is good and bad behavior, while character refers to the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. It's not surprising that character development of children and youth is about educating them in moral and ethical matters has been the mantra in the West from Colonial times through the 20th Century for moral education took the center stage of most schools in the civilized world.

Prof. Wynne stated: "Schools are and must be concerned about pupils' morality. Any institution with custody of children or adolescents for long periods of time, such as a school, inevitably affects the character of its charges." Arguably, it is not a question of teaching morals in school but of deciding which values to instill. For example, Armenia needs to intensify loyalty in children so that they would not abandon their country when they grow up.

Polls indicate we are concerned with the values our children are being taught. Polls also show a strong consensus about the virtues we must prefer. Numerous research studies conclude that greater than 90 percent of people believe that children should be taught honesty, acceptance of different races and ethnicities, moral courage, caring for friends and family in the public schools, and love of country.

The Art of Loyalty. Benjamin Franklin, one of the U.S. Founding Fathers, believed virtue (e.g., loyalty) was an art, but like most arts, virtue was not instinctive: " must be taught the principles of the art, be shown all the methods of working, and how to acquire the habits of using properly all the instruments; and thus regularly and gradually he arrives, by practice, at some perfection in the art".

In a study of loyalty titled *Why Loyalty Matters: The Groundbreaking Approach to Rediscovering Happiness, Meaning and Lasting Fulfillment in Your Life and Work* (c. 2010), Timothy Keiningham and Lerzan Aksoy, state: "The science is very clear when it comes to business success, satisfaction in our relationships and even overall happiness, loyalty is essential."

According to most social-psychology researchers, we need constant training in the art of loyalty. The virtue of loyalty requires that we commit ourselves to a person, group, a cause or a country. We forego our short-term self-interests in order to maintain our bond. By uniting with others, we serve a cause greater than ourselves. Thus, in our training to be loyal, we must learn the true meaning of service to something greater than oneself. What greater entity is there for the Armenian nation than our Hayastan (i.e., Armenia)?

Stephen Nathanson, Professor of Philosophy at Northeastern University, said loyalty is often directly equated to patriotism. To create awareness that the most important ingredient of patriotism is loyalty, a special day for the Armenian citizens should be reserved for **Loyalty to Armenia**. On this

day, if we sway a few Armenian youngsters from entertaining the dream of leaving Armenia when they get older is worth all the effort to celebrate a loyalty to Armenia every year. A window is being opened here to policy decision makers to see the potential of fostering loyalty in Armenia's children for curbing the future exodus of the country's most precious resource--the young men and women--and to stop contributing to foreign nations' brain gain at the expense of Armenia's brain drain.

Without loyalty there can be no true love, a cohesive family, a motivated army; no genuine friendship, no deep allegiance to country and thus no true patriotism. Although there are many different perceptions and definitions of loyalty, one view is conclusively constant: A country deserves unconditional, undivided loyalty to continue advancing its democracy and sustaining its sovereignty by embracing the motto or my mantra: For True Patriotism, Invest Yourselves in Your Country! And live loyally to see Armenia thrive!

