"THE SPACE WHERE PRINCIPLES MATTER"

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Category: Opinions

Viken L. Attarian, Mount Royal, Quebec, August 31, 2012

Introduction

It is hard to believe that it has been five years since *keghart.com* burst on the Armenian cyber scene with an unparalleled vivacity.

Keghart.com immediately distinguished itself from the rest of the pack by several unique characteristics, firstly, by what it was NOT:

- It was not a news outlet with global lists and details of events. That was already pioneered by the venerable *Groong*, and still fulfilling that role admirably.
- It was not an electronic version of existing print media. After all, the print media was mostly partisan and controlled by the traditional Armenian Diasporan political parties or institutions.
- It was not a forum for a closed group of Armenians--whether academic or not.
- It was not interested to become a public relations' platform, neither for an organization nor for an individual.
- It was not a purely isolationist Armenian initiative focusing only on things Armenian.

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Instead, *keghart.com* succeeded remarkably in not only filling a unique niche, but by demonstrating

that the niche was a substantial void, a space which it came to occupy and define. It is what *keghart.com* IS, and will continue to be:

That space is now one of serious journalism, the thinking person's place of ideas, about issues of human rights as they affect not only Armenians but the whole world.

It is the space where principles matter and are not clouded by partisan and ideological positions. It is the space where debates and comments are not censored (so long as they follow very basic rules of civilized dialogue) and are more than encouraged. It is the learning space for items related to history, the arts, language, literature and music.

And yes, it is the space for politics as well, where ideas are initiated and positions taken on issues that matter; rights of citizens, the environment, freedom of speech, poverty and social justice. With all the modern tools that cyberspace allows, electronic forums, commentary, surveys, and the various technical tools that we now take for granted.

For those of us who have long been writing and debating, albeit mostly within isolated geographies, the issues that *keghart.com* continues to address over the past five years, it was as if we suddenly received a tool like no other. Our voices became magnified around the globe. We met each other, argued our points, grew respectful of one another, rediscovered old connections and simply enjoyed the cyber-company of other minds.

I receive almost monthly contacts from individuals who have read my work on *keghart.com*. On the other hand, I have become a lifelong fan of one sharp thinker and writer from Philadelphia, the great Avedis Kevorkian, because of a similar cyber-encounter. I could name numerous examples, of equally great contributors, but the list would never be exhaustive. Suffice it to say, to my knowledge, almost all living serious Diasporan Armenian intellectuals, and many from Armenia proper, have had their work published on this unique website.

Fresh thinking is like fresh air. It is an absolute necessity in our journey of self-discovery. And Armenians, more than ever, need fresh thinking at this critical existential juncture of their history.

And that is where the *keghart.com* editorials come in; never beating about the bush, full of clear thought on even the most difficult of subjects. Editorials, which, on first glance, would look to be in the old classical style, i.e. building arguments leading to presenting a position, and yet always giving new and modern perspectives. Editorials that make you think, make you want to comment, make you want to exercise your grey matter.

Editorials that have captured the *zeitgeist* of our multi-dimensional existence, as Armenians,

Canadians, Americans, Middle Easterners, Europeans, all of the above, some of the above, all of the time, some of the time. Continuously evolving, and basically, being alive.

Even better, editorials that make you want to act.

And *keghart.com* has led by example, never shying away from action. It has initiated petitions, sent letters, organized events, symposia and forums and actively participating in such worthwhile initiatives organized by others.

The site is a tribute to the technical wizardry of Vako Nicolian, who has defended it against numerous cyber attacks, created its structure and robustness, and organized the wonderful tools that are in place. On the content side, Jirair Tutunjian, its editor, has definitely added a unique stylistic stamp that shines with clarity of thought.

And of course, the whole thing as the vision and brainchild of the "good doctor", as Avedis Kevorkian likes to call him, Dr. Dikran Abrahamian, stands today as its own tribute. Within the annals of the history of modern Armenian publications, the site can likely be compared only to Simon Simonian's *Spyurk* and Antranig Dzaroukian's *Nayiri*. Dikran Abrahamian is in real good company.

Yes, five years have gone by, and although one would wonder what it is that is so special about such a short-lived anniversary; I would answer that such a characterization would miss the point. *Keghart.com* is undisputedly today the most popular website of Armenian content in the world. It is unique because of all the things that it IS to so many, and not only to and for Armenians. Furthermore, and very importantly, its editorials, as my old teacher of Armenian, Onnig Sarkissian used to say, "have real taste". An excellent selection is right in this volume.

And may I remind the naysayers, that in the technology business, *keghart.com* being a modern technology media initiative, all years get measured in tech-years, which is the equivalent of dog-years in human comparison (a 7 to 1 ratio). So this would be technically a real celebratory occasion for the equivalent longevity of 35 years of a traditional publication.

Not too shabby, wouldn't you say?

Viken L. Attarian
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