

THE TRUTH DIVIDES

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Ted Tourian, New York, 21 February 2020

Culture is dictated by those in power. If the Armenian Diaspora is to survive another century, it is incumbent on those who have taken leadership roles (whether deserved or not) to understand self-awareness; to realize what is reality rather than a default "popular" ideology. This is not an Armenian problem and applies to any Diaspora. Since this is the group I belong to (ուղեւ չուղեւ; ուղեք չուղեք), I will focus on three instances where our own self-deception has caused dire results; a) our geopolitical past; b) our current syndrome of being prisoner to the moment; and c) a potential future where our own Diasporan organizations will put other cultures before Armenia. The inability to recognize the truth, and default to what is expedient, will expediently aid in our own demise.

a) "Beware of the truth, gentle Sister. Although much sought after, truth can be dangerous to the seeker. Myths and reassuring lies are much easier to find and believe." Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune*

I'm going to start by saying something unpopular. Vassak Siuni was the real hero of Avarayr. (Hamlet Davtyan. *Mez antsanot Vardanants paterazme*. Erkrord, hratarakoutioun, Yerevan, 2007). Vartan Mamigonian was not. Vartan is the hero we wanted.

Every Armenian growing up was taught to want to be "Katch Vartan'een torruh." We were taught to believe how Vartan Mamigonian singlehandedly stopped the invading Persian army with his bravado, that being stubborn and emotionally charged are virtues, and that Armenian salvation lies west rather than east.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Although "Katch" Vartan may have died a supposed martyr, Vassak Siuni was the one who ended the Armenian civil war, where he made peace deals with the Persians, and stopped catastrophic wars while maintaining our borders. He exemplified the quote from *The Dark Knight Rises*, "You either die a hero, or live long enough to see yourself become the villain." And with all he did, he died with nothing but a bitter taste of ingratitude. (Hamlet Davtyan. *Mez antsanot Vardanants paterazme*. Erkrord, hratarakoutioun, Yerevan, 2007, p. 145. Trans. by D. Isajanyan)

Since Avarayr, Armenia has always sought validation from the west. At the time, the Armenian church had a vested interest in turning to Rome in order to secure its own power base, sharing similar religious affiliations with the Roman church, while demonizing a pro-Persian monarchy. What we did was turn on our backs on a superpower that we had millennia of shared history, for the potential flash that the Roman world offered. The rhetorical question is, what has the West ever done for Armenia?

1. **b) As Above, So Below** We are now prisoner of the moment. Monetary success has replaced

how success is measured; and where immaterial virtues like integrity, have become immaterial. The result is embracing the mantra of "do what thou wilt."

Let me explain how this is done.

In the past, there was a court jester. He or she, was entertainment. No one really respected him or her, but, that person brought levity, and was tolerated. Time allocated to entertainment was minimal as the average person was preoccupied with labor intensive fields, like farming. Today, with global population explosion and automation, entertainment now comes at a premium. More people with more available time and disposable income, create a society craving entertainment. What else are you going to do when you're bored?

Enter Kim Kardashian. Really any entertainer, but I'll focus on her, since she is allegedly of Armenian descent. Also, and this is only my opinion, why would an allegedly competent organization, like the Armenian Bar Association, create a posthumous award for Robert Kardashian, whose only real accomplishment was being part of OJ Simpson's defense team, in order to get a photo-op with Kim Kardashian ... who knows, maybe I'm wrong, but that's just my opinion...

The market demands court jesters; demands clowns. Kim Kardashian fulfills this need. She brings nothing to the table, except her pornstar prowess. In an entertainment starved society, her news continuously appears on Yahoo or TMZ. Her ability to appeal to the lowest common denominator, allows the Kardashian family to create a material empire by selling products and ideas that prey on the insecurities of young women by advertising products like "[Flat Tummy Co's detox shakes](#)," which is nothing more than a laxative. Her ability to be the biggest court jester has given her a platform inconceivable for the last six mellenia...

Yes, I know, I know... the counter-argument is that she brought attention to the genocide. So what... All of England and France knew about the genocide after World War I, and that didn't stop them from basically handing over Cilicia back to the Republic of Turkey. The only practical benefit I've seen are floozies from Tinder can now differentiate me as an Armenian as opposed to some type of "Ay-rab"...

But what is never discussed are the virtues the Kardashians extoll, nor the tacit acceptance of her ideologies where she is embraced within our own culture, just because she is allegedly Armenian. Maybe I'm wrong, but I find it objectionable to praise a family as successful for earning money by pushing products effectively body-shaming young women to take laxatives. Who knows what other agendas she has pushed under the cover of monetary success...

1. **c) "We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?" George W. Bush**

As materialism leads society up an unsustainable path, the next generation will seek a spiritual path of the truth, the only path left to ward off the disasters of materialism. The question that

remains to be addressed is whose truth will be observed?

It's very rare you will find clergy as dedicated as Srpazan Meghrig Parikian, of Antelias. Srpazan Meghrig is the gold standard. He exemplified true leadership through service rather than an avenue promoting one's self. His actions backed this up where he spent every cent he earned for the community to which he belonged. He is a huge reason why Toronto's Armenian community is strongest in North America.

Here's a man with a Masters from Juilliard, and doctorate in judicial studies from Switzerland. Growing up in Toronto, I saw how he appealed to rich and poor, alike. He held free concerts playing the organ, while publishing the top 50 donors (in effect, employing a method of variable pricing so no one would be excluded). He gave out bottles of wine during Easter. He ensured that even the weakest members of the community had an avenue to participate.

While Srpazan Meghrig is on one end of the spectrum, we see a mindset that is on the other end, with an emphasis of building cavernous churches, to satisfy ego, with those structures acting in part a mausoleum. I've been around. I was born in Tripolli Lebanon, lived in the Persian Gulf, Athens, Toronto, New York City, Los Angeles and Sacramento. Pick a traditional church in any of these locations, and observe, how many people utilize that church on a weekly basis?

What you now have are counterfeit religious movements contributing to the depopulation of Armenia. You can see this through the [Pentecostal movement](#), a heretical group appealing to the poor from the Armenian country-side, with promises of riches, and living the so-called good life. You see these people immigrating all across California's Central Valley, embracing a Christian-Zionist ideology, similar to John Hagee, and other mega-churches.

I have no problem with anyone supporting Israel. The point I am trying to make is that when those in leadership roles in the Diaspora put money at the forefront of their agendas, then, we as a Diaspora should expect that any, and every culture, will be placed before the Armenian culture, *en masse*.

"When I need to identify rebels, I look for men with principles" Frank Herbert, God Emperor of Dune

Sometimes, it is easy to accept as gospel what those in power say. It is easy to let those few who have taken leadership roles to dictate a path that amputates a soul, just to go with the flow. I don't know what the right answers are. What I do know is that self-reflection and self-awareness are difficult to face, as facing the truth itself is a difficult proposition. And that anyone who really believes in something, loves something, will not be afraid to question those in power, and to question an answer they know not to be true, no matter what the consequences are. That's what loves does. It pushes you to do everything to maintain that connection.

The truth is the light. Through the light, the truth divides. Only in the light is there delineation and separation: where form takes shape; where color is seen. Conversely, deception is darkness, and

darkness unites. With darkness, everything is equal, there is no form, no shape, no color. Darkness cannot understand when light shines through it.

There are no comments yet.