PRESS RELEASE

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The Armenian Center at Columbia University Organizes Conference entitled, "A Century of Armenians in America: Voices from New Scholarship"

The Armenian Center at Columbia University will present a conference entitled, "A Century of Armenians in America: Voices from New Scholarship" on Saturday October 9, 2004. This one-day conference is hosted by the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEMEAC) of The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

The conference will start at 10 a.m. (sharp) and end at 5 p.m. It will be held in the Elebash Recital Hall at the Graduate Center, CUNY which is located on 365 Fifth Avenue between 34th and 35th Streets (diagonal from the Empire State Building). This event is free and open to the public. For more information contact Anny Bakalian ABakalian@gc.cuny.edu or 212-817-7570 [web.gc.cuny.edu/memeac].

As Armenian institutions and communities across the United States have been celebrating their centenary anniversary in recent years, it is curious that scholarship on Armenian immigrants and their descendants remains in its infancy. Even though a handful of seminal works have been published on the topic in the last couple of decades, there are still many gaps in our knowledge. "A Century of Armenians in America: Voices from New Scholarship" is the first

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conference of its kind that brings together almost all the scholars who established the field of Armenian American and Diaspora studies with the next generation of researchers. The conference will showcase the research of historians, psychologists and sociologists who have earned their doctoral degrees recently, and have devoted their dissertation topic to Armenian immigrants and their descendants in the United States of America. Their original research focuses on important topics such as adaptation, assimilation, identity, community, social institutions and family.

The goal of the conference is to introduce the work of the new academics to the general public and promote Armenian American studies as a distinctive area of specialization within Armenian Studies and Middle Eastern Diaspora Studies. The gathering of so many experts on Armenian Americans will provide a context to members of the audience so they make sense of their own experiences and vice versa. It is also the aim of this conference to encourage graduate students in history and the social sciences to consider writing their Master's theses and Ph.D. dissertations on Armenian American topics. Students of immigration and ethnic studies should equally find the conference insightful by comparing the Armenian experience with other immigrant and ethnic groups in the United States and elsewhere.

The conference is organized by sociologist **Anny Bakalian** and author of *Armenian Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian* (Transaction Publishers, 1993). Bakalian is Associate Director of MEMEAC and serves on the board of the Armenian Center of her alma mater Columbia University. Historian **Robert Mirak** whose pioneering book, *Torn Between Two Lands: Armenians in America 1890-World War I* (Harvard University Press, 1983) forged Armenian American studies and **Arpena Mesrobian**, Director Emerita at Syracuse University Press, and author of "Like One Family" – The Armenians of Syracuse, (Gomidas Institute, 2000)

will be the honorary chairpersons of the conference. There will be three panels, one in the morning and two in the afternoon. The program is as follows:

Panel I: "The Pioneers: Early Armenian Immigrants to the United States."

- (1) **Knarik Avakian**, Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, "The Emigration of the Armenians to the United States of America: Evidence from the Archives of the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul."
- (2) **George Byron Kooshian, Jr.,** Los Angeles Unified School District, "The Armenian Immigrant Community of Pasadena, California from its Origins to 1960."
- (3) **Ben Alexander**, The Graduate Center, CUNY, "Reaching Out to the Young: The Parties, the Press, and the Second Generation in the 1930s."

<u>Discussant</u>: **Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill**, Professor of Modern Armenian and Immigration History, California State University, Fresno and author of *Like Our Mountains: a History of Armenians in Canada* (McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming).

Panel II: "Psychological Issues: Successful Adaptation and Legacy."

- (1) **Diana Vartan**, clinical psychologist in private practice in New York City, "Psychological Impact of Acculturation on Armenians Living in the United States."
- (2) Margaret Manoogian, Assistant Professor of Child and Family Studies at Ohio University College of Health and Human Services in Athens OH, "Linking Generations: The Family Legacies of Older Armenian Mothers."

<u>Discussant</u>: **Aghop Der Karabetian**, Professor of Social Psychology and Chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of LaVerne in Los Angeles and creator of the muchused Armenian Identity Index.

Panel III: "Generational Changes: Assimilation and Identity."

- (1) Claudia Der Martirosian, statistical consultant, San Diego, CA, "Armenians in the U.S. Census: 1980, 1990, 2000."
- (2) **Matthew Ari Jendian**, Assistant Professor of Sociology at California State University, Fresno, "To Be or Not to Be Armenian: Cultural Retention, Assimilation, and Perspectives on Ethnic Identity among Four Generations of Armenian-Americans."

<u>Discussant</u>: **Susan Pattie**, Senior Research Fellow at University College London and author of *Faith in History – Armenians Rebuilding Community*, (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

Concluding Remarks: **Khachig Tölölyan**, Professor and Chair of the English Department at Wesleyan University and founder and editor of award-winning *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*.

The participants and organizers of this conference are excited at the prospect of this unique gathering of scholars with a keen interest in the Armenian American community. The proceedings of the conference "A Century of Armenians in America: Voices from New Scholarship" will be published as an edited book. The day is structured in such a way that there will be many opportunities to meet the presenters and discussants. Each of the three panels will have a Q & A period. Please save the date and plan to attend and spread the word especially among the youth.