

EDITORIAL  
BY ANAHIT MINASSIAN,  
DIRECTOR OF KASA

# YOUNG CITIZENS

April 2013- n° 1

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**“Every great journey begins with a single step!”**

## AN INTENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE YOUNG CITIZENS OF ARMENIA PROJECT

I am pleased to present the second issue of the Young Citizens newsletter. I have had a long and intense relationship with the young citizens of Armenia project, having been involved in it since its very beginning. A question which I want to answer in this editorial is why we decided to concentrate specifically on active citizenship.

From a personal point of view, I have always been committed to activism and political participation nationally and internationally and I have seen the difference it can make. Motivated by my personal experiences, I became convinced that, even in unfavorable circumstances, such as those in the current Armenian Republic, a well informed and active population can always make change for the better.

Unfortunately, the more popular option for young Armenians appears to be escaping Armenia, rather than working to change those things which they don't like. Now, I'm not saying that it's wrong to go and try and live in a different country; it is a great and invaluable experience. What I believe, however, is that escape is not really a solution to their problems and it certainly isn't a solution to the problems facing Armenia. Creating positive feeling of ownership and showing the importance of own contribution to develop Armenia is one of the main objectives of our Foundation.

## WHY PEOPLE MAY BE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THEIR OWN ABILITY TO MAKE A CHANGE?

The vision, therefore, of the young citizens project was to cultivate the will to stay and take action. However, this is less simple than it seems given the weaknesses evident in today's Armenia. From the precarious political situation, which has left Armenia geographically isolated, to the unsatisfactory educational system, rife with corruption and failing to provide high quality and inspiring educational experience for students, and the economic monopoly, which stifles any entrepreneurial initiative, or the inaccessible and remote political mechanism which leaves citizens feeling ineffectual and unimportant, it is understandable why people may be sceptical about their own ability to make a change.

To some extent, they are right. But in another significant way, I think young Armenians underestimate their own power to effect change and how to understand when they have made a change. Change is a process. We should not expect immediate changes and be disappointed when change is not obvious and visible. This project is aimed at long-term and sustainable change, which is often more difficult to achieve. A change can be internal to oneself; learning something new, developing oneself, growing. Change can also be external; making people aware of important issues from a variety of different perspectives, changing peoples opinions, fighting against for example corruption in small but everyday ways. As the saying goes: “every great journey begins with a single step!”

THE MONTHLY THEME: ETHICS  
NEXT MONTH'S THEME: ENVIRONMENT

# YOUNG CITIZENS

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## NEWS



### Action Day in Gyumri

In order to promote tourism in Gyumri, economic priority of Gyumri, our volunteers put latin-alphabet transliterations of bus signs on buses which go to places of touristic interest.



### Human right in Yerevan

On the 6th of April, Human rights club organised a debate at Yerevan's Savonic University with the title 'How important is cultural relativism when talking about human rights?'

JUDGES  
voted the Young  
Citizens team  
as winners!



### Narek Dourian visited us!

On the 21st of March, the famous actor and comedian, Narek Dourian gave a talk about theatre, society and citizenship, after which he offered theatre tickets to all the participants!

### TUESDAY

English Club: 3pm-4.30pm, KASA Gumri  
English Club: 6pm-7.30pm, KASA EspaceS

### WEDNESDAY

French Club: 6pm-7.30pm, KASA EspaceS

### THURSDAY

French Club: 2pm-3.30pm, KASA Gumri  
Art Club: 6.30pm-8pm, KASA EspaceS

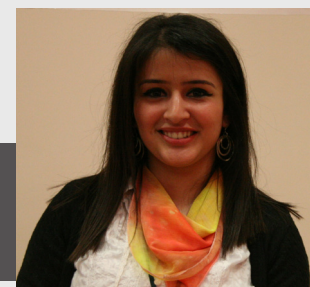
### FRIDAY

Cine Club: 3pm-4.30pm, KASA Gumri  
Psy Club: 6pm-8pm, KASA EspaceS

### SATURDAY

English Club: 1pm-2.30pm, KASA Gumri  
Debates Club: 3pm-5pm, KASA Gumri  
Human Rights Club: 3pm-4.30pm, KASA EspaceS  
Cine Club: 5pm-7pm, KASA EspaceS  
Intercultural Club: 5.30pm-7pm, Kasa EspaceS

## SYUZI MURADYAN THE ANIMATOR OF THE MONTH



**What club do you animate and how did you come to animate this particular club?**

I animate the English club, for which I'm so happy. So as far as I remember it was September 2012, one of my friends put an announcement on her facebook page, really I even don't remember how it caught my eye but I read it and decided to apply.

**How has the young citizens project impacted you and your perception of civil society in Armenia?**

It had and is continuing to have a great impact on me, since after being an animator I started realizing that I don't want my student years to pass in vain, if there is a

lot to do, to know more than I know, to develop myself by going to different organizations why not do that if I have a variety of choices. I think that we all are on the way of reaching a real progress in trying to make our population and especially youth know about that and start to do believe in some changes. I will be happy to have even a little role in it.

**If you could change one thing about Armenian society, what would it be?**

Indifference. I would like people to know that being active and participating in different events and seminars will make them good not harm.

OKSANA KARAPETIAN TALKS ABOUT  
THE MONTHLY THEME...

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## The Way of Honour: A Renaissance of Armenian Ethical Thought

Oksana came to KASA Gyumri to talk to our volunteers about ethics. Within this broad topic she focused on her work within the NGO 'New Armenia' which has recently opened a training program called the 'way of honour', which seeks to revive some ancient Armenian moral codes.

### WHY IS ETHICS IMPORTANT IN ARMENIA?

We are responding to an Armenian public which has lost its sense of spirituality. But spirituality is never really lost from a person's life. It just becomes confused. People are always concerned with questions about the meaning of their lives, how they should rightly behave, what will happen when they die; they are human questions. But, today, these questions are not being asked in public. Only inside people's minds. What happens on the outside in public actually distracts people from being able to consider these questions. In Buddhism, the Sangha, the spiritual collective, is conceived as a public space to discuss these important questions and a public space, importantly, not influenced in politics or business!

### Who is Oksana Karapetian?

Oksana Karapetian is an orientalist with a specialisation in Turkish Studies. She is also an expert in non-formal education and regularly gives trainings and seminars on different themes. In particular, she has been instrumental in the work of the NGO "New Armenia" ([www.newarmenia.org](http://www.newarmenia.org)) which is concerned with mental, spiritual and psychological development. In this context, her work has been focused on investigating Armenian value systems. She is joint author of "The Armenian National systems of values, concepts, and historical transformation" published by AIB - QF Moto Ditsayin ABC books; Yerevan-2011.

### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE "WAY OF HONOUR" AS A WAY INTO ETHICS?

The way of honour understood as the proper way of conduct of the warrior is deeply rooted in almost all cultural traditions throughout the world. We want to inspire the new generation with images of the Warrior in different cultures (Armenian Martik,

Japanese Samurai, Russian Bogatyr, European Knight, Scandinavian Viking, Toltec Warrior, Iranian Pahlevan, Mongolian warriors and Yasa, Caucasian Jigit and others, as well as various historical warrior orders – Templars, Hospitallers, Assassins etc.,) and the moral-patriotic education of their ideas and code of honour. Importantly, for us, the warrior should not be understood as a violent fighter, but as a person who is devoted, at every moment, in the struggle for goodness and against the forces of evil in the world, remaining in creative harmony with the world.

Finally, I want to add that as part of our work, we have developed the "testament of Hayk Nahapet" with a hope that it will serve as a moral guide for Armenians. In order to provide the restoration of Hayk's spirit in Armenians, the testament should be spread, at first, in Armenian schools, as well as in other public places.

## CONTACTS

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