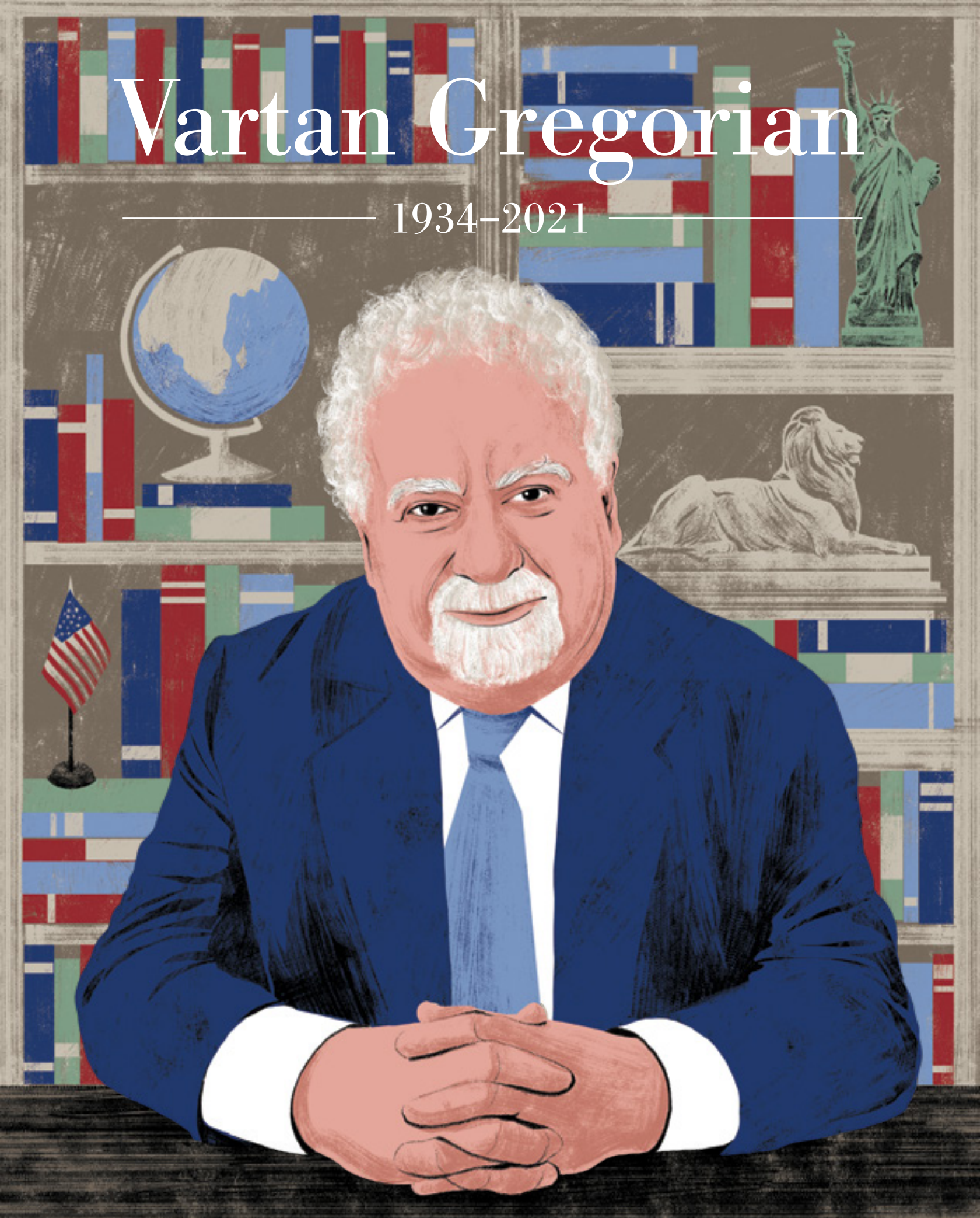
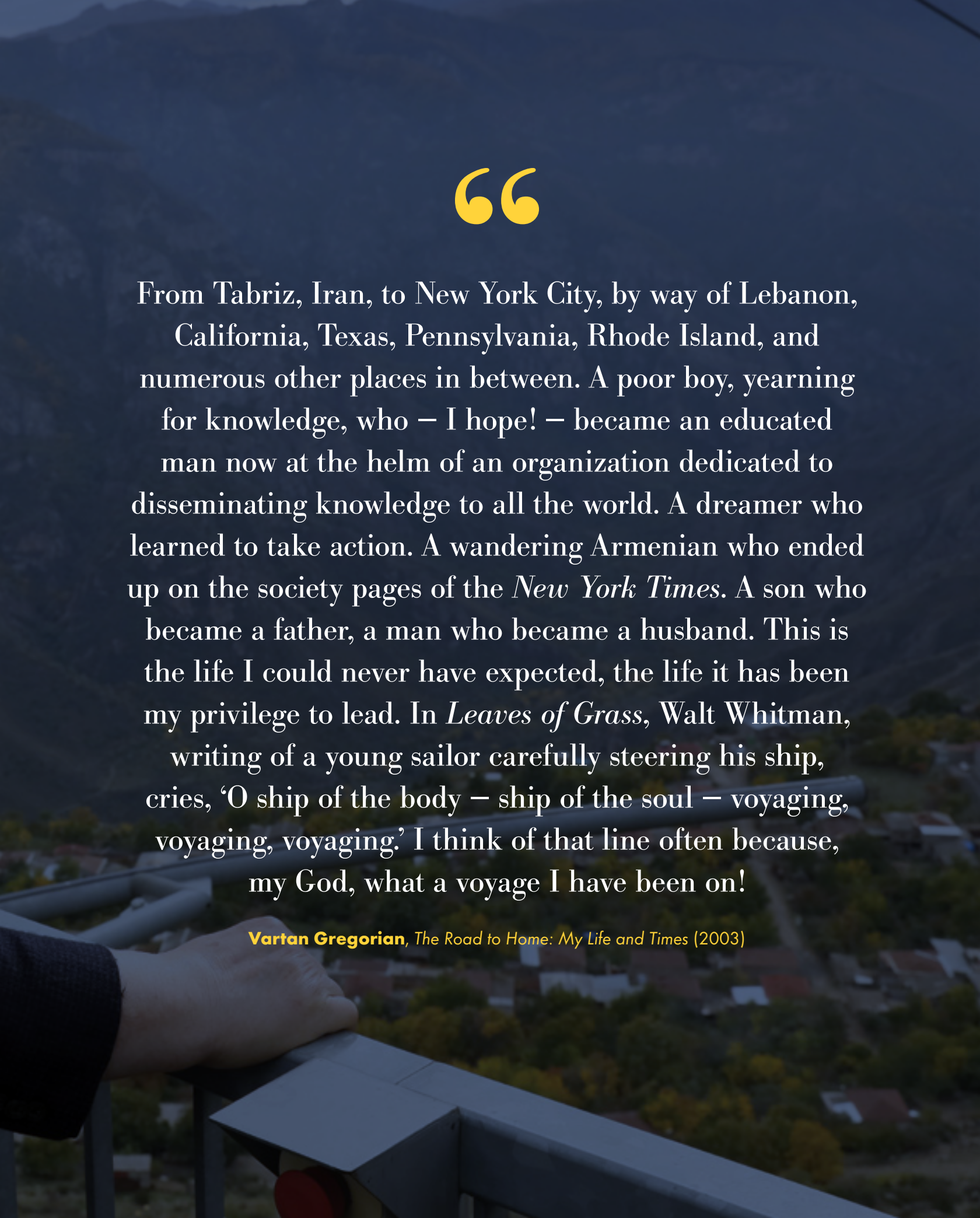
Vartan Gregorian

1934–2021



Vartan Gregorian in Tatev, Armenia, October 21, 2019. CREDIT: VICTOR BOYKO/GETTY IMAGES



From Tabriz, Iran, to New York City, by way of Lebanon, California, Texas, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and numerous other places in between. A poor boy, yearning for knowledge, who – I hope! – became an educated man now at the helm of an organization dedicated to disseminating knowledge to all the world. A dreamer who learned to take action. A wandering Armenian who ended up on the society pages of the *New York Times*. A son who became a father, a man who became a husband. This is the life I could never have expected, the life it has been my privilege to lead. In *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman, writing of a young sailor carefully steering his ship, cries, 'O ship of the body – ship of the soul – voyaging, voyaging, voyaging.' I think of that line often because, my God, what a voyage I have been on!

Vartan Gregorian, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (2003)

Vartan Gregorian

1934–2021

12TH PRESIDENT OF CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

RENAISSANCE MAN

PRESIDENT OF BROWN UNIVERSITY

ELLIS ISLAND MEDAL OF HONOR

PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM

PRESIDENT OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

EMINENT SCHOLAR

STEWARD OF THE LEGACY OF ANDREW CARNEGIE

DISTINGUISHED HISTORIAN

CHAMPION OF EDUCATION, DEMOCRACY, AND INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

STORYTELLER EXTRAORDINAIRE

PROUD NATURALIZED U.S. CITIZEN

CHEVALIER OF THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR

A TRIBUTE TO

VARTAN GREGORIAN

April 2022

Vartan Gregorian served as the 12th president of Carnegie Corporation of New York from 1997 until his unexpected death on April 15, 2021, at age 87. This publication celebrates his philanthropic influence and legacy and his steadfast belief in and support of furthering knowledge and understanding.

Carnegie Corporation of New York is a grantmaking foundation, investing in knowledge that inspires informed action in democracy, education, and international peace since 1911. Visit **carnegie.org** to learn more about our work.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Thomas H. Kean, Chairman
Janet L. Robinson, Vice Chairman

Pedro Aspe
Lionel Barber
Martin Baron
Jared L. Cohon
Kevin J. Conway
John J. DeGioia
Leymah Gbowee
Jean-Marie Guéhenno
Caroline Kennedy
Maria Elena Lagomasino
Marcia McNutt
Martha Minow
Louise Richardson
Kurt L. Schmoke
Anne Tatlock
Ann Claire Williams
Judy Woodruff

Helene L. Kaplan, Honorary Trustee
Newton N. Minow, Honorary Trustee

Carnegie CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

437 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022
Phone: 212.371.3200
carnegie.org

ON THE COVER
Vartan Gregorian
Illustration by Chloe Cushman, 2022

Chief Communications and Digital Strategies Officer
Julia Weede

Director of Content and Publications
Kelly Devine

Editorial Manager
Kenneth Benson

Principal Design Director
Daniel Kitae Um

Editorial Assistant
Angely Montilla

Researcher
Ronald Sexton

© Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vartan Gregorian: An Extraordinary, Transformative Leader Thomas H. Kean, chairman of Carnegie Corporation of New York's board of trustees, recalls the man who left the world more than a little better than he found it — 04

Reflections on Vartan Gregorian The incoming president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, Louise Richardson, reflects on her predecessor and mentor, who wore his learning and his achievements lightly, and always with a twinkle in his eye — 08

He Was Irrepressible Trustees of Carnegie Corporation of New York share their perspectives of Vartan Gregorian, who harnessed his gifts to great causes, who lit up and charmed every room, and who will never be forgotten — 11

A Master of Perspectives and Possibilities Vartan Gregorian's senior program leaders reflect on his philosophy of philanthropy, thinking big, minding the minutiae, and bringing understanding and collaboration to everything he did — 18

Reflections on the Pandemic Vartan Gregorian urged his staff to take the opportunity of their unplanned solitude to assess what it means to live a well-examined life, to serve as each other's keepers, and to think about what each of us can do to leave this world a better place — 24

In His Own Words A selection of memorable passages from Vartan Gregorian's speeches, essays, articles, and other writings — 28

What a Life: Vartan Gregorian's Remarkable Achievement The breadth and depth of his accomplishments truly astonish — from a boy in Tabriz, Iran, who loved books with a passion, to a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom — 38

His Highest Title The future president of Carnegie Corporation of New York becomes an American citizen — 46

A Labor of Love A son's eulogy, delivered at Vartan Gregorian's funeral service in New York City on April 22, 2021, honors the man whose place in history came to be that of "a beacon and a wonder of the world" — 48

The World Responds Immediately following Vartan Gregorian's death on April 15, 2021, there was a tremendous outpouring of admiration for the man who had meant so much to so many — 52

All in the Family Among Vartan Gregorian's signature achievements was building bridges among the more than 20 organizations founded by Andrew Carnegie — 58

The Uses of History Hillary Wiesner writes on Vartan Gregorian's pursuit of knowledge as a quest for larger truths — 64

Vartan Gregorian at the 2019 Aurora Forum in Yerevan, Armenia, October 19, 2019. CREDIT: VICTOR BOYKO/GETTY IMAGES

VARTAN GREGORIAN: AN EXTRAORDINARY, TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

The chairman of the Corporation's board of trustees recalls the man who left the world more than a little better than he found it

By **Thomas H. Kean**

Twenty-five years ago, I served on the search committee to find the new president of Carnegie Corporation of New York. We were all surprised and gratified by the amount of interest in the position from remarkable, able people. But Vartan stood out, having brought an extraordinary, transformative kind of leadership to a number of institutions. But there were questions raised by the search committee, some of whom were concerned that Vartan might be too old and might not stay the 10 years that we were looking for. At that point Vartan and I had been friends for about a dozen years and I saw no problem, but to be sure I decided to check with a friend of mine, Jim Wolfensohn, who was then head of the World Bank and who knew Vartan well. I asked him, do you think he is too old for the job? And without thinking, Jim responded, "He is the youngest man I know."

It was Vartan's youthful energy and boundless enthusiasm that we all knew and loved so well. Vartan was a true Renaissance man. He had an inexhaustible curiosity and thirst for knowledge. His passion for subjects and for people was unbounded. What he was able to do during the course of his tenure as president is extraordinary, made all the more so when one takes account of the many other remarkable achievements in his life before he came to the Corporation. I distinctly remember my amazement upon entering the reception the Corporation held to welcome him to the foundation and being surprised by the number of prominent New Yorkers in attendance. Vartan somehow managed to joyfully do the work of three men. One need only glance at his section of his quarterly letter to the board of trustees to find it overflowing with detailed accounts of his activities as president of the Corporation

Governor Tom Kean (left), chairman of the Corporation's board of trustees, and Vartan Gregorian visiting the Temple of Garni in Armenia during the events of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, October 2018.
CREDIT: DEANA ARSENIAN

as well as notes documenting the often essential role he played in innumerable institutions in the United States and around the world.

Vartan used to jokingly remark that he wanted to be "carried out of Carnegie feet first," and his activities during his last months certainly highlight his enduring dedication to the work of the Corporation and to the causes he believed in. Among Vartan's many projects, he wrote a final essay celebrating the importance of teachers for the Spring 2021 issue of the *Carnegie Reporter*, a magazine that he founded in 2000. The essay offers a high-level view of the role of teachers in our society and democracy, how to make improvements to their profession, and the historical challenges of public school reform, which Vartan strongly believed must include teacher education reform. When asked our profession, Vartan and I always replied, "educator" — and he believed that his work at the Corporation was simply an extension of that "noblest profession."

But it was not just Andrew Carnegie's support for education and educators that Vartan emulated. Indeed, in keeping with Carnegie's legacy as the "patron saint of libraries," under Vartan's leadership Carnegie Corporation of New York supported a number of projects that helped libraries advance the democratization and preservation of knowledge through technology. In particular, the Corporation supported Virtual Trinity Library, an ambitious digitization project to catalog, conserve, digitize, and research the most prized collections of the library of Trinity College Dublin, making these treasures accessible to a global audience. To celebrate the completion of the project, Patrick Prendergast, the provost and president of Trinity College Dublin, and Helen Shenton, its librarian and archivist, invited Vartan to be the guest of honor at the launch of the Virtual Trinity Library in March 2020. During the event Vartan spoke of his childhood love of reading and of libraries, calling them his "sanctuary." He ultimately became the "savior" of his sanctuary as president of the New York Public Library. Moreover, during Vartan's presidency of the Corporation, the foundation awarded more than 140 grants totaling over $84 million to support libraries and digitization efforts.

Yet even more remarkable than his respect for the history and legacy of the Corporation was the way Vartan brought foundations together. Very early on, he recognized that foundations would be much more effective if they worked together where they had common interests and goals. He was able to make it happen, in part because he saw the success of any foundation as a success for philanthropy as a whole. He had such knowledge and such breadth of associations within the world of philanthropy that he was able to get very different people working together. The spirit of collaboration he introduced has been a force of incalculable good for the entire philanthropic sector.

Perhaps even more indicative of his character and dedication to the work being done was the fact that Vartan had the humility to not request that Carnegie Corporation of New York receive top billing in a joint initiative. He did not care who got the credit; he only cared about getting the best people to do the things that they should be doing in the public interest. This is why he looked forward to the annual Foundation Executives Group (FEG) meeting. The FEG was founded with the support of the Corporation in 1965 to share informal guidance and develop philanthropic standards and principles as well as to encourage transparency among foundations. Only a few days before his death, Vartan and other foundation leaders met virtually to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration.

Vartan's collaborations were not confined to great projects. For example, he worked closely with Hillary Wiesner, director of the Corporation's Transnational Movements and the Arab Region program, on a full-page ad in the *New York Times* for the American University of Beirut (AUB). AUB is a Corporation grantee, and Vartan served on AUB's International Advisory Board for many years. During this time of crisis both for the university and for Lebanon, Vartan helped its board promote this fundraising outreach effort, edited the ad multiple times, and contributed a significant amount toward the cost of publication from his private funds. The ad appeared on page 5 of the print edition of the *Times* on Vartan's last Sunday, April 11.

Beyond his support for schools and libraries, Vartan also supported scholars. Indeed, the work he seemed the proudest of was the work of the Andrew Carnegie Fellows Program, which he established in 2015. Every year, he would block off two full days on his schedule to read over each and every one of the hundreds of nominations that came in. He relished the two days of deliberations with the jury and was absolutely delighted with the 2021 class of fellows. One can hardly wonder at his joy when you remember that Vartan often noted that an important fellowship early in his career contributed to his own success.

But Vartan did not believe in just "giving money" — he made investments in the same way that Andrew Carnegie carried out his philanthropic work. He invested in people, in their ideas, and perhaps most importantly, in making the world a better place. It is said that people who are grateful are people who are generous. Vartan was both. He often remarked that he wanted to call his autobiography "The Kindness of Strangers" but was prevented from doing so by his publisher.

His gratitude toward those who had helped him throughout his life as well as toward those who had saved thousands of Armenian lives during the Armenian genocide of 1915–23 led him to cofound the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity with Ruben Vardanyan and Noubar Afeyan. For the past six years, the prize has recognized modern-day heroes who have gone out of their way to care for strangers, people they do not know. The $1 million award allows the Aurora Prize Laureate — who is chosen for their courage, commitment, and willingness to act in response to the needs of those around them — to invest in other humanitarian organizations and causes that have inspired them. As a member of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, Vartan helped choose the 2021 Aurora Laureate, although sadly he did not live to see the official announcement. Truly, the prize stands as testament to Vartan's lifelong recognition and encouragement of *the kindness of strangers*.

As for so many, Vartan's unexpected and untimely death came as a shock to me, moving me to reflect deeply not only on the magnitude of the man's unique accomplishments in this life and the gravity of our — indeed, the world's — loss, but also on his respect for the history of the Corporation and his vision for its future. His attention, dedication, and hard work transformed every institution he led and, as with the Corporation, set each of them up for future success, even in his absence. I know Vartan would be thrilled to know that Louise Richardson, whom he greatly admired and whom he invited to join the Corporation's board in 2013, has agreed to succeed him as president as of January 2023.

I know Vartan would be thrilled to know that Louise Richardson, whom he greatly admired and whom he invited to join the Corporation's board in 2013, has agreed to succeed him as president as of January 2023.

Louise possesses the personal attributes we consider most important for the position: integrity, leadership, an international breadth of experience, and a proven dedication to our work in democracy, education, and international peace and security.

In her own essay in the following pages, Louise reflects on her relationship with Vartan, describing him as her "wise and wily mentor." (Some of the remarkable trustees that Vartan assembled to help steward this outstanding organization also offer their own tributes in this issue.) In addition to her international standing as an expert on higher education and terrorism, Louise possesses the personal attributes we consider most important for the position: integrity, leadership, an international breadth of experience, and a proven dedication to our work in democracy, education, and international peace and security. Like Vartan and our founder, Andrew Carnegie, Louise first came to this country as an immigrant. She will undoubtedly carry on their legacy while brilliantly charting her own path, assuring a very bright future for the foundation and its efforts to improve the world through greater knowledge and understanding.

It has been said that how you live is also how you prepare to die. In his last four months, Vartan Gregorian kept doing the work that defined his life, caring for libraries, supporting teachers and universities, helping institutions in crisis, bringing people and foundations together, and putting gratitude into action, continually trying to make the world a better place than he found it. Andrew Carnegie once wrote that "Not one of us can feel his duty done, unless he can say as he approaches his end, that, because he has lived, some fellow-creature, or some little spot of earth or something upon it, has been made just a little better." Rest in peace, my friend, you made the world better, your duty is done. ■

REFLECTIONS ON VARTAN GREGORIAN

The incoming president of Carnegie Corporation of New York reflects on her predecessor and mentor, who wore his learning and his achievements lightly, and always with a twinkle in his eye

By **Louise Richardson**

Editor's Note: *Louise Richardson will join Carnegie Corporation of New York as its 13th president in January 2023 at the end of her seven-year term as head of the University of Oxford. Richardson, an expert on international terrorism, has served as a member of the Corporation's board of trustees since 2013. A native of Ireland, Richardson came to this country as an immigrant, as did her predecessor, Vartan Gregorian. Richardson is the first in her family to attend university, the first woman to serve as principal and vice-chancellor of the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and the first woman to lead Oxford as vice-chancellor. She will soon become the first woman to serve as president of the Corporation.*

Trustee Louise Richardson, who will join the Corporation as its 13th president in January 2023, with Vartan Gregorian in 2009.

I first met Vartan in June 2009 when we awarded him an honorary degree at St. Andrews, Scotland. He had about 50 honorary degrees by then, but he took enormous delight in the entire occasion, deriving as much pleasure as if it were his first. That was one of his secrets, his love of life; he loved people, he loved universities, he loved occasions. He wore his learning and his myriad achievements lightly, and always with a twinkle in his eye.

I was a brand-new university president with only six months under my belt. He took it upon himself to become my wise and wily mentor. Appalled by the parsimony of some wealthy Scots, Vartan would devise elaborate schemes to cajole them into giving money to the university.

> “For all his playfulness, he was deeply serious about all that mattered: committed to education, to recognizing and rewarding talent, to strengthening democracy, to helping immigrants, and to the idea that is America.

For many people he *was* the Corporation, and he epitomized New York in all its bustling cosmopolitanism.

When one idea failed, he would never give up, phoning me with yet another elaborate plan as we laughed our way through his never-ending schemes. We raised more laughs than money, but he persisted.

His leadership style was unique in my experience. Its hallmark was his generosity of spirit; he would be the first to give praise and credit to others, proffering advice to everyone who asked, devising a quiet way to be helpful, to shine a light on others, and always with the thoughtful present of a book or flowers. His style was extremely effective as, like so many other people, I was completely incapable of saying no to him.

A highlight of joining the Carnegie board was the opportunity to see Vartan in action. Going out to dinner with him, no reservations required, it was clear that he was as beloved by doormen and waiters as by high society. He must have been invited to every fundraiser in New York, but he insisted on attending mine, claiming he was part Scottish due to the similarity between Vartan and "tartan" and because Andrew Carnegie was a Scot. At a gala dinner at the Met with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, he chided my lack of strategy in seating him next to Prince William but delighted in watching all the alums trying to figure out who he was to have gained the coveted seat.

For all his playfulness he was deeply serious about all that mattered: committed to education, to recognizing and rewarding talent, to strengthening democracy, to helping immigrants, and to the idea that is America. Of his many wonderful sayings, my favorite is: "Education is the bridge that allows us to travel from where we are to that further place where we can become who we want to be and do all the wonderful things we might otherwise only dream of."

It was the bridge that took him from Tabriz to Manhattan and into our hearts, and the bridge that he dedicated his life to strengthening for others.

Carnegie Corporation of New York thrived under Vartan's inspired leadership. For many people he *was* the Corporation, and he epitomized New York in all its bustling cosmopolitanism.

I am acutely conscious of the enormous challenge and great responsibility involved in succeeding such a beloved and accomplished leader. The task is made easier by the legacy of the robust foundation that he has left us. He attracted a large, talented, and dedicated staff and convened a brilliant, diverse, and committed board of trustees.

Together we will ensure that the foundation he loved will continue to advance Andrew Carnegie's mission of promoting access to education, strengthening democracy, and advancing peace. This mission has never been more important than it is today. We will make Vartan proud. ■

HE WAS IRREPRESSIBLE

Trustees of Carnegie Corporation of New York share their perspectives on Vartan Gregorian, who harnessed his gifts to great causes, who lit up and charmed every room, and who will never be forgotten

At Carnegie Corporation of New York, as formerly at the New York Public Library and Brown University, Vartan Gregorian worked with, as he put it, "extraordinary trustees who have focused on contributing to the formulation of institutional priorities without imposing their own personal biases or giving in to the temptation to micromanage." In his view,

> *The role of trustees is to provide long-term policy guidelines for an institution and ensure accountability for how the institution's leadership implements those policies. This is particularly true for trustees of institutions such as libraries, universities, and foundations, which are obviously fundamentally different than for-profit business enterprises. They are extremely complex enterprises with a historical identity, a particular culture, and many different constituencies with many different expectations of them and for them. They require the time and attention of very special individuals with deep insight into the indispensability of these institutions to America's national life.*

Gregorian admired — and even loved — the "very special individuals" who served on his boards over the course of his distinguished career, and they returned his affection — and even love — in abundance.

Vartan and I met at a university commencement in 1998. We were both receiving honorary degrees, and Vartan was the commencement speaker. As was always the case, Vartan's address inspired every graduate, every parent, every professor, and it certainly inspired me. His address was eloquent, humorous, thoughtful, and laced with intellectual challenges for every mesmerized listener.

Little did I know that a week later he would invite me to join the Corporation's board of trustees. As I began my service on the board and as the years passed, I came to realize that this man had held many titles during his career and that every one of these titles should surely have been preceded by the word "best." Vartan was the best savior of the New York Public Library, the best university president, and the best president of Carnegie Corporation of New York. However, we all know that the titles that meant the most to him were husband, father, grandfather, and friend.

The saying goes that "you make a living by what you do; you make a life by what you give." There is no doubt that Vartan lived a full, stimulating, and truly joyful life not only because of the contributions he made to every institution he worked for but because he also never ever stopped giving. Having Vartan in my life — and in all of our lives — was his greatest gift.

Janet L. Robinson
Retired President and Chief Executive Officer, The New York Times Company, and Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Carnegie Corporation of New York

I had the fortune of meeting Vartan more than 25 years ago when we were members of the board of the McGraw-Hill Companies. On that day, I knew that I had met a remarkable man who was at the same time a philosopher and a doer, a historian and a visionary, a teacher and a mentor, always in search of the truth.

In these times when democracy is under attack in many places and countries, it is important to remember that Vartan Gregorian's life was dedicated to the promotion of democracy across the world.

His life is a unique example of love and friendship of humanity.

Pedro Aspe
Chairman, Insignia Capital

← PREVIOUS PAGE

Dr. Vartan Gregorian, 1994 – an original pen-and-ink drawing by Al Hirschfeld. CREDIT: © THE AL HIRSCHFELD FOUNDATION. WWW.ALHIRSCHFELDFOUNDATION.ORG

> He was always ready to offer a helping hand with his wit, wisdom, and unconditional generosity of spirit.
>
> **Lionel Barber**

Vartan was a friend and mentor to young and old, irrespective of station. He was always ready to offer a helping hand with his wit, wisdom, and unconditional generosity of spirit.

Who can forget the warm hugs he gave, sometimes accompanied by a gentle kiss on the head, a habit no doubt carried over from the distant past when growing up as a child in the Armenian community in Tabriz, Iran?

Vartan was irresistible, and he knew it. He harnessed his God-given charm to great causes: education, philanthropy, and peace. He brought a boundless energy to his work; he never flagged, even in his final days in office, always convinced that the many noble institutions he headed could make a difference in people's lives.

During my time as a trustee at Carnegie, Vartan taught me more about civic values and civic virtue than any schoolbook or any professor at Oxford. He did so through those familiar, folksy aphorisms ("Don't insult a crocodile before crossing a river") but also through his own intellect, which he wore lightly, and his extraordinary convening power.

After each Carnegie board meeting, we departed better informed, feeling better about ourselves and life in general. That was Vartan Gregorian's greatest gift.

Lionel Barber
Journalist and Former Editor, *Financial Times*

I was elected president of Carnegie Mellon in 1997. Before I took office, I met with four sitting and former university presidents. It was my first meeting with Vartan, and like all my subsequent meetings with him, it was memorable. He had a way of capturing an issue or idea with a single sentence or phrase. He said to me, "Always remember, Jared, that Carnegie Mellon and Pittsburgh are both great, but neither believes it." It was a remarkable insight. He'd never lived in Pittsburgh or spent much time at Carnegie Mellon or in the city. But of course, it was confirmed many times during my first few weeks on the job. Knowing and honoring history were profoundly important to Vartan and an important element of his effectiveness and impact.

Our lives are so much richer for having had Vartan in them. Our institutions are so much better for the attention and grants Vartan gave them. Although he was only about a decade older than I, he was like a godfather to me, or maybe a grandfather. I loved him and will cherish my time with him and our history together.

Jared L. Cohon
President Emeritus, Carnegie Mellon University

> Vartan never forgot where he came from and yet was always responsive to the immediacy of the needs of our time.
>
> **John J. DeGioia**

There's no single story I recall about Vartan. It is more a mosaic of all of them that made him so special. I recall the twinkle in his eye, his mischievous attitude, the depth and breadth of his knowledge and experience, his wisdom, his ability to see analogies in history or trace the roots of a complex issue as a path to a solution. I recall his warmth and his engagement, the strength of his network, his seemingly unbounded curiosity, his commitment to justice, his energy, his persistence for the good, his moral fiber, and his character.

I remember how easy he made it to join the Carnegie family. I saw his welcoming spirit and his inclusiveness in many contexts, and I was always struck by how closely Vartan identified with Andrew Carnegie. Vartan personified the goals of the wide range of initiatives in education, immigration, democracy, world peace, and the defense of individual liberties around the globe. Vartan had the vision and the force of personality and the character to bring many great things to life, and to connect people from all parts of the world. I will never forget the many lessons I learned from the teacher, the scholar, the advocate, the humanitarian, and the Renaissance man that he was.

Kevin J. Conway
Vice Chairman, Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, LLC

I first met Vartan more than 30 years ago as he was completing his service at the New York Public Library. The 1980s were an extraordinary time in New York City, a decade in stark contrast to the desolation of the 1970s. There were many elements that contributed to the rebirth of the city, but none were more important than the restoration of the New York Public Library.

You can see the legacy of Vartan's leadership today in the lines of people waiting in the morning for the opening of the lending libraries; in the glory of the reading room on 42nd Street; in the vibrancy of Bryant Park. The New York Public Library is the civic institution that provides the moral center for the City of New York. It is a home for everyone — from the youngest child to the recently arrived immigrant to the most esteemed scholar.

Of course, so much came before and after in the life and career of a singular leader. From his first faculty appointment at San Francisco State in the 1960s at a very turbulent time in higher education, to Brown in the 1990s, and then his nearly quarter-century at Carnegie Corporation of New York, at every moment he provided a style of leadership that was original, creative, and profoundly rooted in an understanding of history.

Vartan never forgot where he came from and yet was always responsive to the immediacy of the needs of our time.

John J. DeGioia
President, Georgetown University

Dear Dr. Gregorian,

You are unable to read this because the cold hands of death have snatched you away from us. I want to say thank you for being you — a powerful man, yet so humble. A scholar of great intelligence, yet so simple and approachable. Thank you for committing your life to serving humanity and inspiring generations. There's a quote that says, "The heart does not count the years or tears, but the memory of love."

I have known you for six short years, but it feels like I have known you my entire life. You are a friend, a father figure, and a teacher. I could talk to you for hours and you'd indulge me, never too tired to listen. I often joked that my own father's spirit lived in you. You would simply smile. You were never too tired to support me or my work. You labored for, advocated for, and championed many causes advancing human rights and justice. To say that meetings of the Aurora jury and the Carnegie board will never be the same is an understatement. I will miss your jokes, your wise musings, and your compliments.

Take your rest, Dr. Gregorian. I can hear you saying, "Don't call me 'Dr.'"

Leymah Gbowee

Founder and President, Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa

Vartan was a true intellectual and scholar — I was recently reminded by an Afghan friend that his book on Afghanistan remains the reference for an understanding of the roots of modern Afghanistan — and he had a real passion for ideas and read voraciously. However, intellectual life was not for him an escape away from his fellow human beings. He had the same interest in people that he had in ideas, and he was not satisfied until ideas had made their way to people. That made him an incredibly generous man, intellectually and personally: he was always willing to share an idea, to find the time to draw your attention to a long-forgotten book, or to send a clipping of an article he had just read, and while he let you benefit from his encyclopedic culture, there was never a hint of pontification, just a delicious twinkle in his eyes that made you a companion in his intellectual pursuits. He had the gift of humanity.

That makes his loss all the more painful. He had a way of connecting our little lives to something much bigger than us, but he remained anchored in reality. His tolerance of human frailties was not borne of naiveté or cynicism but of a deep sense of history. He conveyed a sense of respect for the past and of duty vis-à-vis the future. The people one can admire unreservedly are rare, although admiration is probably the most satisfying of human emotions. Vartan was in so many ways admirable. Without him, the world is a poorer place.

Jean-Marie Guéhenno

Former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, United Nations

My friendship with Vartan got off to a fast start when I went to see him for advice after I returned from Japan. The next thing I knew, I was swept up into his warmth and infectious generosity. He had great admiration for my parents, and he would talk to me about how my father had inspired him as a young man. My father's ideals for America and his belief in the nobility of public service — these are values that Vartan really *lived* over the course of his career. I also know how closely he worked with my uncle Teddy — to support and fight for civic education and our democratic institutions.

To hear him talk about my mother made me realize what a great friendship they must have had and how that spirit animated the New York Public Library during his tenure there. My mother was thrilled to be a part of it — to help him put the library at the center of New York cultural life, making it possible for all New Yorkers to have greater access to the learning that could help them fulfill their dreams. He was obviously a huge admirer of hers as he never stopped sending me clippings about her. The white blazers she wore, and the handbags she carried … finally I told him that I was worried about him and that he needed to stop reading the fashion pages and clipping them for me. But he went right on doing that.

While I was the inheritor of a great tradition, being on the board at the Corporation allowed me to have my own relationship with Vartan, to see the master at work, to observe how his unwavering moral compass and curiosity ran underneath everything that the Corporation did. He was an agent for social change, intellectual excellence, and expanding the global role and power of the Carnegie institutions, inspiring the next generation of philanthropists as they created their own kind of philanthropy. That is an incredible legacy. To keep learning and sharing what I learn is the way that I hope to honor his example.

Caroline Kennedy

Former United States Ambassador to Japan;
Nominee, U.S. Ambassador to Australia

Vartan adopted people — all kinds of people. He adopted me.

He zeroed in on what he thought was special, engaged it, and encouraged it. He listened and mentored. He watched me grow. He did that without an agenda.

He was a bit of a people gardener — watching people bloom for the sheer joy of it.

He left all of us so much richer for having been chosen.

Maria Elena Lagomasino

CEO and Managing Partner, WE Family Offices

At Corporation headquarters in June 2014 (L-R) trustee Louise Richardson; former trustee Edward P. Djerejian; vice chairman of the board of trustees Janet L. Robinson; Vartan Gregorian; special guest Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, then president of Iceland; former trustee Stephen A. Oxman; and trustee Judge Ann Claire Williams.

Vartan was the father I wish I had. He was the success story I wish I could have written. The mentor I wish I could have been. He was a unique blend of towering intellect and passion. He inspired me to be a better person and steward for humanity. More than a Renaissance man, he was truly a man for the ages. I was one of the few privileged people on this planet to have known him. At the same time, I was one of the many privileged people to have benefited from his unique dedication to making this a better world. There is not a part of my being that he did not touch. I miss him very much.

Marcia McNutt
President, National Academy of Sciences

Unforgettable are Vartan's belief that dignity is not negotiable and his comment that "the universe is not going to see someone like you again in the history of creation." Here is the beating heart behind his passions for sharing knowledge and genuine opportunities to individuals in this country and across the globe. He was an architect of bridges across civilizations and between past and future. It was Vartan's perpetual dynamism that propelled Carnegie Corporation of New York into its second century with momentum, vibrancy, and direction.

I remember visiting after Vartan's successful campaigns to restore the physical spaces of the New York Public Library's central building and could not help but think of Wim Wenders's film *Wings of Desire*. There, angels hang out in libraries; angels provide silent empathy and bear witness to the inner thoughts, struggles, and hopes of the humans immersed in their studies and lives. How spectacular it has been to watch Vartan's angelic touch extend across libraries and universities, journalism and digital learning for elementary schools, peace initiatives and hand-selected fellows, each an extraordinary scholar and writer.

As for me, I came to see how the marvel of *The Road to Home*, his beautiful autobiography, is exceeded only by the life itself: at once optimistic and clear-eyed, simultaneously deeply grounded in the past and searching out the new; emphatically American and thoroughly universalist.

Martha Minow
300th Anniversary University Professor, Harvard University

A few years ago, Vartan attended one of those White House Correspondents dinners. Dinner is over, people are leaving, and I get into my car. I start to leave, and I see — standing there on an island across from the hotel — Vartan. He is looking around, no car; he's the symbol of "just another guy." I call out to him, he turns around and sees me. I don't know whether it was relief on his face that someone was going to pick him up or that he was happy to see me. In any event, it was wonderful to see that glow and beam in his eyes. I pick him up, take him to the hotel, and we talk along the way. I guess I felt better about the incident than he did. I can only say for the record that I am proud to have been Vartan's Uber driver for one moment.

Kurt L. Schmoke
President, University of Baltimore

Vartan's leadership at Carnegie Corporation of New York followed his successful leadership at major American universities and the New York Public Library.

He was a consummate humanitarian in both the fine and the performing arts. Vartan also had enormous genuine empathy. He was a staunch advocate for immigrants. His command of multiple languages enabled him to engage actively with world leaders.

> He transcended today's polarization. He was a man of ideas and a man of remarkable action.
>
> **Judy Woodruff**

Vartan's strategic brilliance is reflected in Corporation program activity, both in the United States and abroad, that embraced international peace and security, education, and democracy — for example supporting work in arms control, nuclear security, and peacebuilding in South Africa.

Participating in committee and board meetings, Vartan asked good but easy questions of the guest speaker — often followed by a tough zinger! He also expected and sought advice, participation, and full commitment to the Corporation's mission from the trustees.

I am very grateful for having been one of the lucky ones to have known and learned so much from Vartan.

Anne Tatlock
Former Chairman and CEO, Fiduciary Trust Company International

Our beloved Vartan was just an incredible, phenomenal human being. A gifted, resourceful, humble leader. A leader of leaders. A visionary that dreamed big, huge, impossible dreams his entire life. He believed in our dreams. They became his dreams, and he helped us achieve those dreams. When he took the reins at Carnegie, he walked in the shoes of the indescribable Andrew Carnegie and dreamed even bigger impossible dreams. Many have come true. Others, sadly, are still a huge challenge and will require us to continue to fight. Vartan taught us to never give up; he inspired us to dream those big, impossible dreams. To challenge, to educate, to inspire, to take action, to fight, to walk with humility. To laugh, to love one another. To make our world — both domestic and global — more equitable, more just, more humane.

Judge Ann Claire Williams (Ret.)
Of Counsel, Jones Day

Vartan lit up every room. He was the person you wanted to talk with, to hear his wise take on the world. He had a gift for making you think you were the most interesting person around. There was virtually no subject I brought up with him about which he didn't have something to teach me. Foreign policy and politics for sure; he had insights on all parts of the world, every significant political figure. The list was endless: literature, music, art, science, history.

He was passionate about much: education, democracy, the inequities in our society, the cause of the Armenians, public broadcasting — no foundation leader was more important to the *NewsHour* — and the great value of immigration, which brought him to our shores.

He transcended today's polarization. He was a man of ideas and a man of remarkable action. He was a confidant of liberals and conservatives — Democrats turned to him for counsel, as did Republicans.

It was extraordinary, just being with Vartan, like the way Churchill once described FDR: "Meeting him was like opening a bottle of champagne; getting to know him was like drinking it."

Like so many's, my life has been enriched by Vartan — his brilliance to be sure, but also his marvelous, kind, joyful generosity.

We will never forget him.

Judy Woodruff
Anchor and Managing Editor, *PBS NewsHour*

A MASTER OF PERSPECTIVES AND POSSIBILITIES

Vartan Gregorian's senior program leaders reflect on his philosophy of philanthropy, thinking big, minding the minutiae, and bringing understanding and collaboration to everything he did

Illustrations by **Alessandra Scandella**

Editor's Note: *VG, as he was known internally at the Corporation, worked closely with his staff during the 24 years of his presidency, often referring to the foundation as a family. In this conversation, his senior program staff — **Deana Arsenian**, vice president, International Program, and program director, Russia and Eurasia; **Jeanne D'Onofrio**, chief of staff; **Geri Mannion**, managing director, Strengthening U.S. Democracy program and the Special Opportunities Fund; and **LaVerne Evans Srinivasan**, vice president, National Program, and program director, Education — discuss Vartan Gregorian's approach to philanthropy, what they learned from him, and his continuing influence. The conversation is moderated by historian and writer **Ted Widmer**, who is working on a retrospective report of VG's presidency and its accomplishments.*

> He built his career around that — the drive to have people understand other cultures and religions and history and be more tolerant.
>
> — **Deana Arsenian**, Vice President, International Program, and Program Director, Russia and Eurasia

CHANGING CARNEGIE, ELEVATING PHILANTHROPY

Ted Widmer: How did Vartan Gregorian change ways of thinking at Carnegie?

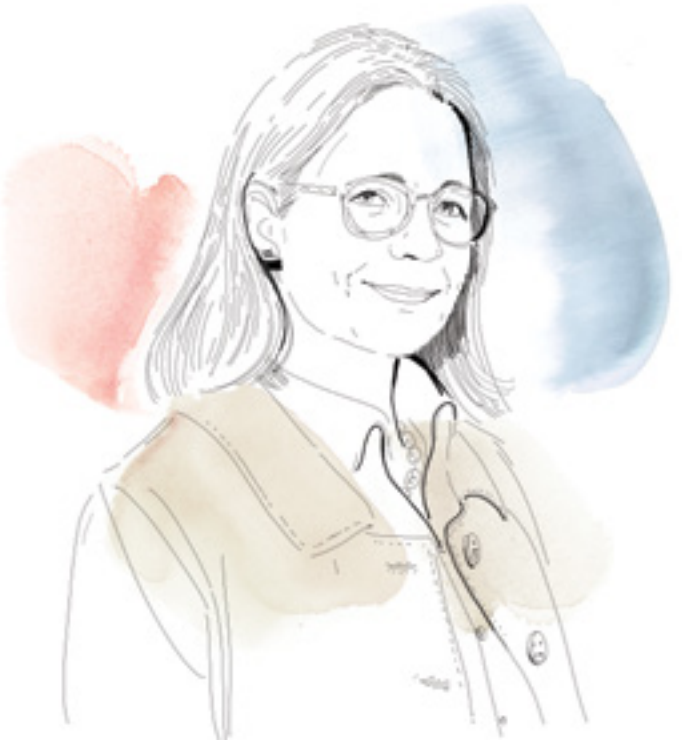
Geri Mannion: I was surprised at some of the things he liked when he came. He really wanted to continue funding campaign finance reform, for example, because he was very distrustful of forces behind the scenes — soft money, money that was not disclosed. He worried about what that meant for democracy. He was proud of the summit we did with John McCain and Barack Obama about the need for community service. He loved having people in the boardroom who all knew each other from different walks of life and who together could do something that could get public attention.

LaVerne Evans Srinivasan: One thing that made him different was that he focused on understanding demand. In education reform, we've created a lot of solutions, and we fund them. But who really wants those solutions, as opposed to the solutions they want themselves? Where is the authentic demand? VG really listened to people and actually valued their opinions, especially people who weren't at all from the elite. He wanted those views to be addressed by our solutions.

Jeanne D'Onofrio: In my three years with David Hamburg, Vartan's predecessor at Carnegie, I don't recall Hamburg mentioning the Carnegie legacy or the institutions other than programmatically. Vartan met regularly with the Carnegie institutions. He cofounded the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in 2001, but at the time it wasn't about the medal — it was about celebrating the centennial of Andrew Carnegie's commitment to philanthropy. Vartan's idea was to get all the institutions together for the very first time in those 100 years to affirm their commitment to their mission and their legacy. They drafted a resolution, and all the trustees and the heads of all the institutions were there.

Widmer: Part of the genius of that medal was that it elevated philanthropy for the wider public and helped cultivate new philanthropists. What was VG's impact on philanthropy?

Srinivasan: I'd call it thought leadership. He talked about Carnegie having more cachet than cash. So if we gave even a small grant to something, that made it more important to other people in philanthropy. They would say, "Okay, why is Carnegie funding that?"



> He could move an idea into action because he could pick up the phone and make it happen.
>
> — **Jeanne D'Onofrio**, Chief of Staff

Deana Arsenian: He had a sense of things that could and should be done but that weren't being done, even though they aren't difficult. Like connecting the Carnegie family. Even at Brown University, he liked high-impact, high-visibility things. Under his leadership, Brown emerged as a top institution — not just because of his fundraising but because of the kinds of students he attracted, the relationships he built with their families. For him, it was always about connecting the dots between and among people, and he was a master at that.

Srinivasan: One time, I was at the White House with him, I guess in 2018, when a lot of people came up to him who had gone to Brown when he was there, and it was like he was a rock star. They were all anxious to see him, and he remembered a lot of them. He said, "Oh yes, I remember you," or called them by name, which was absolutely stunning.

Mannion: Yes, I agree. Relationships really meant a lot to him. He'd still visit people when they were 90 or so, just because he felt that connection or gratitude for what they had done for him at an earlier time in his life — in the U.S. or internationally. And just the week he died, I was told he was holding court during a Foundation Executives Group meeting — on Zoom! He still could hold people's attention.

Widmer: What were some of his new ways of doing philanthropy, and how did he market them?

Mannion: He was all about collaborating, like the way he set up the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa, where he brought together all these philanthropic leaders. He was so proud of that. He was initially looking for just a short thing, a smaller amount of money, and he ended up raising over $200 million to invest in higher education in Africa.

Arsenian: That was very successful, and he wanted other projects to operate that way, as a big joint effort. He liked the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education because it was both ours and the Knight Foundation's.

> Maybe that helps explain why he felt close to Andrew Carnegie – his experience as an immigrant, even though from a different part of the world.
>
> – **Ted Widmer**, Historian and Writer

> Vartan himself was like a mosaic, and that influenced everything. He really thought deeply.

ALWAYS CURIOUS, ALWAYS DEEPLY ENGAGED

Widmer: Deana, what were your first impressions of Vartan? You go back to his Brown University days, before he came to Carnegie in 1997.

Arsenian: When we were both at Brown and he'd just been named the new president of Carnegie, he pulled me into his office one day and said he wanted to learn more about the Corporation. I asked him how he was likely to approach it, and I will never forget his answer. He said, "In any institution that I've taken over, I have never destroyed the house. I always build my own house on top of it." And that was always his approach.

At both Carnegie and Brown, he was engaged deeply in pretty much everything that went on around him. Usually, people don't have that breadth of attention. By engagement, I mean knowing what's going on, knowing the people involved, knowing why things are happening, actually in a very nosy way: curious and engaged.

Mannion: Deana's right about the "building on" because he really didn't shift the primary programs here. I remember he said, "I don't plan to change anything." And then, of course, he changed everything. He changed the structures and how it worked. He wanted to put his own mark on it.

I remember the first Council on Foundations meeting he attended with me in 1998. He did *not* want to go, but we went, and he knew everybody, from every stratum of New York philanthropy and from across the country. He knew them socially because of his work at the New York Public Library, or from Texas, or Penn, or Brown. He always kept his relationships going.

> Initially, it was very hard for him to decide what to fund, and part of it was because he came from want.
>
> – **Geri Mannion**, Managing Director, Strengthening U.S. Democracy Program and the Special Opportunities Fund

D'Onofrio: *New York Times* photographer Bill Cunningham would be at all the social events, and he loved Vartan because of what he did to save the New York Public Library. So he made sure that Vartan's picture was in the paper. VG never wanted that. He said, "I tell him every time, do not put my picture in," but Bill thought that was one thing he could do to thank Vartan for being so generous.

Widmer: Did he have a particular grantmaking philosophy?

D'Onofrio: If he had had a chance to look back at the last 24 years, he would not have anticipated where he ended up. I don't think he realized when he arrived at Carnegie how difficult it is to give money away. He thought, "I don't have to raise funds anymore; this is going to be easy."

Mannion: Initially, it was very hard for him to decide what to fund, and part of it was because he came from want. He always had to raise money; he always thought there wouldn't be enough for his institutions, regardless of how big they were. He always looked at all our budgets — what's that overhead for, what's that money for — because he wanted to make sure that our money, now that he was in charge of it, would be spent in the most appropriate ways possible. That meant sometimes he took a long time to decide that something was a good idea.

Arsenian: Sometimes he was into minutiae to the point of it being painful. When we were supporting the revitalization of public libraries in South Africa and university libraries in a few other African countries, we had one very small grant, maybe $100,000, but it wasn't going well. So the director of the program and I went in to talk to VG about it, and I was thinking this would be a five-minute conversation. Well, it lasted for three hours. VG just would not let go of that $100,000. We were so exhausted! But when something mattered to him, whether it was $100,000 or $100 million, he would go at the minutiae to no end. I had a number of those conversations with him.

Mannion: He much preferred talking about getting big ideas out there, rather than discussing the minutiae. If he did go deep, it was about whether this grant was going to be successful, or were you missing something.

He was always interested in our immigration funding. He wanted us to deal with the big picture of immigration in general, hitting all the marks. I really appreciated his vision beyond the budget totals.

THE BOY FROM TABRIZ

Widmer: In his autobiography, *The Road to Home,* he talks about growing up in Iran, where he was born, and how education was incredibly important all his life. We

> Sometimes he'd get frustrated that Americans take too monolithic an approach to issues they're passionate about, that they don't consider all the potential perspectives.

may not think of Iran as a democracy, but he saw a kind of tolerance there. He then goes to Beirut for schooling before arriving in America for his undergraduate and graduate education in history. But there's always a feeling that the boy growing up in Tabriz is still there.

Arsenian: Yes. Whatever conversation he was in, it came back to Tabriz: this is my upbringing; this is why I'm here. He built his career around the drive to have people understand other cultures and religions and history and be more tolerant. He wanted it to be public knowledge that those were his roots, and he was proud and comfortable with that.

Mannion: He always seemed to me to be more Armenian than Iranian. I almost never heard him talk about being Iranian.

Arsenian: That's true. He always thought of himself as an Armenian, in part because Tabriz had a large Armenian population. He wasn't brought up in traditional Tehran culture. And we Armenians are all over the world. I'm from Russia, he's from Iran; completely different upbringings, different worldviews. He would quote Arnold Toynbee, saying that Islam is a mosaic, not a monolith, so there could not be a clash of civilizations. But at some point, you gravitate toward your ethnicity.

Mannion: I once reminded him that Kim Kardashian was Armenian, and he just went, "Oh my God." *[Laughter]*

Srinivasan: I think Vartan himself was like a mosaic, and that influenced everything. He really thought deeply — going back to Deana's comment about his breadth of engagement. From the taxi driver to the doorman to the intellectual to the president, it didn't matter, he was deeply interested in understanding the individual. It was like playing chess, seeing the issues from many perspectives and possibilities, and he was also a master at that. Yes, he was a historian, but he was also a master of many other social sciences, and he brought all that understanding to everything he did.

Widmer: Reading early documents, I see a lot of ambition. He's rethinking priorities. He's continuing with David Hamburg's programs, but also starting up new stuff.

Arsenian: One of his very important initiatives was helping post-Soviet intelligentsia. He came to Carnegie soon after the Soviet Union fell apart, and when he was at Brown, he helped a lot of faculty from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union get jobs. He saw this huge, jobless Soviet intelligentsia that was driving taxis, with nothing to sell but their expertise, including on our nuclear issues. And if he didn't help them, it would be very detrimental for the world. So he started the Strengthening Scholarship and Research in the Former Soviet Union program, which supported thousands of post-Soviet scholars.

Mannion: Each program had to do a strategic overview. He brought in a company pro bono to think about structures, and that led to bringing the investment team in house and creating VPs for different areas. It was not always a smooth transition, but he would turn it around. He was always willing to listen, but he would also say, "I'll think about it," which meant "no."

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION AT SCALE

Srinivasan: Education and teaching were really important to him, and conversations I had with him when I started at Carnegie went back to Teachers for a New Era, or Schools for a New Society, large initiatives from early in his tenure. He never gave up on them, on understanding how we could do a better job on education. He valued teachers. Teachers were important and should be treated as the professionals they are.

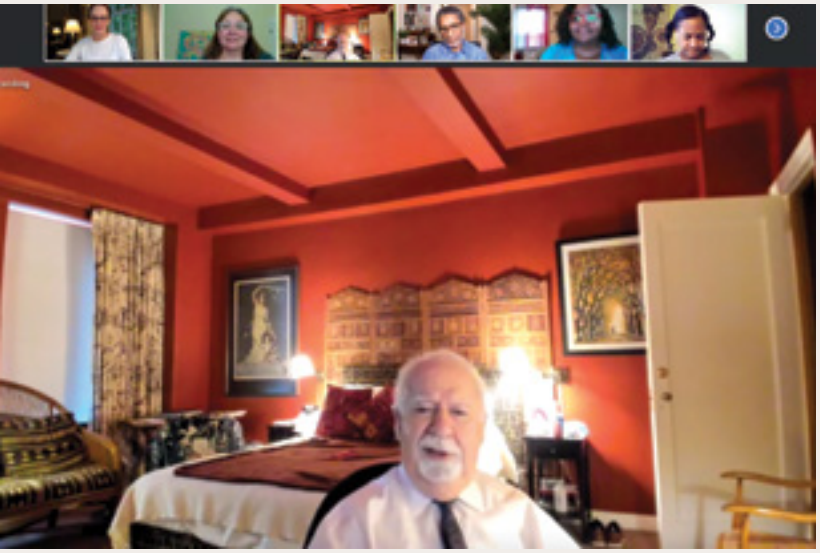
The issue of scale annoyed him endlessly. He saw in schools and colleges of education the very scale-up possibility that everyone was seeking and said *that* is where we prepare teachers at scale. But those places were disrespected overall. He thought colleges of education were treated like stepchildren by universities, but if we really wanted to make change in education at scale, that was a primary way we could accomplish that, and in a way that would influence both universities and K–12.

Widmer: He really pushed to do more for high schools.

Srinivasan: Absolutely. Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein were trying at the time, around 2003, to shut down the large high schools that were known as "dropout factories" — that were failing our

REFLECTIONS ON THE PANDEMIC

During the last year of his life, VG urged his staff to take the opportunity of their unplanned solitude to assess what it means to live a well-examined life, to serve as each other's keepers, and to think about what each of us can do to leave this world a better place



Vartan Gregorian during a virtual town hall with Corporation staff, June 11, 2020. CREDIT: CELESTE FORD

After Carnegie Corporation of New York transitioned to working remotely on March 13, 2020, due to COVID-19, Vartan Gregorian began to offer reflections on the pandemic during virtual town hall meetings with the foundation's staff. The following excerpts are pieced together from staff notes, Zoom recordings, and his quarterly letters to the board of trustees. If he had the opportunity to review them now, VG undoubtedly would insist on improving, deleting, or expounding on some of them, as well as adding erudite references to Hannah Arendt, Isaac Asimov, Marcus Aurelius, Goethe, George Orwell, Pascal, and Adam Smith, among others. While it is not possible to fully capture his remarks, the following passages are a record of some of the thoughts, historical insights, and wisdom that VG shared during very difficult times.

The current crisis is presenting tremendous challenges for our health, our work, our families, our nation, and our entire world. This time of isolation and solitude has given us all much time for introspection, for self-examination. As before in times of crisis, I have turned to history, and considered how humanity – in war, pestilence, and upheaval – has faced the unthinkable. While history holds disasters and malevolence, it also shows us how generations have struggled, overcome, and enriched humanity even in crisis.

Like so many of you, I have found myself thrust into a wealth of solitude, away from the society of family, friends, and colleagues. Instead of becoming despondent, I urge you to use this enforced isolation to confront yourself, to consider your faults, your hopes, and your work – to relearn how to live a well-examined life.

In the light of history's catastrophes, this coronavirus pandemic stands out as singularly different. The fact that we have all voluntarily withdrawn to our homes is a great tribute to our democracy. We are facing incredible hardships, but we are not robbing each other of our humanity and dignity. We are not being dragged from our homes by force or being held in a police state or concentration camp. We are fortunate that we can communicate without harming each other. Technology has given us a gift that we didn't fully anticipate – it is remarkable that we can be in solitude and yet be in immediate communication around the world.

When I look at the world today, gripped by a health crisis of global scale, I see people sacrificing their own interests to bring about a better, safer, and healthier world. I am reminded of Andrew Carnegie's words when he established his Hero Fund in 1904, that there is "no action more heroic than that of doctors and nurses volunteering their services in the case of epidemics." Today, all around us, we see the Herculean efforts of so many exceptional individuals and organizations as they respond to COVID-19 with selflessness, dedication, and urgency.

In this Faustian age, it is important to fight cynicism. Healthy skepticism is indispensable. But this is no time to be a cynic. First you must strive to be an idealist, to look for solutions, work for good, and look for the good. After that, but not before, you can be a cynic if you want to be.

To all of my friends, colleagues, neighbors, and loved ones around the world, I offer this: when your back is against the wall and you want to flee, remember that you have all of history behind you. You are not alone. When you are confined beyond your endurance, consider how generations before you have coped with adversity. In these days, we have been given the luxury of time. We have the ability to assess, reinvent, and emerge as new — and better — than before. Humanity's past reminds us that this is possible.

We are each other's keepers. That is one of the things I am very encouraged to see. I would like for us to see — for a change, not as cynics, but as human beings — to see what is good in us. What is good in other people. What ties us together. There are many ties — not merely money, position, glory, and others.

Let us take this time to consider where we stand in the universe, and in life. Let us consider and reassess our ambitions and how each of us will leave this world a better place.

For those who ask me how I am coping, my answer is simple: I love my solitude, which may surprise you. One of the benefits of my "self-incarceration" is being with my 2,500 or so books and hundreds of records of different orchestras, pianists, singers, and wizards of other instruments. When I get very tired, I play Beethoven. When I feel sorry for myself, I play Edith Piaf's "I Regret Nothing." ... When I want to be inspired, I listen to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. I also have the complete liturgy of my Armenian church, where I was a choir boy. I know the Sunday service by heart, which reminds me of my childhood.

I have had moments of reflection, reexamined my priorities, and appreciated the beauty of music and poetry. Thanks to the telephone, I have kept up with all of my current and former friends, and there has been time to meditate and to review objectives and friendships.

I wish you good health, and if you get bored, write about your childhood — for yourself, not for anybody. You'll be so pleased to see so many things you have forgotten about your childhood. Spend some time with yourself. Discover all the good traits you have, the good dreams you have. Some of them you have not accomplished, some of them you have accomplished. Make peace with yourself for a change. And love thy neighbor, thy relatives, thy children, and others. ■

> For him, it was always about connecting the dots between and among people, and he was a master at that.

young people socioemotionally, academically, on every level — and it was a terrible environment for educators as well. So he took a lead role around opening new small schools.

We knew early childhood education was important, but we also thought we could do things for secondary schools that would better prepare young people for college *and* for careers. By reducing the size of the schools, teachers could have a more positive influence on students and prepare them better. What's going on now, the focus on preparing kids for *both* college and careers, is not that different. It's just recognizing that young people might not all graduate from high school prepared to go to college. Other pathways can still bring them back to higher education, but it may not be as linear as we once thought.

HE LOVED NEW YORK — AND BEING AN AMERICAN

Widmer: So in 2001, of course, you have one of the most devastating events in the history of New York. Gregorian was prescient, talking about Islam in annual reports before 9/11. How did his background prepare him for 9/11?

D'Onofrio: I think growing up in Iran and being discriminated against had a lot to do with his reaction. He saw that Americans knew very little about Islam or Muslim communities, so he tried to level the ground a little by educating and getting their story out.

> VG really listened to people and actually valued their opinions, especially people who weren't at all from the elite. He wanted those views to be addressed by our solutions.
>
> – **LaVerne Evans Srinivasan**, Vice President, National Program, and Program Director, Education

Mannion: He was really concerned before 9/11 that the Muslim population in the U.S. was growing and people needed to know about Islam, so he was one of the very first to put real money and time and scholarship around that. He worried, as Jeanne said, that Americans just didn't know much about the more than one billion Muslims around the world — who come from very different backgrounds, different countries, different cultural experiences. He thought the lack of understanding would have rippling effects for decades, for centuries to come if we didn't tackle it correctly.

Then, he was incredibly personally affected by 9/11 because he loved New York so much. I think that was why he was so responsive immediately.

Srinivasan: Sometimes he'd get frustrated that Americans take too monolithic an approach to issues they're passionate about, that they don't consider all the potential perspectives. Or they are careless about their language. He chose every set of words very carefully, and he was proud of that.

Arsenian: Immigrants often come from cultures that are older, more historically oriented, more self-reflective, so they look at the world through different eyes. America is just so naive, and that's really the strength of America.

> He wouldn't say, "I'm running this. Come on board." He'd say, "You're working with me, you're my partner on this. I need you at the summit, I need you here."

Widmer: Maybe that helps explain why he felt close to Andrew Carnegie — his experience as an immigrant, even though from a different part of the world.

Arsenian: Well, he and I were coming up from Washington, D.C., on Amtrak about a year before he died, and we came into Penn Station late at night, and it's a total zoo, and I'm like, "Oh, my God, I hate this." He says, "You must be kidding. It's the city. I love it!"

D'Onofrio: Of course, he didn't like folks to get dual citizenships. He said either you're an American or you're not.

Mannion: Yes, we had a tussle about that. So when I got my own dual citizenship with Ireland, I said to him, "Look, I'm a dual citizen. What does it matter?" But he wanted people to choose like he did, affirming his faith in America. He felt people should have one country, not dual loyalties.

CHOOSING HIS WORDS CAREFULLY, MOVING IDEAS INTO ACTION

D'Onofrio: Nobody could say "no" to him. Since his death, anybody — whether colleagues or Mayor Bloomberg or whoever — that's what they say. He could move an idea into action because he could pick up the phone and make it happen. He wouldn't say, "I'm running this. Come on board." He'd say, "You're working with me; you're my partner on this. I need you at the summit. I need you here." You just could not say "no" to that.

Arsenian: And remember the I Love My Librarian campaign? It was a major program in Africa, and now it's in the U.S. He loved Andrew Carnegie's library legacy, and he built on that. He made connections for people with memories of talking to their local librarian and checking out that first book. He got the *New York Times* involved, and that was huge.

Widmer: So how about his personality?

Arsenian: He never wore a hat. We were in Moscow in December, freezing, and we're walking someplace, and I'm like, "Can you please put a hat on?" And he refused. Even though nobody would ever recognize him — it's Moscow — he was adamant about a particular look: "I'm tough, I'm healthy, I can walk fast, this is how I grew up, and no, I'm not going to wear a hat, no matter what." That was part of his character.

Mannion: He was very politically savvy, and for years I never really knew his politics. He told a story where he was at a dinner and trying to raise money from the guy next to him. The guy says, "What do you think about George H. W. Bush running for president?" And Vartan thinks, "Oh my God, I can't say yes; I can't say no." So he finally says, "Well, he's no Reagan." And the guy says, "You're absolutely right."

Srinivasan: Yes, that's what I meant by choosing his words. He went to a concert once that he didn't enjoy, and when someone said they liked it, he said, "Yes, that was really something."

HE SPEAKS TO US STILL

Mannion: He was unbelievably generous. I would walk into his office, and he'd be writing check after check. Every person who wrote to him and he couldn't make a grant, he'd send them a personal check. Also, he was great to his staff, always picking up the lunch check, or he'd send us flowers — every Valentine's Day, even for the guys. He always said his wife, Clare, never knew about his flower bill.

D'Onofrio: And he never used the corporate credit card — it was always out of his own pocket. One time we were going somewhere overseas, and he said, "You're coming first class on British Air with me, and I'm paying for your ticket." That was incredibly generous right there. Then, on the plane, Tom Brokaw was in first class with us. So it was VG at the window, then me, then the aisle, and then Tom Brokaw. I said, "Do you want me to change seats?" because they were talking; they know each other. He said, "No, don't ever say that again. You are my guest and my friend. Tom is my friend too and we will spend time together another time."

And the entire trip, he was ripping newspaper articles out. I couldn't close my eyes for a second because he would rip one out and tap my shoulder and say, "This is for Geri." Rip another one out: "For Deana." All the way. I came back with a suitcase full of newspaper clippings.

Arsenian: On the way back from Armenia once — a very long flight — he's doing the same thing, ripping the papers, and I said, "I don't want to deal with you anymore; you should watch this movie."

Mannion: He loved American movies. I think he learned English by going to the movies when he came to America. He loved Danny Kaye, *The Inspector General*. He could act out the scene about the bureau — remember he would do that, with the hands?

D'Onofrio: He loved what he called cowboy movies, not Westerns. And he loved *Cinema Paradiso*. He said he was Totò — "That's my town, that's me." Then there was *Gabriel Over the White House*. He'd say, "You have to watch this movie!" I never did, but I guess I will someday now.

I'm really going to miss watching world events on my computer with him in the mornings. He'd say, "What are you watching? Put the news on." He'd always give me more context, encouraging me to learn more and to get my degrees.

Widmer: He's so alive still for all of us. Is he still speaking to you?

Srinivasan: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

D'Onofrio: He's in my dreams.

Arsenian: Every grant recommendation, every decision I make, at least for now, I'm following his advice. ■

IN HIS OWN WORDS

A selection of memorable passages from Vartan Gregorian's speeches, essays, articles, and other writings

Vartan Gregorian had a way with words and an ability to inspire everyone — from new citizens and students to politicians, tycoons, movie stars, taxi drivers, grandmothers, and doormen. He was generous in sharing his wit and understanding with people from every walk of life. In the words of George Clooney, honorary cochair of the Aurora Prize Selection Committee, an award that Gregorian cofounded, "Vartan is the best, truly, the best of us. He's who I want to grow up and be." And upon hearing of his death, Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) tweeted, "Vartan Gregorian made my grandma feel like the most important woman in the world at my college graduation. I'll never forget that, and nor did she. The world did, indeed, lose a great man."

Inside Philanthropy magazine described him as the "foundation president we'll miss the most" in 2021, citing Gregorian as "an all-too-rare kind of foundation president: a public intellectual and true 'citizen of the world' who believed in the power of ideas." We could not have said it better ourselves — and we invite you to read the following excerpts from his speeches, essays, and other writings, which capture not only Gregorian's inimitable voice but also his expansive sense of humanity, his optimistic but clear-eyed ambitions for our society, and his unshakeable faith in democracy, education, and America.

ON DEMOCRACY & AMERICA

CREDIT: SDI PRODUCTIONS/GETTY IMAGES

We know America is not perfect, but we see it as perfectible. For us, America is not just a past; it is also a future. It is not just an actuality — it is always a potentiality. America's greatness lies in the fact that all its citizens, both new and old, have an opportunity to work for that potentiality, for its unfinished agenda.

Individual fulfillment is not the equivalent of the fulfillment of a society's aspirations. This is especially true of a democratic society such as ours where "We the people" is not just a lofty metaphor that begins the text of our Constitution but the first lines of an operating manual for a system meant to benefit citizens across all the race, class, economic, gender, and ethnic strata of our society.

Martin Luther King, Jr., stressed our moral obligations to our fellow men and women, both as citizens of our country and members of the human race. His influence, which was immensely important in rekindling America's sense of decency, opportunity, and equality, reached far and wide. Among those who echoed King's ideas was Reverend James Bevel, who gave a sermon in 1962 in the small town of Ruleville, Mississippi, in which he urged African Americans to register to vote. His words were heard — and taken to heart — by Fannie Lou Hamer, a Mississippi sharecropper, who was the first person in her town to respond to Bevel's call to action even though registering to vote was a dangerous thing for a Black person to do at that time in the deep South. As a result, she lost her job, was harassed by the police and savagely beaten, but that didn't stop her from devoting the rest of her life to grassroots civil rights activism. Her courage and determination drew national attention, thus helping to change Americans' understanding of how an individual can serve democracy and contribute to change that benefits all. Why did she do all this? Because, she said, "Nobody's free until everybody's free."

America has become a microcosm of humanity, where religious and, more recently, ethnic diversity have added much to the strength of our democracy. Yes, there has been discrimination, on an individual, institutional, and at times, even national level — against immigrants, against different minorities, ethnic groups, nationalities, and followers of various religions. I refer not only to Native Americans, African Americans, and Asians but also to women, to the Irish, to Catholics, Jews, and many others as well. Nevertheless, throughout all these troubled times, our Constitution has remained the bedrock of our nation, and its resiliency has provided for the gradual elimination of barrier after barrier to full participation in our national life. ■

ON CITIZENSHIP

CREDIT: SDI PRODUCTIONS/GETTY IMAGES

As citizens of this country we can — and we must — participate in the work of our democracy. That means undertaking a myriad of small actions, most of which do not take place on Election Day. Read, learn, listen to others, help your neighbors, speak out against injustice, and vote! Study our nation's glorious past as well as its trials, tribulations, and tragedies. By doing so, you fulfill your rights and obligations as citizens.

When the Scottish-born Andrew Carnegie, in his 1889 *Gospel of Wealth*, expressed the bold notion that the rich have a moral obligation to give away their fortunes, he did so as an American citizen, writing in an American context, as an immigrant who had grown wealthy in his adopted nation and not only believed it was his duty to pay back his country but welcomed the chance to do so.

At a time when the U.S. faces many challenges at home and abroad, and there is seeming disillusionment with many of our institutions and policies, cynicism has become a corrosive force in our society. But as Americans, one of the greatest antidotes we have to any pessimism we may hold about our individual or collective future is our citizens' deep commitment to volunteerism. There is nothing cynical or shallow about offering to lend a hand.

Above all else, a volunteer is the very definition of a good ancestor, a human who not only acknowledges but celebrates his or her humanity and who sees what to others may be invisible: the bonds that tie us together across the globe and through the centuries. We need many more people to volunteer to be good ancestors.

Our task, as members of a society and a nation — and, along with the rest of humanity, as fellow stewards of our one world — is to create a future in which we can all dwell in peace, and live safer, healthier, more fulfilling lives. ■

ON HISTORY

CREDIT: BEINECKE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

From the paintings of Lascaux to the clay tablets of Babylon — even to the computers of the modern library — stretch thousands of years of man's and woman's insatiable desire not only to establish some form of immortality for themselves and their kind but also to ensure the continuity of their line; to share their memories, their wisdom, their strivings, their fantasies, their longings, and their experiences with mankind and with future generations.

We cannot and must not lose our sense of history, our memory, and our identity. We cannot become prisoners of the present and wander out of history. For a society without a deep historical memory, the future ceases to exist and the present becomes a meaningless cacophony. Further, we should remind ourselves that the struggle for history is the struggle for a free and educated citizenry and it is a struggle *against* spiritual polarization.

If we teach it with skill, study it with objectivity, listen when it speaks to us, and learn to truly understand what it has to say, then history will come to us cloaked in hope. As David McCullough has said, "I'm convinced that history encourages, as nothing else does, a sense of proportion about life, gives us a sense of how brief is our time on earth and thus how valuable that time is."

In dictatorships, if there is no history, then everything is controllable. Totalitarian and authoritarian states have all too often used specious renderings of history to legitimize their rule and control their societies, doling out their version of history in the form of catechism that does not allow for the freedom to test ideas or to separate fact from fiction, lies from the truth. Under such a system the ideal, of course, would be to completely outlaw any critical analysis of history, but since this is not possible, we have seen that propaganda is often used as a virus sent to infect history with its own poison and its lies. ■

> We need many more people to volunteer to be good ancestors.

ON KNOWLEDGE

CREDIT: COURTESY GLADSTONE'S LIBRARY

From Bacon to Einstein and on, scientists, philosophers, and theologians have been cognizant of a "twin" issue, the place of faith and religion and their relationship to science and to reason. Over the centuries, while there has been a continuous and rigorous pursuit of scientific research and concurrent breakthroughs in science and technology, many have felt compelled to ask the question that progress always poses: *To what end*? Is existence solely about the welfare of humanity in the here and now? Or is there some transcendent purpose to life beyond mere utility and earthly comfort? Are we accidental objects or part of some great design? These questions have been with us for millennia and will probably never go away.

One of the greatest challenges facing our society and contemporary civilization is how to distinguish between information — which may be true, false, or some tangled combination of both — and real knowledge. And further, how to transform knowledge into the indispensable nourishment of the human mind: genuine wisdom. As T. S. Eliot said, "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

Today's universities — along with our colleges, libraries, learned societies, and our scholars — have a great responsibility to help provide an answer to Eliot's questions. More than ever, these institutions and individuals have a fundamental historical and social role to play in ensuring that as a society, we provide not just *training* but education, and not just *education* but culture as well. And that we teach students how to distill the bottomless cornucopia of information that is ceaselessly spilled out before them twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, into knowledge that is relevant, useful, and reliable and that will enrich both their personal and professional lives.

Teaching and learning must recognize the sweep of our culture, its problems, its solutions, and the failures that mark our society's history. Education must enrich our understanding of the limitations, the possibilities, and the premises of our notion of progress, and of our culture and civilization, which believe in the value of the past, the worth of economic and technological growth, reason, and the intrinsic importance — the ineffable worth — of life on this earth. That kind of knowledge is critical to understanding who and what we are because of our past and where we are headed in the future. And deep, rich, knowledge-based education is also, certainly, what students deserve — and should expect — from all of us. ■

ON EDUCATION

CREDIT: MASKOT/GETTY IMAGES

When I was president of Brown University, I used to welcome and bid farewell to students by reminding them of a wise saying, namely, "The number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed!"

If we believe, as the great education reformer Horace Mann did, that "education is the engine of democracy," then the strength and progress of both American society and our democracy depend on our ability to mobilize around this work, with clear goals and great determination.

As a society, we must commit ourselves to the reality that *all* students can achieve at high levels in math and science, that we need them to do so for their own futures and for the future of our country, and that we owe it to them to structure and staff our educational system accordingly.

A university is a center of debate and discussion about every conceivable issue that may come up in the classroom, from racism, to immigration, to ethics, to civil rights, to religion, to secularism, to the validity of scientific theories, to war and peace, nationalism and internationalism, and everything in-between. In the midst of all this, it would be naive to think that tensions could be avoided, or that conflicts were an aberration. By their very nature, universities thrive on the energy of ideas, theories, and notions rubbing up against and challenging each other, and the fact that the university environment encourages students and faculty to pursue these different ideas and different pathways is something to be celebrated, to be grateful for.

Freedom of speech, academic freedom, cannot be rationed. It cannot be dispensed piecemeal. Rather, it is a single entity that belongs to all. The hallmark of a university must not be the presence of a little bit of intellectual freedom — not freedom just behind closed doors, not freedom just for liberals, or just for conservatives or just for radicals, or just the exclusive domain of organized groups.... We know that tolerance of others' ideas does not mean agreement. You can express your views, and I can express mine. I can criticize your views, and you can criticize mine. This kind of intellectual tolerance permits the exploration of new knowledge and the discovery of new truths — which, as we know, are often born as heresies. By protecting free speech and academic freedom we are safeguarding an essential process for pursuing new truths and new knowledge. ■

ON LIBRARIES

Vartan Gregorian at the New York Public Library in 1983, where he served as president from 1981 to 1989. CREDIT: ARNOLD NEWMAN PROPERTIES/GETTY IMAGES

The free library is, in the words of Andrew Carnegie, "the cradle of democracy," and he backed up that belief by building 1,681 public libraries in nearly as many American communities and another 828 libraries abroad. I should mention that my fellow educators — librarians, information scientists, and all communicators of culture and creators of knowledge — continue to rock this cradle of democracy, even as it moves into cyberspace.

Libraries contain the heritage of humanity, the record of its triumphs and failures, its intellectual, scientific, and artistic achievements, and its collective memory. They are a source of knowledge, scholarship, and wisdom. They are an institution, withal, where the left and the right, God and the Devil, are together classified and retained, in order to teach us what to emulate and what not to repeat.

As someone who has had the opportunity to live in different countries and different cultures, I know how extensive the cultural divide between different peoples can seem, how exotic differing beliefs and customs can appear to be, so it seems to me that knowledge about the world, both its tangible qualities and ephemeral mysteries, and about each other — about our glories and our follies — is the only way to narrow the great gulfs that divide us. The place where we can all find that knowledge is in books and in libraries as well as in the new technologies that enhance our ability to share the precious "knowledge and understanding" that Andrew Carnegie believed in so deeply and sincerely.

Reading and the love of libraries and books has to begin in the earliest stages of education. School libraries constitute an indispensable introduction to literacy and learning about the world and the universe. They are pathways to self-discovery. They are tools for progress and autonomy.

The library constitutes an act of faith in the continuity of life. The library is not, therefore, an ossified institution or a historical relic. Together with the museum, the library is the DNA of our culture. Libraries are the mirror held up to the face of humankind, the diary and textbook of the human race. ■

ON PHILANTHROPY

CREDIT: KLAUS VEDFELT/GETTY IMAGES

Foundations should stand for the best ideas and impulses of the American people, their idealism, altruism, and generosity. Because of this, their values, and how they conduct themselves, must be higher than the prevailing standards. We are accountable not only before the law and the court of public opinion, but before history, as well.

What also ties together libraries, universities, and philanthropic organizations is their faith in the future and their common goal of educating our citizens and serving both our democracy and its institutions. They also believe in the power of private-sector philanthropy as an important form of participatory democracy — in fact, as one of the foundations of our society.

As Andrew Carnegie pointed out, as citizens, we have an obligation "to do real and permanent good in this world," which is also what he hoped to do — and wanted the Corporation to do — in carrying out his philanthropy. Sometimes, for both people and institutions, such efforts require taking stock, aligning our goals with our resources, and reinventing ourselves. Libraries and universities are in a continual state of refining and reimagining their work, which is part of what keeps them so vital. So are philanthropic organizations.

Trial and error are at the heart of science, and the courage to be honest, analytical — and scientific — about our work must be at the heart of philanthropy, as well. ■

“

Trial and error are at the heart of science, and the courage to be honest, analytical – and scientific – about our work must be at the heart of philanthropy, as well.

Vartan Gregorian experimenting with virtual reality goggles in 2016. CREDIT: NATALIE HOLT

It is important not only to be open, always, to new ideas, to welcome new concepts and challenges, but also to have the courage to make public declarations of your commitments and convictions — and the confidence to translate these into words and deeds.

Be aware of those forces in society that will attempt to reduce you to mere socioeconomic or entertainment units, born and destined to be relentless consumers. Remind yourselves that you are, instead, rational, social, and spiritual beings.

In all of human history, there has not existed, nor will there ever exist, a single other man or woman who was, or is, *exactly* like you. But with this uniqueness comes the obligation to use your special gifts — *your* mind, *your* ideas, *your* skills, *your* abilities, *your* time, and *your* life in a way that will help you to decide if you are to be of any consequence to our society, to humanity, or not.

Please, please, do not become victims of cynicism and nihilism, nor passive adherents of political correctness. For it trivializes, marginalizes, and ignores our society's real issues and challenges — including poverty, racism, sexism, discrimination, and injustice. The use of the right lingo and jargon is not a substitute for thorough analysis, sound public policy, and passionate commitment to social change.

Much of life is about the routine, not the extraordinary, but do not let the routine distract you from your pursuit of the exceptional. Throughout history, artists, poets, theologians, and philosophers have borne witness to the fact that the routine and the ordinary can all too often capture your attention and draw your eye — and your heart — away from the big picture. So don't forget to keep focused on that big picture, on what role you want to play in the great human drama. Remember that you are not mere actualities. You were born as potentialities. *Dare* to be and *dare* to know. ■

“

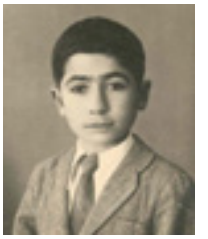
It was my grandmother who instructed me in the first moral lessons of life and the ‘right way.’ She was the best example of what good character means. Among the many things she taught us between the ages of seven and fifteen was that earthly belongings are ephemeral, as are, unfortunately, vigor and beauty. What endures are good deeds and reputation, one’s name, one’s dignity. For her, dignity embodied the true character of the individual. It was not love of the self; it was appreciation of one’s true values, the essence of one’s humanity, one’s enduring qualities and values. She admonished us to properly guard our dignity and our honor, for they were not negotiable commodities. You are not known by what you eat, she told me, but who you are. No one will investigate the contents of your stomach, but they will scrutinize the content of your character. ‘Be proud, but not arrogant,’ she said. ‘Be polite, but not overbearing. Be self-sufficient: self-sufficient and self-confident people don’t need to be jealous.’

Vartan Gregorian, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (2003)

What a Life: Vartan Gregorian's Remarkable Achievement

The breadth and depth of his accomplishments truly astonish — from a boy in Tabriz, Iran, who loved books with a passion, to recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Often described as a "citizen of the world," Vartan Gregorian was born to Armenian parents in Tabriz, Iran, a city he described in his autobiography, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (2003), as "at the crossroads of expanding or contending empires and rival kingdoms." His mother died of pneumonia when he was six. His father was largely absent, and Gregorian and his younger sister were raised by their illiterate maternal grandmother. He attended elementary school in Tabriz and spent many hours in the Armenian library, a place of peace and solitude where he developed his deep love of reading as well as his concept of the library as a sacred space and repository of the world's memories. He received his secondary education at the Collège Arménien in Beirut, Lebanon, overcoming many obstacles, including his father's great reluctance, in order to leave Iran. In Beirut he added French and some English to the five languages in which he was proficient (Armenian, Persian, Russian, Turkish, and Arabic).



Vartan Gregorian at age 11. COURTESY OF THE GREGORIAN FAMILY

In 1956 Gregorian moved to California to attend Stanford University. At the urging of his advisor, he majored in history and the humanities, graduating with honors two years later. He was awarded a PhD from Stanford in 1964. Years later, when celebrating the university's centennial, he gave a speech saying, "At Stanford I learned a fundamental lesson: that we cannot and must not lose our sense of history and our memory for they constitute our identity. We cannot be prisoners of the present and wander out of history. For a society without a deep historical memory, the future ceases to exist and the present becomes a meaningless cacophony."

Vartan Gregorian in his office at Carnegie Corporation of New York, January 10, 2005.

Gregorian's PhD thesis topic was traditionalism and modernism in Afghanistan. Although he had expected to return to Beirut to teach high school, he received a Ford Foundation Foreign Area Training Fellowship, which changed Gregorian's career plans by underwriting his research trip to Afghanistan. This research also formed the basis of his first book, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880–1946,* which traces the evolution of the modern Afghan state through the politics of reform and modernization. To many scholars, the book is as unique today as when it was first published. It remains the only broad work on Afghan history that considers ethnicity rather than religion as the defining influence over the course of the country's history.

Gregorian had a distinguished teaching career: he taught European and Middle Eastern history at San Francisco State University, the University of California at Los Angeles, and the University of Texas at Austin. In 1968, Gregorian became one of 10 faculty members in the nation awarded a $10,000 tax-free E. H. Harbison Distinguished Teaching Award from the Danforth Foundation, which, combined with the imminent publication of his book, led to his recruitment by the University of Texas. There, Gregorian also assumed his first administrative position as director of special programs of the College of Arts and Sciences.

In 1972 he moved from Texas to the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania to become Tarzian Professor of History and professor of South Asian history. He was appointed the founding dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1974, where he met the critical challenge of consolidating the university's five autonomous organizational units, with their separate administrative degree requirements and goals, into an organic, intellectual core of the university. During this period, Gregorian developed his talents for recruitment and fundraising — work he found unexpectedly fulfilling. Four years later he became the twenty-third provost of the university, responsible for guiding its overall educational mission, a post he held until 1981.

It was during his tenure at Penn that Gregorian applied to become a United States citizen. At the official ceremony, he was asked to deliver remarks on behalf of the newly naturalized citizens who had just taken the oath. His speech expressed Gregorian's commitment to his adopted country: "Like many other immigrant forefathers of ours, we have come not only to enjoy the benefits of America but to contribute to its development, to its growth as well as to its welfare. We have come to contribute to the achievement of what is left undone or unfinished in the agenda of American democracy. We have come to contribute to that perfect union."

Vartan Gregorian, then president of the New York Public Library (NYPL), accompanies Coretta Scott King (LEFT) and Rosa Parks (RIGHT) to the opening of a 1986 exhibition of memorabilia of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, an NYPL research library that the Corporation helped to establish with a grant in 1926. CREDIT: ROBERT ABBOTT SENGSTACKE/GETTY IMAGES

Gregorian's next position, from 1981 to 1989, was president and chief executive officer of the New York Public Library, a role that made him well known throughout New York City and the nation at large. An institution with a network of four research libraries and 83 circulating libraries serving every sector of society, its main branch at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street, popularly known as "The People's Palace," was a city treasure as well as a national and international institution of great distinction. Gregorian was proud to be the first head of the library not born in the United States. When he assumed the presidency, the institution was in crisis: its funding had dried up, the main building was in severe disrepair, and its hours of operation had been cut back. Gregorian reached out to the city's political and philanthropic communities and, according to Librarian of Congress James H. Billington, "enticed, inveigled, and corralled the State of New York and New York Public Library to provide the model of how you could revive a great institution." In all, Gregorian raised $327 million in a public-private partnership, allowing the library to become once again the intellectual, scholarly, and cultural repository for the nation.

Having achieved his goals for the library, in 1989 Gregorian was eager to return to academia and accepted the presidency of Brown University. Once again, he would be leading a financially stressed institution, but it was a challenge he was ready to tackle. At Brown, Gregorian nurtured an environment dedicated to inquiry and the liberal arts and the understanding of other people, customs, beliefs, and ways of looking at life. At the same time, he ran a successful capital campaign that doubled the university's endowment, raising over $500 million, and brought in 275 new faculty members, including 72 new professors. Gregorian left behind a flourishing campus and academic community when he returned to New York City in 1997 to become president of Carnegie Corporation of New York.

> My first teacher was my Armenian grandmother, an illiterate peasant yet wise disciplinarian, who raised me in Tabriz, Iran, where I was born. She instructed me in the moral lessons of life and the 'right way' through her sheer character, stoic tenacity, formidable dignity, individuality, and utter integrity.

Vartan Gregorian, "Teachers Create the Future of America," *Carnegie Reporter*, Spring 2021

Andrew Carnegie established Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1911 to "promote the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding." It was the first organization to apply what the founder called the principles of "scientific philanthropy" — meaning investing for the long term in the issues he cared about most, including education and international peace. Gregorian, having served at the helm of other nonprofit organizations, was no stranger to American philanthropy. Still, he often remarked that his years as the leader of Carnegie Corporation greatly widened his perspective about the impact and importance of philanthropy as practiced by institutions such as foundations as well as by private citizens, rich and poor, noting that "the societal benefits of all this philanthropy are beyond measure."

Gregorian viewed foundations as stewards of public trusts and stressed the need for philanthropies to be transparent, or have "glass pockets." Under his leadership, the foundation's grantmaking continued its mission of addressing contemporary problems with cutting-edge strategies that drew strength from deep knowledge and scholarship. When he joined the Corporation, Gregorian led an in-depth review of the scope and effectiveness of its grantmaking that resulted in a new focus on working with partner foundations and greater emphasis on the evaluation and dissemination of programmatic work. Ten years later, the review process was repeated, yielding the additional goals of sharpening the focus of grantmaking and building on the Corporation's strength as an incubator of innovative ideas and transformative scholarship.

Gregorian's influence could be traced across all the Corporation's program work, national and international. For example, early in his tenure, the foundation embarked on an ambitious program to strengthen higher education in the former Soviet Union, concentrating on the humanities and the social sciences — fields that would be essential to the societal transformations underway — rejuvenating scholarship in the newly independent states and establishing university centers for interdisciplinary area studies, network building, and promoting scholarly communication. The goal was nothing less than the reinvigoration of the post-Communist Russian university system as an underpinning for the nation's social and intellectual future. The intent was not only to benefit the emerging democracy in Russia but to help shore up stability in the region, which would benefit international peace.

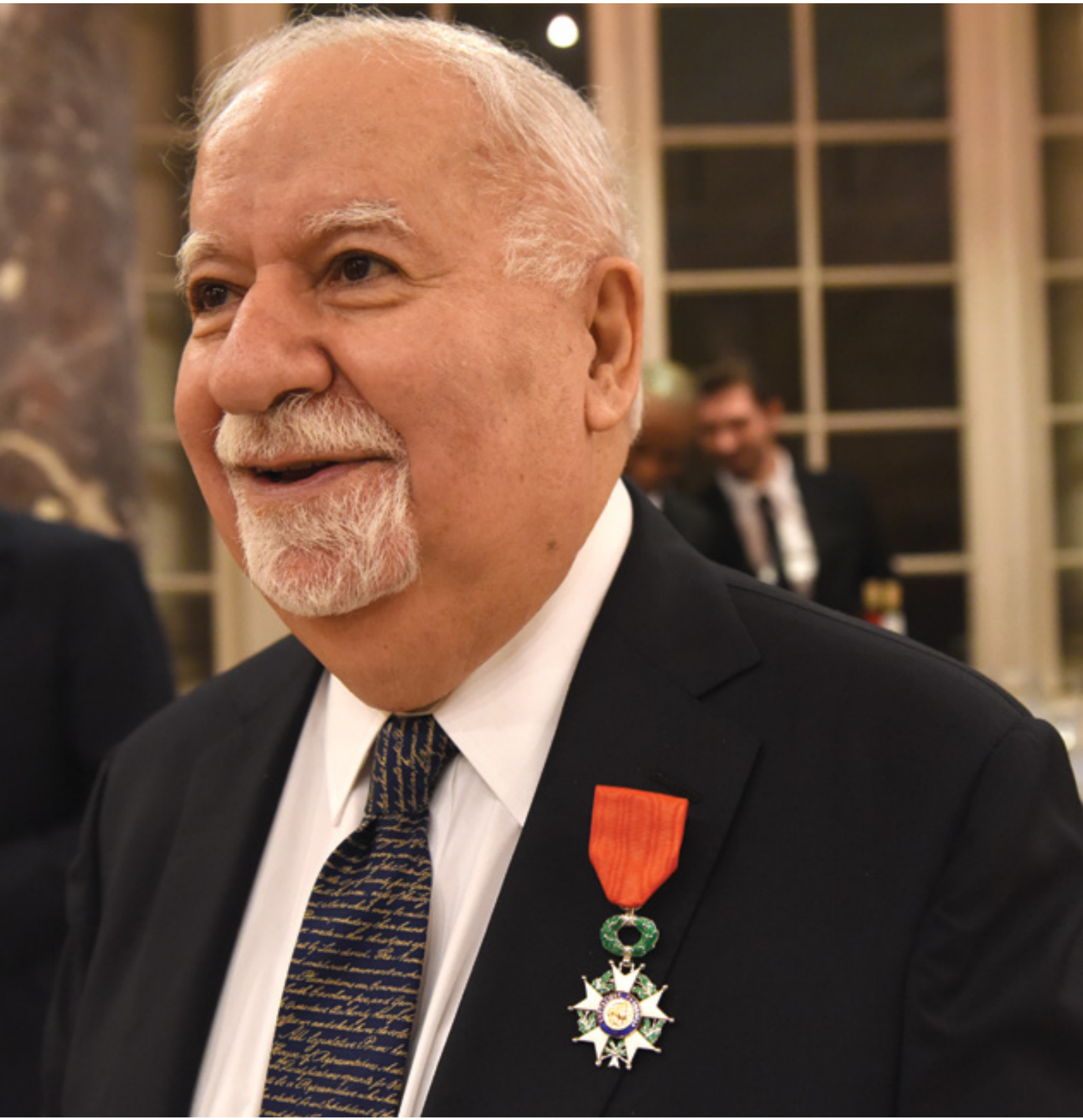
The state of American education was also his priority. Early in Gregorian's tenure, the Corporation's domestic grantmaking included new initiatives aimed at improving teacher education, advancing adolescent literacy, and meeting the most significant challenges facing large urban high schools. As it became clear that the U.S. was losing its competitive advantage because students were insufficiently prepared in science, technology, engineering, and math fields, the Corporation joined with the Institute for Advanced Study to create a commission, comprised of some of the nation's most distinguished mathematicians, scientists, educators, scholars, business leaders, and public officials, to determine the best ways to enhance the capacity of schools and universities to generate innovative strategies across all fields that would increase access to high-quality education for every student in every classroom.

> "The more I read, the more I had to read. One book led to another, one author led to another, one subject led to another. Reading became a compulsion for me.
>
> **Vartan Gregorian**, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (2003)

In response to trends of democratization and reform in a growing number of African countries, Gregorian partnered Carnegie Corporation of New York with the Ford, Hewlett, Kresge, MacArthur, Mellon, and Rockefeller foundations to form what became known as the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA). The foundations believed Africa's future rested with the development of its intellectual capital through strong higher education systems, not just with the development of basic education. Altogether, the PHEA grants to nine countries totaled $440 million over 10 years, improving conditions for 4.1 million African students enrolled at 379 universities and colleges.

When Gregorian joined the Corporation, its Strengthening U.S. Democracy program was already in existence, but in keeping with the foundation's tradition of responding to the country's most pressing needs, it grew under Gregorian's leadership, adding a mandate to develop programs advancing immigrant naturalization and civic integration. He instituted the Carnegie Scholars program, an initiative that was especially near to his heart, to support innovative and pathbreaking public scholarship that would extend the boundaries of the Corporation's grantmaking; it eventually came to focus exclusively on Islam and the modern world. Gregorian also found a way to bring together several themes that infused the Corporation's work — education, civics, journalism, and collaboration with peer foundations — through the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education to improve journalism education in the United States. He also found new ways to work collaboratively with the more than 20 sister organizations established by Andrew Carnegie. For example, he inaugurated the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in 2001, which honors philanthropists from all over the world, chosen by the Carnegie organizations, who have dedicated their private wealth to the public good.

In 2013, Vartan Gregorian visited his namesake public elementary school in Providence, Rhode Island, where he lived while serving as the 16th president of Brown University from 1989 to 1997. CREDIT: THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL



Vartan Gregorian was awarded the medal of Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor at a ceremony at the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York City on February 9, 2017. CREDIT: JENNIFER ALTMAN

> You never graduate from your life and hence, you never really graduate from learning. One's 'formal' education is really just an introduction to learning where the skills to go on educating oneself are acquired and inculcated into everyday life — because learning is a lifelong endeavor.

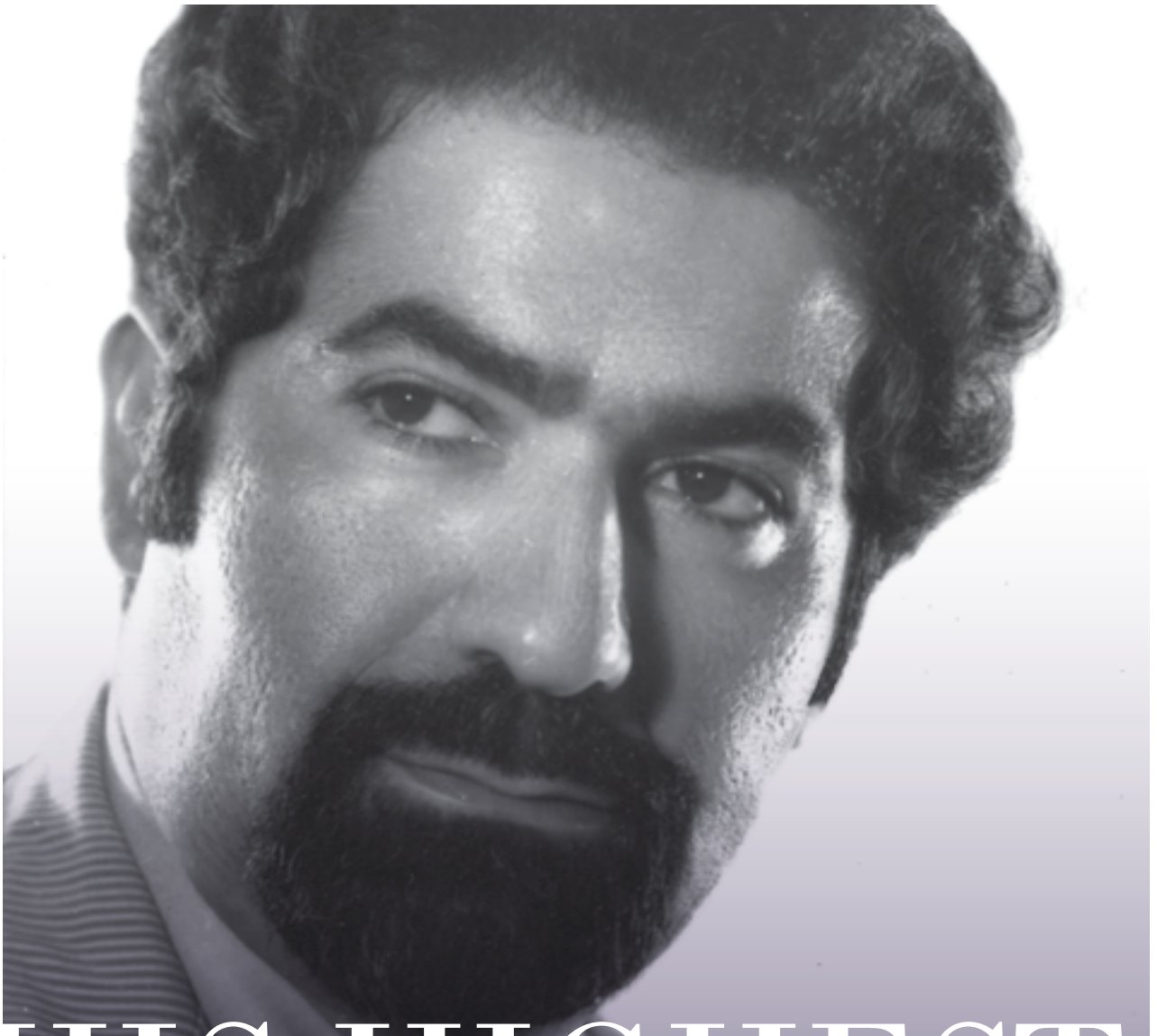
Vartan Gregorian, Remarks at the University of Tokyo President's Council Meeting, June 8, 2010

President George W. Bush awarded Gregorian the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004, the nation's highest civilian award. In 1998 President Clinton awarded him the National Humanities Medal, and President Obama appointed him to the President's Commission on White House Fellowships in 2009. He received the Council on Foundations' Distinguished Service Award, the Aspen Institute's Henry Crown Leadership Award, and the Africa-America Institute Award for Leadership in Higher Education Philanthropy. He was awarded the Ellis Island Medal of Honor and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters' Award for Distinguished Service to the Arts. In 2017, Gregorian was awarded France's medal of Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor in recognition of his efforts to strengthen U.S.-France relations. The president of the Republic of Armenia bestowed upon him the Order of Honor as a thank you for Gregorian's service to the country.

In addition, Gregorian was decorated by the French, Italian, Austrian, and Portuguese governments. He received scores of honorary degrees and was honored by countless cultural and professional associations. Gregorian also served on numerous boards: the National September 11 Memorial & Museum, the American Academy in Berlin, the J. Paul Getty Trust, Aga Khan University, the Qatar Foundation, the McGraw-Hill Companies, Brandeis University, Human Rights Watch, The Museum of Modern Art, the Library of Alexandria, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and others. In 2015 Gregorian cofounded the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, which was created on behalf of survivors of the Armenian genocide and seeks to address some of the world's most pressing issues. It administers the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, for which Gregorian served on the selection committee.

In addition to his autobiography, Gregorian was the author of *Islam: A Mosaic, Not A Monolith* (2003) and *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880–1946* (1969). He was a recipient of numerous fellowships, including those from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Social Science Research Council, and the American Philosophical Society. He was a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society.

Gregorian died on April 15, 2021, in New York City at age 87. Predeceased by his wife, Clare Russell Gregorian, he is survived by their three sons: Vahe, Raffi, and Dareh. He is also survived by five grandchildren — Juan, Maximus, Sophie, Miri, and Dashiell — and a sister, Ojik Arakelian, of Massachusetts and Iran. ■



HIS HIGHEST TITLE

The future president of Carnegie Corporation of New York becomes an American citizen

At a February 7, 1979, naturalization ceremony, Vartan Gregorian took the oath of citizenship, which was administered by Judge Louis H. Pollak of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania in a courtroom in Philadelphia. Following the swearing in, Gregorian addressed the court. The following text, which has been edited for clarity and accuracy, is a transcription of the event.

Vartan Gregorian in 1975, while serving as founding dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania.
COURTESY OF THE GREGORIAN FAMILY

JUDGE POLLAK: It is customary at each of these ceremonies for one of the new class of citizens to speak both to you and for you on this important occasion. I feel very proud today to be able to recognize speaking to and for you my dear friend and former colleague at the University of Pennsylvania, Vartan Gregorian. Professor Gregorian is a historian of distinction and has very recently become the provost of the University of Pennsylvania, but he speaks today in his highest title, which is to say one who has of his own choice decided to become an American citizen.

PROFESSOR GREGORIAN: Your Honor, fellow former immigrants and now citizens, distinguished guests: We, the new citizens of this United States of America, come from some 27 countries, from many cultures, from many continents, many faiths, many colors, many languages, many accents, many races, of different socioeconomic backgrounds and of different political persuasions, but whether we come to the United States for economic opportunity, political or religious asylum, education, security, reunification with our families and relatives, we all share a common faith in America. America is a democracy with a profound faith in human dignity and freedom and in men's and women's potentialities — and historically, America has remained committed to that faith and to those principles. However one defines democracy as a political system, whether it's government of the people, by the people, for the people, or a system that embodies sovereignty of the people where, according to Alexander Hamilton, the people may be said to be entirely masters of their own destiny and fate or that the essence of the American proposition has always been for people, that free people can be trusted to know what's good for them. Nevertheless, we share the vision of Walt Whitman that democracy is also the essence of the American spirit and the purpose of America's existence and that democracy's aim was and must be the perfection of human beings, a kind of training school for living lives of love and noble aspiration. We share Woodrow Wilson's notion of democracy – that it consists for the purpose of reducing inhumanity and maximizing hope. The principle of the dignity of the human being legally guarantees the political equality of the individual. It gives recognition to individuals and helps to create a society that provides political and — potentially or actually — social and economic opportunity.

We agree with Wilson that by "morality" we mean the enhancement of the human being and that in the political sphere, democracy is morality of a higher order, for it involves respect, justice, and hope, for it releases the energies of every human being.

We share the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt and his view that American democracy's freedom must include freedom from want, freedom from insecurity, and freedom from fear.

In addition to democracy as the embodiment of human dignity, freedom, and self-determination, we share the common vision of a pluralistic, nonparochial, and cosmopolitan and international America – America where faiths, cultures, races have coexisted in a microcosm of humanity. In the words of Herman Melville, we are not a narrow tribe. No, our blood is that of the blood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one. We are not a nation so much as a world.

While not abandoning our identity and our past, as new American citizens we share Thomas Wolfe's confident assertion of America's dream when he says, and I quote: "I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land, is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us. And I think that all these things are certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon."

The preamble of the United States Constitution, and I quote: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America."

We, the new citizens of the United States, like many other immigrant forefathers of ours, we have come not only to enjoy the benefits of America but to contribute to its development, to its growth as well as to its welfare. We have come to contribute to the achievement of what is left undone or unfinished in the agenda of American democracy. We have come to contribute to that perfect union. For us America is not a past, but it's also a future. It's not an actuality, but it's also a potentiality. We have come to share its past heritage and the responsibility of its future mission.

Your Honor, we are delighted and proud that on the eve of the bicentennial of the United States Constitution, tricentenary of the City of Philadelphia, cradle of American independence, under jurisdiction of one of America's prominent judges like you, we are joining the American nation in order to become part of its historical struggle and quest for human dignity, freedom, self-determination, and social justice.

Thank you.

JUDGE POLLAK: I thank you, as you have already been thanked by the applause, Professor Gregorian. ■

Vartan Gregorian with his three sons (L–R): Raffi, Dareh, and Vahe, New York, ca. late 1990s. COURTESY OF THE GREGORIAN FAMILY

A LABOR OF LOVE

A son's eulogy, delivered at Vartan Gregorian's funeral service in New York City on April 22, 2021, honors the man whose place in history came to be that of "a beacon and a wonder of the world"

By **Vahe Gregorian**

On behalf of my brothers, Raffi and Dareh, and with gratitude to St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, we welcome you. A friend taught me that it is an honor to grieve with loved ones, and so we thank you all for being here today, and we so appreciate all of those who are with us in spirit.

We all know my father to have been a vivacious man of letters, enlivened by the seven languages he spoke. That blend made for an endless catalogue of sayings, some expressed with more clarity than others in English.

Eagles don't eat worms, he liked to tell us. And just because a donkey is carrying gold doesn't mean it's a golden donkey. Do not have a hole in your eye, because envy is bottomless. Virtue is its own reward. When the caravan passes, dogs bark.

Each aphorism had deep meaning to him, even if his way of saying it meant that we weren't always exactly sure of its import — and that makes us smile today as we think of him.

But the words of his that most resonate now are ones we often heard in his speeches and interviews, such as the way he put it in 1985 when speaking with Ken Burns: "We have to remember that the universe is not going to be seeing somebody like you again in its entire history of creation. So, it's up to you to become a dot, a paragraph, a page, blank page, chapter in the history of creation."

Quite unfathomably, his place in the history of creation came to be that of a beacon and a wonder of the world … if not among the stars themselves.

Told of my father's death, one former colleague of his wrote that it struck him as a "category error, as if someone had told me that the Great Pyramid had died." My dear Aunt Trudy said he was "not supposed to do that. Ever. He was for all of us part of the sun that shines."

Quite fittingly, the many-splendored chapters of his life and enduring legacy, brimming with wisdom and warmth and exclamation points and adorned with dropped articles, will forever be entwined within the vast repository of the New York Public Library.

“He was so many different things to an incalculable number of people — a philanthropist and philosopher and teacher and mentor to a galaxy of influential friends. He was a brother and an uncle and a father-in-law and a grandfather.

It’s also so telling that this illuminator, in the spirit of St. Gregory himself, spent nearly the last quarter century in voracious service to Carnegie Corporation of New York in its mission to “promote democracy, education, and peace across the globe.” It was a labor of love that sprang from his soul. That work was so essential to him that it helped sustain him through the death three years ago of our mother, Clare, a unique marvel herself with whom he shared an irresistible love story. A “one-man swarm,” she called him, and sometimes I wish that had been the title of his autobiography. He thought about calling it “The Kindness of Strangers,” which would have been apt in its own way both for how it spoke to his own sense of fortune and how he treated so many. Instead, he called it *The Road to Home*.

And how right that seems today as we consider not just the circle of his life but its meaning and infinite inspiration.

He was so many different things to an incalculable number of people — a philanthropist and philosopher and teacher and mentor to a galaxy of influential friends. He was a brother and an uncle and a father-in-law and a grandfather.

And, of course, a father, who tried to meet his three sons where they live … strange as that might have been for him at times. So he’d invite Raffi’s Highlander band to play in the provost’s office at Penn. Or go to a comic book convention with Dareh. And to a Bruce Springsteen show with all three of us, where he sang out the only words he knew: “Born in the USA,” of all things. In the last few years, he even made it a point to watch Kansas City Chiefs football games and offer a colorful critique afterward.

In certain ways, you might even call him a healer.

Vartan and Clare Gregorian on the front steps of the president’s residence at Brown University, where Vartan served as president from 1989 to 1997.
COURTESY OF THE GREGORIAN FAMILY

When New York City and the world wept in the wake of September 11, 2001, for one of many instances, he served as chairman of the World Trade Center Memorial jury.

And he was a visionary. Again, one example: when Richard Stengel became CEO of the National Constitution Center, my father advised him to host immigration ceremonies at the center. As Stengel wrote for *Time*, he took his advice and found it magical to see so many families in their national dress crying for joy. He made it a regular event.

My father understood the meaning of that. His life embodied both the American dream and the immigrant's essential role in it, standing as a profound reminder in these times of how those go hand in hand. Like a modern Colossus, he bestrode both worlds … and yet somehow stood comfortably wherever he found himself.

Indeed, the same man Stengel suggested "may have had more awards and honors than any living American" is much more importantly defined by the Armenian concept of *nekaragir*.

My father once described *nekaragir* as "the embodiment of one's own uniqueness as an individual: it embraces one's dignity, honor, and independence and one's commitment to a corpus of moral and social values that forge ties among individuals, families, ancestors, generations, and society and that affirm our common humanity on the one hand and our uniqueness on the other."

Even as he spent his life affirming the humanity of many around the globe, he was foremost a vital representation of being Armenian. He once said that to be Armenian is to be part of the Book of Job, "always being tested, always suffering, never giving up, part of it a defiance, part of it perseverance, part of it fate, part of it hope, part of it just struggling to be and become."

As we stand here today in the comforting arms of St. Vartan Armenian Cathedral, we are reminded how his epic journey to be and become began decades ago in Tabriz with his ever-loving sister, Ojik, who along with her husband, Varoujan, graces us with her presence today and touches us with her unyielding love and support of her brother.

Amid harsh circumstances, the choir boy at St. Sarkis Church was recruited to work in the affiliated library. Books became his instruments of liberation, what he has called "a kind of helicopter that took me out of the village, gave me a new life, new perspective." Who knew the ride would take him to Beirut and Palo Alto and Afghanistan, from San Francisco State to the University of Texas to the University of Pennsylvania and the New York Public Library and Brown University and Carnegie Corporation of New York? And that he would make a meaningful difference to so many people around the world?

All despite an inauspicious beginning, even when he arrived in Beirut. Because of a miscommunication, when he left home as a teenager to continue his education there, well, his arrival hadn't been as heralded as he'd anticipated. The principal asked him, "What are you doing here?" "I don't know," he replied. "I was sent here." And so he was, wasn't he?

Not merely to become a man of renown but a man of consequence and a philanthropist in the purest sense of the term: the love of humanity, as it was derived from the ancient Greek.

If he were standing here today, we'd surely hear him use another of his favorite terms and try to assure us that "this, too, shall pass."

And while we know nothing like him will pass our way again, we can also rest assured that he will live on. Not simply through his astounding achievements and words but the *nekaragir* that animates the canvas of his special place in history. ■

Vahe Gregorian has been a sports columnist for the *Kansas City Star* since 2013 after 25 years at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. He has covered a wide spectrum of sports, including 10 Olympics. Gregorian was an English major at the University of Pennsylvania and earned his master's degree at the University of Missouri.

THE WORLD RESPONDS

Immediately following Vartan Gregorian's death on April 15, 2021, there was a tremendous outpouring of admiration for the man who had meant so much to so many. Tweets, emails, telephone calls, media tributes, personal statements, cards, and notes flooded in – from Washington, D.C., to Armenia and New York City to South Africa. This is but a small sample.

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

Vartan Gregorian has been called "the senior statesperson of philanthropy" and "a man of the world who inspired the world."

Vartan Gregorian was a towering intellect whose passion for public service was matched only by his kindness and compassion for others, and his loving devotion to his family.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg | Founder, Bloomberg Philanthropies

He always shared a smile and a warm story. He was so proud of his immigrant background, but even prouder of his American citizenship.

General Colin Powell | Founder, Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership, The City College of New York *[d. October 2021]*

Few did so much for humanity.

Nicholas Kristof | Columnist, *The New York Times*

The New York Times

Dr. Gregorian was a fighter: proud, shrewd, charming, a brilliant historian and educator who rose from humble origins.

Legendary in the field of higher education, philanthropy, and librarianship

Carla Hayden | Librarian of Congress

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Dr. Gregorian relished life in the city. "New York was full of chutzpah," he wrote, and "I was full of chutzpah."

Saw the world as a place of promise and possibility.

Ernest Moniz | Cochair and Chief Executive Officer, Nuclear Threat Initiative; Former U.S. Secretary of Energy

The Washington Post

The true message of a diploma, Dr. Gregorian said, should be, "Congratulations for knowing this much, and now we instruct you to learn for the rest of your life."

Vartan earned his wisdom with his full, consequential life and shared it freely, with a full heart.

Darren Walker | President, Ford Foundation

TIME

There was no better friend than Vartan, but I wouldn't want to have him as an enemy. He was a happy warrior.

Richard Stengel | Former Editor, *Time*

A man who strode so large on this earth, who sparkled so bright, that I really believe his spirit will never, ever fade.

Samantha Power | Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Vartan's long-lasting impact on the Library and, by extension, the people and communities of New York City is immeasurable.

New York Public Library | @NYPL

He was an ardent believer in the transformative power of education as a means to personal growth as well as the betterment of society.

Christina H. Paxson | President, Brown University

Vartan was not simply an addition of things, but he was a multiplication of things. If you take wisdom, compassion, curiosity, and devotion, and you multiply them together, you get Vartan Gregorian.... There was no one who represented a new level of what extraordinary meant as was Vartan.

Noubar Afeyan | Cofounder of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative

It is such a huge loss that is being felt around the world. Dr. Gregorian was such a wonderful mentor, friend, and advocate for all of us in the developing South, particularly in Africa (and especially South Africa), and we deeply mourn and feel his passing. It truly marks the end of an era. I remember fondly our last visit with him, which again was characterized by his incredible warmth, generosity of spirit, insatiable curiosity, remarkable erudition, and wise counsel.

Russell Ally | Senior Director, Institutional Advancement, University of the Free State

Clear thinking, courageous, and decisive, he was a born leader. He was a constant evangelist for education. He never saw education as an end in itself, or to be aimed at "becoming educated." Long before the vocabulary of lifelong learning appeared, he exemplified and fulfilled the last words attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, "I lived as a student, and I die as a student."

Sir Angus Grossart | Chair and Executive Director, Noble Grossart Holdings

Always had a twinkle in his eye and tremendous spark in his mind.

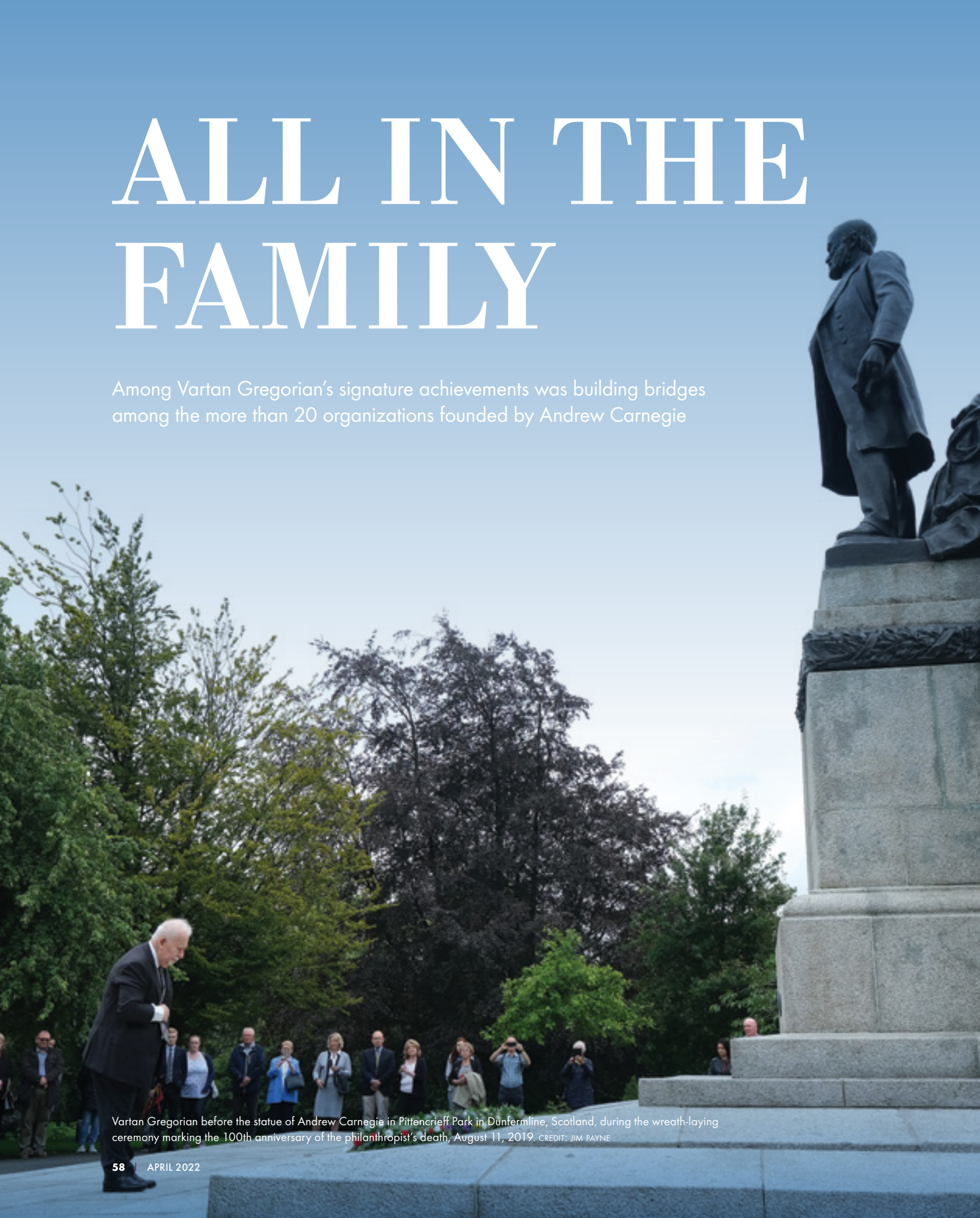
Susan E. Rice | Domestic Policy Advisor, Biden Administration

Vartan Gregorian served as a role model for many Armenians in Armenia and abroad, and his absence will be a great loss for our people.

Nikol Pashinyan | Prime Minister, Republic of Armenia

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Among Vartan Gregorian's signature achievements was building bridges among the more than 20 organizations founded by Andrew Carnegie



Vartan Gregorian before the statue of Andrew Carnegie in Pittencrieff Park in Dunfermline, Scotland, during the wreath-laying ceremony marking the 100th anniversary of the philanthropist's death, August 11, 2019. CREDIT: JIM PAYNE

In June 2021, less than two months after Vartan Gregorian's death, the institutions founded by Andrew Carnegie held their biennial business meeting. The sister organizations shared written remembrances in tribute to Gregorian, edited excerpts of which appear here. The meeting began with a welcome from William Thomson, Carnegie's great-grandson:

> *There have been very heartfelt tributes which have been publicly made to Vartan, and on behalf of the great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren of Andrew Carnegie, I would like to record our appreciation for his friendship and support to all of us as a family over many years. For me and my wife, Tina, he became a close friend, confidant, and wise counselor. How we miss him.*
>
> *Among Vartan's many innovations at Carnegie Corporation of New York, one stands out as embodying not only his ideals for philanthropy but also his desire to bring all Carnegie institutions together as a family. For the past 20 years, the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy has been successful not only in celebrating and expanding the story of the world's most influential philanthropists but also in providing an opportunity for the Carnegie institutions to come together, enabling them to explore ideas together through collaboration, information sharing, and thought leadership.*

Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs | Joel H. Rosenthal, President

For Vartan, the Council's mission — "ethics matter" — was intuitive. What could be more important than the principles by which we live? Democracy and peace depended on this bedrock foundation of values.

As historian and humanist, Vartan shared with us his uncanny ability to look both backward and forward. His stewardship of the Carnegie legacy emphasized historical knowledge and understanding, yet always for the purpose of forging a better future. Vartan showed us through his personal example the infinite possibilities of rigorous scholarship and the persuasive capacities of reason, dialogue, and civic education. Vartan believed in the power of the individual. He wanted to empower each and every person to think for him or herself. This became a fundamental goal of the Council's work — along with Vartan's advice: be an original, not a copy! Vartan was a force of nature and an inspiration. It is impossible to convey his impact. Because he believed in progress, his story does not end but becomes part of the bigger story of our civilizational aspirations. Vartan lived the American Dream and did his best to pass it along to others.

Carnegie Dunfermline Trust and Carnegie Hero Fund UK | Fiona M. Robertson, Chair

Vartan exemplified the values of Andrew Carnegie. He too had been born into poverty and was rescued by his love of books. In 1981, he became president of the New York Public Library. How he brought that rundown library back from the brink teaches us a lot about him and the Carnegie values we all share. Firstly, the power of networking — he was a consummate networker and was not afraid of approaching philanthropists and asking for their help. Like Andrew Carnegie, he took the view that the rich have a moral duty to share their money! Secondly, he personalized the story of the library so that it tugged at the heartstrings. Finally, he always remained optimistic with his vision. His approach could teach us a few things about how to get things done the "Vartan Way."

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace | Thomas Carothers, Senior Vice President for Studies

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace had no better friend over the past two decades than Vartan Gregorian. Over and over again, as we attempted new phases of institutional growth and innovation, he was there to help. In every case, he started by listening carefully to our ideas and plans and then challenged us to sharpen our thinking, aim higher, and strive for deeper impact. And then after we did our best to respond to his probing questions, he followed through with invaluable support on multiple planes — resources, contacts, and ideas.

Intellectualism is a word that the Washington policy community nervously avoids. As president of Carnegie Corporation of New York, Vartan embodied the very best of what that word can mean, and he helped instill it in us — an appreciation for research that goes deep, insists on originality, pays adequate due to culture and history, and doesn't stop until it finds genuine analytical and practical traction. His influence shaped the Carnegie Endowment's work across manifold domains. That includes the Middle East, of course, given his profound personal ties to the region, but also extends to our work on Russia and the rest of the former Soviet Union, on China, and on thematic issues like nuclear security and democracy that are fundamental to the larger quest for international peace. His influence on us was profound, but his touch was thoughtful and light.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching | **Timothy F. C. Knowles**, President

Vartan was driven by an insatiable curiosity and ferocious appetite to make the world a much better one. His influence, his colleagueship, and his generosity will ripple through generations to come. In 2019, Vartan spoke about the access we all have to extraordinary amounts of information. Vartan said, "Information is not knowledge; you have to absorb knowledge, see its consequences, and build on it." We will keep Vartan's words and spirit close at hand as we celebrate and honor his remarkable life and enduring legacy — and traverse what is yet to come.

Carnegie Foundation / Peace Palace in The Hague | **Erik de Baedts**, General Director

Vartan Gregorian was a connector, warm and personal with an unbridled commitment to do good until his last day. For the Carnegie Foundation / Peace Palace in The Hague, he was a wise counselor and a source of inspiration, especially in difficult times. We will miss Vartan's faith, his humanity, his wisdom, and his guidance.

Carnegie Hall | **Robert F. Smith**, Chairman | **Richard A. Debs**, Chairman Emeritus | **Sanford I. Weill**, President | **Clive Gillinson**, Executive and Artistic Director

The board of trustees and staff of Carnegie Hall celebrate the life of our beloved friend and admired colleague, Vartan Gregorian. Leading with an inspiring combination of personal warmth and strategic brilliance, Vartan tended to the Carnegie philanthropic legacy with heartfelt care and diligence. Carnegie Hall was honored to award Vartan with its Medal of Excellence in 2019, recognizing his lifetime of service, especially in the humanities and arts and manifested particularly in his transformative leadership as president of the New York Public Library and Brown University. Vartan's veneration of archives and libraries as living resources informed Carnegie Corporation of New York's generous support for digitizing Carnegie Hall's Susan W. Rose Archives, ensuring that the Hall's programs and performance history are freely available to today's audience and preserved for future generations.

Carnegie Hero Fund Commission | **Mark Laskow**, Chair

Vartan was a wonderfully warm and interesting man. He was born and raised an Armenian in the largely Azerbaijani city of Tabriz. There's a mix for you! His grandfather owned a caravansary, a sort of rest stop for camel caravans. He himself attended an Armenian elementary school, then a Russian one after the Soviets occupied northern Iran during World War II. He arrived in the United States in 1956 with those two languages plus Persian but little English. Combine that personal history with his grace and warmth, and you would want to talk to him for hours. He was provost at Penn, rescued the New York Public Library, served as president of Brown, and then led Carnegie Corporation of New York from 1997. Along the way, he always championed the interests of the Armenian people. While our hours with Vartan Gregorian have ended and there will be no more, for the people he touched, the imprint of this wonderful man will remain with them for the rest of their own hours.

Carnegie Institution for Science | **Eric D. Isaacs**, President

Vartan was the embodiment of *rachmones*, a Yiddish word that is often inadequately translated as "compassion" or "mercy." But *rachmones* means something deeper and more egalitarian than those commendable but limited virtues. I think the nearest we can get in English is "heart feeling" — a soul-deep connection that binds us to our fellow human beings, draws us to stand beside them, and inspires us to strive together for community, justice, and peace. In every aspect of his long and extraordinary career, Vartan showed us the almost immeasurable impact one person can achieve when intellectual brilliance is shaped and refined by *rachmones* and powered by unshakable moral courage.

When I first joined the Carnegie family, as president of the Carnegie Institution for Science, I felt concerned that our mission of scientific research and discovery seemed slightly out of alignment with the warmer humanitarian virtues of our sister organizations. Vartan reminded me that, as part of Andrew Carnegie's legacy, Carnegie Science had a duty to incorporate those virtues into our own work. He quoted the dictum of the French Renaissance physician and humanist François Rabelais, who said: "Science without conscience is but the ruin of the soul."

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh | **Mary Frances Cooper (ret.)**, President and Director

As president of the New York Public Library, Vartan Gregorian repositioned the library as an important cultural and educational asset, made people understand that a strong public library is essential to a healthy and thriving city, and rallied elected officials, foundations, philanthropists, and individual donors to ensure that the library got the support it deserved. In doing so, he showed public library leaders across the country, many of whom were operating libraries that were struggling as well, a path toward a brighter future.

Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands, which opened in August 1913. It houses the International Court of Justice, the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and the Hague Academy of International Law. CREDIT: CARNEGIE FOUNDATION / PEACE PALACE

Carnegie Mellon University, a private research university based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is the result of a merger in 1967 of the Carnegie Institute of Technology, founded in 1900 by Andrew Carnegie, and the Mellon Institute of Industrial Research. CREDIT: PHOTOGRAPH PROVIDED COURTESY OF CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

Carnegie Mellon University | **Farnam Jahanian**, President

Dr. Gregorian was a luminary and a visionary who made an immeasurable impact on society through his advocacy for education, democracy, world peace, and immigration. Under his leadership, Carnegie Corporation of New York strengthened its mission of addressing contemporary problems with strategies that drew strength from deep knowledge and scholarship. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to get to know him and to draw on his remarkable kindness, experience, and wisdom.

Carnegie Mellon University | **Jared L. Cohon**, President Emeritus; Trustee, Carnegie Corporation of New York

Vartan Gregorian was a brilliant scholar and a highly effective philanthropist, but he was also a humble and kind man who touched so many lives across higher education — and beyond. While his passing is a tremendous loss, I take comfort that his legacy is one that will live on for generations.

Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh | **Steven Knapp**, President and Chief Executive Officer

Like the founder of the many Carnegie institutions he championed throughout the world, Vartan was a naturalized U.S. citizen whose experiences in a new country helped shape him. He greatly admired Andrew Carnegie and took pride in bringing the family of Carnegie organizations together and celebrating their important work. On a personal note, I had the honor of regarding Vartan as an admired friend since we first met more than two decades ago. He will be sorely missed by the many whose lives he touched in such a variety of important ways.

In 1895, Andrew Carnegie founded Carnegie Institute, now known as Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. Today, the organization includes four museums: Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Science Center, and the Andy Warhol Museum. CREDIT: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH

Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland | **Andy Walker**, Secretary and Treasurer

With our office based in Dunfermline, Scotland — the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie — we were able to welcome Vartan on numerous occasions. Two of these visits corresponded to the hosting in Scotland of the awards ceremony for the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy. As usual, he played a pivotal role throughout these events.

As just one of the many organizations founded in numerous countries worldwide by Andrew Carnegie, our Trust greatly values the links we have with our sister institutions. The creation of this Carnegie family — sharing experiences and working together — is entirely down to the vision and persistence of Vartan Gregorian. His term as president of Carnegie Corporation of New York was exemplary, and we can be forever grateful for his success in bringing together all of our organizations. He will be greatly missed. It remains to us to continue the pursuit of his vision.

Carnegie UK | **Sir John Elvidge**, Chair

Along with our colleagues in the family of Carnegie institutions, we owe Vartan a considerable debt of gratitude for the initiative that he took more than a decade ago to reinvigorate a sense of community and comradeship amongst us. While we have all benefited from this, perhaps the U.K. and Europe-based organizations gained even more than others from the opportunities to forge collegiate links with our sister institutions in the U.S. The fruitful engagements that Carnegie UK has had in recent years with the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace came about as a direct result of the conditions that Vartan created for the building of strategic relationships. ■

THE USES OF HISTORY

For Vartan Gregorian – professor, historian, writer – the pursuit of knowledge was a quest for larger truths

By **Hillary Wiesner**

I told the students that my ambition was to teach them to know the facts; to understand the nature and the impact of historical data and the role of individuals and ideas in shaping historical trends and social forces; to understand all the orthodoxies and be able to challenge them; to navigate through many cultures; to go beyond identity politics; and to learn how to reconcile the unique and the universal. In short, I wanted them to be able to think.[1]

– **Vartan Gregorian**

Updating History A staff member restores Islamic manuscripts in Egypt's Bibliotheca Alexandrina, which opened in October 2002, restoring the legendary Library of Alexandria founded by Ptolemy II around 295 BCE. CREDIT: NORBERT SCHILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Vartan Gregorian's life, home, and office overflowed with books. He was a historian of ideas with a particular reverence for archival research, the impractical and the obscure, "the usefulness of useless knowledge."[2] For Gregorian, the impact of a book was unpredictable and *not* determined by how many people read it. "Rousseau's *Social Contract*," he used to say, "almost no one read it. Kant read it, Hegel read it, Robespierre read it, Danton read it, Napoleon read it." Therefore, as a scholar and an educator, Gregorian often pushed back against the instrumentalization of learning. For him, education makes you who you are, so the pursuit of knowledge is a sacred process. As he explained, "This quest for larger truths, purposes, and explanations lies at the heart of the religious and reasoning experiences."[3]

A lifelong supporter of education and research, libraries and universities, academic freedom and scholar mobility, Gregorian had indirect impact on innumerable works of scholarship. He also wrote a few of his own.

Afghanistan in History

As a student of history and humanities at Stanford University, Gregorian wrote his undergraduate thesis on Arnold Toynbee and Islam.[4] Toynbee's fame and reputation peaked conspicuously during the years of Gregorian's undergraduate and graduate study at Stanford. Moreover, Toynbee had attracted attention as an early opponent of "the murder of a nation" during the atrocities that would later be known as the Armenian genocide. On the one hand, Gregorian seemed to agree with Toynbee that history is marked by cyclical trends, that religion is a major sociopolitical force, and that we often see inverse correlations between nationalism and transnational religious movements. In other words, as nationalism rises, religion-based polities may wane, and vice versa. But on the other hand, contra Toynbee, Gregorian took a firm stand against civilizational models that portray religious communities as unified blocs. Gregorian saw cognitive, political, and cultural diversity as inherent to religion and religious unity as a fiction.

From his 1964 doctoral dissertation, "Traditionalism and Modernism in Islam," we glimpse a Toynbee-esque fascination with religious traditionalist, modernist, and reformist debates as they played out across Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Gregorian conducted archival and field research the old-fashioned way: "seven thousand 5 x 8 cards of handwritten notes."[5] From his dissertation research he produced a major work of scholarship, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880–1946*.[6] His book would trace the anti-colonial interplay of Afghan nationalism and religion, connecting political and intellectual history while repeatedly emphasizing changes in education systems as drivers of historical change. An early reviewer praised its interdisciplinarity, noting that Gregorian "may make some 'scholarly' purists uncomfortable with his skillful interweaving of history, political science, economics, and sociology."[7] Indeed, Gregorian delicately situates historical figures and events in relation to wider trends and worldviews: he unfolds *a history of people's changing beliefs about themselves*. The book would become a standard reference work and cement Gregorian's lifelong ties with the people of Afghanistan.

A Mosaic, Not a Monolith

As fate would have it, Gregorian's own scholarly interests were destined to clash with the intellectual milieu of the 1990s, notably a politicized and Orientalist study of Islam that rose with the decline of the Cold War. That milieu included Bernard Lewis's essay "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (1990) and his *Islam and the West* (1993), as well as Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996).[8] In contrast, Gregorian would make his stand on two key points about the study of Islam: first, the need for rigorous scholarship grounded in social science data, and second, the irreducible diversity of thought, practices, cultures, and polities in and across Muslim societies.

Following the Al Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001, politicized and contested knowledge production about Muslim societies escalated. Many viewed the attacks as religious or as a historically rooted attack by "Islam." Soon, the United States was militarily engaged in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere in an open-ended and costly Global War on Terror. For his part, Gregorian often refuted the binary pairing of Islam and the West, as if these two were divisible, commensurate, and nonoverlapping entities — arrayed side by side or in perpetual conflict. And post-9/11, he would note that in past centuries religious leaders dominated politics, but in our time states and terrorists "use religion as a tool of secular ideologies"[9] to "justify their political agendas."[10]

After 9/11 Gregorian brought out what he called a primer on the diversity of Islam, but the book had begun well before 2001. When the attacks happened, Gregorian was drafting a report to the trustees of Carnegie Corporation of New York on the diversity of Muslim societies, cultures, and thought. That report became the book *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith* (2003), and it followed some patterns seen in Gregorian's Afghanistan book. In both books, Gregorian provides an overview of ancient and medieval history, followed by a plunge into his beloved 19th and 20th centuries. Both works deliver a geographic scope beyond the Arab region while measuring the centripetal and centrifugal forces of nationalism against competing ideologies. And both books spotlight debates between religious traditionalists, modernists, and Islamists of all kinds. Why?

Gregorian was fascinated by the compatibility of faith, reason, and knowledge. While a devotee of the 17th-century French philosopher Blaise Pascal, for whom mystical realization ultimately overshadowed human reasoning, Gregorian believed that, ultimately, religion can never be anti-intellectual, can never be an opposite to reason or science — and he praised Islam as the knowledge-venerating religion par excellence. He reckoned that through dialectical processes across time, societies integrate traditionalist and modernist forms of public religion, often through education. Where education flourishes, we see faith and knowledge reconciled. This leads to "economic, cultural, and social progress and the eventual liberation of their realms from colonial rule."[11] He sums up *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith* with a prescription for complexity: "Islam, like other religions, cannot be categorized or stereotyped because it is brimming with nuances, exceptions, divisions, contradictions, and ambiguities."[12]

In December 2002, Samuel Huntington wrote a private letter to Gregorian objecting to portrayals of Huntingtonian "monolithic Islam" in the Carnegie report and demanding the correction and deletion of all such references in the future. Gregorian cordially replied with a four-page refutation citing Huntington, eight scholars of Huntington, and a brief history of Huntington's own defense of "simplified pictures of reality."[13]

As a writer and as a grantmaker, Gregorian was deliberative and circumspect, weighing evidence that both confirmed and conflicted with his hypotheses. Some facts will support one interpretation of events, even while others stack up against it. Yet history has power. History is not only "recording what *has* happened, but also serves as an engine of change and of progress pushing us forward to find what lies ahead."[14] Perhaps the greatest obstacle to his personal scholarship was that Gregorian rarely considered a work completed. He read and wrote prodigiously, open-endedly. To an editor's dismay, as deadlines dissolved, he would appear in the doorway each morning with spiral notebooks full of new notes. He saw his own texts as unfinished. He worked for years on a new preface to his Afghanistan history, never judging the draft complete. Plans are now underway at Stanford University Press to publish a revised edition. ■

Hillary S. Wiesner is the Corporation's program director for Transnational Movements and the Arab Region.

IDEAS INTO ACTION

From Carnegie Scholars and an Islam Initiative to Arab Region social science

Early in his presidency of Carnegie Corporation of New York, Vartan Gregorian signaled a special initiative to advance public understanding about Islam as both a global and an American religion. At the same time, to support pure research, Gregorian also stated his intent to create a program of grants for individual research and book writing. This became the Carnegie Scholars Program and later the Andrew Carnegie Fellows Program.[15]

In order to bolster standards of scholarship and historical accuracy across Islamic and regional studies, the Corporation mobilized the Carnegie Scholars Program under Patricia L. Rosenfield, funding 117 books by a post-Orientalist generation of U.S.-based researchers and educators covering the diversity of Muslim societies. Prefacing a report on the program, Gregorian wrote that we "need to distill real wisdom from vast tracts of unaggregated facts and information. Often, we overlook those who can be among our most useful guides in this endeavor: scholars."[16]

Eventually Gregorian started a bibliophilic partnership with Ismail Serageldin, founding director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt. The Corporation supported the library's editing and reissuing of modernist classics of Islamic heritage, in which 19th- and 20th-century thinkers advanced social, religious, and governance issues that are still debated in our time. The project brought dozens of relevant works from the distant past to accessibility for new generations of students and scholars. In the U.S., the Corporation joined with the Social Science Research Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities under chairman Jim Leach to achieve at-scale impact, facilitating public education by university centers and libraries across the country. The NEH Bridging Cultures and Muslim Journeys initiatives brought 3,140 events to 1,000 libraries, reaching over half a million participants across all 50 states. Working with the American Library Association, the programs also provided 25,000 books, 3,000 DVDs (with public performance rights, thanks to the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation), and over $550,000 in subgrants for local events. And in partnership with Afghan cultural institutions, Gregorian supported the World Digital Library and Library of Congress digitization of Afghan cultural treasures — books, manuscripts, maps, photographs, newspapers, and other historically significant materials dating from the 1300s to the 1990s.

The Corporation first supported individual scholars, then institutional projects, and then academic fields — initially in the U.S. and then increasingly abroad — outside of the religion frame. Over the years, as Gregorian had shown with his support for Eastern European and African academics during times of transition, what had been the Islam Initiative shifted toward building social science disciplines in the region itself.

Perhaps in alignment with his personal history, Gregorian was a lifelong supporter of scholar mobility, contributing generously from both foundation and personal sources of funding. Remembering the kindness of university colleagues who had welcomed him in his youth, he befriended and hosted faculty and students who came to America from overseas. After the Arab uprisings of 2011, supplementing its traditional support of scholars at risk, the Corporation offered grants that hosted a hundred Arab-region scholars across a dozen American universities, catalyzing both research and scholarly collaboration. In some cases, the academic residencies served a dual purpose: universities hosted prominent scholars fleeing imminent threats not only to their academic freedom but to their very safety. After Gregorian's death the International Institute of Education (IIE) created a new award in his honor and memory, the Vartan Gregorian Research Grants in the IIE Scholar Rescue Fund. The fund supports research to serve threatened and displaced scholars and institutions of higher education functioning in prolonged conflict and crisis. ■

SCHOLARLY BOUNTY

A selection of significant works of scholarship that came out of the Carnegie Scholars Program and the Corporation's ongoing work in Middle East studies

Arabic Oration: Art and Function | Tahera Qutbuddin | Leiden: Brill, 2019 | Masterpiece of erudition that won the prestigious Sheikh Zayed Book Award in 2021

The Cost of Counterterrorism: Power, Politics, and Liberty | Laura K. Donohue | Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008 | Documenting diminished rights to life, liberty, property, privacy, and free speech

Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism | Robert A. Pape | New York: Random House, 2005 | A groundbreaking study testing theories against comprehensive data

A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order | Kambiz GhaneaBassiri | New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010 | Authoritative study across five centuries — from colonial America to the contemporary era

Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights | Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina | Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009 | A juridical and theological examination of the emergence of universal rights

Islam, Science, and the Challenge of History | Ahmad Dallal | New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010 | Virtuoso intellectual history by the current president of the American University in Cairo

The Muslim Brotherhood: Evolution of an Islamist Movement | Carrie Rosefsky Wickham | Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013 | Political competition producing complexity and change

Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture | Hisham D. Aidi | New York: Pantheon Books, 2014 | Winner of the American Book Award

Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report | Saba Mahmood | Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015 | How secular governance has often exacerbated religious inequalities; winner of the 2016 Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion

Torture and Democracy | Darius Rejali | Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009 | At 880 pages, the most comprehensive history of modern torture; winner of the 2009 Lemkin Award of the Institute for the Study of Genocide

Striking from the Margins: State, Religion and Devolution of Authority in the Middle East | Aziz Al-Azmeh, et al., eds. | London: Saqi Books, 2021 | State atrophy heralds the rise of marginal social movements

Wahhabism and the World: Understanding Saudi Arabia's Global Influence on Islam | Peter Mandaville, ed. | New York: Oxford University Press, 2022 | The origins and evolution of Saudi religious transnationalism

Endnotes

[1] Vartan Gregorian, *The Road to Home: My Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003): 199

[2] As the longest-serving member of the board of the Institute for Advanced Study, Gregorian worked with Robbert Dijkgraaf, then director of the Institute, to republish Abraham Flexner's 1939 manifesto, *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge*, with a new companion essay by Dijkgraaf. The book argues that curiosity-driven research that seeks to answer deep questions without concern for applications often leads to lasting scientific discoveries, innovations, and social and cultural change. The new edition of *The Usefulness of Useless Knowledge* was published by Princeton University Press in 2017.

[3] Vartan Gregorian, *Encounters between Faith and Reason in Christianity and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, 2011): 25

[4] *The Road to Home*, 116

[5] *The Road to Home*, 160

[6] Published by Stanford University Press in 1969

[7] Leon B. Poullada, Untitled review, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 24, No.4 (Autumn 1970): 526

[8] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly* (September1990); Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Huntington's treatise grew out of his October 19, 1992, lecture to the American Enterprise Institute and his 1993 article published in *Foreign Affairs*.

[9] Vartan Gregorian, *Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003): 134

[10] *The Road to Home*, 329

[11] *Encounters*, 39

[12] *Islam*, 134

[13] "If Not Civilizations, What? Samuel Huntington Responds to his Critics," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1993)

[14] Vartan Gregorian, "The Importance of History." Address to the National Council of Historians Conference, March 12, 2009

[15] Patricia L. Rosenfield, *A World of Giving: Carnegie Corporation of New York — A Century of International Philanthropy* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014): 424–25

[16] Vartan Gregorian, foreword to *Carnegie Scholars Program: A Five-Year Review of Scholarship on Islam 2005–2009* (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2010): vii

Vartan Gregorian in his office at Carnegie Corporation of New York, January 10, 2005.

Carnegie Corporation of New York

Board of Trustees

Memorial Minute

for

President Vartan Gregorian

The Trustees of Carnegie Corporation of New York wish to express their deepest respect and gratitude to Vartan Gregorian, beloved twelfth president of the Corporation, who died unexpectedly in New York City on April 15, 2021. We extend our profound sympathies to his family, including his three sons, Dareh, Raffi, and Vahé; to his "family" here at the Corporation; and to the countless individuals around the world whose lives he touched throughout an illustrious career of nearly six decades marked by scholarly brilliance, unflagging curiosity, boundless enthusiasm, fearless energy, unstinting loyalty, good humor, and generosity of spirit.

Vartan Gregorian, who led the Corporation as president from 1997 until 2021, led a truly remarkable life. An Armenian born and raised in Tabriz, Iran, Vartan arrived in America in 1956 to attend Stanford University and became, as the New Yorker observed, a "one-man academy of arts, letters, and humanities," rising to the highest levels of higher education and philanthropy as a naturalized U.S. citizen.

After earning his doctorate at Stanford in 1964, Vartan began his academic career teaching European and Middle Eastern history at San Francisco State College. Especially devoted to higher education, Vartan would later serve as provost of the University of Pennsylvania and president of Brown University. In the 1980s, he became the "Savior of the New York Public Library," as the New York Times described him, when, as its president, he revitalized and reaffirmed the library as a preeminent civic and educational institution.

As president of Carnegie Corporation of New York for more than two decades, Vartan oversaw the disbursement of nearly three billion dollars in grants in support of education, democracy, and international peace and security, as well as scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, higher education and research in Africa, and the civic integration of immigrants. Through the creation of an in-house investment team, Vartan ensured the significant growth of the Corporation's endowment to over $4 billion today. In collaboration with the more than 20 sister organizations founded by Andrew Carnegie, Vartan established the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in 2001, which honors philanthropists who have dedicated their private wealth to the public good.

The recipient of more than 70 honorary degrees and dozens of significant awards, Vartan was recognized with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in addition to receiving decorations from the governments of Armenia, Austria, France, Italy, and Portugal. Moreover, he was a devoted friend – and often mentor – to myriad young people, students, colleagues, and peers.

It is with a heavy heart and everlasting devotion that we salute Vartan Gregorian for his compassion and kindness, his keen and probing intellect, his sly irreverence and sense of humor, his ability to both challenge and inspire, and, above all, for his tireless dedication to making our world a better place. Vartan often quoted the historian Henry Adams: "Teachers affect eternity. They never know where their influence ends." The influence of Vartan Gregorian, our great teacher, will extend for generations in numerous and inestimable ways through the knowledge, wisdom, and immense humanity that he cultivated and shared so generously with all of us and the world.

Presented this third day of June, two thousand twenty-one

Thomas H. Kean, Chairman of the Board

Janet L. Robinson, Vice Chairman of the Board

This memorial tribute in honor of Vartan Gregorian was read by chairman Thomas H. Kean at the Corporation's board of trustees meeting on June 3, 2021. CREDIT: ARTIST/CALLIGRAPHER SHARON D. EISMAN

CARNEGIE CORPORATION
OF NEW YORK

437 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022

Non-profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
St. Louis, MO
Permit No. 1018

Vartan Gregorian as a young boy. COURTESY OF THE GREGORIAN FAMILY

“

Here’s the story – a bright Armenian boy from Tabriz comes to America, tears through college and graduate school, becomes a history professor, rises like a rocket through the ranks of academia, then single-handedly rescues the New York Public Library from oblivion. For starters. Is this a fable about the inestimable value of immigrant infusions into our national life? No, it’s the true life story of Gregorian the Great Hearted …

Novelist **E. L. Doctorow**, writing of Vartan Gregorian’s autobiography, *The Road to Home* (2003)