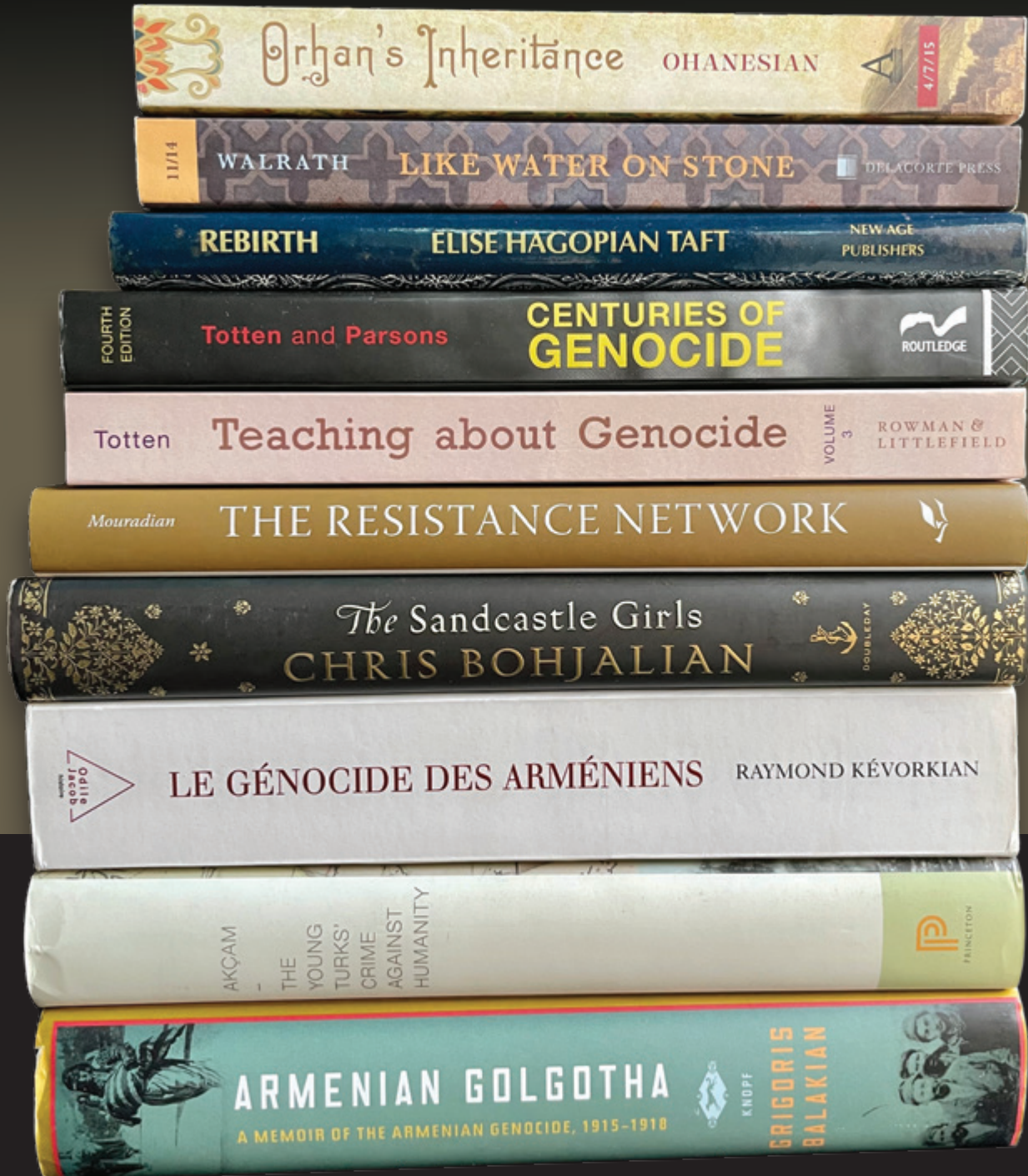




The Armenian Weekly

APRIL 2023

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Sara Cohan is a human rights and genocide education consultant. She worked for The Genocide Education Project for seventeen years as their education director. Her background combines research, study, curriculum development and teaching. She is a Museum Teacher Fellow for the US Holocaust Museum

and Memorial and worked extensively with the USC Shoah Foundation. In 2001, Cohan was named the Research Fellow for Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center and later she served on their advisory board in 2012. She also studied in Mexico as a recipient of a Fulbright-Hays scholarship and studied Islamic influences in Europe as a fellow for the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was an expert lecturer at the Council of Europe's European Youth Centre in Budapest in 2009 and has worked with the Armenian Genocide Museum and Institute in Yerevan. Cohan has written articles and designed educational materials for a variety of organizations and publications. She is the granddaughter of an Armenian Genocide survivor.



Asya Darbinyan, Ph.D. is a visiting assistant professor at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University, where she offers courses on Genocide and Women, the Armenian Genocide, the History of Armenia and the History of Genocide. She earned her Ph.D. in history at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and

Genocide Studies at Clark under the direction of Prof. Taner Akçam. Her dissertation explores the Russian Empire's responses to the Armenian Genocide and to the refugee crisis at the Caucasus battlefield of the First World War. Dr. Darbinyan's research and teaching expertise stand at the intersection of Armenian history, the history of the Russian Empire, genocide, refugees and humanitarian interventions, with a focus on the agency and actions of refugees in addressing their suffering and plight. She is a recipient of multiple scholarships and grants, most recently, the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative's Vartan Gregorian Scholarship to revise and expand her dissertation into a book manuscript.



Ani Boghikian Kasparian is an active member of the Detroit Armenian community. From 2004 until the pandemic, she taught Western Armenian language at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and is affiliated with university's Armenian Research Center. Boghikian Kasparian is a member of the Armenian

Genocide Education Committee of Michigan and president of Houshamadyan Educational Association, the USA executive board of the Houshamadyan Project (Houshamadyan.org). She received a Bachelor of Arts degree double-majoring in sociology and psychology and a Master of Arts degree in teaching, both from the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and a Master of Arts in counseling from Oakland University-Rochester.



Kevork Khrimian was born in Yerevan, Soviet Armenia in 1960 of parents who had repatriated there from Lebanon and Egypt. He attended Hagop Baronian School No. 59 in the Nor Zeytoun section of Yerevan through the fourth grade. The Khrimians emigrated to the United States in 1971, and Kevork completed his primary and

secondary education in the New York City public school system. He received his undergraduate degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo where he studied engineering and economics, followed immediately with a master's degree in 1986 from Carnegie-Mellon University in finance and decision analysis. After a brief stint in the New York City government, Khrimian spent almost his entire professional career at Moody's Investors Service as a vice president and senior analyst. While at Moody's, in 1995 Kevork assumed a temporary assignment with the United States Department of Treasury to serve as an advisor to the government of Armenia and helped establish the Armenian Treasury Bond system. Since retiring from Moody's, Khrimian is involved in numerous projects in Armenia and New York, one of which is serving on the working group for potential Armenian Diaspora Bonds.



Andy Lawrence is a history teacher in the United Kingdom. Since the start of his teaching career in 2004, Andy has worked with his pupils, genocide survivors, academics and educational organizations to raise awareness of the Holocaust and other genocides, such as the Armenian Genocide. He was made an MBE in

Her Majesty The Queen's last honours list in 2022 for his services to Holocaust and genocide education.



Roxanne Makasdjian is executive director of The Genocide Education Project (GenEd), a non-profit organization providing educators with professional development services for teaching about human rights and genocide, with particular focus on the Armenian Genocide and its relationship to other genocides of

the modern era. She also is a member of the California State Council

for Holocaust and Genocide Education. A former national television news producer, Makasdjian serves as director of broadcast communications at UC Berkeley. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in journalism. The grandchild of Armenian Genocide survivors, Makasdjian was born and raised in Los Angeles and lives in San Francisco.



Marc A. Mamigonian is the Director of Academic Affairs of the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR), where he has worked since 1998. He is the co-author of the volume *Annotations to James Joyce's Ulysses* (Oxford University Press, 2022; with John N. Turner and Sam Slote) and is the co-author of annotated editions of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Alma Classics, 2014; with John N. Turner) and *Ulysses* (Alma Classics, 2015, with John N. Turner and Sam Slote). He has served as the editor of the *Journal of Armenian Studies* and the volume *The Armenians of New England* (Armenian Heritage Press, 2004) and has published articles in *Genocide Studies International*, *James Joyce Quarterly*, *Armenian Review*, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* and elsewhere. His chapter "Weaponizing the First Amendment: Denial of the Armenian Genocide and the U.S. Courts" was recently published in *Denial of Genocides in the Twenty-First Century*, Bedross Der Matossian, ed. (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2023).



Lalai Manjikian, Ph.D. is a humanities professor at Vanier College in Montreal. She also teaches in the Women and Gender Studies program at Vanier. Her main teaching and research interests are in the areas of immigration and refugee studies, media representations of migration, the ethics of migration and migrant narratives. She is the author of *Collective Memory and Home in the Diaspora: The Armenian Community in Montreal* (2008). A former Birthright Armenia participant (2005), over the years, Manjikian has been active in volunteering both within the Armenian community in Montreal and the local community at large, namely engaged in immigrant and refugee integration. She previously served as a qualitative researcher on the Armenian Diaspora Survey in Montreal. Manjikian also serves as a board member for the Foundation for Genocide Education. She holds a Ph.D. in Communication Studies from McGill University (2013).



Jermaine O. McCalpin, Ph.D. is chair and associate professor of the African and African American Studies program at New Jersey City University. He is an expert on truth commissions, reparations and genocides, having worked on these research areas for over two decades. Prof. McCalpin has advocated for the Armenian



There's Nothing Wrong With Her

A MEMOIR

M.B. YAKOUBIAN

Thrust into the Syrian desert by the Ottoman Turks, young Elise and her mother survived the 1915 Armenian death march. Twenty years later, her new life in America is more than she could ever have dreamed possible. The dream ends when her husband Leon dies and she is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. She has spent her entire adult life filling the woman's role she was taught to in Syria—cooked, cleaned, prayed, and looked after her three children. But she never learned how to drive a car or manage a bank account. Leon saved enough for her to get by after his death. But he didn't think their lawyer son would turn his eye to those meagre savings. Elise's advancing dementia dimmed her awareness of the family strife swirling around her that would mark the last five years of her life. Elise's daughter offers a close-up view here of helping a dependent mother from a thousand miles away.

For information contact: souroghlian@gmail.com

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Genocide and reparations with many Armenian organizations in the United States, Canada and Armenia.



Khatchig Mouradian, Ph.D. is a lecturer in Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University, and the Armenian and Georgian Area specialist at the Library of Congress. He also serves as co-principal investigator of the project on Armenian Genocide denial at the Global Institute for Advanced Study, New York University. Mouradian is the author of the award-winning book *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915–1918*, and the co-editor of two forthcoming volumes on Ottoman and Middle Eastern history. Mouradian has published articles and book chapters on concentration camps, unarmed resistance, the aftermath of mass violence, midwifery in the Middle East and approaches to teaching history.



Lara S. Nercessian graduated from Wayne State University with a major in political science and minor in English literature, and later with her law degree. She is currently a practicing attorney at the Wayne County Prosecutor's office, where she has practiced law for over 18 years. Previous to her current role as the lead attorney for the District Courts Division, she prosecuted sexual assault crimes as a member of the Special Victim's Unit. Nercessian has also been an active member of the Armenian American community. Currently, she serves on the Armenian National Committee of America Eastern Region board, is the vice chairperson of the Armenian Genocide Education Committee, is a member of the Armenian Relief Society "Zabel" Chapter and Detroit Mid-Council and former chairperson of ANC of MI.



Rob Petrucci is a social studies and theater teacher at East Greenwich High School (EGHS) in Rhode Island. A graduate of Rhode Island College, he began his career in education as a behavior specialist at EGHS in 1998 and moved to the social studies department in 2000. Petrucci was the first recipient of the RI Outstanding

Genocide Educator of the Year award in 2007, presented by the RI branch of The Genocide Education Project. He has also been recognized as the Fastpitch Softball Division II North Coach of the Year (2022), East Greenwich High School District Teacher of the School Year (2021–2022), NBC 10 Golden Apple Award Winner (2018) and Joyce & Bob Starr Teacher Award for Holocaust Education (2011).



Yeghia Tashjian is a Lebanese-Armenian regional political analyst and researcher. He graduated from the American University of Beirut in Public Policy and International Affairs. He also participated in and graduated from Swedish Defense University's "Strategic Leadership in Global Societal Security Programm" (2022). He pursued his BA at Haigazian University in political science in 2013. Currently, he is researching on the Turkish-Russian "co-optation" in the MENA+ Caucasus region. He is a contributor to various local and regional newspapers, a columnist for the *Armenian Weekly* and has presented various topics from minority rights to regional security issues. He is an Associate Fellow at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut and a part-time instructor in International Affairs at the American University of Science and Technology-Beirut.



Henry C. Theriault, Ph.D. is currently associate vice president for Academic Affairs at Worcester State University in the US, after teaching in its philosophy department from 1998 to 2017. From 1999 to 2007, he coordinated the University's Center for the Study of Human Rights. Theriault's research focuses on genocide denial, genocide prevention, post-genocide victim-perpetrator relations, reparations and mass violence against women and girls. Since 2007, he has chaired the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group and is lead author of its March 2015 final report, *Resolution with Justice*. With Samuel Totten, he co-authored *The United Nations Genocide Convention: An Introduction* (University of Toronto Press, 2019). Theriault served two terms as president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), 2017–2019 and 2019–2021. He is founding co-editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Genocide Studies International*.



Arto Vaun, Ph.D. is a musician, poet and the executive director of Project Save Armenian Photograph Archives. Previously, he was assistant professor and chair of the English and Communications bachelor of arts program at the American University of Armenia (AUA), where he also founded and directed the Center for Creative Writing. He studied English literature, creative writing and Armenian studies at UMass Boston, Harvard University and Glasgow University. He holds a Ph.D. in creative writing from Huddersfield University. As a poet and musician, he has published and performed widely. Vaun has utilized photography not only in his academic career but also in his art.



History, Resilience and Resistance

PAULINE GETZOYAN

My journey in genocide education began in the year 2000 in my home state of Rhode Island. At that time, then-State Representative Aram G. Garabedian, a child of Genocide survivors, succeeded in securing passage of the state's first legislation about genocide education. Today, there are dozens of states in the US and communities around the world teaching about genocide.

This magazine is a testament to the work that has been done globally to bring genocide education into school curricula and specifically to include the Armenian Genocide in those studies. Research in genocide studies continues to expand, along with ongoing analysis and improvement of educational materials and pedagogy. Eyewitness accounts from survivors are regularly included in genocide studies, and stories of resistance, both armed and unarmed, have become important additions. Armenian Genocide educational materials have grown in leaps and bounds, and more states have made genocide education a requirement, as our communities' grassroots efforts spread across the country and beyond.

As Armenia, Artsakh and other countries around the globe are grappling with human rights abuses, racism and oppression, there is a pressing need for genocide education. Armenians bear the scars of the Genocide, including the rupture of our families and

displacement from our homeland. Artsakh continues to be under blockade by Azerbaijan. Baku, along with its partner in aggression Turkey, remains intent on depopulating Artsakh of its indigenous Armenian residents. At the same time, Azerbaijan attacks and encroaches on the Republic of Armenia with the stated goal of completely eliminating Armenians from the region.

"We, therefore, promote bearing witness to genocide's lingering effect as stories of our history can inspire action, teach truths, provide connection, build respect and evoke emotions," said my dear friend and colleague Esther Kalajian as we discussed the importance of genocide education, for which we have advocated and worked together since that fateful day in 2000.

Educators present information to students on a variety of subjects. In the case of genocide studies, the teaching tools should engage students through factual materials and civil discourse toward a better understanding of and the ways to confront man's inhumanity to man. Ultimately, genocide education will shape characters and create future leaders who will actively combat and help eliminate these crimes against humanity. I am the granddaughter of Armenian Genocide survivors—unwavering, determined ancestors upon whose shoulders I stand and present to you a collection of works dedicated to "Genocide Education for the 21st Century."

A Note of Gratitude from the Editor

It was the year 2000, and Rhode Island State Representative Aram G. Garabedian had a vision—one that he had for decades—to include genocide education in the state's schools. Rep. Garabedian's vision became a reality that year, thanks to his persistence and determination and the support of the RI Armenian community. House Bill 7397, "Genocide and Human Rights Education," was signed into law following a battle, led by Garabedian and the Armenian National Committee of RI (ANC-RI), against Turkish lobbyists, almost all of whom came from out of state with the sole purpose of defeating the bill. They were unsuccessful.

Garabedian has consistently led and supported all efforts for genocide education, specifically Armenian Genocide education, for his entire political and civic career. Not only has he supported all legislation, including the most recent in 2016 which now requires the subject in RI's secondary schools, but he also generously funded all professional development and teacher training conferences that followed. Since that initial legislation in the state, a coalition was formed with members from

communities affected by genocide, of which Garabedian was an active participant and supporter.

My dear friend and colleague Esther Kalajian offered these thoughts upon learning of this magazine's focus: "Garabedian's foresight and fortitude to introduce the first piece of legislation on Genocide and Human Rights into RI's law inspired us to inform educators of this legislation and provide avenues for teachers to receive peer-reviewed material to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the Armenian Genocide and its effects on humanity," adding that his legislation provided "traction to our cause."

My heartfelt thanks to Aram G. Garabedian, a child of Armenian Genocide survivors, which motivated and inspired his life's work and led to the realization of his dream to include genocide education in his home state's school curricula. His vision continues to inspire me.



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From the Conference of Berlin to Bronx Science

By Kevork Khrimian



PHOTO: JIRO TCHOLAKIAN

In the spring of 2019, a social studies teacher at the Bronx High School of Science (Bronx Science) asked if I would speak to her Holocaust class about our family's experience during the Armenian Genocide. I was her second choice. She had already asked our daughter Sarinar who was enrolled in the class, but she had volunteered me instead. Probably due to its history and location, Bronx Science is a leader in Holocaust and genocide education. It even has a Holocaust museum which houses many artifacts of actual survivors who attended or were otherwise associated with the school. I had visited the museum on more than one occasion, and the assistant principal in charge of the museum and many of the teachers involved in Holocaust education knew me well. I accepted the teacher's request without hesitation.

Speaking about personal or family experience seemed painfully boring for the exceptional students at one of the city's most selective schools who were taking the class as an elective. It had to be a compelling class, with PowerPoint and all; otherwise it would be a flop, Sarinar's social standing at the school would take a nose-dive and, worst of all, the subject matter would be disrespected. Though I have some unrelated experience in teaching, including as a teaching assistant in graduate school and training new analysts at a major Wall Street firm in infrastructure finance, teaching a class to high school students seemed out of my depth.

The horror stories I heard from my grandparents were no match for Instagram and Snapchat, media that excite this generation of teenagers. Without any formal training in pedagogy or history, I had to rely on my experience of understanding complex concepts and events that defy normal human activity. I also had the benefit of raising two children in New York City and having some idea of what could hold their interest. If a story had context and a coherent flow, it stood a fighting chance. The story had to be relatable; therefore it had to be through the eyes of one of their classmates. Also, it had to have positive elements so that it would at least minimally offset the unimaginable horror. I feared that if in the minds of a group of high school juniors and seniors there was no hope of a happy ending, I would lose them right

from the start. At the end of the day, I had to draw a line from the Conference of Berlin to the classmate sitting next to them.

Fortunately, most of the students were familiar with history and geography thanks to previous classes. This was key for providing context that included 19th century Europe where human rights and dignity were becoming more fundamental and respected; the Ottoman Empire as the “Sick Man of Europe” in this space; the state of the Armenian nation and other religious minorities in the empire, focusing on the population as second- or third-class citizens with no real safety and security or economic rights; and lastly, the Conference of Berlin which shed international light on these problems and placed demands on Turkey to improve the condition of the Armenians and other religious minorities.

Perhaps the most challenging part was maintaining coherence in the story or trying to make “sense” of a decision to annihilate an entire component of an empire’s population. Why would a state commit genocide of its own citizens? Even our grandparents never gave us a satisfactory answer to this question, which would inevitably follow each session of the Genocide stories. “Because we were Christian.” “They hated us because they were jealous.” “They were bad people.” Their responses, which may have been partly true, were never fully convincing, and I was afraid that my students would also remain unconvinced. But a bit of history seemed to provide the answer. The Balkan Wars were particularly sobering for the Ottomans because they led to loss of territory following an uprising of the indigenous population. To the authorities, the writing was on the wall that the Armenians on the other side of the empire were next. If they eliminated the population, they would hold on to the land. It made “sense.”

Then came the challenge of finding something positive in a story about an abhorrent event. It turns out that even when humanity is at its worst, some people can be redeemable. We knew from our own stories of survival that sometimes it was thanks to the kindness, generosity or even courage of some Turkish or Kurdish people. My grandfather’s survival depended on the handouts



A map presented during Kevork’s Khrimian’s lesson



A slide from Kevork Khrimian’s presentation

of Muslim villagers after he had walked away from the caravan when he realized that the outcome was going to be horrible if he stayed. He and his younger brother became street urchins, begging and stealing for survival until the Near East Relief Foundation arrived. Many Holocaust survivors also have kind and generous Czechoslovakians,

Hungarians and others to thank for their fate. Pointing out such parallels proves to be relatable for teenagers and makes the overall horror somewhat easier to process.

In a sense, the mere presence of their classmate among them illustrated the happy ending. But the long arc of deportation and its unspeakable details, an American



I feared that if in the minds of a group of high school juniors and seniors there was no hope of a happy ending, I would lose them right from the start. At the end of the day, I had to draw a line from the Conference of Berlin to the classmate sitting next to them.

identity and inheritance and were forced to leave—ultimately resulting in Sarinar as their classmate. Much of this rings familiar to New York City students, as many of them are immigrants or children of immigrants who also have experienced hardship.

Based on this general framework, I created a PowerPoint presentation with 28 slides. They began with a map of the Ottoman Empire, highlighted with the six cities and towns that were home to six of Sarinar's

features the US and other governments' recognition. In general, any involvement by the US, such as missionaries, relief organizations and recognition proves relatable for students, which is key for maintaining their interest.

The first presentation was for a combined group of Sarinar's Holocaust class and interested students taking Advanced Placement (AP) Global History. Two weeks prior, the teacher had assigned readings that were recommended by the AP guidelines. The class was a success, and there were many thoughtful questions after the 30-minute presentation thanks to the students' preparation. Several other social studies teachers and an assistant principal also attended, and we all had a meaningful conversation after the students were dismissed. The assistant principal suggested that I continue teaching the class, even though Sarinar was graduating. I agreed, but recognized another challenge.

Though I had taken great care to get the facts right, I'm not a historian and the material was not vetted by an expert. That's when I reached out to Dr. Khatchig Mouradian to make sure there were no glaring errors. To my relief, I had no material errors, and Dr. Mouradian offered suggestions that would enhance the presentation, such as having more photographs and making sure that the story remained through Sarinar's perspective, even though she would no longer be present. He also suggested that I expand my audience to schools other than Bronx Science, as genocide education is now part of the New York and New Jersey high school curricula. Again, I agreed.

Since then, I've taught the class in both New York and New Jersey. It is generally well received, and teachers appreciate the fact-based comprehensive nature of the class and the total absence of hyperbole. I typically will temper some of my comments with guidance from the teachers and always ask permission to mention some of the more graphic elements, like sexual assault. Preparation by the students seems to be essential; at a minimum, some knowledge of geography and history is vital. This brings me to my next challenge—a request to teach a class of middle schoolers in a New York private school. □



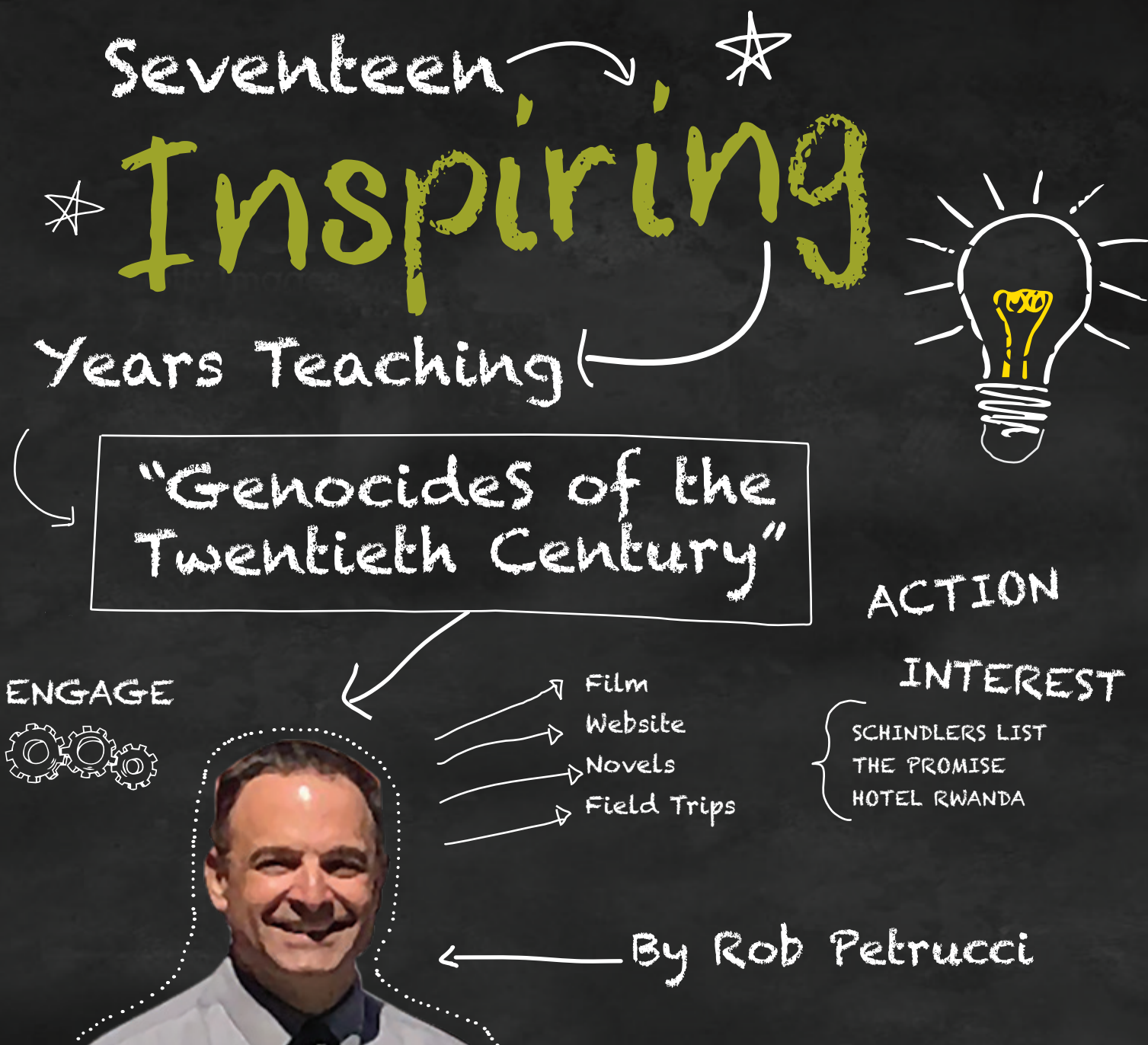
Back to Armenia Again

- Kevork Khrimian and Susan Kirby were married in the ruins of an Armenian Castle, not too far from where Marta Dedeyan was born.

A photo from Kevork Khrimian's wedding used in his classroom presentation

orphanage in Greece and settlement and prosperity in Egypt made the story relevant. Then came repatriation to Soviet Armenia, where my grandparents viewed their survival as victory in and of itself, maintaining a positive attitude. My parents, however, could never adjust to Communism, forced Russification at the expense of our national

great-grandparents, and ended with an image of her as a three-year-old at the Bronx Zoo. In between, there were bullet points covering each of the aforementioned components with accompanying images. I also addressed Turkey's persistent denial. At the time, the US had not yet recognized the Genocide, but the current version of the presentation



Thinking about the past has always been a passion of mine, and family history is important to certain members of every family. I never fully understood this until I had the great fortune of joining the Halvajian/Ashukian family in the fall of 1993. As an aspiring teacher, I listened to the stories about the Armenian Genocide from my new family members and

grew to recognize the impact it had on a generation of Armenians—a generation that deals with the horrific knowledge that lives would never be fully realized or recognized and that families would be forever ruptured with relatives who never came home. Generations of Armenians would not have the opportunity to contribute to this world and leave their legacy. The unimaginable events of World War I are increasingly and globally confirmed as a genocide by more and more countries and leaders every year; President Biden recognized

the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2021. As a young man, listening to these stories during family dinners, and every November on a larger scale at Sts. Vartanantz Armenian Apostolic Church bazaar in Providence, RI, had a tremendous impact on me.

In the early 2000s, I attended a conference on the Holocaust at the University of Rhode Island, which led to an awe-inspiring trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. That led to another conference on the Armenian Genocide at Rhode Island College. Initial interest can ignite imagination. Wonder can lead to action. These two specific encounters led to the creation of a history class titled *Genocides of the Twentieth Century*, which has been in existence since 2006 at East Greenwich High School (EGHS) in RI. Having the right people around you makes all the difference in the world when you are trying to build something from scratch. Esther Kalajian and Pauline Getzoyan, along with Tim McPartlin (department head of East Greenwich High School) and Mike Levine (former principal of East Greenwich High School) were just the people needed to help move this course out of the development phase and into the program of studies at EGHS.

Since 2006, we have offered two to four classes per year. The classes are often at capacity, and students have visited me to ask to be put on a waiting list to gain admission to a section. The course has become one of the most popular electives in the social studies department, if not in the entire school. Due to the content, the class is restricted to juniors and seniors, which makes its popularity even more impressive. The class is offered at the college preparatory level, making it available to all upperclassmen—with no prerequisite—further expanding its accessibility. It is a class that has evolved over time and will continue to do so as world affairs dictate discussions and curriculum. East Greenwich High School is also in compliance with RI state law that requires exposure to and instruction in the Holocaust and genocides by the time students graduate from high school.

The course uses primary source documents, films, websites, novels and field trips, among other materials to provide students with a well-rounded experience culminating in a unique final presentation at the end of each semester. It is designed to engage students on a variety of levels that challenge them to dive into important philosophical discussions. Man versus man; good versus evil; why is there suffering in the world; what role does religion play; what causes human brutality; and what are the forces that shape the worst in us are just a few of the many essential questions students are asked to answer throughout the semester. While the class covers the history of events, it's also philosophical in nature, leaving open the chance to engage in rich class discussions that broaden the minds of young

adults and encourage spirited, lively conversation during instruction. The two main anchors of the course are the the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Students have familiarity with World War I and World War II by the time they are eligible for the class, and this makes teaching these events even more important. While virtually every student has had some exposure to the Holocaust, almost no students recall or know about the Armenian Genocide. In some cases, students are shocked to learn that the Armenian Genocide is WWI's



A visit to hear Holocaust survivor Alice Eichenbaum speak at the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center on April 11, 2019

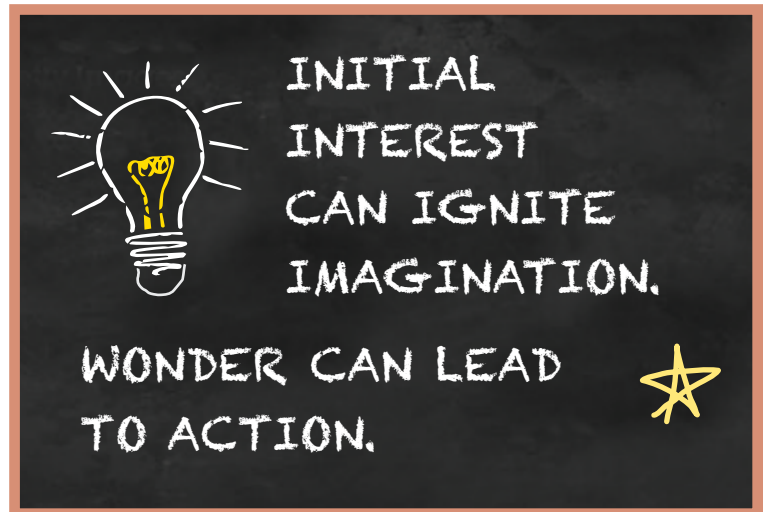
greatest atrocity, and yet, it is rarely taught or discussed. What may be more egregious is how world affairs and the geopolitical debate can dictate the official response of the United States when it pertains to what happened to the Armenians over 100 years ago. Students learn about the parallels between the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust and draw their own conclusions based upon the evidence.

The use of films and a novel plays an important part in the class and helps to bring a human element to their experience. *Schindler's List*, *The Promise*, *Defiance* and *Hotel Rwanda* bring these important events in history to life in a way that students understand. Students also read the book *Never Fall Down*. The novel leaves such an impression that students often ask to take a copy home or read it outside of class. The method used in telling the story of Arn (a young boy assigned to a Cambodian labor camp then turned child soldier) is very authentic, and students can visualize a vivid picture of the scenes described throughout the book. These different forms of media play a vital role in the educational process and show students how ordinary people can do extraordinary feats against the toughest of odds, even in the most difficult situations.

There have been many memorable class experiences, but the bi-annual field trip and final presentation are the top two choices of the students. Every semester, we visit downtown Providence to walk through Memorial Park, just off South Main Street. Students can

walk from the pedestrian bridge to the park and take in the beautiful memorials, while listening to an audio tour of the RI Holocaust Memorial. Students also visit the North Burial Ground in Providence. There, students learn the history of the Armenian Martyrs' Memorial Monument dedicated on April 24, 1977, and the Memorial Pedestal dedicated on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 2015. Following these two stops, we often travel to the Sandra Bornstein Holocaust Education Center for a tour of the facilities and to hear a speaker, usually discussing the Holocaust. Over the years, students have heard from a Jewish rabbi, a passenger on the Kindertransport (Children's Transport), and most recently, they heard and asked questions of internationally-recognized Rwandan genocide survivor and human rights activist Jacqueline Murekatete.

Our final presentation of the semester challenges students to think about the future and the role the United States plays when it concerns the issue of genocide globally. The simulation is an adaptation of the Brown University Choices Program. Students use what they've learned throughout the semester and get a more concentrated look at genocide from the use of primary source documents and a series of important eyewitness testimony videos. They learn what America knew about the Armenian Genocide through a series of headlines and



articles in *The New York Times* in 1915. All of this work culminates in a simulation the students conduct on the final two days of the project. They are tasked with deliberating four different policies the United States could adopt by asking a series of questions for better clarification of the policy. The background information is paramount to their role, and students can use real historical events to argue their points.

Once the presentations are complete, the real work begins. Students analyze the policies and then craft their own policy based on history, research and their own beliefs. They can adopt a policy they learned during the simulation, combine policies or draw on their experiences throughout the semester to write something completely different. After drafting the new policy for the United States, it's time to put their work to the test. Students are given a global case study, and they must examine their policy as it would pertain to the hypothetical crisis identified and assess its effectiveness in the conflict. Our final exam is challenging given the global community, the United Nations and the sovereignty of other countries. The world is continuously more and more intertwined; the lines—especially economically—are blurred as countries scour the earth for trade opportunities with nations and open up new markets to capitalize on business ventures and opportunity. As students begin to realize just how difficult every decision really is, be it political, humanitarian or morally just, these decisions are no longer black and white; they are fraught with varying shades of gray, even if that decision is to stop the senseless killing of innocent people. Our semester does end with hope, as they provide a potential plan to end genocide forever. Maybe someday their dreams can be realized.

I am forever grateful to the students of East Greenwich High School for their thoughtful and articulate responses to the class as a whole and how they approach the final exam. Their empathy and understanding of a complex subject inspires me to work harder and design a course worthy of their participation. Throughout my 24-year career, seventeen of which have been spent teaching *Genocides of the Twentieth Century*, I am continuously amazed at how fortunate I am to be in this district working in a profession that is so vitally important to society. Interacting with students who think about the world around them and who apply the knowledge they gain may be the greatest gift of all. □



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Expanding Armenian Genocide Studies in the UK



By Andy Lawrence

Page 10 of the book *Ravishing Armenia* contains a photograph. It is entitled “The long line that swiftly grew shorter” and shows a column of Armenians being marched through an arid, inhospitable environment by armed guards. It is a snapshot of the deportations. The book tells the story of Aurora Mardiganian, a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. It was published in 1919.

For years I used Aurora’s story, and the photograph a few pages into the book, to help me teach about the Armenian Genocide—to teach a narrative of the genocide that emphasised the horrific nature of the events of 1915, the deportations into the desert and the attempt to wipe out the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. Aurora’s story

was one of miraculous, if horrific, escape. The image on page 10 of the book was used to illustrate this: forlorn human beings being taken to their deaths in the “great plains of Mamuret-ul-Aziz, escorted by the barbarous ‘zapieths.’” All this is true...and an essential part of the historical narrative necessary for young people to know.

Nevertheless, since then, my teaching has developed—enabling my students to gain a more nuanced, sophisticated and, most importantly, historically accurate understanding of the Armenian Genocide. Now, the image is used as a starting point, as is *Ravishing Armenia*. It is no longer a full stop. Instead, the nature of the photograph as one produced by perpetrators (or bystanders) is considered, and the reality

of the victims as being completely without agency and going to their fate in a passive manner is questioned critically. Other elements of the text are drawn to illustrate a more multi-dimensional picture of the Genocide.

In addition to the account detailing Aurora’s experiences (and that of others), I have integrated more modern scholarship into my teaching of the Armenian Genocide. *The Resistance Network*, researched and written by Dr. Khatchig Mouradian of Columbia University without question has enabled me to enhance the quality of my teaching in several ways.

A group of Andy Lawrence’s students who raise genocide awareness in their school

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I now dedicate more lessons of my scheme of work on the Genocide to resistance. This provides historically justified and important depth and detail to a study of the events under consideration. More than that, it gives the students an understanding that Armenians did not passively accept what was being perpetrated. They had agency. They fought for their lives in many different ways. This all helps to humanize and contextualize what the students take away from the lessons I teach.

As a starting point, we look at overt examples of what students would most readily classify as ‘resistance’ in my teaching. Together, we examine the actions of the Armenians in Musa Dag, led by Moses Der Kalousdian. The villagers in this area, knowing what the Ottoman perpetrators intended for them as they approached, put up a stubborn physical resistance for an astonishing fifty-three days.

Using Dr. Mouradian’s scholarship, we examine a wider meaning of resistance, including his definition of resistance as “actions carried out illegally, or against the sanction and will of the authorities, to save Armenian deportees from annihilation.” We then go on to examine the work of Armenian religious and secular community leaders who had been deported to Syria as part of the Ottomans’ genocidal policies in 1915. I ask the pupils to study how these people resisted, the choices that they made and how they interacted with a larger coalition of local Muslim, Jewish and Christian allies who tried to help the deportees survive.

I have also been bringing a greater focus to survivor memoirs into my teaching. For instance, Karnig Panian’s memoir *Goodbye, Antoura*, which Dr. Mouradian introduced me to not so long ago, has enabled me to further enhance the granular detail with which I teach about the Genocide. For instance, I’m now able to provide a more focused view of the pre-genocide way of life that is so important to introduce to students. If the young people in my class first meet Armenians as they

My teaching has developed—enabling my students to gain a more nuanced, sophisticated and, most importantly, historically accurate understanding of the Armenian Genocide.

are deported or persecuted, it might lead to the problematic belief that the Armenians were simply put on this earth to be victims. Instead, they understand that those who were to suffer at the hands of the Ottoman perpetrators and their collaborators had lives, hopes, fears, ambitions, culture and community just like the rest of us. In this instance, Panian outlines the rich life that he and his family enjoyed in their village of Gurin during the early years of the author’s childhood. Panian’s memoir also serves to further illustrate the attempt of the perpetrators to destroy identity, as well as recounting a narrative that includes the horrors of deportation and the desert. Furthermore, the book is very powerful in allowing my pupils to understand the agency of Armenians during the Genocide and their struggle for physical and cultural survival.

All this serves to provide a more detailed, accurate, sophisticated, and most importantly, more human picture of Armenians during the Genocide. I no longer teach from a perspective that solely focuses on

the genocidal actions of the perpetrators but instead allow my pupils to leave the classroom with a much better, truer, understanding of the Armenian Genocide. More broadly, some of the students that I have taught about the Genocide have reacted by wanting to know more and to become activists. They have asked to speak to experts and have interviewed Dr. Mouradian. Some in my classes, realizing that not many people knew about the Armenian Genocide specifically, or genocide in general, have worked in their spare time to raise awareness. Their work may be viewed via their Twitter account @genocide8020.

There is no official textbook for British secondary schools that covers the Armenian Genocide in any great depth, detail or sophistication. I have not received any specific training on how to deliver a scheme of work about the Genocide. However, thanks to ever-generous, inspirational, expert academics such as Dr. Mouradian, who devote time and energy to helping teachers understand more about what happened, I have been able to teach myself more about the events of the Genocide. I also use the training that I have received on how to teach about the Holocaust from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education to fit my new knowledge into a pedagogical framework that works. I suspect that those teachers in the UK who do teach about the Armenian Genocide follow a similar path.

Postscript: The students themselves also enhance my teaching of the Armenian Genocide with the questions that they ask—those unexpected but very valuable moments in teaching when a lesson takes a different turn and explores an issue that I hadn’t planned for that day. For instance, one student asked why the British government has not recognized the

Armenian Genocide. I had to confess that I did not know. We decided to investigate further and found documentation setting out our government’s defense of their position, as well as the efforts of MPs to have

the Genocide recognized. This natural inquisitiveness and eagerness to have a wrong righted can give hope to us all. □

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SECTARIANISM AND THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The Politics of the Absence of Genocide Education in Lebanon

By Yeghia Tashjian

Sectarianism is deeply rooted in Lebanon's everyday life, particularly in the education system which shapes the political opinions and beliefs of students. Sectarian identity plays a crucial role in political mobilization in Lebanon, whereby an individual is not directly connected to the state but is bridged to it through the sectarian institution or community to which he or she belongs. Hence, this factor pushes Lebanese to naturally divide the world into categories of "us" and "them," or "in-groups" and "out-groups," which can boost one's self-image and may entail prejudiced views against members of particular groups, in this case the Armenians.

Within this context, in the Lebanese education system, the lack of unified history textbooks complicates the situation as history teaching is highly politicized, and each sectarian educational institution has its own history textbook. For example, while in Muslim schools the Arab "opening" to the Middle East is praised, in Christian schools, the period is viewed as an "occupation." In addition, one of the factors that hinders genocide education in Lebanon is the Arab-Israeli conflict, where any academic or educational discussion about the Jewish Holocaust is directly related to Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians. Hence, many Arab nationalist scholars tend to ignore the Holocaust and compare the Armenian Genocide to the Palestinian Nakba (1948). Meanwhile, Christian private schools, mainly Catholic and Greek Orthodox schools, tend to view the Armenian Genocide as part of a "Christian Genocide" perpetrated by the Muslim Ottoman Empire that includes the Assyrian (Seyfo) and Greek Genocides, the starvation of Mount Lebanon and the execution of the Lebanese and Syrian intellectuals on May 5-6, 1916.

Schools located in Muslim Sunni majority areas either ignore these events or portray the Armenian Genocide and the starvation of Mount Lebanon as exaggerated events and their victims as tools of Western imperialism to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire. This narrative became a dominant factor among some Sunni political circles, especially after the centennial of the Armenian Genocide, and with the growth of Turkish soft power in northern Lebanon and Beirut, with the rise of political Islam in the Middle East.

Therefore, throughout the years, the events dedicated to the Armenian Genocide commemoration in Lebanon became highly politicized and turned into a tool of the domestic political bazaar, sometimes used in political elections to win over Armenian voters. Moreover, the Turkish embassy, along with its cultural and social centers, started sending political messages against the Armenian community through its proxies on the ground. These developments began challenging the discourse of the Armenian Genocide in Lebanese politics. To analyze these events, this article will highlight how sectarianism has shaped, and sometimes hindered, (mainly Armenian) genocide education in Lebanon.

SECTARIANISM AND THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LEBANON

With the absence of a centralized state over the decades, the sectarian structure of the Lebanese political system has penetrated the educational system largely contributing to the current sectarian division in Lebanese society. This led to the inability of the Lebanese to agree on a unified history textbook. The period textbook ends in 1943 when the French mandate ends, and thereafter, Lebanese sectarian leaders couldn't agree on describing the nature of the state and the roots of the civil war.¹

For example, in relation to history curricula, some religious groups opposed a unified single history textbook out of concern that their community would lose the monopoly of "historical truth." Their opposition was deeply rooted in religious ideologies. Sectarian politicians also were successful after the civil war in imposing religious education in public schools, which was traditionally absent before the war, despite the opposition of many leftist and secular parties in the country. To add fuel to the fire, two separate religious textbooks were created for each faith with no information about the other religion. It is worth mentioning that 60-percent of the schools in Lebanon are private, which have a long history of using textbooks for religious teachings.² The language used in these textbooks is discriminatory and biased based upon "us and them," "our faith and their faith," and "Christian and Muslim."

These teaching methods and textbooks shaped the narrative of education relative to the study of World War I—Muslim schools viewed it as an imperialist attempt to overthrow the Islamic Khalifate, while Christian schools pushed the narrative that the events (starvation, genocide, massacres...) that took place in the Ottoman Empire constituted war crimes perpetrated by the Ottoman state to depopulate the region of its indigenous Christians. Moreover, similar to Arab states when it comes to genocide education, Lebanon lacks this subject matter both on the secondary and university levels either due to a lack of interest or reluctance to recognize the Jewish Holocaust due to the Arabs' enmity towards the Israeli state. For this reason, some Muslim schools and education centers teach the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians (Nakba) through political and historical lenses, while Christian schools tend to ignore the Palestinian Nakba and instead concentrate on the "Christian Genocide" during WWI.

Some attempts were made by Armenian political parties and educational centers to promote the Armenian Genocide courses at Haigazian University and the American University of Beirut. Additionally, student organizations have pushed to organize Armenian Genocide events (lectures, exhibitions, round tables) in private and public universities, sometimes in coordination with Palestinian and African clubs, to target a large number of Lebanese and foreign students. Moreover, the May 6, 1916 events when the Ottoman government publicly executed hundreds of Lebanese and Syrian intellectuals is also a matter of debate between sectarian groups. While Armenians, along with some other Christian groups, commemorate the Martyrs' Day dedicated to those executed by the Ottomans, Sunnis tend to ignore it out of fear of antagonizing Turkey, despite the fact that most of the Arab intellectuals killed on that day were Muslim Sunnis.

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

The Christian perspective of the Armenian Genocide is a reflection of the horrors of the starvation that took place in Mount Lebanon as the Ottomans imposed a blockade on the region. In fact, the Christian community has not overcome the memory of the Ottoman occupation and continues to look back at Ottoman rule as an era of repression.³

As WWI began, the Ottomans were highly suspicious of the Maronites and their contact with France. As a result, Jamal Pasha—the military governor of Greater Syria also known as "al safah" in Arabic (butcher)—abolished the autonomous region of Mount Lebanon within the Ottoman Empire, imposed martial law and deployed thousands of Ottoman troops in Mount Lebanon early in the war to prevent Christians from aiding the allies. He later detained the Maronite intellectuals and religious leaders, imposed a blockade and cut off all supply lines to Mount Lebanon, resulting in a severe food shortage and later starvation. "Meanwhile, despite the harsh conditions in Mount Lebanon, the Patriarch welcomed Armenian survivors of Ottoman atrocities, defiantly declaring, 'the piece of bread that we have, we will share it with our Armenian brothers.'"⁴

According to a French intelligence report, Jamal Pasha claimed: "We have rid ourselves of the Armenians by the sword. We shall do



Maronite Patriarch Elias Peter Hoayek distributing bread during the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon (Fouad Debbas collection, public domain, Wikimedia Commons)

away with the Lebanese by famine." By the winter of 1916, famine was widespread in Beirut and Mount Lebanon. By the time the Entente powers had captured Beirut and Mount Lebanon in October 1918, dozens of villages were destroyed and almost one-third of the population of Beirut and Mount Lebanon, or approximately 175,000 Lebanese were starved to death. It's debatable whether Ottoman authorities actually envisioned the engineered extermination of the Maronites. There were neither coded Ottoman instructions to murder Maronites en masse nor a *fatwa* by religious authorities to attack Maronites, as there had been for the Armenians. Nevertheless, the result of Ottoman policies during the First World War was the mass killing of a majority Maronite population in Mount Lebanon.⁵

Although some historians have written about the famine of Mount Lebanon, the event has largely gone unrecognized in contemporary political or social discourse outside of the Maronite community itself. The Maronites and other Christians stress the topic while studying the events of WWI, and the subject is also asked in public exams. However, Maronites and other Christians view the event from a religious (pan-Islamist) perspective rather than an ethnic-nationalist position. For them, the Genocide perpetrated against the Armenians, Assyrians, Pontic Greeks and others was interconnected, as the crime was against a particular religious group. This factor is very important as it mobilizes the Christian community along religious and sectarian lines, and the narrative became dominant with the rise of ISIS and the return of political Islam during the Arab Spring.

Hence, during Armenian Genocide commemoration events, some Christian private schools and institutions organize public commemoration events to remember the Christian Genocide and express Christian solidarity.

TURKEY'S SOFT POWER AND THE RISE OF ANTI-ARMENIANISM

It is clear that Turkish diplomacy towards Lebanon improved dramatically following the Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005. Many Lebanese considered Turkey's role in the country cross-sectarian. Turkey's involvement in sending peacekeepers to the south as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) troops and increased humanitarian aid to the country

fostered a socio-economic environment in which Turkish influence deepened and was translated into soft power. However, the outbreak of the Syrian crisis has transformed this dynamic and Turkey's diplomacy faced many challenges.⁶

After Ahmet Davutoglu's (2009) and Recep Tayyip Erdogan's (2010) visits to Lebanon, Turkey started directly helping and investing in Akkar, Tripoli and other areas. While in Beirut, the Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Center and TIKA Lebanon Coordination Office were opened respectively in 2012 and 2014. According to the pro-government *Daily Sabah* newspaper, in 10 years around 15,000 Lebanese graduated from TIKA by learning the Turkish language and participating in cultural activities and workshops.⁷ These two organizations were crucial in advancing Turkey's soft power by working to improve the living standards of Turkmen and other Turkish communities and protecting their cultural identity. Meanwhile, complementing their work with the "Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities," an agency of the Prime Minister's office, many Lebanese of Turkish descent and Turkmen were granted scholarships to study in Turkey. This step has strengthened the bond between Turkey and these communities and further enhanced Turkish culture and language.⁸

Overall, Ankara has invested in two domains: the socio-economic empowerment of the Turkish communities and Sunnis through the provision of development aid and capacity-building projects and the reawakening of ethnic sentiment among the Turkmen community. In both cases, the objective is to expand its influence by conquering hearts and minds.⁹

It is important to mention that a key lever of Turkish soft power in Lebanon, and in the region more broadly, is popular culture embodied by Turkish television series. The popularity of these dramas encouraged Lebanese to visit Turkey, and some travel agencies proposed packages that include a tour of the locations where the top television series were shot. Turkey's soft power initiatives also targeted the elites. By opening offices of the Yunus Emre Institute in Beirut and Tripoli, Ankara sought to shape a Turcophone elite. The primary goal was to recruit a new kind of elite who is attracted to Turkish culture and civilization and has positive perceptions of Turkey.¹⁰

Turkey infiltrated Lebanese domestic politics through the gates of humanitarianism. Meanwhile, the rise of Sunni Islamist movements in the region encouraged Islamist movements in Lebanon to flourish. The Jama'a Islamiya Party (Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood) in Lebanon considered itself a sister party of AKP and sought to forge a strong relationship with Turkey. This was clear during the centennial of the Armenian Genocide (April 24, 2015), when the Jama'a organized anti-Armenian rallies and meetings and declared its support for Turkey against the "false genocide accusation."¹¹ Moreover, some Sunni MPs also joined the call and officially visited Turkey and attended the centennial of the Gallipoli ceremony. Armenians today are shocked to see counterdemonstrations organized by Lebanese Turkmen and some Sunni clerics and activists, along with public justification of the Genocide.¹² This type of rhetoric became very common against the Armenians in Lebanon beginning after the centennial of the Armenian Genocide. In 2015, a group of pro-Turkey Muslim clerics in Beirut

and the northern city of Tripoli announced that they would no longer accept the "insults towards the grandchildren of the Ottomans." It is not surprising that many Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated websites and social media pages spread fake publications about "Armenians committing genocide against Muslims."¹³ Similar anti-Armenianism and genocide denial are also spread in mosque sermons and conferences "exposing the Armenian lies."¹⁴

On June 11, 2020, in response to criticism against the Turkish President by an Armenian reporter, a demonstration was staged in parts of Beirut's western quarter, primarily inhabited by Muslim Sunni, with slogans directed against Armenians and accompanied by the waving of the Turkish and Lebanese flags. On the same day in a viral video, a Lebanese of Turkish descent threatened to slaughter Armenians in Bourj Hammoud, called the Ottomans "his ancestors" who did a good job slaughtering Armenians and called Armenians traitors and evil people.¹⁵ Here, it became clear that the issue was no longer denial of the Genocide but justifying it. Such justifications also were present in the speeches of many Islamist clerics during the early phase of the Syrian civil war. Often, justification of a crime instigates new crimes and opens the path to the repetition of crimes against a community that has been demonized over time.

The narrative justifying the Armenian Genocide has been part of Turkish denialist propaganda in the Sunni community, where Armenians have been portrayed as the "fifth column," "tools of imperialism," "stabbers and traitors," "separatists" and "Muslim killers."¹⁶ Events have been organized by the Turkish embassy where photos have been displayed of Armenians allegedly killing innocent Muslims in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷

ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

The lack of a unified history textbook and the absence of genocide education for political reasons has left the Armenians alone to raise awareness about the Armenian Genocide and the atrocities committed by Ottoman Turkey against the indigenous non-Muslim nations in the region. Unlike in other Arab countries, the Christian presence in Lebanon has helped Armenians to coordinate their efforts with other Christian organizations and communities; however, this action gave the Genocide commemoration a religious tone. Despite the fact that Armenian schools and their educational system stress the ethnic dimension of the Genocide (pan-Turkism), Christians concentrated on the religious (pan-Islamist) dimension of genocide.¹⁸ This phenomenon has made it difficult for Muslim Sunnis to have a positive view towards the Armenian Genocide commemoration events.

Moreover, the Turkmen and Turkish communities residing in Lebanon began to be viewed as Ankara's voice and an essential means to serve its policy and ambitions, thus consolidating Turkey's influence abroad.¹⁹ In some ways, this has counter-balanced the efforts of the Armenians and increased pressure on private education institutions (schools and universities) addressing the Genocide issue from a humanitarian angle. □

For the endnotes, please see this article on www.armenianweekly.com.

Yerablur, loss, and the continuing cycle of genocide



By Sara Cohan

*Immediately, the Fellows understood that our very
just ensure 1915 is remembered, but that Armenia*

As my last major endeavor as education director with The Genocide Education Project (GenEd), I had the honor of working with fifteen US educators from Alaska to Massachusetts in Yerevan in July 2022. They comprised the first group of international secondary level educators to attend seminars at the Armenian Genocide Memorial and Institute (AGMI). The teachers were chosen based on a competitive application process in which they proved an understanding of the history of the Armenian Genocide, had taught the subject for at least three years and demonstrated their leadership in education at the local, state and national levels. As an educator of twenty-six years myself, and

involved in teaching about the Armenian Genocide for almost as long, working with this masterful group with GenEd in Yerevan was a dream come true.

One challenge I faced while creating the curriculum for the program was how to show the ongoing and growing threat of genocide facing Armenia and Artsakh today. How was I going to translate the hurt experienced by Armenia, specifically since the 2020 war? After my first visit to Yerevan since the 2020 war in April 2022, I grappled with this question as I saw young soldiers lined up at Tsitsernakaberd on April 24. They were in wheelchairs, on crutches or with the scars of the war in their eyes. They were the ones who returned home.

As a diasporan, I read over and over again about the tragedies of the 2020 war. It was not until I was in Haiastan that I began to truly feel the loss levied on our homeland. I decided to add a field trip to Yerablur (Military Pantheon). At Yerablur, the Fellows would be able to see the images of our fallen heroes etched into their gravestones. The faces of the young soldiers lined across the cemetery would surely illustrate the loss that Armenia has been dealt.

We went early in the week. As the Fellows began to explore Yerevan and cultural sites near the city, they needed to understand the impact of the war. While they were well-versed on 1915, they did not know as much about the 2020 war due to the disinterest of the Western media in accurately covering it.

On Monday afternoon, just a few days after the Fellows arrived, we boarded the bus with our tour guide, Rima Darbinyan, and two videographers, Karotik Galstyan and wHayk Frangulyan. We had just spent the morning exploring the history of Sardarabad and denial of the Armenian Genocide with GenEd board member Dr. Dikran Kaligian. We exited the cool, dimly lit space of AGMI and drove to Yerablur with the relentless sun of Yerevan on our backs.

Darbinyan, an absolutely brilliant woman, began to explain the history of Yerablur to the Fellows. She generally had

to explain that since November 9, 2020, hundreds more had been killed as Azerbaijan continues to encroach upon sovereign Armenian land.

With a glance downward, Darbinyan said in almost a whisper that she had lost close family friends and that her father had served in the war. The videographers in the back of the bus were silent. One of them had lost their brother in the war and was a veteran of the 2016 war. His family was in the process of constructing the gravesite at Yerablur. As he was leaving the bus, he told a few of the Fellows. His pain was palpable.

The GenEd Teacher Fellowship program was designed to facilitate a series of outcomes including providing advanced training about the Armenian Genocide, the ongoing violence against Armenians and the history and complex sociological issues surrounding the study of human rights and genocide. After this deep dive into the study of the Armenian Case and upon arrival back in the US, the Fellows then would launch workshops and seminars about the Armenian Case within their educational networks on behalf of GenEd. Within a month of returning from Yerevan, the Fellows immediately began running



existence is in peril. They now had a mission to not is not forgotten.

an uplifting energy about her. Today was different. She recited the information about the cemetery and the impact of the war with a slow pace and distant tone. Almost 4,000 Armenian soldiers and hundreds of civilians were killed, she stated. I interrupted Darbinyan, fearful that the impact of this loss on such a small country would be lost on the group. I was wrong. Our Fellow from Oregon, Sigrid Olsen, quickly stepped in and kindly corrected me—they realized the enormity of the impact. She was taken aback by the numbers and reminded us that the number of deaths was comparable to that of all the allied soldiers who died on D-Day. “How do we not know this?” was echoed through the bus. We went on

We walked through the older sections of the cemetery and paid homage to the celebrated war heroes of our past as we moved closer to the graves of the soldiers who died at the hands of Azeris between 1991 and today. Their faces, fixed into marble, stared at the American group approaching. I could hear “they were so young” murmured by one of the Fellows. Immediately, the Fellows understood that our very existence is in peril. They now had a mission to not just ensure 1915 is remembered, but that Armenia is not forgotten.

In an era where we learn on screens more and more often, we forget the value of being physically present. Standing together under the piercing sun, we watched in silence as mothers laid flowers on the fresh graves of their sons.

professional development workshops and speaking at state and national conferences. Just months after the inaugural year, it was clear that a fully-funded and immersive training program with leaders in education means exponentially more US educators will receive vital training on the Armenian Genocide which will strengthen educators’ grasp of genocide and human rights history.

Confronted by the uncertain future of Armenia’s survival, the GenEd Teacher Fellows no longer simply learned about our country, but they began to feel the agony of the ongoing attacks by Azerbaijan with Turkish support. They left Armenia ready to share what was now interned in them with their colleagues across the US. □

PHOTOGRAPHS

are the Last Witnesses

By Arto Vaun, Ph.D.



Palanjian family of Erzinga. This extended Palanjian family had another almost identical photograph taken in 1914—the same matriarch, name not known, sitting in the same photo studio chair in Yerzinga, Historic Armenia, with the same backdrop and carpets. The date of this image is approximated as 1903 by using the age of Shooshanig Palanjian, the young girl at the right with the bow in her hair. Shooshanig had attended Euphrates College in Kharpert, Historic Armenia from 1912 to 1913, but was unable to return as the outbreak of war and the plight of Armenians worsened. Only she survived the Genocide of 1915. Photographer unknown. (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Araxie Derderian)

Project **SAVE** Archives

A photograph is many things. It's a snapshot of a moment and an echo of a memory. In older photographs, it's both what's in the photo and the materiality of the photo itself—a valuable, often uncanny object in its own right. Photographs can document and amplify historical events. They can also explore notions of beauty, mystery, time and mortality. Photographs are so visceral and direct that they can elicit empathy and connections among people who might otherwise not understand or know one another's stories. A powerful photograph will usually do all of the above.

In communities that have been historically oppressed and scattered, photographs have a vital added function—they are witnesses. And that has been the driving force behind Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, to save and share the dynamic narrative of the Armenian world through photographs and the stories they tell so that they won't be forgotten.

Founded in 1975, Project SAVE is the largest archive in the world solely dedicated to photographs of the Armenian global experience. Its collections contain over 80,000 hardcopy, original

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photographs spanning over 160 years and several continents.

Today, the visual image has become a dominant, ubiquitous global language due to intense technological and cultural changes to the point where we take photographs for granted. But in the late 1960s, Project SAVE's founder Ruth Thomasian instinctively understood the universal impact and importance of photographs, especially when she noticed that in the Armenian world there was little to no focus on preserving and documenting them. Without realizing it, she would become one of the most unique, pioneering individuals in the field of Armenian cultural work.

Decades later, Project SAVE has become one of the important photography archives in North America.

It's 1903 and fourteen members of the Palanjian family have gathered in a photo studio in Yerzinga to have a portrait taken. Sitting for a photograph at that time is still mostly for the privileged, so they're dressed impeccably, like any middle to upper class Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. The children and grandchildren are gathered around the matriarch who lovingly holds the infant on her lap. Three of the children grip wildflowers casually in their tiny hands. Two of the girls have big white bows in their hair. Shooshanig, the younger one, sits on the edge of a chair by her mother, feet dangling. Years later, she's the only one who would survive the Genocide. But for now, as the photograph is snapped, the warmth and bond between them all is evident in their eyes and demeanor. They are full of hope.

It's 1918 in Tokyo, Japan. A sister and brother are 5,035 miles away from their home in Van—a home and family no longer there. After escaping from the Genocide, they've clung to each other for dear life, somehow stumbling east through Siberia and Manchuria before finding themselves in Tokyo, where they decide to pose for a photo in traditional Japanese garb. Why? Perhaps they're trying to make sense of a world that isn't recognizable anymore. Perhaps they need proof that they're still real and alive. They stare awkwardly past the camera as if to say, *We can't believe any of this this either, and we are scared.*

Before the trivialization of photography in the digital age, it was often a ritual of wonderment. The camera was a cutting-edge miracle of modernity. It took time to set up and take one photograph. Nothing was taken for granted, from how the subjects were dressed, to the backdrop, to how people were posed. The taking of a photograph was an event. And the physical photo itself then could be an object of comfort or elucidation, giving people pummeled by massive changes something to hold onto and say, *That was us, we were there, and maybe our story matters.*



Satenig and Ardashes Megerdichian, Tokyo Japan, 1918. Sister and brother escaped the Genocide in Van and made their way to the United States going east through Russia, Siberia, Manchuria, Japan, Seattle and finally, Boston. Before leaving for America, Satenig and Arshag posed for the camera in traditional Japanese kimonos as a souvenir of their time in the country. (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Kay Danielian Megerdichian)

For Satenig and Ardashes Megerdichian, their story progressed from Tokyo to Seattle and finally to Boston. And that photograph traveled with them as a living relic, to remind them of what was, what wasn't and what could have been.

They are gone now, but that photograph lives on at Project SAVE, which means Satenig and Ardashes live on. The survivors of the Genocide and thousands of Armenian immigrants before that and after that are gone, so it's even more valuable and impactful that they

continue to exist in the tens of thousands of photographs in Project SAVE's collections. They and their stories would be forgotten without the immense photographic evidence painstakingly gathered and cared for in this one organization.

I had never known about Vasken and Berjoughie Ekizian.

They were siblings who lived somewhere in the Ottoman Empire with their family. Luckily, their parents could afford to have a portrait taken. So there's a striking photo from 1910 with little Vasken and Berjoughie dressed beautifully, each one holding a toy in their hands. The photographer thought to stand Berjoughie on a chair to be at the same height as her brother. She places her tiny hand lovingly and confidently on her brother's shoulder. They look at the camera. Both will be killed in the Genocide a few years later.

But because the photograph survived and is now at Project SAVE, their spirits and relevance can stay alive. We know they existed, mattered, and were part of a vibrant, extensive and historic Armenian community in historic Armenia (much of present day Turkey) because of this one photograph. Imagine if it too did not exist.

Like the Ekizians, the stories from before, during and right after the Armenian Genocide are often fragmented and difficult to piece together into a cohesive narrative, and for good reason. Moving pictures, photographic technology and audio recording were not as ubiquitous as they became by the time of the Holocaust. And the geo-political position of the Ottoman Empire in relation to other world powers, especially in the near apocalyptic chaos of World War I, made it difficult for the Genocide to gain the focus it deserved. There's also the still stunning fact that the word *genocide* did not exist at the time

Siblings Vasken and Berjouhie Ekizian, c. 1910–1914. Both were later killed in the Genocide. Photographer Unknown. (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Mary Tooroonjian McDaniel and Alice Tooroonjian Sangster)



(it didn't exist until Raphael Lemkin coined it in 1944).

So, beyond the catastrophe unleashed on Ottoman Armenians at a time when there wasn't the technology to more extensively document it nor the geopolitical will to stop it, there was also no way to talk about it because it was an event that hadn't been experienced before quite in that manner and on that scale. Consequently, the diaspora has been collectively stuck in the ripple effect of that trauma. And at times, this has negatively impacted the diaspora's ability to plan and think about a future that's more imaginative, free of victimhood and centered on where it lives rather than a romanticized faraway country that has its own government, citizens, interests and realities.

Photographs can be a grounding force that helps recalibrate one's perspective. Even when we initially don't recognize the people in photographs, we recognize ourselves somehow. It's a familiarity and sense of connection that only photographs can ignite. Strangers

become familiar and the past seeps into the present so that we can better understand who we are, where we are and what we want to happen next.

It's the 1920s. Three teenagers become friends in an orphanage in Torino, Italy. The orphanage is run by the Mekhitarists (another important but fragile diasporan entity). Their villages decimated and their families gone, the orphans become one another's family. Somehow, it's luckily decided by the administrators to have photographs taken. For whatever reason, these three friends are chosen as the subjects. They're dressed in crisp white shirts and their hair is shiny and combed. Without knowing the context, one might think they're the usual close school friends and not orphans who've survived a massive historical trauma. The girl in the middle leans her head gently towards the one on the left. They both give a look that's almost typical of a teenager, aloof and cool (or trying to be). The girl on the right clasps her hands on the middle one's shoulder and rests her head while smiling at the camera. She has a watch or bracelet on her delicate wrist.

We don't know their names or where they ended up after this photograph. But because this photograph is safe and sound at Project



Orphans of the Armenian Genocide Mekhitarist (Armenian Roman Catholic) Orphanage, Torino, Italy, mid-1920s. Photographer Unknown. (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Adrina Boyajian Tutunjian)



Nevart Chalikian with her first husband Garabed Zakarian on a beach. Exact location and date unknown, c. late 1920s-early 1930s. Photographer Unknown. (Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Courtesy of Nevart Hadji Bedrosian Chalikian)

This page is sponsored by Ara, Heather, Araxi, Nairi, Anoush & Knar Krafian (MA)

SAVE, we know that they existed. We can preserve and share their part in the broader, diverse story of that period.

The years right after the Genocide were profoundly bittersweet. Those who survived had to pick up the pieces and continue somehow. And part of being able to survive is finding a way to have hope again. It was those people who laid the foundations for the dynamic and vibrant communities in the diaspora around the world. People like Garabed Zakarian and Nevart Chalikian, Genocide survivors who found themselves on a beach in the United States around fifteen years after losing everything. They sit for a photograph with poise and warmth, two broken people transforming themselves into Americans.

Most of the people in the photographs at Project SAVE are in the process of becoming. In addition to being Armenian, they are becoming Syrian, French, American, Egyptian, Argentinian, Canadian, Lebanese, Greek, Polish, British, Cuban, Bulgarian—they are becoming a part of the fabric of their new home countries. In this way, the immense photographic archive at Project SAVE is also a unique visual record of the countless countries that Armenians have called home, where they reclaimed hope.

Over one hundred years after the Genocide, there are forces yet again that want to erase or lie about the existence of Armenians. Project SAVE continues to make sure they don't succeed. For nearly 50 years, it has cataloged

over 80,000 photographs that provide direct and clear evidence of the rich and expansive culture and history of Armenians over the past 160 years. But there needs to be renewed investment so that organizations like Project SAVE can grow into their true potential to have more sustainable and long-term impact on a larger scale; otherwise we're just talking to ourselves and preaching to the choir.

Three teenagers in Torino look out at us from the past. Small children and elderly parents in Yerzinga look out at us. Brothers and sisters, friends and strangers look out at us. They look at us from Tokyo, the United States, the Ottoman Empire, from everywhere Armenians have had vibrant, complicated, sad, beautiful lives, no matter how short or long. They all live on at Project SAVE Photograph Archives. They look out at us from photographs and ask, *What's the plan to reimagine, rejuvenate and properly invest in diaspora organizations that we helped build and that have given so much to the Armenian community and beyond?*

Organizations like Project SAVE will not exist forever without larger investments and connecting to the wider world. Those who came before us did their best to create vibrant communities even though they could have easily folded under the weight of grief and the struggles of immigrant life. Many of them now exist in the photographs at Project SAVE. They are witnesses to what was and what is. What happens next is up to you and me. □

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“Facts are Stubborn Things”: How DENIAL Turns FACTS Into OPINIONS and Erodes TRUTH

By Marc A. Mamigonian¹

“Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.”

—JOHN ADAMS, 1770²

Almost 200 years after John Adams spoke the words quoted above, Hannah Arendt, in her 1967 essay “Truth and Politics,” reflected on a problem she identified earlier than most: “the extent to which unwelcome factual truths are tolerated in free countries they are often, consciously or unconsciously, transformed into opinions—as though the fact of Germany’s support of Hitler or of France’s collapse before the German armies in 1940 or of Vatican policies during the Second World War were not a matter of historical record but a matter of opinion.”³

Denial does not necessarily need to convince people to be effective: it inflicts sufficient damage by creating a spurious discussion that creates a haze of doubt around the facts. Facts may be stubborn, as Adams stated, but as Arendt understood, if you can confuse enough people about what the facts are, it is possible to reduce a set of facts to merely the status of opinion.

The American civil rights leader Medgar Evers is credited with saying, “You can kill a man but you can’t kill an idea.”⁴ (Evers was

murdered in 1963 by a member of the Ku Klux Klan.) But the Ottoman Empire and subsequently the Republic of Turkey have tried, and in some ways succeeded, in having it both ways. First they killed the Armenians, and then they tried to kill the idea that they had killed the Armenians.

Turkey’s protégé state Azerbaijan has emulated its “big brother,” expunging the region of Nakhichevan of all evidence of Armenian existence, threatening Artsakh with annihilation while eradicating evidence of Armenians’ presence in the region, and, in effect, denying the existence of Armenia as such.⁵ Furthermore, subsequent to the writing of most of this article, beginning on December 12, 2022, Azerbaijan imposed a blockade on Artsakh, sealing off its sole connection to Armenia (and, thus, the world), creating dire conditions for the Armenian inhabitants of the region and, in effect, holding them hostage.⁶

Turkey and Azerbaijan are often aided and abetted in their contra-factual efforts by people who call themselves scholars, journalists and policy analysts who, sometimes knowingly, sometimes ignorantly repeat the counterfactual, denialist assertions that emanate from those states. While it is a universally accepted truism that the best way to combat ignorance is with education, and it is also frequently asserted and widely accepted as incontrovertible that education about genocide is the most effective means of preventing its recurrence as well as thwarting its denial, the facts on the ground suggest that this may be optimistic: the remarkable development and proliferation of genocide education in recent decades has not resulted in the elimination or necessarily even the marginalization of genocide denial.

One does not wish to suggest that education about genocide serves no purpose, nor that it can have no impact on genocide denial;

on the contrary, it is essential. It is important to realize, however, that denial is not always, or even mostly, a *product* of ignorance, but instead is a strategy for *producing* a kind of ignorance. As denial and the propagation of “alternative facts” takes its place at the center of contemporary life, it is increasingly important to understand how it works and what it seeks to accomplish. It is there that education is desperately needed.

In 2019, after decades of Armenian-American advocacy, both the US House of Representatives (H.Res. 296) and the Senate (S.Res. 150) passed resolutions expressing “that it is the policy of the United States to commemorate the Armenian Genocide through official recognition and remembrance,” “reject[ing] efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide or any other genocide,” and “encourage[ing] education and public understanding of the facts of the Armenian Genocide, including the role of the United States in humanitarian relief efforts, and the relevance of the Armenian Genocide to modern-day crimes against humanity.” On April 24, 2021, US President Joe Biden became the first president to issue a statement on Armenian Genocide Remembrance day that actually employed the term “Armenian Genocide.”⁷ In 2022, Mississippi became the 50th and final state to recognize the Armenian Genocide.⁸

These landmark occasions in the long struggle for US recognition of the Armenian Genocide follow other such acts of recognition elsewhere in the world and anticipate, one might suppose or hope, future instances elsewhere.

While these noteworthy acts of recognition by the US and other states and entities are in themselves important and contribute to the never-ending pushback against genocide denial, they do not signal that efforts to deny the Armenian Genocide are in retreat. Turkey’s official denialist stance remains unchanged and efforts to push its narrative in academic, journalistic and think tank circles are undiminished. Furthermore, just as Turkey and Azerbaijan have forged a strong strategic partnership exemplified by the catchphrase “One Nation, Two States” and enacted in the Turkish-facilitated Azerbaijani attack on Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in 2020, they and those who support their efforts have common cause in crafting and disseminating denialist narratives.⁹ As historian Bedross Der Matossian has recently written, “denialists of the Armenian Genocide are not part of the past, they are still very active in contemporary academic circles. In addition to being preoccupied with their futile efforts at the dissemination of (mis)knowledge about the Armenian Genocide, they also are currently embarking on new projects to write a revisionist history that denies the historical ties of Armenians to the land of Karabagh and undermines their quest for self-determination.”¹⁰

In the aftermath of the 44-day war in late 2020 and the recognition by President Biden of the Armenian Genocide in April 2021, there has been an impressive outpouring of analysis and opinion pieces on matters relating to Armenia, Turkey and Azerbaijan—impressive in quantity, if not always in terms of quality. All too often these have been highly selective and misleading in their presentation of facts and are distorted by, if not examples of, denialist discourse.

I would like to take a look at three pieces that appeared in prominent, internationally known outlets, Sinan Ülgen’s “Redefining the U.S.-Turkey Relationship” (published on the Carnegie Europe website), Hans Gutbrod and David Wood’s “Turkey Will Never Recognize the Armenian Genocide” (*Foreign Policy*, June 14, 2021), and Ghaith Abdul-Ahad’s “Each Rock Has Two Names” (*London Review of Books*, June 17, 2021), before briefly turning to a very recent book publication, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Historical and Political Perspectives* (2022), edited by Michael M. Gunter and M. Hakan Yavuz, and considering some of the fruits of Azerbaijan’s efforts to assert itself in the sphere of western academia.¹¹

A CLASSIC STRATEGY: THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AS “CONTROVERSY”

“Redefining the U.S.-Turkey Relationship” is the first publication in a Carnegie Europe series it calls the “Turkey and the World” initiative. The paper is authored by one of Carnegie Europe’s experts, Sinan Ülgen, a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels and a former member of the Turkish foreign service.

Contained within this lengthy working paper is Ülgen’s discussion of the impact of President Biden’s statement of April 23, 2021. Ülgen’s overall policy discussion and recommendations are beyond the scope of this discussion. They are summarized by Carnegie Europe thusly: “To fix their troubled relationship, the United States and Turkey should take gradual, concrete steps that build confidence and focus on common agendas.” As an analyst, he is entitled to his views and to share his perspective.

However, when Ülgen briefly provides historical background for the discussion of what he calls “the Armenian Question” he defaults to repeating lines from Turkey’s official denialist script. This may be expected from a career Turkish foreign service officer—indeed, it may be part of the job description; but it ought not to be acceptable from a Carnegie Europe-certified expert.

We must be clear about what denial of the Armenian Genocide is. It has shifted from an untenable position of total denial—no Armenians died, it is all a fabrication—to acknowledging and perhaps even expressing regret for the loss of Armenian lives during a time of general suffering but rejecting the existence of a coordinated effort to destroy Ottoman Armenian existence and thus denying the applicability of the term genocide. The shift has occurred not because the Turkish state is moving towards recognition of the Genocide but because it has found that “softer” denial is actually more effective. As Jennifer Dixon has argued, “while the narrative shifted to acknowledge some basic facts about the genocide, Turkish officials simultaneously took steps to more effectively defend core elements of the state’s narrative. Consequently, movement in the direction of acknowledgement was accompanied by the continued—and arguably strengthened—rejection of the label ‘genocide.’”¹² What all styles of denial have in common is the repudiation of the extensive documentation and scholarship on the Armenian Genocide.

Ülgen’s use of the phrase “Armenian Question” is in itself telling. In historical discourse, the Armenian Question refers to the

international debate between approximately 1878 (the end of the Russo-Turkish War) and World War I over the treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. In more recent parlance, of which Ülgen's use is an example, the phrase stands for the so-called debate over how to describe and characterize "the events of 1915." The Ottoman and then Turkish Republican solution to the historical Armenian Question ultimately was to render it moot through genocide. The Turkish state's answer to the latter-day "Armenian Question" is the eradication of historical facts—or at least demoting them to the status of opinions, much as Arendt described.

Ülgen's presentation exemplifies the more sophisticated end of the genocide denial continuum that has emerged over the last three decades, which acknowledges the tragic loss of Armenian lives but insists that the entire topic is fundamentally controversial and reducible to a he said/she said dispute between two sides: "Turks" and "Armenians."

"The proper characterization of the large-scale massacres committed against the Armenians under Ottoman rule remains controversial to this day," Ülgen asserts, without explaining the origin of this spurious "controversy"—more than a century of Ottoman and Turkish denial—or conveying the *lack* of controversy surrounding the characterization of the Genocide among experts. The suggestion that there is no consensus on the issue would be news to the International Association of Genocide Scholars, which has unanimously recognized the Armenian Genocide and called on the government of Turkey to end its denial campaign.¹³

Consistent with his professional background in the Turkish foreign service, he provides a distorted thumbnail sketch of the Armenian Genocide:

Beginning in 1915, the Ottoman leadership began to arrest, kill, deport, and forcibly resettle the empire's Armenian minority, in order to quash potential resistance or independence movements among the Armenian population. Armenians claim that these events amount to genocide. Turks, in return, claim that it was a forced relocation under the conditions of war, which ended tragically.

Ülgen has put forward a historical narrative not fundamentally different than that offered by the Ottoman Empire as the Armenian Genocide unfolded and then by the Turkish state and its genocide-denying apologists: the Ottoman leadership acted reasonably to counter a legitimate threat represented by its Armenian population. The end result may have been tragic, but Armenians brought it on themselves. It was not genocide, and it is only Armenians who claim that it was. Furthermore, "Turks," which presumably means all Turks, claim otherwise. There are no discernible facts: merely competing "claims."

Such an account is indistinguishable from the current official narrative by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which states that "the Ottoman Government ordered in 1915 the Armenian population residing in or near the war zone to be relocated to the southern Ottoman provinces away from the supply routes and

army transport lines on the way of the advancing Russian army. Some Armenians living away from the front, yet were reported or suspected to be involved in collaboration, were also included in mandatory transfer." It also notes, with what is perhaps meant to be exemplary sensitivity, that "Loss of life, regardless of numbers and regardless of possible guilt on the part of the victims, is tragic and must be remembered."¹⁴

The genocidal intent of the Ottoman authorities and the genocidal consequences of their actions are amply documented and described in a large body of scholarship. That Ülgen never mentions the existence of such materials does not speak well for his status as a Carnegie Europe expert. Indeed, the only time he acknowledges the concept of "a consensus within the academic community about the nature of these events," is to question its existence. Such an approach is in keeping with the arguments made by extreme nationalist Doğu Perinçek (supported by the Turkish government) before the European Court of Human Rights, in defense of Perinçek's right to deny the Armenian Genocide, which he had called "an international lie."¹⁵

Perinçek and Ülgen embody the full spectrum of Turkey's denial of the Armenian Genocide. The former is outlandish, aggressive and deliberately offensive. The latter is suave, polished and steeped in the language of Davos diplomacy. They seem to be polar opposites. Yet they approach "the Armenian Question" with the same goal—to deny the factuality of the Genocide.

Ülgen recounts the Turkish government's reaction to international recognitions of the Armenian Genocide, stating that "it regards many of them as politically motivated," and that "many Turks believe that the West was singularly interested in the fate of Christian Armenians but totally aloof to the large-scale tragedies that affected Muslim Turks in the same period."

It is apparent that, although he declines to say so, these staples of Turkey's denialist narrative which Ülgen presents as representing the positions of "the Turkish government" and of "many Turks" are also his own views.

Following President Biden's April 23, 2021, statement, Ülgen took to Twitter to express his disapproval, complaining: "The reason why Turkish people are reactive to Western pontification about the events of 1915 is that these statements are singularly focused on the fate of Christian Armenians. And include no empathy with the Muslim Turks who also perished in great numbers."¹⁶

He also repeated via Twitter the counter-statement issued by the Istanbul-based Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM), of which he is the chairman.¹⁷ Although EDAM is, purportedly, an independent entity, on this subject its position and the position of the Turkish state are identical. The statement reads, in part:

US President Biden's remarks yesterday on the qualification of the tragic events of 1915 as a genocide are fully in contradiction with these norms of responsible statecraft. A head of state should not have passed judgment on this controversial period of history in such blatant disregard to the principles of international law. In addition, these remarks are likely

to undermine many ongoing positive dynamics that would have helped to reach a better understanding of this large scale tragedy. Over the past years, the Turkish government has recognized the enormity of the human suffering caused by the fateful decisions of the Ottoman leadership in 1915. Ankara has also expressed its regrets for the consequences of these actions. Secondly at present Turkish society is having a debate on the nature of these atrocities. International pressure can only stifle this domestic debate. It is up to the citizens of Turkey to freely shape their opinions. The cause of freedom of expression will not be served by such international pontifications.¹⁸

We do not know if Ülgen was the author of this statement, but his Twitter feed would suggest that he regarded the statement as conveying his own thoughts. At any rate, the ideas expressed by EDAM are entirely consistent with Ülgen's own presentation: facts as such are not part of the discussion, only a "debate" and "opinions."

Ülgen's Twitter feed and the EDAM statement are part of the public record. Nevertheless, Carnegie Europe granted him space to present his denial in the guise of expert policy analysis.

Some have previously expressed frustration with Carnegie Europe's highly problematic writings on matters relating to Armenia, Turkey and the Armenian Genocide, and its reflexive and inadequate response when criticisms have been offered.¹⁹ Ülgen's work is

significantly worse still with its uncritical adoption of official Turkey's language of genocide denial.

While the article carries the caveat that "Carnegie does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of Carnegie, its staff, or its trustees," that does not grant it carte blanche to irresponsibly disseminate counter-factual state propaganda. An organization with Carnegie Europe's reputation ought to be capable of distinguishing facts from fiction, history from state propaganda.

AN EXERCISE IN MORAL HUBRIS AND MISSING THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Hans Gutbrod and David Wood's "Turkey Will Never Recognize the Armenian Genocide" is a remarkable exercise in moral hubris as the authors dispense their bromides and presume to lecture Armenians on how they should "commemorate the past in an ethical manner." What is most noteworthy about the piece are its elephant-in-the-room-sized omissions which inevitably skew the discussion the authors are attempting to engage in.

The authors, who are professors at Ilia State University in Tbilisi, Georgia, and Seton Hall University in New Jersey, respectively, propose to address "the moral dimensions of an Armenia-Turkey détente," warning that "a focus on achieving justice alone—through unilateral action or external arbitration—may provide a sense of validation to victims, but it can also fuel resentment, sour relationships,



and lead to future violence.” They argue that “the Armenian and Turkish governments should work to reframe the Armenian genocide—and the wider suffering that accompanied the downfall of the Ottoman Empire—as a shared history” and even recommend that “Washington could fund research into Turkish and Armenian sentiment on the Armenian genocide to explore the contours of belief in more depth to transcend the ongoing standoff.”

On one point, at least, I am fully in agreement with the authors: Turkey will likely never recognize the Armenian Genocide; at least, it is hard to imagine that day coming. They are mistaken, though, in asserting that the only point of international efforts to gain recognition of the Armenian Genocide is to compel Turkey to do likewise. As a citizen of the United States, I do not think it is unreasonable to want the stance of my government to reflect the reality of the history of the Armenian Genocide, as well as other historical realities, and not to aid and abet Turkey’s denial.

Efforts to gain international recognition, while not necessarily an end in themselves, usefully highlight the absurdity of Turkey’s denialist stance. Why is that useful? Because—and it is simply incomprehensible that the authors do not mention this important fact—Turkey not only does not *recognize* the Armenian Genocide but also it actively, vehemently, and aggressively *denies* it; and not just within its own borders but also abroad, wherever and whenever possible, in a multitude of ways.

There is a significant body of scholarship as well as general commentary dating back to the 1970s on the topic of Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. It is hard to believe that two serious-minded scholars could be unaware of this or, if aware, why they chose to omit mention of it. Likewise, it is difficult to see how a discussion of how to “commemorate the past in an ethical manner” can occur without taking the issue of Turkey’s denial into account. Such omissions and lapses do great harm to the credibility of their presentation.

Furthermore, the authors fail to take into account the vast power discrepancy between the two nations, both historically and currently. Turkey, with its huge population and military capacity, has for some three decades imposed a blockade on Armenia; the tiny remaining Armenian population in Turkey has lived in constant fear of discrimination or violence for a century; and Ankara, at minimum, was Azerbaijan’s indispensable ally and provider of weapons for its war of aggression against Armenians in 2020. These facts are not mentioned by the authors. While they rightly decry the “petty triumphalism of Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev” following the war, no mention is made of Ankara’s own “petty triumphalism.”²⁰

Gutbrod and Wood call on Armenians and Turks, or perhaps Armenia and Turkey, to “reconcile.” Reconciliation implies a restoration of friendly relations after a dispute. While, historically, there was not always an intractable state of bloody conflict between Armenians and Turks, neither was there a state of relations at an

earlier time—say, prior to the Armenian Genocide—which it would be reasonable to expect Armenians to want to restore.

The entire discourse of “Turkish-Armenian reconciliation,” as it has been framed mainly by European and American policy makers, and never more so than in Gutbrod and Wood’s presentation, positively reeks of first-world paternalism. As a white American, I would not have the temerity to call on Native Americans or African

Americans to set aside seeking justice in order to “reconcile” with white Americans or to urge them to focus instead on highlighting the many good white people who opposed slavery or the annihilation of the indigenous population.

Indeed, such an analogy is not strong enough. More apt might be counseling Native Americans or African Americans to seek reconciliation with white Americans while the government openly and

unapologetically denies its historical crimes and embraces white supremacy and neo-colonialism (a scenario which is, alas, not as fanciful as one might wish) or urging Jews to reconcile with a Germany that still denied the Holocaust. Such recommendations would be, one hopes, dismissed out of hand and seen as what they are: attempts to solve problems by coercing a victim group into abandoning its rights.

All too often we have seen the language of reconciliation deployed in the service of denial by stronger parties and the use of a so-called “reconciliation process” as a tool to defer any proper recognition or redress for historical crimes. An insistence on the facts of the Armenian Genocide—by scholars, by activists, by governments—is seen as counterproductive, if not an act of aggression. That is, reconciliation is deployed as one more weapon to beat back acknowledgement of the historical record and consequences that might arise from such an acknowledgement, and a never-ending “process” fosters the illusion of forward progress.²¹ The dangling carrot of “Turkish-Armenian reconciliation” has become a version of the cruel ploy pithily articulated by Ralph Ellison to encapsulate the African-American experience in his novel *Invisible Man*: “Keep This N----- Boy Running.”

A secondary sense of “reconciliation” is the process of bringing into harmony two different ideas in such a way that they are compatible with each other. To that end, we might ask: “Is there any way to reconcile the Turkish state’s narrative of ‘the events of 1915’ with the historical record?”—for this appears to be what Gutbrod and Wood have in mind by “refram[ing] the Armenian genocide—and the wider suffering that accompanied the downfall of the Ottoman Empire—as a shared history.” Even a casual reading of Turkey’s official historiography and the work of those who promote it abroad must lead to answering this question in the negative. The only way forward is for Turkey to enter into the world of historical facts rather than state-manufactured historical fiction. Gutbrod and Wood’s recommendations do not point in that direction.

What is needed is an entirely new Armenian-Turkish relationship founded on the realities of history and based on equality that grants

The only way forward is for Turkey to enter into the world of historical FACTS rather than state-manufactured historical FICTION

redress for previous wrongs to the maximum extent possible. This does not appear to be what Gutbrod and Wood are advocating, nor does it appear to be a likely prospect given the political realities on the ground. Unfortunately, by calling for a “redescription” of history “that various sides can live with” and suggesting that an inconvenient genocidal history can simply be “reframed,” they are granting Turkey license to continue its efforts to rewrite history and victimize Armenians.

EACH ROCK HAS TWO NAMES, BUT IT IS STILL A ROCK

In “Each Rock Has Two Names” Ghaith Abdul-Ahad provides an uneven mixture of insightful commentary, tenuous arguments, and false equivalences about the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. Painting with a broad brush, he states that “in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, writers constructed an ethnonational narrative that aspired to negate the existence of the other country, or at least to assign it the role of newcomer in the region.” The comparison, and the equation that it suggests, is fundamentally flawed.

While some historians in Armenia have indeed written problematic “ethnonational narratives” which warrant criticism, they have not, for example, systematically expunged references to Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis from republished historical sources, in stark contrast with Azerbaijani academicians, who have excised Armenia and Armenians from such publications for several decades²² even as thousands of Armenian historical monuments have been destroyed

within Azerbaijan. Criticism of the work of Armenian historians is certainly fair game—and calls for specifics rather than generalities—but the two cases are not comparable in any meaningful way.

Presumably by way of advancing this critique, Abdul-Ahad states that “Armenian writers pointed to Armenian churches and monasteries in Karabakh as proof of an uninterrupted presence in the area” and “dismissed the term ‘Azerbaijan’ as a modern political label.” But it is not only “Armenian writers” who have noted the ancient and uninterrupted Armenian presence in the area; it is not an “ethnonational” assertion nor an opinion but is simply a fact of which any historian or expert on the region must surely be aware. The suggestion that pointing out the obvious and indisputable fact of the evidence for ancient and uninterrupted Armenian presence in Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) is “nationalistic” is no more helpful or true than saying that the argument that vaccinations help combat Covid-19 is “liberal.”

Similarly, the use of the name “Azerbaijan” for the area comprising the current-day state of that name (as opposed to the region of Iran south of the Arax/Aras River that has been known as Azerbaijan from time out of mind) does not pre-date 1918. This is essentially a historically accurate statement, whether or not it is also uttered by nationalists.

Abdul-Ahad rightly identifies as “specious” the elaborate and preposterous fiction of Azerbaijani historians that modern Armenians “had erased ancient inscriptions and claimed monuments as their own.” Yet the unwarranted conclusion he draws is that “two peoples



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I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose history is ended, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, whose prayers are no longer uttered.

Go ahead, destroy this race. Let us say that it is again 1915. There is war in the world.

Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their houses and their churches. See if they will not live again. See if they will not laugh again. See if the race will not live again when two of them meet in a beer parlor, twenty years after, and laugh, and speak in their tongue. Go ahead, see if you can do anything about it. See if you can stop them from mocking the big ideas of the world, you sons of bitches, a couple of Armenians talking in the world, go ahead and try to destroy them.

-from “The Armenian & the Armenian”
New York. August, 1935.

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could look at the same building and each see in it what they wanted to see—a curious and unhelpful equating of (or inability to distinguish between) reality and fantasy. Surely there is a difference between Armenians (and non-Armenians) looking at Gandzasar cathedral and identifying it as an Armenian church and Azerbaijani assertions that it is actually a Caucasian Albanian (and thus proto-Azerbaijani) edifice. Equating these two “positions” is an absurdity and may suggest that the person making the equation is either incapable of or unwilling to distinguish history from state propaganda.

Finally, Abdul-Ahad and one of his sources, analyst Phil Gamaghelyan, present a decidedly problematic view of Armenia-Turkey-Azerbaijan relations. Abdul-Ahad writes: “At a time when Turkey itself was at last taking steps to acknowledge this part of its history—decriminalising discussion of the genocide, allowing books to be published addressing all aspects of the late Ottoman period, holding commemorations in Istanbul and Ankara—it was in Azerbaijan that denialism flourished.” It is true that genocide denialism in Azerbaijan has flourished; it goes hand in glove with the overall negation of any and all things related to Armenians. It is, however, absurd and insupportable to say that because a small number of courageous individuals in Turkey were addressing the Genocide and holding commemorations that “Turkey”—as a state—was “taking steps to acknowledge this part of its history.” It is, indeed, a form of denial to say, as Abdul-Ahad does, that “More recently, however, Turkey returned to a denialist position.” *Turkey has never left its denialist position*, even if some Turks have.

Additionally, Gamaghelyan refers to the dangerous “Armenian nationalist narrative that Azerbaijan and Turkey were one and the same.” But of course it is not “Armenian nationalists” who have formulated the idea of Turkey and Azerbaijan as “one nation, two states”: it is Azerbaijan and Turkey who have devised and embraced this description.²³ It is Azerbaijan and Turkey who put it into practice during the 44-day war of 2020, when “Turkey’s army-building capacity was clearly one of the leading factors contributing to Azerbaijan’s victory.”²⁴ It was Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev who jointly celebrated the war’s outcome, which Aliyev called “an example of our unity, our brotherhood.”²⁵ The June 15 Shusha Declaration further cemented this—if further cementing was needed.²⁶

While Abdul-Ahad is right to look critically at how facts are used to advance various political (and perhaps nationalistic) agendas, be they Azerbaijani or Armenian, at key moments he fails to differentiate fact from fiction while doing so, presumably out of a desire to present a “balanced” picture.

Unpacking the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict requires identifying the harmful roles played by nationalist narratives, but the process is not aided by placing fact and fiction on the same footing as Abdul-Ahad too often does. Each rock may have two names: but if one side calls the rock a rock and the other insists that the rock is actually a tree, can we not at least agree where the problem lies?



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"A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT"?

In late 2022 an ostensibly scholarly book appeared, *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Historical and Political Perspectives* (Routledge, 2022), edited by M. Hakan Yavuz and Michael M. Gunter. Considerations of space preclude a lengthy discussion of the ongoing contributions of Yavuz and Gunter to the denial of the Armenian Genocide; I have already done so elsewhere, as have others.²⁷ Suffice it to say that they have long been in the forefront of efforts to conjure an academic controversy about "the events of 1915." It is this background, rather than any training in or expertise on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, that appears to have placed them in a position to extend their reach to editing a volume on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The editors make the grandiose claim of providing "a comprehensive overview of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the long-running dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Armenian-majority region of Azerbaijan." *Caveat emptor*.

The editors provide a bathetic preemptive apologia as a preface, stating their deep sensitivity to the fact that the subject of the book is

susceptible to the perception of bias and the arousal of strong feelings on both sides. Not only should bias be avoided, but so too its mere perception if at all possible. This is difficult because people, no matter how unbiased, can be perceived by

others as being on "one side" or the other. Thus, the editors recognize that this is a subject that gives rise to strong feelings on both sides. They have done all they can to be even handed. Although they recognize that with some people perceptions of bias might still exist, they feel that any such views are ill-founded. Indeed, they believe that this volume will contribute to a better understanding of the entire situation.

In the ranks of overdetermined protestations of impartiality, this ranks with Gunter's own almost comical assertion in the preface to his 2009 *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* that "Given the 'received wisdom' on the Turkish-Armenian issue, some will argue this book is a Turkish apology. It is not!"

Such reassurances are far from convincing.

It will have to be the task of other writers and reviewers to unpack the historical distortions larded into the 452 pages of *The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict*. For the purposes of this discussion, it will be enough to note that the book's primary task of presenting an account of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that aligns with Baku's preferred narrative is fully compatible with the long-standing efforts of the editors (and at least some of the authors) to cast all possible doubt on the Armenian Genocide. The book is replete with references to "genocide" in scare quotes, the "so-called Armenian Genocide," "genocide allegations," "claims of genocide," and so on, which are a "natural" and synergistic companion to the book's main objective.

In fairness, one must note that co-editor Yavuz is not entirely a newcomer to the world of pro-Azerbaijan, anti-Armenia activity. Of particular note in this regard is a special issue of the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* (or JMMA, vol. 32, no. 2, June 2012) co-guest-edited by Adil Baguirov and Umut Uzer. According to the journal's editor-in-chief Saleha S. Mahmood:

When we were approached with a proposal to dedicate a Special Issue of JMMA to one of the world's ongoing, unresolved and perhaps now a 'forgotten' conflict, that of Nagorno Karabakh in the Caucasus, I was not quite sure if we can have the richness and variety in form and content that characterizes each issue of our Journal. Encouraged by Associate Editor, M. Hakan Yavuz, who connected us with the two guest editors of the proposed issue, Umut Uzer and Adil Baguirov, we took on this challenge.

Mahmood is effusive in his praise of the issue's articles, concluding that they "all make for fascinating reading," which is true but probably not in the sense that he means it.²⁸

Adil Baguirov not only guest edited the issue but also authored the first article, extending traditional denialist rhetoric to a more recent issue in "Nagorno-Karabakh: Competing Legal, Historic and Economic Claims in Political, Academic and Media Discourses." The guest editors declare at the outset that "[i]t is clearly evident that the NK conflict has been generally misunderstood, ignored or distorted as well as understudied in academic circles as well as exploited for political purposes." It soon becomes clear that what they mean by this is that the NK conflict has been generally misunderstood, ignored or distorted as well as understudied in academic circles as well as exploited for political purposes by Armenians.

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Baguirov is the co-founder of an entity known as the Karabakh Foundation (as is acknowledged in his contributor bio), of which JMMA Associate Editor M. Hakan Yavuz is also the only listed member of the Board of Trustees and its Chairman Pro Tempore (which is not acknowledged anywhere in the issue).²⁹

According to a lengthy exposé by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, which dubbed Baguirov “Baku’s Man in America,” he is “known to have close ties to President Aliyev” and was the recipient of funds from the “Azerbaijani laundromat,” which is “a set of intertwined bank accounts used as a slush fund by the country’s elite to buy luxury goods, pay off European politicians, and launder money” in order to “influence American policy in the interest of Azerbaijan.”³⁰

QUESTIONABLE ORIGINS OF AN OXFORD CENTRE

There seems little doubt that Azerbaijan, emboldened by its military victory and fueled by petro-dollars, will increasingly seek to purchase the kind of academic semi-credibility that Turkey has for decades sought through the cultivation of scholars willing to present its state narrative as historical fact or at least worthy of consideration as such.³¹ Even before the war, the 2018 establishment at the University of Oxford of the Nizami Ganjavi Centre through a £10 million donation from a mysterious entity called the British Foundation for the Study of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus (BFSAC), a UK-based foundation with intimate ties to the sister-in-law of Azerbaijan’s dictator Ilham Aliyev,

was an indication that Azerbaijan recognized the value of investing in scholarship that reflects favorably on a state hungry for legitimacy.

A 2021 *Times Higher Education* report on the Ganjavi Centre contained numerous revelations that raised concerns that the Centre may be less than purely academic, among them that “The donation [that established the Centre] was brokered by Nargiz Pashayeva, sister-in-law of President Ilham Aliyev, who since 2003 has ruled Azerbaijan amid accusations of torture, the jailing of political opponents and corruption” and “A member of the family of Azerbaijan’s autocratic ruler [i.e., Nargiz Pashayeva] sits on the board of a University of Oxford research centre that studies the country, raising conflict of interest concerns for academics.”³²

The same article quotes Prof. Robert Hoyland, former head of the Ganjavi Centre, as stating that the gift that created the Centre came from “a donor based in Europe” and “was not made to or from BFSAC, but to Oxford University directly, and the deed of gift was made between those two parties.” Hoyland’s assertion flatly contradicts Oxford’s own narrative of the creation and funding of the Ganjavi Centre, and renders the claim of the unnamed Oxford spokesman quoted in *Times Higher Education* that the university “was made aware of the original source of funds for this gift, which does not come from a government” far from reassuring, particularly in light of the skill with which Azerbaijan’s rulers have hidden the origin of the wealth they have spread around the United Kingdom, as has been extensively documented and reported.³³



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Indeed, even if Oxford's own prior statements are correct and the BFSAC was the source of the £10 million gift, given the central role played by Nargiz Pashayeva in the Foundation, the absence of information on where it obtained such a large amount of money, and the comments of Azerbaijan's ambassador to the UK that the incorporation of the Nizami Ganjavi Centre was one of the "tangible achievements" of his seven-year tenure, there would still be crucial questions that must be answered.³⁴

REWRITING THE PAST TO DICTATE THE FUTURE

There is a famous, perhaps apocryphal story about French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, who, when asked what future historians will think about the problem of who was responsible for starting World War I, is said to have responded, "This I don't know. But I know for certain that they will not say Belgium invaded Germany."

Commenting on this Clemenceau anecdote, Hannah Arendt wrote that "considerably more than the whims of historians would be needed to eliminate from the record the fact that on the night of August 4, 1914, German troops crossed the frontier of Belgium; it would require no less than a power monopoly over the entire civilized world. But such a power monopoly is far from being inconceivable, and it is not difficult to imagine what the fate of factual truth would be if power interests, national or social, had the last say in these matters."³⁵ Echoing John Adams, she writes: "Facts assert themselves by being stubborn, and their fragility is oddly combined with great resiliency."

But facts need help to assert themselves. Within Turkey and Azerbaijan, the kind of "power monopoly" Arendt finds "far from being inconceivable" is a reality. Turkey, Azerbaijan and their hirelings continue their well-funded efforts to overwrite the historical record with their "alternative fact" account of the Ottoman extermination of the Armenians, of the history of Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh and of the region generally. Although their efforts are widely rejected in most—but not, alas, all—international academic circles, in the less rigorous realms of journalism and think tanks, their efforts are more profitable. With Armenia in a position of abject vulnerability as a result of the 44-day war and the subsequent Azeri incursion into Armenia proper, it is increasingly clear that powerful forces are lining up not only to dictate Armenia's future but also its past. □

For the endnotes, please see this article on www.armenianweekly.com.

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*“I believe in the resistance as I believe there
can be no light without shadow; or rather,
no shadow unless there is also light.”*

—Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale*

By Khatchig Mouradian , Ph.D.

The defiance of victims is fundamental to the history of genocide. Without it, our understanding of the dynamics of mass atrocities would be flawed and inadequate. Using the Armenian Genocide as a case study, this essay argues for making resistance, broadly defined, an integral part of teaching about genocide in high schools and colleges.¹

Ask students to describe what happened during the Holocaust, and most responses will focus exclusively on acts the Nazis *committed* and the Jewish people *were subjected to*. Any knowledge of other mass atrocities will likely be framed in a similar manner, rarely with any reference to how the victims resisted. In our well-intentioned effort to demonstrate the enormity of the perpetrators’ crimes, we strip the victims of their agency, and unwittingly contribute to their silencing.

Therefore, it is key to emphasize that while the genocidal machine aims to maximize the very power asymmetry that propels it, it cannot erase the opposition of the victims as individuals and as a group: the perpetrator never wields absolute power, and the victims often demonstrate feats of individual and collective resistance. These actions merit a prominent place in our lesson plans.

This is not a call to turn teaching about genocide into communicating a hagiography of resisters, nor an attempt to glorify victims “by exaggerating resistance, which can imply a condemnation of those who did *not* resist,” to quote historian John M. Cox.² It is a call to give resistance as much time—and emphasis—as we allocate to the perpetrators’ crimes.

THE BREADTH OF RESISTANCE

In the scholarship on anti-Nazi resistance, a broad, inclusive definition has for decades been the norm. Sociologist Nechama Tec sees resistance “as a set of activities motivated by the desire to thwart, limit, undermine, or end the exercise of oppression over the oppressed.”³ Historian Bob Moore defines resistance to Nazis in Western Europe as “any activity designed to thwart German plans, or perceived by the occupiers as working against their interests.”⁴ Historian Yehuda Bauer has defined resistance to the Holocaust as “any group action consciously taken in opposition to known or surmised laws, actions or intentions directed against the Jews by the Germans and their supporters,” although more recently he has

argued for including individual acts of resistance and referring to the perpetrators as “Germans and their collaborators.”⁵

While historians have been successful in dispelling, in the words of historian Paul Bartrop, “one of the greatest myths of the Holocaust...that the Jews made little or no effort to defend themselves against their Nazi oppressors,”⁶ scholarship on other cases of mass violence has been slow to catch up. To this day, some authoritative histories of the Herero, Armenian and Rwandan genocides still equate resistance with armed action and ignore civilian forms of resistance, like organizing relief efforts, forging documents to facilitate escape, creating networks of solidarity and upholding religious and cultural practices against the will of the perpetrators. This neglect of the scope of resistance extends into—and, I would argue, is magnified—in the classroom setting.

One way to explore the theme of resistance in the classroom setting is to have students analyze multiple definitions, note similarities and particularities and examine the significance of these variations. Some useful questions to consider in this exercise include:

- How broad is the scholar’s definition? Does it include armed and unarmed forms of resistance? Does it consider both individual and group acts?
- What possible acts does the definition leave out? What considerations may have led the scholar to exclude these acts?
- What are similarities and differences among the definitions under study? What are key words and phrases in each? What are the implications of these word choices?
- Can this definition be applied to other mass atrocities? (see next section)

Based on their responses, students can then come up with a definition of their own and excavate manifestations of what *they* consider to be acts of resistance from assigned memoirs and accounts. This will lead them to discover resistance and resilience in the very pages where they were taught to see subjugation and erasure.

THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND RESISTANCE: A CASE STUDY

A discussion of resistance during genocides other than the best-known case, the Holocaust, can broaden students’ analytical aperture, help them apply what they have learned and challenge them to test and revise their conclusions. This section provides educators with background information and helpful resources to explore resistance to the Armenian Genocide.

The decision to uproot, dispossess and destroy Armenian communities on the pretext of wartime security measures and military necessity was spurred by an exclusionist ideology and a drive to homogenize the crumbling Ottoman Empire. What was known as the Armenian Question would be resolved through a policy of expulsion, expropriation and extermination.

The Ottoman Turkish authorities began arresting Armenian leaders and deporting the empire’s Armenian population in the spring of 1915. Hundreds of communities were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands and marched in the direction of the Syrian Desert. Those who survived the massacres and privations along the transport routes on the forced marches were interned in concentration camps near Aleppo, in Ras el-Ain, and along the lower Euphrates, from Meskenah to Der Zor. Gendarmes and groups of irregulars massacred most survivors of this camp system (about 200,000 people) in Der Zor in the summer and fall of 1916.

The literature on the Armenian Genocide tells us that Armenian resistance was rare and limited to armed struggles in places such as Van, Urfa, Musa Dag and Shabin Karahisar. Oral historians Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller write:

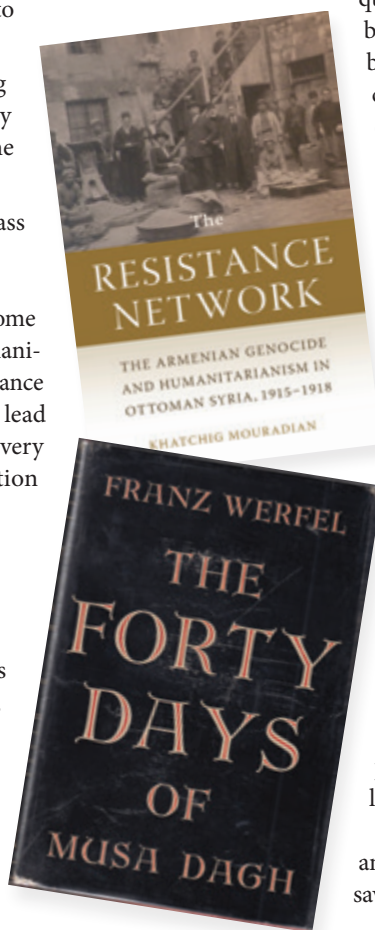
In the course of our interviews, we often wondered why there was so little resistance to the deportations. This is a complex question. . . . First, the Armenian leadership had been imprisoned or killed; second, weapons had been confiscated; and, third, the young men most capable of defending their communities had been drafted into the Turkish army.

The authors also attributed Armenian passivity to an ingrained receptiveness to authority that had been developed over centuries and to the fact that “they could not perceive the master plan of extermination that was unfolding.”⁷

Yet, as we broaden our analytical aperture to include non-violent forms of defiance, the argument for Armenian passivity crumbles. It becomes evident that Armenians resisted genocide from the moment authorities enacted the empire-wide arrests, deportations and massacres.

Shavarsh Misakian, an Armenian intellectual in Istanbul who had escaped the arrest of hundreds of Armenian thought leaders on 24 April 1915 and the weeks that followed it, organized a clandestine chain of communication across the empire. A network of informants prepared reports of atrocities that were then smuggled out of the country. These reports proved crucial sources of information to western diplomats, humanitarians and journalists.⁸

Others created groups that procured, transferred and distributed funds, food and medication to exiles, saved them from sexual slavery, created safe houses and



underground orphanages and upheld morale. These groups were loosely inter-linked, operating out of cities where the population was only partly deported (Istanbul and Aleppo) and along railroad lines stretching from Istanbul to Konya, Aleppo, Ras el-Ain and Mosul.

Ignoring unarmed forms of defiance or ascribing such actions a supporting role diminishes the importance of women's contributions. During the Armenian Genocide, many women saved lives by engaging in unarmed resistance. The story of Elmasd Santoorian is a case in point. She was a "massacre widow" from the town of Marash who lost her husband during an earlier anti-Armenian pogrom in the Ottoman Empire. She went on to study midwifery in Istanbul, before returning to her home town in 1914. A year later, she was deported. She came down with typhus in Aleppo, but recovered with the help of an Armenian doctor. Santoorian's skills as a nurse and her immunity to typhus propelled her, within a few months, to the position of head nurse at a top Ottoman military hospital in Aleppo's Azizieh quarter. There, she hired "Armenian refugee girls, some orphaned, but all hiding from the gendarmes," securing documents for them and preventing their deportation to the desert.

Many other women engaged in humanitarian resistance, endangering their lives as authorities cracked down on efforts to save refugees. Nora Altounyan established an orphanage in Aleppo for Armenian children whose parents had perished. Two other women established a makeshift orphanage in the Meskenah concentration camp, repeatedly confronted gendarmes demanding rations for the children and were deported to their deaths alongside the orphans they protected.

These individuals resisted without firing a single bullet.

Below is a list of books, essays, and audiovisual resources on resistance to the Armenian Genocide.

- For armed resistance, see Carlos Bedrossian, "Urfa's Last Stand" in Richard Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Tigranakert/Diarbekir and Edessa/Urfa* (Santa Ana, Calif.: Mazda, 2000), 467-507; Simon Payaslian, "The Armenian Resistance in Shabin Karahisar, 1915," in Richard Hovannisian, ed., *Sebastia/Sivas and Lesser Armenia* (Santa Ana, Calif.: Mazda, 2000), 399-426; and Anahide Ter Minassian, "Van 1915," in Richard Hovannisian, ed., *Armenian Van/Vasporakan* (Santa Ana, Calif.: Mazda, 2000), 209-244.
- Franz Werfel's 1933 novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* is unmatched in the literature on Armenian resistance. For a book review, see Stefan Ihrig, "From Musa Dagh to Masada: How Franz Werfel's novel about the Armenian Genocide inspired the Warsaw Ghetto fighters and the Zionist resistance," *Tablet Magazine*, 18 April 2016. <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/from-musa-dagh-to-masada> (Accessed on 12 March 2023). The Musa Dagh Resistance is also featured in director Terry George's 2016 film "The Promise."

RESISTANCE

Ignoring unarmed forms of defiance or ascribing such actions a supporting role diminishes the importance of women's contributions.

- For an exploration of unarmed resistance, see Khatchig Mouradian, *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1918* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2021); Khatchig Mouradian, "The Very Limit of our Endurance: Unarmed Resistance in Ottoman Syria during WWI," in Hans-Lukas Kieser, Margaret Anderson, Seyhan Bayraktar, and Thomas Schmutz, eds., *End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 247-261; Hasmik G. Grigoryan, "Food Procurement Methods During the Armenian Genocide as Expressions of 'Unarmed Resistance': Children's Experiences," *International Journal of Armenian Genocide Studies*, 6:2 (2021), 40-52; and Hilmar Kaiser, *At the Crossroad of Der Zor: Death, Survival, and Humanitarian Resistance in Aleppo, 1915-1917* (London: Gomidas Institute, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Once they adopt a definition and make a list of actions that constitute resistance, students realize that it was hidden in plain sight. They observe acts of resistance in most memoirs and survivor testimonies, developing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of mass violence and human agency.

Delving into the analysis of the agency and resistance of those targeted for genocide offers students the opportunity to critically examine power dynamics and explore questions of choice and voice in the media and public discourse. How do we portray refugees and asylum seekers? How do we speak of the experience of victims of sexual violence? How do we present human rights issues of the day? How do we think about breakthroughs in genetics, neuroscience and technology and their implications on human agency?

Ultimately, exploring resistance during genocide is good scholarship and good pedagogy. Students explore human agency and solidarity even in the most restrictive and perilous of circumstances, and consider resilience against oppression, hatred and cataclysm. In a world beset by human rights crises, population displacement emergencies and environmental disasters, reading about genocide depresses—pondering resistance uplifts. □

For the endnotes, please see this article on www.armenianweekly.com

Genocide & Women

Teaching about
the roles women
play in genocidal
and post-genocidal
societies



Erin Mouradian sharing
her family history with classmates

By Asya Darbinyan, Ph.D.



MY FIRST STEPS IN TEACHING

in the US were at Clark University as a doctoral student and teaching assistant for two exceptional professors—Taner Akçam and the late Robert Tobin—for their courses on the Armenian Genocide and on Human Rights and Literature, respectively. That's when I realized how much I enjoyed the process of teaching: leading interactive discussions with students, addressing their curious and, at times, challenging questions, learning with and from them. Soon, I was invited to teach courses that focused on the history of the Armenian Genocide, comparative genocide and the history of the Holocaust at Stockton University and Northern Arizona University (NAU). Those experiences helped me hone my teaching skills and explore and practice various styles and methods; they also proved quite educational. I was particularly keen on learning what students were more curious to study, what questions they raised in class, in their papers or during group discussions and how well their course material addressed those questions.

THE ROAD TO GENDER AND GENOCIDE STUDIES

Soon it became apparent that questions about gendered experiences, specifically the role of female victims, perpetrators and/or bystanders, repeated and dominated the discourse in every class. Students sought to learn more about women and not just as ‘vulnerable,’ and at times ‘faceless’ and ‘nameless’ groups in perpetual suffering and need of external assistance. They raised questions about female agency. How do women exercise their agency during a time of crisis—during a war, genocide and other mass atrocities? How do they face the tremendous hardships these atrocities bring upon them and their families? How do they overcome the unimaginable physical and psychological trauma caused by sexual violence? Do they, or could they, ever heal? And then, there was another set of questions aiming to explore and understand how the male-dominated patriarchal societies exacerbated these women’s pain and trauma and paved the way for more suffering post-genocide and post-war. Why don’t we hear more about sexual violence and its long-lasting consequences when studying the history of mass atrocities? What happens to those girls and women in the aftermath of war or genocide? Are they provided



Zoom discussion with activist Niemat Ahmadi

the necessary means and support to heal and find peace, or are they neglected, or worse, segregated and their experience and trauma stigmatized? Are they further pushed away from the rest of society into everlasting darkness and seclusion? And finally, what can we do about it? After all, isn’t it up to us to try and change this reality?

Students’ deep, thought-provoking questions shaped my approaches to scholarship and inspired me to adopt more inclusive and novel teaching ideas and methods. Thus, when the opportunity to design and offer a new course at Martin-Springer Institute of Northern Arizona University arose, I created “Genocide and Women”—an interdisciplinary course that examined the multifaceted roles women played in genocidal and post-genocidal societies. In this class, students’ primary task was conducting a gendered analysis of mass atrocity. My role as an instructor was to create and manage a classroom where every student would feel comfortable participating in the discussion, even if the discussion topics were not always comfortable. The goal was not just to have the students entertained and engaged; it was instead an attempt to create a civil and professional environment where students would feel free to express themselves and learn from each other while discussing crucial and, at times, controversial subjects.

Focusing on women’s experiences during the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust and the genocide in Rwanda, and learning about sexual violence and its memory in Bangladesh, Bosnia and Iraq, we analyzed the relation between gender, ethnicity, class and violence in the “Genocide and Women” class. As Elissa Bemporad and Joyce W. Warren have explained, this *intersectionality* “plays a crucial role in the way women experience genocide.”¹ Students expressed their appreciation of the topics we discussed and the opportunity to learn about and discuss many different case studies from a new perspective, feedback that indicated the course was a success.

Discussions with guest lecturers were a favorite student experience in this class. Since they were exposed to a variety of cases, geographies and histories from the Balkans to Central Africa, from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, I invited my colleagues, educators of diverse backgrounds, to join our classes via Zoom and discuss different approaches to and methods of understanding the systemic elements of gendered violence.² With Dr. Arnab Dutta Roy—an expert in world literature focusing on responses to colonialism in South Asian literature—students examined the role of fiction, including novels, contemporary movies and TV shows, in understanding gendered experiences of violence. They also discussed issues of agency and the meaning and role of empathy during and post-genocide. With Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman—an expert on the genocide in Bangladesh—students addressed questions of stigma connected with rape. They observed the links between sexual violence and shame during the genocide and its aftermath. With Dr. Sara Brown—the author of *Gender and the Genocide in Rwanda: Women as Rescuers and Perpetrators*—students discovered the complexity of female participation in the crime of genocide and in rescue and rehabilitation efforts during and post-genocide.³ Students found these in-class experiences so engaging and compelling that some asked permission to bring their friends and peers to attend the lectures and participate in discussions.

STUDENT ANALYSIS AND ENGAGEMENT

My students’ positive feedback and enthusiasm at NAU encouraged me to continue teaching this course when I joined Clark University in the fall of 2022. At the Strassler Center, I taught “Genocide and Women” as a seminar, which allowed more time for discussions and analysis. With a group of a dozen bright students, we explored the voices and perspectives of female victims and perpetrators of genocide. We addressed the role of eyewitnesses and relief workers. For students to see the subtleties and depths of the human dimension in the history of genocides and mass atrocity, we investigated the topics through personal accounts, including diaries, published memoirs, testimonies, and through novels and documentary films. These sources created a new dynamic in the classroom: students engaged closely with the text and visual material. They, for example, noticed significant differences between the accounts of male and female survivors when analyzing their testimonies. Students detected females’ willingness to speak about feelings and emotions extensively rather than focusing on factual details of the events, which was more common in male accounts—an observation that corresponds to Belarusian writer and Nobel Prize laureate Svetlana Alexievich’s view: “Women tell things in more interesting ways. They live with more feeling. They observe themselves and their lives. Men are more impressed with action. For

them, the sequence of events is more important.”⁴

Students also showed initiative by critically analyzing and utilizing the sources assigned for the coursework. For instance, after reading the memoirs of Vergeen⁵—an Armenian Genocide survivor abducted by the Bedouins and later ashamed to return to the Armenian community because of her facial tattoos—and watching the documentary *Grandma's Tattoos*,⁶ one student expressed willingness to share her family history with the class. Erin Mouradian—a senior at Clark—volunteered to prepare a presentation and told us the story of her great-grandmother, Arousiag Khacherian of the province of Adana in the Ottoman Empire. Arousiag had survived the deportation to the Syrian desert and endured “horrible treatment” in a Muslim household, followed by several years in an orphanage.⁷ She then traveled to Cuba to marry Abraham Parseghian Mouradian—Erin’s great-grandfather. Together they eventually immigrated to the United States. Erin confessed in class that she remembered seeing her great-grandmother Arousiag’s tattoos, yet she had no idea what they meant or where they came from until our seminar. Erin’s willingness to utilize the analytical skills gained in our class, examine her family history and then share it with her peers created an opportunity for students to grasp the significance of those skills. Suddenly, it became evident that the topics discussed in class were not about some ‘distant’ and ‘faceless’ historical actors of the past. Arousiag’s story helped students relate to the victims’ experiences of trauma and survival. Moreover, they discovered how gender affected not only the experiences but also the recovery from and the memory of the Genocide.

♀ One of the most emotional and educational experiences for the students of this seminar was the Zoom discussion led by Niemat Ahmadi—a veteran human rights and genocide prevention activist. Ahmadi survived the genocide in Darfur and was forced to flee because of her outspoken nature against the government’s genocidal attacks. To empower and amplify the voice of the communities impacted by genocide in Darfur, in 2009, Ahmadi founded the Darfur Women Action Group (DWAG).⁸ Generous with her time and willing to address any questions students raised, Ahmadi spoke about the continuing threats and attacks on her life and the lives of her family members even after she fled Darfur to continue the struggle for justice and accountability. Nadia Cross, one of the students pursuing a doctoral degree at the Strassler Center, later reflected on how important it was for her to have an opportunity to communicate with a female survivor and human rights activist directly. “Not only did I admire her courage and strength to pursue such work, but I also deeply appreciated that she could



Students detected females’ willingness to speak about feelings and emotions extensively rather than focusing on factual details of the events, which was more common in male accounts.

“Genocide & Women” Seminar announcement

provide a local perspective to the women she helped, policy and lawmakers and our student group. That is incredibly unique,” highlighted Nadia.

The seminar concluded with a class conference

where students presented and discussed their final papers in the classroom. The assignment entailed a comparative analysis of women’s experiences during genocide, war and other mass atrocities. Students’ presentations reflected on various case studies—from the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust to the genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia, Darfur, Guatemala, Iraq and Rwanda. Defne Akyurek’s paper titled “The Rhetoric of Denial in the Cases of the Armenian and Bosnian Genocides,” for instance, focused on Turkish intellectual Halide Edib Adivar and Serbian politician Biljana Plavšić—

two influential women who were perpetrators and deniers of genocide. Presenting her thesis, Defne explained that although these female actors operated within different contexts and timeframes, there were quite striking similarities in the methods of their denial. She noticed, for instance, that both Edib and Plavšić reframed the victimized group—Armenians and Bosniaks, respectively—as “threatening aggressors.” These women also attempted “to redirect international attention to violence inflicted on the perpetrating population” and portrayed “genocidal violence as necessary or justified retribution for a perceived wrong committed against their nations.”⁹

Presenting their research results, students actively discussed issues tackled during the semester. They talked about women’s agency, resistance and denial, poetry and memory, and physical, psychological, emotional and social consequences of sexual violence post-genocide.

Focusing on women’s experiences during and after genocide allowed students to think about and analyze the history of mass atrocity through a novel, more complex and nuanced lens. Drawing upon primary sources and personal accounts of various actors, not only did they learn about different roles that women played in the time of crisis—as victims, perpetrators, rescuers, resisters, collaborators, traitors, witnesses, human rights activists, among others—but they also discussed the importance of culture and culturally defined roles of women, the rules historically imposed by society that affected the experience of women during and post-genocide. Moreover, interacting with several guest speakers, including survivors and activists, and engaging in thought-provoking discussions in class, students completely immersed themselves in every aspect of gender analysis of war and genocide, ultimately developing exceptional research questions and final projects. □

For the endnotes, please see this article on www.armenianweekly.com

Genealogy

“Useful in the toolkit of genocide education”

By George Aghjayan

T

he impact of genocide lingers long after the initiation of the crime. Genocide scholarship today delves into the more nuanced ways in which victims are subjected to genocidal acts in addition to murder. Sexual violence against women and de-ethnicization of children are just two examples. Entire societies are destroyed through genocide and the surviving remnants separated and scattered, resulting in the magnitude of the crime being difficult to quantify.

While research into a person's ancestry was traditionally reserved for nobility, and in the United States there were societies devoted to descendants of specific groups, for example Daughters of the American Revolution or Mayflower Descendants, since the 1970s there has been an explosion of genealogical research into all ethnic groups regardless of societal class. The publication of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* and the television mini-series based on the book brought forth tremendous interest in genealogy, the family history of African Americans, specifically, and all ethnic groups universally.

In addition, there was controversy over the accuracy of the oral history included in *Roots* and the ability to document through source records the family history of victims of slavery that is equally relevant for all victims of genocide.

Initially, my involvement in genocide education focused on demographics and the ways in which a numbers game is utilized in genocide denial. A primary recurring theme in the denial of genocide and ethnic cleansing is to minimize the victim population. Presumably, if less Armenians were alive and living in the Ottoman Empire in 1914, that would mean that less were subjected to murder, rape, slavery, etc.

My research has focused on three aspects. First, I work on documenting the location and previous Armenian population of the villages of Western Armenia, given the destruction of many of these locations and the Turkish government's changes in names and



George Aghjayan (right) visiting the grave of his great-grandmother's sister Vazkanoush with his cousin Cengiz Başibüyük, June 2019

locations. Second, there is a common misconception that the various source documents are in conflict over the pre-genocide number of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire. Instead of viewing them in conflict, my research has attempted to show under what assumptions the sources can be brought into agreement. Lastly, I have used micro-studies to better evaluate the quality of the various sources.

Over time, through this research, I additionally saw the continuing damage to our people by the ruptures in our families caused by the Genocide. I was tormented reading the advertisements searching for relatives placed in various Armenian newspapers following the end of World War I.

Since 1996, I have met hundreds of survivors of the Genocide and their descendants still living in Turkey and desiring to reconnect with

their relatives. At the same time, the amount of documentary resources available to Armenians attempting to learn more about their family histories has exploded in the last 20 years. From Armenian church records in Armenia and the Diaspora and family history reports available to Turkish citizens to Ottoman population registers and DNA testing, thousands of Armenians are gaining new insight into their ancestors in ways they never thought would be possible.

The Armenian Genealogy Facebook group has provided an invaluable forum for those seeking answers. The Armenian Immigration Project has culled the documents pertaining to Armenians within United States and Canadian civil records, and there are similar efforts beginning in other countries as well. Since 2016, there have been a number of Armenian genealogy conferences held throughout the United States and in September 2022 at the American University in Armenia.

The resulting stories of connections and reconnections of families have served as a powerful educational tool to understand the depth of the crime. For over a century now, Armenian women forced into marriages with Muslims, as well as children forced into slavery, and ultimately, assimilation into Muslim households, have been treated as dead. They considered themselves dead to their families and they urged their families to accept their “death.” There were hundreds of thousands who were included in the 1.5 million deaths of the Armenian Genocide. Yet, we know that many of them “survived,” and against all odds and threats of persecution, they retained their Armenian heritage.

Hrant Dink often wrote of the plight of so-called hidden Armenians in Turkey. In 2004, *My Grandmother: A Memoir* by Fethiye

Çetin was published in Turkey and has gone through multiple printings. Through their efforts, a much greater awareness was created both inside and outside the Republic of Turkey about the Armenians still remaining on our ancestral homeland.

The tragic reality is that many genocide survivors pass away never knowing for certain what has happened to their lost relatives. In 2012, while traveling to the village of my grandmother, I had an epiphany about the way DNA testing could be used to assist in the reconnecting of families. In 2015, my hopes were realized—the family of my great-grandmother’s sister and I found each other through DNA testing.

While it still remains very difficult and certain parts of the homeland are underrepresented, nonetheless today I find it much more common to be able to validate family trees and other oral histories through official documents. The village of Hazari in the Chmshgadzak region is an excellent example of what is possible. In the 1930s, Hovhannes Ajemian collected a tremendous amount of information on the Armenian-inhabited villages of Chmshgadzak. Included with this, thus far, unpublished material were genealogy wheels. I was given a copy of the genealogy wheels for the families of Hazari by the descendants of Vazken Antreasian, author of three books about the village. I was able to rebuild the family trees for most of the families from Hazari based on the genealogy wheels, Ottoman population records and United States records for those who had come from the village. The analysis has been published on houshamadyan.org.

In this way, genealogy is useful in the toolkit of genocide education and also serves as a critical way of mitigating the continued detrimental impact of genocide on the victims. □



Watertown, MA
CELEBRATING 25 years

Fast-Tracking Armenian Genocide Education in the US

By Roxanne Makasdjian

Amy Perkins overlooking Khor Virab

“You’ve challenged us to tell the story. And we’re very eager to share that story...” said Genocide Education Project (GenEd) Teacher Fellow Amy Perkins, describing her mission after participating in the GenEd Teacher Fellowship Program in Armenia last summer. Following the program, Perkins, who hails from Michigan, presented a teaching unit she created based on the denial of the Armenian Genocide to teachers at the November 2022 National Council for the Social Studies conference in Philadelphia.

The 10-day immersive teacher-training program gave Perkins and 14 other high school educators from fourteen different states the unique opportunity to study the Armenian Genocide and its ongoing effects at the only Armenian Genocide museum in the world, while also becoming familiar with Armenian culture and current conditions in Armenia. Following the study tour, the new GenEd Teacher Fellows have been creating new lesson plans, providing workshops for other teachers and advocating for Armenian Genocide education within their professional associations. Without fully recognizing and investigating the causes of the most destructive chapters in history, the human race seems doomed to replay them. Only after the true scale and pervasive nature of these acts are acknowledged and understood can individuals and societies act to stop them. It starts with education.

This page is sponsored by Robert Kaprielian (IL)

Top: Teacher Fellow Allison Weller descending Khor Virab; Bottom: AGMI Director Harutyun Marutyan guiding the Teacher Fellows at Tsitsernakaberd

GENED'S GENESIS AND MISSION

The Genocide Education Project was founded with this mission at its heart. Established by Armenian-Americans in 2005, GenEd has steadily expanded its work to bring teaching materials and professional development programs to high school educators across the United States. GenEd offers a particular expertise on teaching about the Armenian case as an essential episode in modern world history, WWI history and any curriculum that addresses human rights and genocide.

Indeed, the Armenian Genocide holds a singular place in genocide studies. It was the stimulus for Rafael Lemkin's invention of the word "genocide" itself. It was the most significant human rights crisis of WWI, with record numbers of people murdered, an entire population erased from its historic homeland. New technologies made it possible to murder 1.5 million human beings faster than ever before, and the Turkish government's total impunity for this unprecedented act served as inspiration for future perpetrators, beginning with Adolph Hitler. That impunity and the genocide denial campaign of successive Turkish governments also has a direct connection to the genocidal actions of Turkey and Azerbaijan against Armenians today, currently playing out with the months-long blockade intended to empty Armenians from Artsakh.

With this history and current events in mind, the value of including the Armenian Genocide in standardized social studies curriculum is indisputable. Yet, despite its important place in modern history and its unique and powerful educational merit, it has been overlooked in most secondary curricula.

Providing students an understanding of key examples of genocide across time, their common stages (including the stage of denial which perpetuates a genocide and enables new ones), equips our students as they become responsible global citizens, to take action when the early stages begin to appear.

Through presentations at social studies conferences, teacher-training workshops in major U.S. cities, and dissemination of free teaching resources through its website, GenEd has directly reached more than 10,000 social studies teachers. GenEd also collaborates with numerous state education departments and genocide education commissions.

Critical partnerships with other educational organizations and Armenian-American community groups and volunteers around the country have significantly contributed to the introduction of Armenian Genocide education in schools and GenEd's reach and success. Among GenEd's earliest partners are its Rhode Island branch volunteers, Michigan's Armenian Genocide Education Committee, local and regional chapters of the Armenian



National Committee of America, Armenian General Benevolent Union's *The Promise* film educational outreach committee and other ad-hoc community groups that have coalesced to take on the challenge of advocating for genocide education within their local government bodies and local school districts. Without the dedicated advancement by these advocates, the Armenian Genocide would be far less recognized today as an essential part of social studies education.

NEW GENED TEACHER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

GenEd's single most impactful initiative to date is the GenEd Teacher Fellowship Program, inaugurated in 2022. Tapping its extensive network of educators and developing a rigorous application process, GenEd selected 15 highly-qualified and skilled teachers to become new GenEd Teacher Fellows. Through a unique partnership with the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute (AGMI), adjacent to the Tsitsernakaberd genocide memorial in Yerevan, Armenia, the program combines GenEd's expertise in training U.S. social studies and English language arts educators with AGMI's unique role in Armenian Genocide remembrance and research, including its in-depth museum exhibit, collection of primary source documents and artifacts, and its ongoing scholarship on various aspects of the genocide, its aftermath and its continuing effects today.

"Working alongside the staff at the Armenian Genocide Museum and Institute to educate American teachers on aspects of our history and share with them Armenia today was a dream come true," said 2022 GenEd Teacher Fellowship Program director Sara Cohan.

The program is also a productive means by which two organizations—one outside and one inside Armenia—dedicated to the same mission of genocide education, learn from each other's circumstances and perspectives. "I think that the partnership with The Genocide

Education Project is very important for us at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, because we are receiving new methodologies of education,” said AGMI Director Harutyun Marutyan. “Being a professional teacher here in Armenia and being a professional teacher in the United States are different. So, for me it was very interesting being in touch with the American teachers during the training process, listening to their questions and hearing their reactions to our answers.”

The American University of Armenia also joined the effort by hosting the GenEd Teacher Fellows for presentations by experts on Armenia’s current economic, political and educational conditions. Through this and other sessions throughout the week, the GenEd Fellows were able to understand the long, multi-faceted and compounding effects of genocide and continuing genocidal policies.

“As a result of my participation in this program, I’m able to make those connections between the Genocide and the current geopolitics. And I think that that’s important to share with students,” said Allison Weller of New York.

“It has actually been more important to learn about Armenia today and what the people who live here deal with... It’s still a battle for survival in the face of external threats...” said Justin Bilton of Massachusetts. “The lesson we learned is that silence on these issues benefits the perpetrators and awareness benefits the victims and the survivors.”

The educators visited historic and cultural sites in the afternoons that enhanced their understanding of the academic content of the morning sessions. Throughout the experience, the GenEd Fellows engaged in many discussions on human rights and genocide education, Armenian history and culture and teaching pedagogy. Moreover, these GenEd Teacher Fellows are equipped with a much deeper understanding of the history of the Armenian Genocide and with the skills to teach about it in a historically accurate and morally appropriate manner.

“I feel like I can speak to this topic more authentically than I could have done prior to this trip,” said Jeff Lewis from Connecticut. “I look forward to taking everything I’ve learned here and bringing it back home and sharing these important lessons with not just my students, but my colleagues and my administrators.”

GenEd is now overseeing the second phase of the program, meeting with the GenEd Teacher Fellows regularly, discussing their experiences since their trip to Armenia, sharing new materials they’ve created and collaborating with them on preparing workshops for fellow teachers. The GenEd Teacher Fellows have expressed a strong desire to continue this work throughout their careers and to build on the relationships forged during the program in Armenia.

“I came here with a group of acquaintances, but I’m leaving Armenia with a group of lifelong friends,” said Kelly Rosati of Virginia. “It’s one of the most amazing feelings to know that going forward we have this group of inaugural Fellows who will always support each other. I wish that all educators could have this opportunity that I did.”

The GenEd Teacher Fellows have accomplished much since returning to their home regions. So far they’ve created at least four new lesson plans on different aspects of the Armenian Genocide; given or are preparing for presentations at the National Council for the Social Studies conference as well as sessions at the California, Michigan, Missouri, New York and Tennessee branch Council for the Social Studies’ conferences; given or are preparing workshops for school districts in Oregon, California and Massachusetts.

By the end of the school year, the 2022 GenEd Teacher Fellows will have trained approximately 300 other teachers, who will teach approximately 30,000

new students each year. In this way, the teaching of the Armenian Genocide is expanding faster and farther than ever before.

With the success of the inaugural Teacher Fellowship Program last summer, GenEd hopes to repeat it annually, as the fruits of its fundraising efforts will allow. The program is being made possible by generous donations from individuals and Armenian-American foundations that share GenEd’s vision that students across the country graduate from high school with an understanding of the Armenians and the lessons of genocide and the Armenian case.

Once again, a group of teachers has been selected from 14 different states for the 2023 GenEd Teacher Fellowship Program. In preparation for the program, in the coming months they will be introduced to last year’s Fellows, which will undoubtedly add an important, positive dimension to the success of the program. □



Top: Former GenEd Education Director Sara Cohan leading an AGMI workshop; Bottom: Teacher Fellows at the AGMI museum

THE DEADLY GAP

Genocide Education and Artsakh's Right to Survival

By Henry C. Theriault, Ph.D.

Genocide education can have many purposes. Whatever the level and type of education (elementary school, graduate school, public education through events or museums), the most essential purpose cuts across all forms: to foster a conceptual framework in members of society that is sensitive to genocide in general and helps those members perceive emergent or occurring genocides when there is enough time to do something about them, especially cases that are being ignored or misconstrued by the media, political leaders, academics, and others. It should equip people with tools to recognize and reject denialism.

The stakes can be very high. Effective genocide education in the 1970s and 1980s could have supported a North American and European population that was ready to recognize the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda for what they were and were committed to stopping them as soon as possible. It would have prepared that population for the denials, obfuscations and political maneuvering that in actual history meant the deaths of hundreds of thousands unnecessarily.

With this in mind, I turn to Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). The facts are simple. As Soviet Interior Minister, Stalin put the Armenian area within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, but gave it autonomy, as part of his architectural destabilization of minority groups in the Soviet Union as a means of ensuring all groups' reliance on Moscow. Over the next six-plus decades,



Papik and Tatik, Artsakh (Photo: Eric Nazarian)

Azerbaijan made a major effort to de-develop Artsakh and reduce its Armenian population. By the mid-1980s, the Artsakh Armenian situation grew so dire that independence was the only path to survival. In 1988, this movement was met with wide-scale violence and repression of Armenians, including two massacres of Armenians in Azerbaijani cities outside Artsakh. With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan launched a military attack on Artsakh in order to ethnically cleanse it of Armenians. Armenians resisted

and by 1994 had reached a stalemate, with Artsakh in Armenian hands. The situation was relatively stable until the September 2020 invasion of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, with the results we are all familiar with. Most notable of the current facts is that Turkey was a full and decisive participant in the war, which was executed by a combined Turkish-Azerbaijani military force and extensive weapons, logistical and financial support from Turkey (for instance, in supplying thousands of mercenaries from among radical Islamists in Syria and Libya).

Why does genocide education matter in this case? Even if one looks at the facts, they do not convey the seriousness of Azerbaijani intentions and the potential impact for Armenians. Proper genocide education includes both specific knowledge of the Armenian Genocide and an understanding of the processes that lead to genocide, how to evaluate genocidal rhetoric and intent and more. If education about the Armenian Genocide and genocidal processes were firmly in place in 1988, in 1991 and especially in 2020, then the well-funded and effective Azerbaijani disinformation campaign presenting itself as a victim and Armenians as demonic perpetrators would have been met with genuinely critical evaluations rather than almost mechanical parroting by political leaders and media outlets. The propaganda of think-tank journalists such as Thomas de Waal would have been met with skepticism rather than the credulity that has greeted his biased writing *even in Armenian circles*. Most importantly, the active military participation of Turkey in killing

5,000 Armenians, including many civilians, and drone attacks on civilians across Artsakh would have been met with international outrage as a reinitiation of unrepentant Turkey's 1915 genocidal project, instead of being completely ignored and even supported in many circles. The clear statements from Turkish and Azerbaijani leaders of the intent to eliminate Armenians, not just from Artsakh but from the entire region, would not have been dismissed with the "politicians will be politicians" mantra or that such extreme rhetoric is just for domestic consumption and doesn't *really* confirm in no uncertain terms genocidal intent. The brutality of attacks on Armenian civilians in conjunction with this rhetoric, and a proper framework for understanding Turkish-Azeri-Armenian relations, would have made it impossible not to see these as clear steps on the path to genocide, which would have triggered early-warning mechanisms and global attention to stop the impending genocide against Armenians. A blockade "[d]eliberately inflicting on the [the Armenians of Artsakh] conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" (Method c of genocide execution as defined in the UN Genocide Convention) would be recognized as an act of genocide without any question.

We know how devastating the results have been of the lack of proper genocide education on the fate of Artsakh Armenians. Let us hope that in the future more effective genocide education will prevent these harms to Armenians and other future groups subjected to the risk of genocide. □



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TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Genocide Education, the Armenian Genocide and Reparations

By Jermaine O. McCalpin, Ph.D.

My first encounter with Armenia and Artsakh happened in 1986 as an elementary school child in Jamaica. My sister was a history teacher and I was an inquisitive boy always wanting to discover things. I took one of her books and began to read and found a reference to Nagorno Karabakh during the Soviet era. I could not find it on the map, but I would later discover its importance and meaning to a people of long and noble history.

December 2023 marks nearly two decades and over 60 presentations, lectures, visits and conversations during which I have advocated for and supported the just cause of reparations for the Armenian Genocide. It started serendipitously at a symposium held in Worcester, Massachusetts at (then) Worcester State College in December 2005 entitled “*Whose Debt? Whose Responsibility?*” I was invited by Dr. Henry Theriault, Armenian and genocide scholar. In the intervening seventeen years, I have collaborated with Theriault on countless panels, research groups and conferences. This association culminated in the founding of the Armenian Genocide Reparations Study Group (AGRS) in 2007 that published the very important report of a comprehensive reparations scheme for the Armenian Genocide entitled *Resolution with Justice*. The report



Dr. Jermaine McCalpin, pictured with ANCA Government Affairs director Tereza Yerimyan, during his Lemkin Policy Series remarks, September 2019

was published in 2014 and was the continuation rather than the end of my fight for reparations for the Armenian Genocide. To Theriault I owe the debt of introducing me to the Armenian community and supporting my work on these deeply important issues of recognition and repair.

DEFINING REPARATIONS

My advocacy for recognition and reparation of the Armenian Genocide is because I believe in the truth of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s words that

“injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” I am a justice and reparations advocate for the transatlantic trade in Africans and for the First Nations in the United States and Canada. I firmly believe that reparation is not just an attempt to “pay out monies in order to silence history.” Reparations is a comprehensive notion of repair that has five goals (5Rs): recognition, restoration, restitution, re-humanization and reconciliation.

I define reparations as a comprehensive approach of repair that seeks to respond to historic injustices, such as genocides, mass violence, torture, detainment, etc. It involves both material and non-material components whose goal is to make survivors and their families and the wider group benefit from redress for the historical harm.

Genocide education is preparing the next generation to advocate for justice for all oppressed and victimized groups that have suffered from genocides and their continuation.

Defining reparations in this manner points to more than just monetary compensation and will involve first and foremost:

1. An apology/acknowledgement.
2. Tangible acts of repair, such as return or possession of properties sequestered during the Armenian Genocide or restitution to the value of expropriated property.
3. Historical reclamation to ensure that history is taught and education administered in such a way as to dignify the suffering of those who died and the continuing suffering of their descendants through denial.
4. Public commemoration and days of remembrances.
5. Public education campaigns to ensure that the historic injustice is well-documented and preserved so that denial is less likely in the future.

The goals of reparations are:

Recognition To recognize the Armenian Genocide is to acknowledge its occurrence and to dignify the suffering of generations of Armenians by apologizing for the violence and attempts at erasure of their identity and culture. A significant part of the group culture of Armenians and other “genocide triumphers” is that their identity in both positive and negative ways revolves around the Genocide. Their reference point in both talking about resilience and suffering centers on the Genocide. Recognition must be the first act of repair.

Restoration When recognition is achieved or done, then restoration is possible. In the reality of genocides, restoration is a psychological return to a time prior to genocide where the Armenian people thrived and contributed to Turkey’s economic and political development. Restoration is also aimed at a physical return of property, heirlooms and possessions that can be traced to the seizure of Armenian assets during the forced deportations, marches and expulsions from cities across Turkey. These must be restored to the families of survivors, and where this is not possible, these should be publicly displayed and regarded as precious possessions of Armenians.

Restitution When the original properties or possessions cannot be returned, restitution is to be done. Both properties and possessions can be appraised, and monies should be disbursed to compensate for the initial loss in contemporary monetary value. Genealogical records of many Armenians in Turkey and the Armenian diaspora have been discovered and preserved. My friend and colleague George Aghjayan has been doing tremendous genealogical research that has unearthed

many records from across Turkey, Syria and the Americas that were previously thought to have been destroyed.

Re-humanization Any meaningful reparation scheme must aim at re-humanization. One of the continued indication of genocide is dehumanization. Those who commit genocides first remove the dignity of being human from those they intend to expunge from existence. It is an attempt of the genocidaires and deniers to lessen the humanity of victims. This strategy and its subsequent success through deliberate and elaborate denial can only be negated through a re-humanization process. Reparation must re-humanize, restoring the humanity of victims and survivors of genocides by documenting families, communities and livelihoods that were written out of existence in order to justify killings. Armenians, much like peoples of African descent before them and the Jewish nation since them, have suffered from a “victim identity” that has not been shed even with the march of time. These groups continue to be defined not by what they have achieved but what they have endured or suffered through.

Reconciliation The last stage of reparation is reconciliation. It is intentionally last because you cannot reach reconciliation before you have accomplished the four previous steps. Reconciliation is long term, cannot be forced and is only likely when justice is evident. This is the most important lesson I have gathered in my two decades of studying truth commissions around the world. No matter what the names of these commissions indicate, reconciliation does not happen because truth is excavated; it only happens after a sense of justice is rendered. This is why the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) was destined to fail. There was no agenda of truth (not even in its formal name), and therefore not justice, for the genocide.

This theory of comprehensive repair for the Armenian Genocide was first (publicly) presented when the Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region (ANCA-WR) invited me to be their keynote speaker at the 100th commemoration of the Armenian Genocide in Glendale, California in April, 2015. I outlined then, and continue to advocate eight years later for, an understanding of reparations that is above and beyond financial disbursements and rather focuses on the whole experience of Armenians, including psychological repair.

GENOCIDE EDUCATION

Genocide education has a dual purpose. First, it is about trampling the denial of the Armenian Genocide by those who think that erasure is in the power of the deniers. The second purpose of genocide education is to plant seeds in the fertile ground of advocating for public knowledge transfer to a wide cross-section of people who can ensure that the weed of denial cannot choke the justice of reparations. Genocide education

advocates must make information accessible that provides everyone with ways to support resolution for historic injustices.

Genocide education is not simply talking about genocides across history. It is the dissemination of information and the encouragement of a consciousness to learn about historic injustices and to act on this knowledge to advocate for repair. Genocide education is difficult because it often involves “unlearning” stereotypes and shedding misinformation. Genocide education is preparing the next generation to advocate for justice for all oppressed and victimized groups that have suffered from genocides and their continuation.

I have travelled far and wide presenting and teaching on genocides and reparations for the Armenian Genocide. I have educated Armenians and others not on the pain and legacy of continued victimization but also resilience. I have taught and worked on widening the understanding of reparations as not just one act or disbursement but rather as a comprehensive package of repair that addresses not just the monetary obligation of perpetrators but also their moral obligations.

However, I have also been taught. As a lifelong learner, I am well aware that even after seventeen years I cannot know all there is to know concerning the Armenian Genocide and the Armenian people. So with these visits I have listened to my Armenian sisters and brothers about their understanding of the justice struggle for reparations.

Genocide education is also about concerted efforts to become more aware and sensitive to the requirements of justice. One of the roles for genocide education is to not apply “broadbrush” solutions but to situate justice in the specific realities of the genocide about which we are educating others.

As a Black man researching on and advocating for reparations for the Armenian Genocide, I have served up many gasps and stunned stares to audiences across the world. I have been asked about why I would be working on reparations for the Armenian Genocide when I am not Armenian. I have never responded with just one sentence. Rather, I have pointed out the importance of alliances and cross-group advocacy for justice. As the descendant of enslaved Africans transported to the Americas, I completely understand a history of oppression and victimization that has attempted to erase an even longer history of development, civilization and greatness. Both peoples of African descent and Armenians can therefore find common cause and common ground on which to stand and from which to build a justice framework.

Genocide education is exactly what I have described above, educating peoples of African descent, Armenians and all peoples about supporting both causes for reparations for historic injustices and the cause of justice, in general.

JUSTICE ADVOCACY AND TRANSFORMATIVE GENOCIDE EDUCATION

My work on justice advocacy would not have been possible without the many Armenians and organizations dedicated to fighting for reparations for the Armenian Genocide – organizations important to acknowledge, as there would have been no Jermaine McCalpin working on reparations for the Armenian Genocide without their support and welcome.

September and October 2019 were critical steps in the advocacy journey. In September, I was asked by the ANCA to give the Raphael Lemkin Lecture on Capitol Hill and used the opportunity to articulate a vision of justice for the Armenian Genocide that built on the 5Rs. It was also a reminder of the work that had already been done on reparations for the Armenian Genocide. In this lecture, I also argued against denial and its consequences. A month later, I was presenting at Columbia University under the auspices of its Armenian Center. There, my presentation was about the commonalities of the African American reality and the Armenians relative to how avoidance and denial shape the treatment of justice claims for both groups.

In the end, genocide education is both retrospective and prospective. It reaches back to the past as a way to ensure that denial does not win and that justice is worked on. It stretches to the future ensuring that the generations to follow will remember to do justice as an obligation of those who seek to do the right thing.

My work continues for the realization of reparations as the right step towards resolution of the Armenian Genocide. The longer Turkey takes to recognize this grave injustice, the longer the Armenian Genocide persists. A genocide denied is a genocide continued.

Ultimately, genocide education is transformative, moving the educated from inertia to advocacy; and it is moral, moving us from being neutral against injustice where it is found to doing what is right. Finally, genocide education should be mandatory, moving us from an optional knowing about the past to it being a requirement for all who love humanity. □

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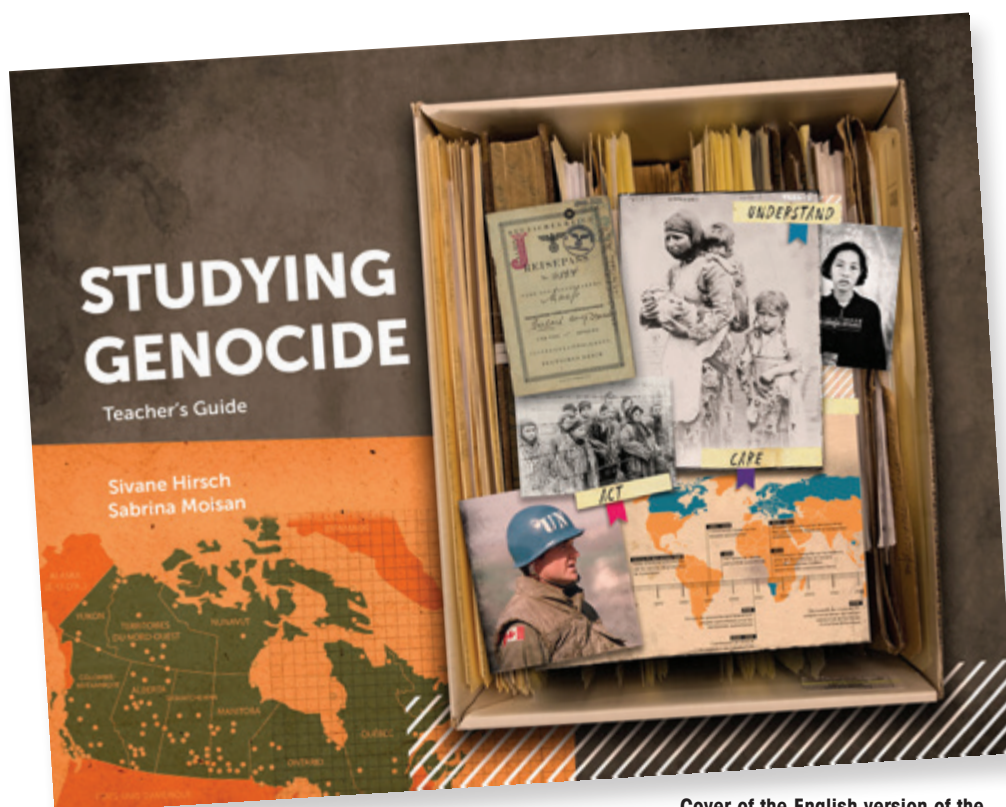
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On the importance of teaching genocide in high school

A CASE STUDY FROM QUEBEC



Cover of the English version of the teacher's guide, coming spring 2023

“
You have to understand what caused genocide to happen. Or it will happen again.

—Tim Walz¹

”

By Lalai Manjikian, Ph.D.

Teaching about genocide, particularly at the high school level, can be a daunting task. Educators are often reluctant to approach this highly sensitive topic due to the complexity the study of genocide encompasses. However, the complex nature of this issue is precisely why teaching genocide is so crucial.

In April 2022, after a decade of hard work and overcoming various obstacles, a comprehensive guide on teaching genocide to high school students was launched in the province of Quebec. The interactive guide entitled “Teaching about Genocide” is now available online² in French (English to come in spring 2023), reaching over 310,000 students in 800 schools.³

Montrealer Heidi Berger, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, is the driving force behind this guide. Over the years, in talking to students about the Shoah, she realized there was a profound degree of ignorance about facts surrounding the Holocaust. Berger was determined to bring significant change and help repair this lack of knowledge amongst high school students. In 2014, she created a non-profit organization called The Foundation for Genocide Education (FGE). The main mission of the FGE is to ensure that the history of genocide, as well as the steps leading up to this crime against humanity, are taught in high schools across Canada and the United States.⁴

The “Teaching about Genocide” guide is the result of a collaboration between The Foundation for Genocide Education and the Quebec Education Ministry, the Montreal Holocaust Museum, and representatives of the various communities highlighted in the guide, including the Armenian National Committee of Canada (ANCC) and the Armenian National Committee of Quebec (ANCQ).

Lead researchers who worked on the guide are Sivane Hirsch, Didactic Professor of Ethics from the Department of Education at Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, and Sabrina Moisan, Professor of History Education in the Faculty of Education at Université de Sherbrooke.

In the digital age where information is as easily accessible as it is distorted, the lack of awareness and knowledge surrounding genocide is staggering. The *U.S. Millennial Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Survey*⁵ published in September 2020 revealed the extent of this ignorance. According to this survey, in the United States, 63 percent of young adults don’t know that six million Jews were killed in the Nazi Holocaust. In fact, 36 percent think the number was “two million or fewer.” Around one in ten respondents were not sure whether the Shoah happened at all or deny that it did. Most appalling of all is

“ In the digital age where information is as easily accessible as it is distorted, the lack of awareness and knowledge surrounding genocide is staggering. ”

that 19 percent of millennials and zoomers in New York State believe that it was the Jews who *caused* the Holocaust.⁶

In the aftermath of such profoundly traumatic events as the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust, educating current and future generations—using historical facts and survivor testimonials—is not only a pedagogically sound approach, but it is, first and foremost, an ethical obligation.

Educators in Quebec now have a comprehensive tool that will assist them in teaching about genocide. This guide on teaching genocide offers “a comparative, socio-historical and ethical approach”⁷ to the atrocities. “Teaching about Genocide” includes a series of case studies, a list of steps leading to genocide, teaching plans, reference documents and instructional videos. The guide also includes genocide survivor and descendant of survivor video testimonies.

The guide defines the crime of genocide and methodically explains the various stages that have historically led to this crime using Gregory Stanton’s stages. Additionally, it provides thoroughly-reviewed case studies of nine genocides recognized by the United Nations (UN) and the Canadian government. These genocides are the First Nations Cultural Genocide (1876–1993), Herero and Nama Genocide (1904–1908), Armenian Genocide (1915–1923), Ukrainian Holodomor (1932–1933), Roma and the Sinti Genocide (1935–1945), Holocaust (1939–1945), Cambodian Genocide (1975–1979), Bosnian Genocide (1992–1995) and the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (1994).

The guide also contains a section entitled “Racism, Prevention and Justice.” Each genocide is presented in a similar manner, which enables educators and students to draw parallels between different events through a comparative approach in order to further develop their understanding of the genocidal process.

University professors, educators and community leaders were involved in reviewing the guide. Moreover, in order to ensure that the guide is utilized in an effective manner, training workshops are being offered to teachers.

Board members of the Foundation for Genocide Education (FGE) representing the ANCC and ANCQ were involved in advocacy efforts in order to bring the community’s voice to the table. Furthermore, the ANCC and ANCQ formed an Academic Advisory Council comprised of historians and scholars specializing in the study of the Armenian Genocide. Their academic expertise and advice were indispensable during the process of developing the guide.

High school is a critical period in terms of students forging their world views. Introducing students to the topic of genocide, and encouraging them to learn the facts and think critically around issues of mass human extermination, hate, racism and violence is imperative. This approach will allow youth to be better equipped to build a healthier way of living on both local and global scales.

Understanding the causes of systemic violence is the only way such crimes against others can be prevented. Remembering the names of the genocides is far from sufficient. What is needed is to *understand* the causes linked to this complex phenomenon and the steps leading up to it. This requires a pedagogical approach that will ultimately activate students’ intellectual, emotional and ethical engagement.⁸

Given the increasingly polarized nature of political landscapes around the world and the rise of online hate, it is now, more than ever, urgent to invest in teaching genocide. Education remains the key to breaking the cycle of hatred which in its extreme forms can lead to genocide. □

For the endnotes, please see this article on www.armenianweekly.com.

From Law to Curriculum to Training

Armenian Genocide Education in Michigan

By Ani Boghikian Kasparian and Lara S. Nercessian

The Armenian Genocide has always been at the forefront of Armenian consciousness and will continue to be as long as upcoming generations carry the torch of history, demand justice and work to prevent present-day injustices against Armenia and Artsakh (Nagorno Karabagh).

Armenia is facing an existential threat just as it did in 1915. The unprovoked attacks on innocent Armenians of Artsakh, the blockade of Artsakh by Azerbaijan, and recently, attacks on the Republic of Armenia, are nothing more than the continuation of the Armenian Genocide over a hundred years ago. The need to educate students everywhere is imperative.

In recent years, some public school districts have recognized the importance of educating students on the topic of genocide, at times as part of their history classes, and in other instances, as a full-semester course on the topic. While a few genocides are well known to the public, the Armenian Genocide has traditionally been marginalized in Michigan. When taught in all public schools, there are vital lessons that can be learned from studying the Armenian Genocide, the first major genocide of the 20th century, while for Armenians, the history and memory of those who perished will be engraved forever.

THE FIRST STEP

Every April 24, the Armenian community commemorates the Genocide with a remembrance proclamation from the state of Michigan; but in 2002, it was formalized through legislation as “Armenian Genocide Remembrance Days, Act 558 of 2002” signed into law by Governor John Engler.

“Section 435-281 Michigan days of remembrance of the Armenian genocide of 1915–1923.”

Sec. 1 “The legislature declares that April 24 of each year shall be the Michigan day of remembrance of the Armenian genocide of 1915–1923, and that the period beginning on the Sunday before that day through the following Sunday shall be the days of remembrance in this state, in memory of the victims of the genocide, and in honor of the survivors.”

Recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the state of Michigan was cemented into law.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE EDUCATION BECOMES LAW

In 2014–2015 the Michigan chapter of the Armenian National Committee of American (ANCA) had pursued an aggressive campaign to include the Armenian Genocide in the Genocide and Holocaust Education Bill that was to be proposed in the Michigan House of Representatives. Through countless meetings, knocking on every legislator’s door, letter writing campaigns and phone banks, every legislator was briefed and asked to support the inclusion of the Armenian Genocide in the Genocide and Holocaust Education Bill. Although the initial bill never made it to the floor before the Michigan House of Representatives ended its session, a new, identical bill was proposed the following year. The ANCA and other Armenian groups and organizations who were working to the same end joined forces in 2016 as a united front, advocating for Armenian Genocide education with the help of a lobbyist, an energized grassroots effort from the community, and this time, against the powerful Turkish lobby. Despite extreme challenges the second time around, the Armenian and Jewish communities successfully pushed the bill through.

In 2016, Governor Rick Snyder signed into law HB4493, the Michigan Genocide and Holocaust Education Bill. The Armenian

“When taught in all public schools, there are vital lessons that can be learned from studying the Armenian Genocide, the first major genocide of the 20th century, while for Armenians, the history and memory of those who perished will be engraved forever.”

Genocide and the Holocaust, as the only two genocides recognized by law in the state of Michigan, are named specifically. The new law, MCL 380.1168, requires a minimum of six hours of instruction from the eighth through 12th grade.

With the passing of the law came responsibility. The governor appointed five members from the Armenian community to serve on the Governor’s Council on Genocide and Holocaust Education, along with five members from the Jewish community and five nonaffiliated members, and charged them with the task of providing resources and the necessary tools for educators to teach specifically about the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust.

By this time, representatives from the Michigan ANCA and other community groups and organizations had joined together to form the Armenian Genocide Education Committee (AGEC), a non-profit (501c3) organization. The AGEC, as the community’s representative body, is responsible for securing inclusion and dissemination of all materials related to Armenian Genocide education in Michigan and



Detroit Armenian community members with then-Governor Rick Schneider as he signed the Genocide and Holocaust Education bill into law in 2016

to fundraise for this purpose. The term of the Michigan Governor’s Council on Genocide and Holocaust Education ended two years later with a resource website for educators, which continues to be a work in progress (mhge.org).

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN THE STATE STANDARDS

Beginning in 2014, there were several attempts to revise the Michigan social studies standards to become more inclusive. In 2019, after much politicized tensions, the Michigan Board of Education approved the last version of the revised social studies standards. Prior to the final vote, the AGEC actively pursued inclusion of the Armenian Genocide in the appropriate sections by contacting key legislators, directly communicating with the standard writers and



A genocide education workshop held in Dearborn, Michigan, and led by Sara Cohan, former education director for The Genocide Education Project

public speaking at town hall meetings. Hearing our voices, the writers amended the lapses in the standards, which was included in the final version under World History and Geography, Era 7, (Standard 7.2.6 Case Studies of Genocide and 7.2.1 WWI). It was purely by chance that the social studies standards were being revised and put to vote by the Michigan Board of Education following the end of the Governor’s Council term. This allowed the revised standards to reflect the new law and include the Armenian Genocide as a case study.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE TEACHER TRAINING IN MICHIGAN

The task of providing Armenian Genocide teacher-training workshops through Michigan Intermediate School Districts is a daunting task. The AGEC hosted several trainings, provided by The Genocide Education Project, but the pandemic slowed the process. It soon became evident that the work requires assistance from an experienced team of professionals in the field of education. The AGEC soon formed an advisory board, composed of district curriculum directors, superintendents and the CEO of a consulting and administrative services for school districts, to seek counsel on this new endeavor.

It also became evident that the work requires a team of educators and like-minded individuals to carry out the mission of reaching out to the various districts and to help organize teacher trainings throughout the state. Presently, the AGEC is in the process of forming such a team.

This team eventually will recruit and prepare a group of classroom speakers to be on call as available resources for teachers. The AGEC’s agenda includes the future establishment of a separate website exclusively about the Armenian Genocide and specifically designed for Michigan teachers with lesson plans aligned to Michigan’s social studies standards and local resources for teachers.

There is great potential for further engagement with the public to educate them on the Armenian Genocide outside of schools. Utilizing public libraries, civic centers and public events to organize art and photography exhibitions, musical concerts, poetry readings, showing documentary films, essay contests and speaker series expands the audience base beyond the Armenian community and beyond classrooms, too. In turn, this will provide a better understanding of the present situation in Armenia and Artsakh, broadening our advocacy base beyond our small communities. These are some ideas for the future being considered by the AGEC of Michigan. Keeping alive the memory and history of the Armenian Genocide is crucial in understanding today’s reality, and with the lessons learned, it is imperative for securing the future of Armenia and Artsakh. □

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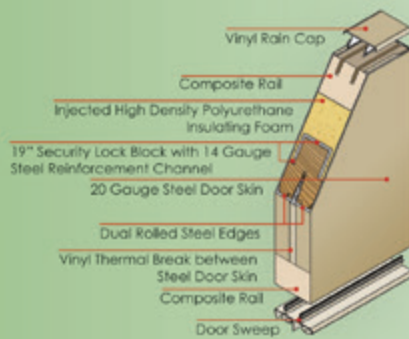
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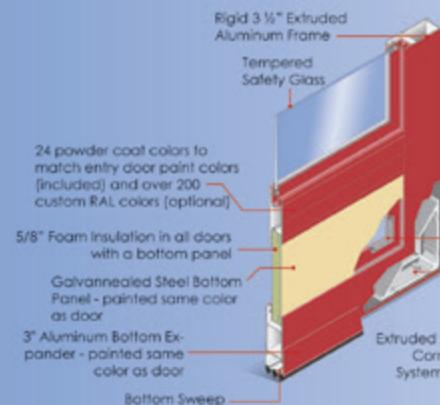
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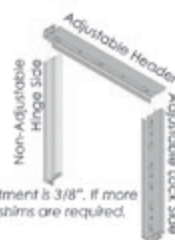
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ANCA

Countering Armenian Genocide denial with education and advocacy

By Pauline Getzoyan

The Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA)—the largest and most influential Armenian American grassroots political organization—works to advance issues of concern to the American Armenian community, particularly in support of a free, united and independent Armenia. The ANCA is on the ground on Capitol Hill working to influence and guide US policy and serving Armenian Americans as a liaison with their elected officials. The ANCA's current efforts and actions are dedicated to stopping all US military aid to Azerbaijan and to sending emergency humanitarian assistance to Artsakh in the face of the ongoing blockade by Azerbaijan. In conjunction with these pressing issues, the ANCA also focuses its attention on education, and in particular, Armenian Genocide education. The Armenian Weekly conducted an interview with ANCA executive director Aram Hamparian to learn more about the ANCA's objectives in genocide education and how they correspond to current events in Armenia and Artsakh.



ANCA Executive Director
Aram Hamparian on Capitol Hill

Armenian Weekly (A.W.) Tell us about the Armenian Genocide Education Act and its status.

ANCA Executive Director Aram Hamparian (A.H.) Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, a longstanding ally in Congress, joined with Congressman Gus Bilirakis in introducing the Armenian Genocide Education Act, H.R.7555, in the 117th Congress (2021-2022). This measure secured strong bipartisan support, garnering 76 cosponsors

and considerable interest and support among diverse Congressional constituencies and also academic, scholarly and human rights circles. This legislation was referred to the Committee on House Administration, since it called on the Library of Congress (an arm of Congress) to promote Armenian Genocide education, but this panel did not have time to act on the measure before the end of the 117th Congress. With the departure of Congresswoman Maloney from the US House, new avenues are being explored to see this

measure brought forward in this new session of Congress.

H.R.7555 built upon the President's (2021) recognition of the Armenian Genocide and the historic passage (2019) of H.Res.296 and S.Res.150—resolutions that established US recognition of the Armenian Genocide and rejected any official US association with the denial of this crime. This measure aimed to appropriate \$10 million over five years for the Library of Congress to help educate Americans about the Armenian Genocide. It specifically cited Ottoman Turkey's systematic and deliberate state-sponsored mass murder, national dispossession, cultural erasure and exile of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Syrians, Arameans, Maronites and other Christians between 1915 and 1923.

Simply put, our Armenian Genocide education advocacy counters propaganda that claims that Ottoman Turkey's systematic and deliberate state-sponsored mass murder, national dispossession, cultural erasure and exile of millions of Armenians and other Christians between 1915 and 1923 did not take place.

A.W. How does Armenian Genocide education fit into the ANCA's legislative priorities?

A.H. The ANCA has a forward-looking policy agenda, focused on the long-term viability of the Armenian nation. Armenian Genocide education represents a vital component of this work, aligned with our aims of a secure Armenian homeland and a safer world. Increasing awareness of the Armenian Genocide shines a spotlight on the current threats—by the same state perpetrators of the 1915 Genocide—to the very existence of Armenia and Artsakh. More broadly, this type of education makes the world safer by challenging Turkey's precedent of genocide committed, consolidated and denied with impunity.

A.W. Given that the ANCA's advocacy efforts are focused on the existential threat facing the republics of Artsakh and Armenia today, how can genocide education inform those efforts?

A.H. Genocide education places the current existential threats to our homeland in historical context. Azerbaijan's aggression—fully

backed by Turkey—did not start in the 1980s, but rather has its roots in the genocidal campaigns by Sultan Abdul Hamid, the Young Turks and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk to rid Armenian lands of Armenians as part of their twisted pan-Turkish dream of ethnically-cleansing their way to Central Asia. Today, a century after the Armenian Genocide, we hear Turkish President Recep Erdogan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev repeating genocidal threats, and worse yet, acting on their stated intentions to finish the work of 1915. Erdogan and others have called Armenians the “remnants of the sword,” meaning the few they failed to kill, while Aliyev loudly proclaims Yerevan and the rest of Armenia as Azerbaijani land.

A.W. The ANCA continues to work diligently to zero out US military aid to Azerbaijan and to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its war crimes in the 2020 Artsakh War and to the present day. How do you think genocide education today can help in these specific efforts?

A.H. It is our hope and expectation that US policymakers—forced to make decisions on US military aid to Azerbaijan out in the open, under the bright light of public scrutiny—will be informed by the long history of Turkey and Azerbaijan working together today to eradicate the presence of Armenians upon their indigenous homeland. That they will not misrepresent this ethnic-cleansing as a “conflict” between two antagonists, but rather a unilateral attack by vastly larger militaries against a blockaded, landlocked genocide survivor state. We are working toward the day that Turkey and Azerbaijan's genocidal drive to eradicate Armenians will be challenged by American leaders as a moral imperative, not as a geopolitical chess game to be managed. A future State Department whose diplomats all learned about the Armenian Genocide in school would be far more willing and able to prevent a second Armenian Genocide, and more broadly, to help end the global cycle of genocide.

A.W. According to The Genocide Education Project's website, currently, 14 US states that require genocide and Holocaust education include the Armenian Genocide as a primary example. What efforts are being

made by the ANCA and its local affiliates to promote this requirement in other states, and what states, if any, are a specific focus?

A.H. Our challenge is to expand the list of states that require Armenian Genocide education and then – just as importantly – to ensure that these states actually implement these programs in each and every school district. We are working with our local chapters to make this happen. We aim to build on the remarkable work that has been done in the civic arena, by Armenian National Committees in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas and Virginia, to include Armenian Genocide education in public school lesson plans. The Genocide Education Project, in the academic space, is doing ground-breaking work in training teachers and providing educational materials in school districts across the country.

A.W. Any final comments about the importance of Armenian Genocide education, specifically as it pertains to the work of the ANCA?

A.H. As William Faulkner said: “The past is never dead. It's not even past.” That's doubly true for Armenians. By virtue of our history, our geography, our neighbors and the threats we face, we must confront the past, addressing its gravest injustices, as part of our broader movement forward as a nation.

What's at stake here is not just historical memory, which is so very vital, but also prospects for a just resolution of the Armenian Genocide and the prevention of future genocides against any peoples, anywhere on our planet. There is no better way to end the cycle of genocide than by teaching about genocide, and there is surely no better place to start than in our schools.

Our efforts in this regard are all the more necessary given the lack of sufficient Armenian Genocide education in school textbooks and lesson plans and all the more urgent in light of the Turkish government's increasingly aggressive global campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, including active and ongoing efforts to roll back US recognition of this crime. □