



For those who believe in the social, economic and political liberation of the Armenian people. Perhaps the most unique community of Armenians in history exists today in the United States. This community, unlike any other, contains

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individuals with a diverse set of ideas, philosophies and outlooks which can be a blessing or a curse to this community depending on what kind of more basic outlook we have toward each other.

To be able to capture the best of these ideas and gain from them, we will need to understand our own place in history, to view ourselves in our place in the centuries of Armenian history.

The most crucial group of individuals that may contribute to this new basic outlook is the youth.

The youth have an obligation to assert themselves because we are in a position unlike any other to evaluate the positive and negative aspects which exist in the differing ideas we have inherited from preceding generations. It is also the youth who, in the end, will decide which of these ideas to accept or reject.

The first step is to recognize that there is an undeniable Armenian aspect in our identity. This identity binds us together through common interests and common virtues.

The next step is to identify what that identity and other aspects in our character. We will define the Armenian-American.

In this definition we will see what we are to all of the other Armenians that inhabit this planet with us. And in these relationships we will decide what our future will be as Armenians. We will decide for ourselves and for future generations.

The outcome of this metamorphosis will be the maturity of our community and the socio-economic and political maturity of Armenian America.

This maturity will be our liberation.

Haytoug will strive to expedite this process. In its pages we will see the aspects of our essential identity, our common interests and our common virtues. And from these pages we will judge.



***For the social, economic and political liberation of
the Armenian people***

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A new chapter has opened in the history of Western Armenian America. A few months ago the heads of the apostolic churches in this region announced intentions to unify their organizations. This development, which would have hit at the heart of this community, was, however, stalled when the late Catholicos Vazken I announced intentions of revamping the Constitution of the Armenian Apostolic Church to make it more democratic and include the other sects of the church—the Holy See of Cilicia, the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Istanbul. An all encompassing restructuring of the apostolic churches would have made similar efforts in this region redundant.

As a result, local efforts seem to have died away. The community has not been informed of any new developments in the matter.

With the death of Vazken I it remains to be seen if his successor will also pursue a new order for the apostolic Armenian religious organiza-

The artificial existence of two Armenian Apostolic Churches came about through a combination of foreign political influences and unfortunate acts of fate. But today, when the Armenian political climate has improved significantly, an opportunity exists for this anomaly to be corrected.

It may be difficult to comprehend the significance of these developments after so many generations have seen nothing other than a split church.

The significance is not in the church itself at all. After all, churchgoers will continue their spiritual self-delusion. The same people will fall asleep during sermons of archaic babble while others converse outside with their Sunday friends. So what will change?

The most obvious advantage is in the greater efficiency created by the merging of the two organizational structures which currently exist. The new structure will benefit from the relative advantages of both of the currently existing, secular, if not religious, hierarchies.

The less obvious advantage will come in the future, as the new organization evolves. The "National Constitution" system, first developed in Ottoman Turkey gave the church organization significant political, secular authority. This tradition still exists in our community.

The greatest advance will be the eventual secularization and democratic politicization of the whole system. The moronic provisions made in favor of cleric influence in the structure has been fed by the divisive system for too long. The unnatural division has forced each organization to keep a cleric under in their system in order not to lose legitimacy relative to the other organization. With the unity of the structure this force will be removed; the community will rule itself through membership in "congrega-

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Identity and Activism

It was to get something done

by Stepan Haytayan

Iranian's with green eyes are fairly atypical. But that is not Behzad Tabatabai's only unique characteristic.

After extensive involvement in other campus activities at UCLA, Behzad decided to devote a year of his academic career to the Iranian Student Group at UCLA. While there he served as co-editor-in-chief of *Armaghan*, the group's periodical, and gained extensive insight into the workings of ethnic minority youth groups.

Behzad believes he is atypical among Iranian young people. Much to his despair, he feels that the Iranian identity is shunned by young people, and idealistic purpose is avoided. "The young generation does not see itself as Iranian... They're totally Americanized," he said.

In this respect he feels that the Iranian Student Group and other similar groups on campus have missed the point, "Everybody has a group. They'll come in and want to put on concerts and such things, which is fine. But the whole purpose of having student groups was originally to fight for political change. It was to get something done... People are going to have fun anyway. It's harder to educate them."

This has apparently manifested itself into a two-tiered structure among UCLA student groups. "Student groups like the African Student Union and MEChA feel their struggle is different from ISG's or ASA's [Armenian Student Association]. A lot of these groups have become social and are not given as much respect." The differences have resulted in the more political groups getting more attention and more funding from campus institutions like student government, he said.

"When professor [Stanford] Shaw at UCLA said that the Genocide never happened the Armenian student group mobilized, and at that



Behzad Tabatabai

time Armenian students were getting a lot of respect. You kind of knew they existed, but the rest of the time they were not really there. They weren't really noticed."

Behzad attributes some of the tendency to be apolitical to the financial affluence of the communities involved as well as the circumstances under which they entered American society.

"African-Americans were brought here, and the system kept them on the bottom economically... Most Latinos came here fleeing their countries economic or political conditions. But everybody else including most of the Asian communities and all of the Middle Eastern communities got on a plane and came... They were a more affluent community to begin with so they tended to be more conservative."

In our conversation Behzad pointed out the incredible emphasis placed on education in the Iranian community. "One of my cousins once said that 'In our family it would be harder not to go to school than to go and get your Ph.D.'"

But there was one unfortunate aspect he pointed out. "How many doctors does one community need?" he asked. The potential of the community, though great, is directed lop-sidedly. "We need philosophers and writers and teachers. There are too many people in the Iranian community

who live only for themselves, without any sense of community."

Like many in the Armenian community, Iranians face the same bouts with identity, which cause a duality. Some of these internal conflicts are an indirect result of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979. Many Iranians dealt with the situation by calling themselves Persian.

"To say that I am Persian, to me, is to say that I am not Iranian. In 1979 when Iranians started to come here en mass it was safer to say you were Persian and not Iranian, because most Americans were [ignorant] and did not know that it was the same thing.

"You could get beaten up. There were time when I said that I was Persian and people would say, 'Oh, cool. Like the Persian Empire right?' You know—Persian cats, Persian rugs. Then they would ask, 'Where is that exactly?' I would say Iran, and I would get into a fight," Behzad recalled an experience as a schoolboy, "That was when a lot of Iranians learned to say that they were Persian."

"For me it's very hard. I have a major identity crisis because my family and my community and all of my relatives and all of my Iranian friends tell me that I should forget about all this idealistic politics and just go an make my fortune, when I don't feel that it is right," said Behzad.

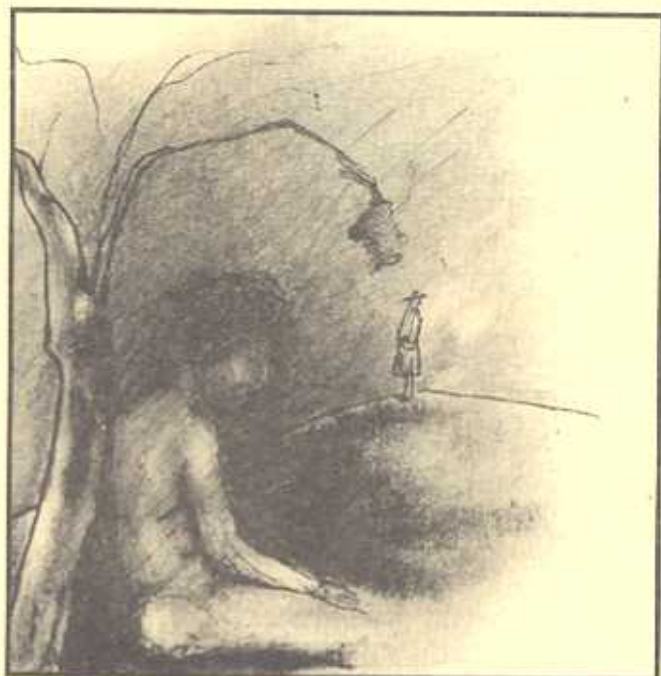
Too Much for Our Students?

by Dzia Vartabedian

Public schools have changed considerably over the past couple of years, especially on the elementary level. With an influx of non-Armenian students, particularly in the Los Angeles Unified School district and the implementation of a year-round school system, things just are not the same.

There are specific programs being created for minorities. As Armenians we fall under that category.

A few schools have divided the school tracks according to ethnicity. For example, if a school is run on three tracks, one of them might be solely for American born students, one for hispanic-Americans and the third for the rest, mostly Asians and Armenians. Depending on where one lives, 95 percent of the third track may be composed of Armenian students. Initially this might seem like a good idea—having all the Armenians together. But this is not very beneficial for the children. They do not have the opportunity to meet new people and get introduced to new things. This also limits their English speaking because conversations outside the class-

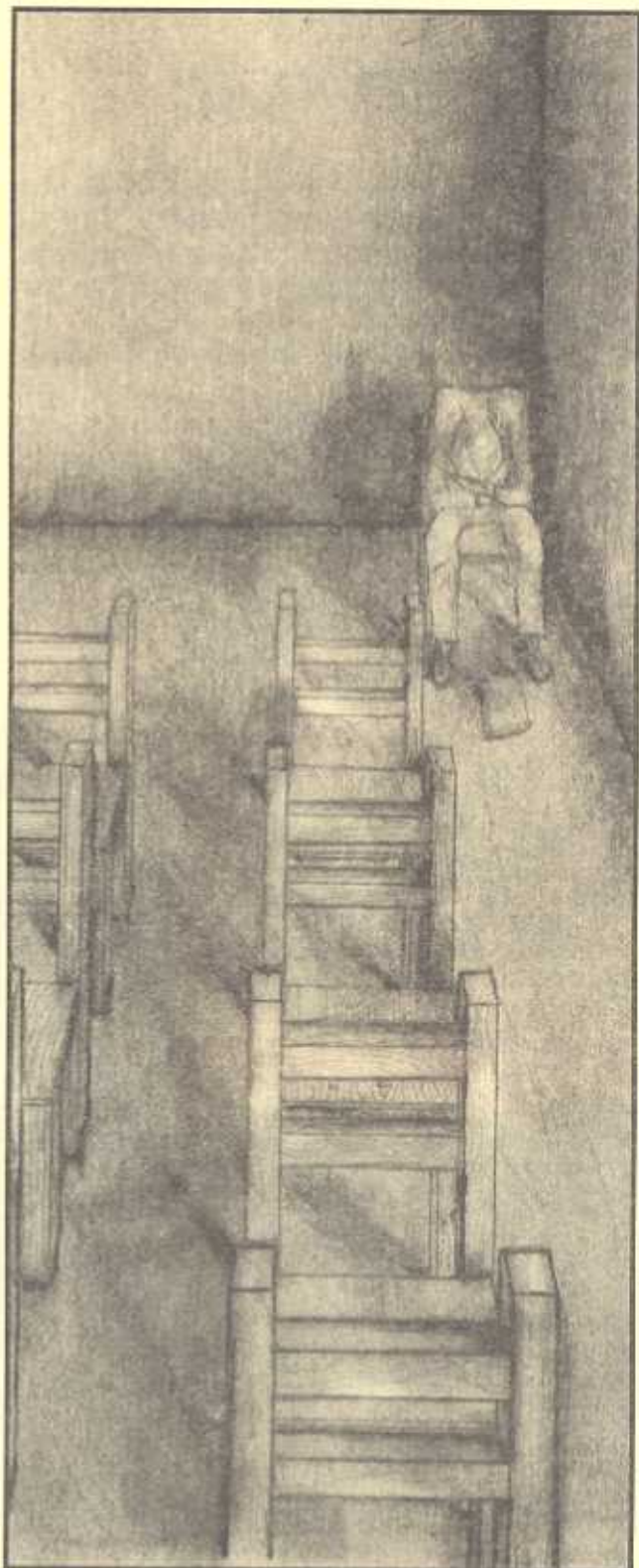


room take place in Armenian. Thus ESL students get less practice.

There is a bilingual program for Spanish speakers which I do not consider to be very effective. In this program all subjects, other than the English language, are taught in Spanish. This includes Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Once again the students do not have the opportunity to practice the English language and they might enter middle school without the necessary language skills, even if they were born in the United States. If you are living in the US, if nothing else but out of courtesy, you should learn the language.

In classes where the majority of the students are Armenians, the teacher's assistant is usually Armenian also. Last year a program was devised at our school where once a week a

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Dear *Haytoug*,

This question is one that concerns morals, values, individuality, and tradition. I've thought about this for the past two years now, and I'm very confused. I am in a position where I feel I must make a choice, and no matter what I choose I am making a sacrifice. One that I would rather not make.

You see, for the past two years I have been dating an *odar*. [non-Armenian] I met him at school, and our relationship has gotten to be very strong. I care for him very much, and I would never do anything to hurt him, but I know that I have to choose. Our relationship has gone far beyond what I had imagined, and if I don't want this to get deeper I have to choose now. I have to choose between him and myself.

Lately I have been feeling guilty for dating an *odar*. Sometimes I feel ashamed, and embarrassed. Not because he's an *odar*, but because I am dating him. People tell me that, "If you love him and he loves and you are happy together, your going out with him doesn't make you any less Armenian. Being Armenian is in your blood, and in your heart, no one can take that away from you, especially an *odar*." I have thought about this issue a lot. I know that being Armenian is in my heart and blood, but isn't it also our tradition and culture and a certain responsibility to our nation. Am I not being selfish and ignoring the latter issues by continuing this relationship?

I am truly confused. I don't know what to do. I want to do the right thing. I want to keep my obligation to my family, my past, my culture and *Hayastan*, to being Armenian. But I am really breaking that obligation by continuing this relationship?

Does dating an *odar* make me any less of an Armenian, or is the advice I've gotten so far fair?

A.L.



Dear A.L.,

Your dilemma is something that has lingered in the minds of young Armenians for many years. The solution has been illusive, but guidance has been abundant.

Everyone is full of advice, but the only one in charge is you. Therefore you must make this decision, a very personal decision.

Though it is true that your choice may have an impact on the Armenian community and nation in the sense of cultural perpetuity, there is another side of human beings which must be addressed. Cultural perpetuity will naturally dictate that you cease pursuing this relationship. It is the other, more universal aspect, that you must explore.

In doing so I would point out a few things which you might choose to weigh in to your final decision.

This is not a questions of morals or values—culture is objective, it has no bearing on good or bad,—it does, however, have a definite relation to individuality, and as such, a relation to tradition.

Being Armenian is a part of your identity, but it is definitely not in your blood. Identity is developmental. It is the result of a series of experiences.

The adage "out of sight, out of mind" is relevant to this issue. By associating most of your life with non-Armenians, whether it be a boyfriend or other peers, you

expose yourself less and less to the Armenian aspect of your identity. Your statement "I have to choose between him and myself," shows that you have come to this realization to some degree.

The fact that you feel a conflict shows that this person is important to you. You are facing a decision that will require a great deal of maturity. Either choice will result in a loss. You need to make the choice that will have the least long-term loss for you.

Choosing an Armenian is not "a certain responsibility to our nation."

Choosing a friend is a choice for yourself. But your self, being Armenian, is included in the equation. All of our national responsibilities emanate from our responsibility to ourselves--the freedom to protect and perpetuate that unique part of ourselves that is Armenian.

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Haytoug is provided as a community service to Armenian American youth.

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Editorial

tions."

Unified, secular, democratic and legitimate leadership in the community will finally provide the vehicle by which this community will advance. With the creation of a central authority over the whole community the party oligopolies will be broken, and parties will be forced to compete in the races for leadership positions. Arguments will be over community and national issues; petty attacks and finger-pointing will cease.

A new dynamic will also begin to enter the community. The various parties will have an interest in expanding their constituencies. By current standards, where each party has a controlling share in various sub-communities, there is no incentive to expand out of their safe yet small market shares.

The new pseudo-government will be responsible for administering one school system, one cultural association, one benevolent organization, one athletic association. And when one party fails to satisfy the community, the members of the community will show their discontent at the polls.

Eventually the new system will admit the other religious sects in the Armenian community creating a truly unified, expanding, organized and active community.

It may be that this new system has a long way to come, but the first fragile steps are being taken today. Contribute to their success. The youth are a significant consideration for the leadership of today. Make your voice heard to the decision-makers.

Identity and Activism

When asked what anyone could do to heighten awareness, he replied, "There isn't any natural element to politicize people or to get them to think about anything other than social [activities] or personal, individualistic types of ideas. Unless something from outside triggers it they are not going to think of it on their own. Individuals may, but it is not going to happen soon, I think... There is a handful of people who are political, mostly within the Iranian

community though. There are all sorts of programs we have on TV and there's a 24 hour radio station. A lot of the issues are aired there, but everybody just talks. Nobody organizes."

Behzad Tabatabai is 24-years-old. He was born in Tehran, Iran and moved to the United States at a young age. He graduated from UCLA in June 1993 and is currently a graphic designer and aspiring author.

Too Much for Our Students?

parent volunteer would work on language and critical thinking with the Armenian students who know how to read and write. The assistant would introduce to the rest of the Armenians our history and culture. (Meanwhile the teacher would work with the remaining, non-Armenian students.) This has been a good opportunity for the students to practice Armenian and for those that do not know Armenian

to further their knowledge in our rich culture and history.

There are different ESL programs for non-English speaking students. These programs are implemented differently depending on the teaching assistant and the class. All of the programs are very effective, and when combined with a caring and patient teacher Armenian students and others will receive a proper education in elementary school.

But once in middle school things become extremely difficult. Unfortunately there is a definite lack of parent involvement in the public schools. Armenian par-



Dzia Vartabedian

ents have the general misconception that because they do not know the English language very well, there is a barrier for them. This is not the case at all. They can help. Some feel intimidated by non-Armenians. But some parents are simply apathetic. They do not take the time to go to parent conferences, let alone get involved in parent associations. They have the mistaken mentality that their only job is sending the kids to school.

The government does that already. Now it is time to take the extra step.

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"I believe we are lost here in America, but I believe we shall be found."

--Thomas Wolfe