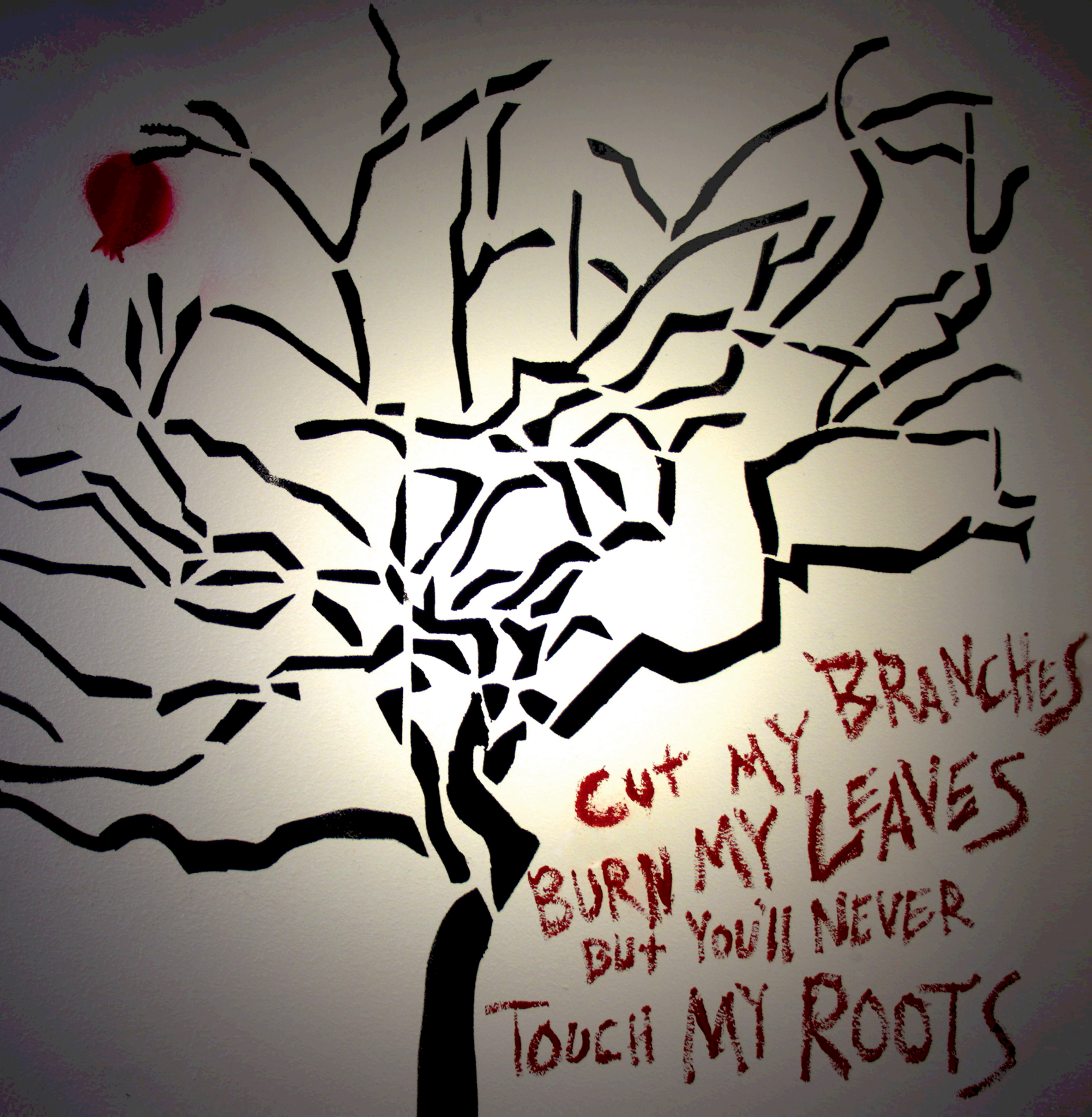


# HAYTOUG

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ARMENIAN YOUTH FEDERATION WESTERN UNITED STATES  
SPRING 2010





**Contributors:**

Vahe Abrahamian	Heghinar Melkomian
Nyree Abrahamian	Lori Najarian
Nazik Armenakyan	Tamar Salibian
Paul Chaderjian	Vahe Sargsyan
Shant Hagopian	Skeptik Sinikian
Hovig Keushkerian	

**Editors:** Allen Yekikian, Vaché Thomassian

**Layout & Design:** Allen Yekikian

**Cover Design:** Krikor Mugerian

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## CUT MY BRANCHES, BURN MY LEAVES, BUT YOU WILL NEVER TOUCH MY ROOTS.

It is not uncommon to hear certain pundits sound off about how Armenians are too 'hung up' on the Genocide. It is said that 1915 has become the sole 'obsession' of Armenians, especially in the Diaspora.

Whether discussing genocide resolutions or the recent Turkey-Armenia Protocols, Armenians are told they need to "move beyond" the Genocide issue and put more emphasis on things like culture or helping the homeland. Sadly, at times, it is fellow Armenians pontificating these notions.

The underlying assumption here is that commemorating and working on attaining justice for the Genocide somehow takes away from other aspects of Armenian identity; we are supposed to believe that we must focus less on the Genocide in order to highlight other aspects of our history and culture.

But the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, strengthening and advancing our culture is part of the resistance against the Genocidal process itself.

After all, the motivation behind the Genocide perpetrated by the Turkish government was to erase all trace of Armenian identity from the face of the earth. Fighting against this means

not only bearing witness to these crimes and demanding real justice, but also bolstering and reviving our rich heritage and culture.

With over 2/3 of our people dispersed outside of the homeland, we face the constant threat of acculturation and assimilation within our host countries. The loss of our native language, cultural traditions, and eventually our identity as Armenians is a very real challenge we must deal with everyday.

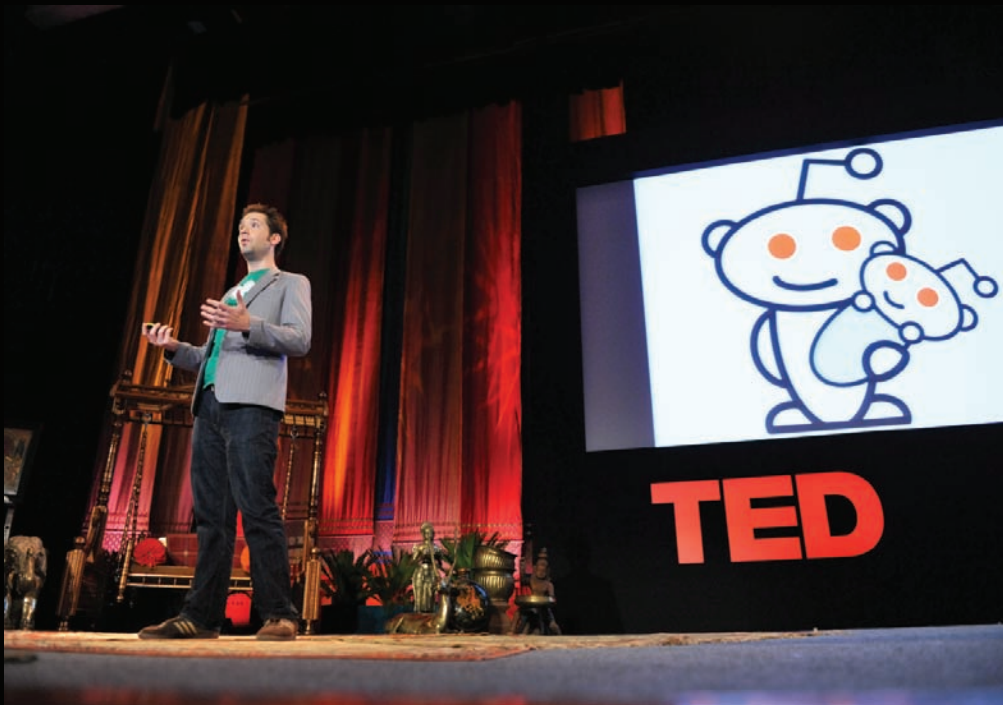
We can choose to confront this challenge in one of two ways: hold on to conventional practices and strictly defined notions of Armenian identity or carve a new path which embraces modern influences and seeks to reinvigorate our traditions in the context of the 21st century.

Our history is analogous to the life of an old wise tree. It has been through much: it has seen drought, it has withstood torrential rain, it has been cut with every imaginable ax, it has been burnt and wounded...but its strong, unwavering roots will ensure a new spring, and a new rebirth.

Invigorated by our roots, a new generation will grow and develop itself to bear the fruits of our future.



# ALEXIS OHANIAN GAINS PERSPECTIVE IN YEREVAN



**Cofounder of Reddit.com discusses his start-up, his experience in Armenia with Kiva, and his endeavor: TEDxYerevan**

By Nyree Abrahamian

*“Wake up. Get ready. Go to work. Tea. Reddit. Chitchat. Reddit... Start work.*

*This is how I start my average workday. Reddit.com is an addiction, for me and for thousands of people around the world. It’s a social media website where users (Redditors) post interesting links and other users can vote and comment on them. The links that get the most “upvotes” make up the front page of interesting, witty, insightful and comical articles, photos and videos.”*

Reddit is the brainchild of Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian, who started the site fresh out of college in 2005. When I first googled Reddit and read this, like any good Armenian, my eye was immediately drawn to the -ian, and I felt proud that I could add another name to my list of brainy Armenians. So when I found out that Alexis Ohanian would be in Yerevan (where I live) for a few months, I knew I had to track him down and talk to him.

Alexis is here on a three-month fellowship with Kiva (kiva.org), an organization that allows people to lend money via the internet to microfinance institutions in developing countries, which in turn lend the money to small businesses. After selling Reddit to Condé Nast

in 2006, he has been keeping busy with several projects, his recent connection to Kiva being one of them. He has also founded a new website, [www.breadpig.com](http://www.breadpig.com), “an unincorporation that’s responsible for bringing geeky things into the world”, and in December 2009, gave a TED Talk about the power of social media - [http://www.ted.com/talks/alexis\\_ohanian\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_a\\_splash\\_in\\_social\\_media.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/alexis_ohanian_how_to_make_a_splash_in_social_media.html).

If you haven’t come across it yet, TED.com (another of my online addictions) is a non-profit foundation that holds conferences all over the world in which some of the world’s leading thinkers share “ideas worth spreading,” as the TED motto goes, through short lectures which are broadcast online.

After spending only a few weeks

here, Alexis quickly realized that Armenia is a place filled with “ideas worth spreading,” and is now helping organize Armenia’s very own TEDx conference ([www.tedxyerevan.com](http://www.tedxyerevan.com) - an independently organized TED event), to be held on September 15, 2010 in Yerevan.

We met, and discussed a range of topics from social media to Armenia-diaspora relations, over hot bowls of spas (yogurt soup).





**Nyree Abrahamian:** *What is Reddit?*

**Alexis Ohanian:** Reddit is basically a news website where readers, not editors, determine the front page. It's a place where interesting links from anywhere on the internet get submitted by people, and other people vote on them. If they like them, they vote them up, if they don't like them, they vote them down. The end result is this evolving front page of interesting links.

**N.A.:** *How did Reddit come about?*

**A.O.:** My cofounder, Steve Huffman, and I were trying to solve the problem of not being entertained enough in the morning when we woke up. There wasn't a good destination to find all the best stuff on the web. And it seemed like there were two possible solutions. One, we get a bunch of people to curate and figure out what the best stuff is, and that was going to be costly and time consuming. Or, we just let all of our readers do that work for us. And in the end, it turns out that all these people (we get about 7 million unique visitors a month) spread out all over the world, can help to find all of the best stuff on the web... certainly better than we could.

**N.A.:** *Why did you decide to volunteer with Kiva? And why in Armenia?*

**A.O.:** I decided to do it because when I first discovered Kiva in 2008, the very first thing I did when I went to their website was search for Armenia, and we weren't there, and that made me sad. I thought, 'I know this diaspora pretty well, I mean, I'm a part of it, and they seem to be very keen on the future of Armenia...' And the Kiva model is one that I do believe in, and I thought, 'Why are they not in Armenia? It's a no-brainer.'

So I was eventually able to get a hold of the president of Kiva through a friend, and annoyed him, basically, until he finally relented. So long story short, six months ago, Kiva started work here.

**N.A.:** *What are your impressions of Armenia so far?*

**A.O.:** What has really struck me is that... it's not a country that seems to want help. I don't know if that sounds right. The perspective from the States is that, here is a country that needs help, and fair enough, that could be true. But there is this... I don't know if it's stubbornness, or pride... but everyone I meet seems to be interested in helping Armenia, but doing it in ways in which Armenians help themselves. And that's valid.

I think it's given me some good perspective, because now I'm going to go back and probably be more engaged with the diaspora from this experience, but doing it with I guess a more Armenian perspective...

I was always proud of being Armenian but it was just like, that was it. I was proud to be Armenian, but not in connection to present-day Armenia. Now, I would like to be able to keep the relationships I made here, thanks to the internet, and perhaps be a more attuned voice for Armenia.

**N.A.:** *You gave a Ted Talk in December. How did this opportunity come about?*

**A.O.:** I was invited to my first TED (TED Global - Oxford) just under a year before and was hooked. Heard about TED in India at TED Global and almost immediately started checking my calendar. When I arrived, they were doing a (routine, I believe) open call from TEDsters (attendees) for anyone interested in giving a talk. The big TED mantra is that the attendees are all as interesting as the speakers, so why not let some of them just spontaneously come up and share something.

They asked for a brief pitch and a video of a past talk, I believe, which I had thanks to YouTube, and I told them something they liked, so they asked me to give a TED Talk. I only had a couple days' notice to get slides and a talk together, but thankfully it was only supposed to be about four minutes.

I've never rehearsed more for a talk in my life. And my rehearsal time to talk time ratio was absurd, but I think it all paid off.

**N.A.:** *What did you gain from the experience?*

**A.O.:** I was 'sighted' for the first time in my life by a busboy in San Francisco who'd seen my TED Talk, which was pretty awesome. Most importantly, I've gotten plugged into the TED network, which has allowed me to host the TEDx we're having in Yerevan this September.

**N.A.:** *TEDx Yerevan - why did you decide to go for this? What can we expect?*

**A.O.:** Because I kept meeting so many potential TEDsters, basically, a lot of motivated and smart people with ideas worth spreading. We - and I should stress the we because I'm only one of a team of about 6 people bringing TEDx to Yerevan - are aiming to make this a premier event for anyone interested in world-changing ideas and implementing them. We're assembling the best speakers to talk on topics suggested by visitors to the TEDxYerevan website (version 2 is on the way) and want to invite attendees who are themselves full of ideas worth sharing.

I hope this conference is a starting point for countless great Armenian innovations, projects, and partnerships.





# TEDx Yerevan

**x = independently organized TED event**

September 25th, 2010 - Yerevan, Armenia - Location: TBD

**THEME** Our Future Without Borders

## What can you expect from TEDx Yerevan?

*A gathering of world-leading thinkers, makers, and doers in Yerevan to discuss doing the unprecedented. This event will bring together an audience as impressive as the speakers -- thought leaders from Yerevan and beyond -- for a stimulating day of presentations, discussions, entertainment and art that will spark new ideas for all. Below are among the many topics submitted online. For one month, site visitors had the chance to vote topics up or down; the highest trending topics will be chosen for the conference.*

### GOVERNMENT & SOCIETY

- Demanding transparency: requiring government organizations to publish budget & expenditures on the Web.
- Building the institutions that place checks on the government.
- From "kings" to accountable public servants: how to change the Armenian perception of government.
- Equalization of rural & urban Armenia.
- Creating a judicial system that protects citizens' rights.
- What the average citizen can do in their day-to-day life to help reduce bribery and nepotism.
- How best to remove corrupt individuals who prey on innocents?
- Knowing your rights as an employee working in Armenia.
- Prospects of democracy in Armenia - five steps to bring change to Armenia
- Armenia: Corruption or development?
- Fascism and the Republican Party of Armenia: why a totalitarian regime is not an option.
- Top 10 companies in Armenia evading taxes (and who owns them).
- Creating a Culture of Volunteerism & Service in Armenia.

### ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

- Renewable Energy: How Armenia (like Iceland) can become 100% energy independent.
- Converting garbage to energy: how gas from Nubarashen landfill is being harnessed for energy.
- Geothermal Energy: Armenia's untapped natural resource.

- Small wind turbines and solar panels on every home: clean, cheap, distributed electric power.
- How trees & forests ensure water security, food security & tourism opportunities.
- Sustainable Development (Economic, Social & Environmental)
- How to design your energy efficient home in Armenia.
- Climate Change Projections for Armenia (Environmental, Social & Economic Impacts).
- Preservation of Armenia's Natural Heritage.

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Information superhighways
- Mobile phones with Internet as a leapfrogging device for average Armenians
- Getting high speed Internet infrastructure to an affordable level in Armenia

### GENDER EQUALITY

- Empowering Armenian Women.
- LGBT issues and rights in Armenia and Diaspora.
- The role of women in 21st century Armenia.
- Violence against sexual minorities.
- Homosexuality in Armenia.
- Sexual revolution, legalization.
- How to have at least 30% more female representation in RA National Assembly.

### ECONOMICS

- Future professions: reality and forecasting.
- Startup companies, how establish business in Armenia, business innovative ideas.
- Government incentives for starting up new businesses and Manufac-

turing facilities.

- Turning Armenia into a "startup nation"
- VivaCell: Zero to \$600 million company in 5 years
- Assessing the Armenian government's external debt and growth: addiction or prudent borrowing?
- Opportunities & Costs of Microfinance to Support Entrepreneurship & Alleviate Poverty
- Where are those World Bank and IMF loans going? Did the projects actually get implemented?
- Armenia as a tourist destination for people beyond the Diaspora
- An economic master plan.

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- Sovereign, high-speed road & rail corridor to the Black Sea: why Armenian must demand & build it.
- Armenia as a bridge between the Europe, Russia and Asia.
- Development of Armenia as an regional economic gravity center.
- Armenia as a new partner of EU.
- Bringing Armenian Innovations to the World.
- Kurds of Eastern Anatolia: how our neighbors perceive Armenia and Armenians.
- Transportation routes of Eastern Anatolia: road, rail, sea, air.

### CULTURE & HERITAGE

- Armenian culture beyond the Genocide (Empowerment and exposition on the International level)
- Maintaining Armenian traditions while also modernizing the nation
- Revitalizing Armenian Cinema
- Artificial popularization of Rabiz subculture. Is Intelligentsia an

endangered species?

- Bringing Armenian art to the world.
- RELIGION**
- Embracing atheism and moving forward without religion.
- Armenia without religion (by Richard Dawkins).

### EDUCATION

- Introducing critical thinking in primary and secondary education in Armenia.

### MEDIA

- Strengthening and Developing Journalism in Armenia.
- How the Internet can change the Armenian entertainment industry.

### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- Great artists steal: why Armenia should COPY technology from the 1st world & NOT try to innovate it.
- Reverse the brain drain. Opportunities for scientists/engineers to apply skills in the motherland.
- Transforming Culture through Science and Education.
- Alternative Medicine.

### ARMENIAN CAUSE

- The Armenian Genocide and International Law.
- Artsakh/Nagorno Karabakh, perspective of development and co-operation.
- A new perspective on Nagorno-Karabakh.
- Across the border: Life, Demographics, ViewPoints, and Economy of Eastern Anatolia.

### DIASPORA

- Birthright Armenia organization: linking the Diaspora and Armenia one volunteer at a time.
- 10 smart ways for a diasporan to really help Armenia(or how to stop treating Armenia like a patient).

CONNECT: [www.tedxyerevan.com](http://www.tedxyerevan.com) | [www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com) | [www.breadpig.com](http://www.breadpig.com) | [www.kiva.org](http://www.kiva.org) | [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com) | [www.ted.com/talks/alexis\\_ohanian\\_how\\_to\\_make\\_a\\_splash\\_in\\_social\\_media.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/alexis_ohanian_how_to_make_a_splash_in_social_media.html)

# Honoring Our Martyrs by Saving the Living

By Heghinar Melkom Melkomian

There are more than 10 million Armenians scattered throughout the world, including the almost 3 million in the Motherland. Even though we are all Armenian, we are also very different. Of course, this is due to the fact that we have been influenced by those communities in which we have been raised. However, there are several things that make us all the same. For example, wherever we go, we always try to find Armenians and even sometimes we try to claim non-Armenians, Armenian. Several years ago there were rumors in Armenia that renowned American signer Gwen Stephani was Armenian. How? Very simple. Just add an "an" at the end of her surname and you have a perfect Armenian surname: Stephanian. There are many similar examples, which are sometimes beyond absurd and ridiculous. However, one thing that is proven is that we Armenians have a unique gene-pool and this is, of course, inarguable.

During the years of the Armenian Genocide, from 1915-1923, while the Ottoman Turks were working systematically according to their "perfect" plan to eliminate all Armenians from the surface of the earth, one and a half million Armenians were brutally massacred. Even though the Turks did not manage to fulfill their mission, one thing is for sure: that many people carrying Armenian genes were killed.

This year is the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. On April 23, thousands of ARF Youth and other young people will take part in the annual torch lit march to the Dzidzernakabert memorial. On April 24 hundreds of thousands of Yerevan residents will pay their tribute to the Genocide victims and lay flowers at the memorial. On April 24, all Armenians throughout the world will become as one and commemorate one of the most unjust and black pages of history.

The definition of the term genocide is "the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group." We don't have to open a dictionary to find the definition of this word, it is encrypted in blood and it is passed on to our generations through our unique genes. Prior to the events in 1915 we had Armenian communities in India, Iran, America and many other countries; however the numbers of Diasporan Armenians skyrocketed after the

Armenian Genocide. Also after the Motherland gained independence in 1991, numerous Armenian families, unable to withstand the harsh living conditions, fled the country. And so, as a result of all this, today we have millions of Armenians dispersed all over the world.

Ninety-five years after the Great Armenian Genocide we still feel the consequences of the Young Turks' actions. Even though I am talking about material loss, I do not mean the loss of our ancestral lands, which today lie behind Turkey's locked

only 10 million of us.

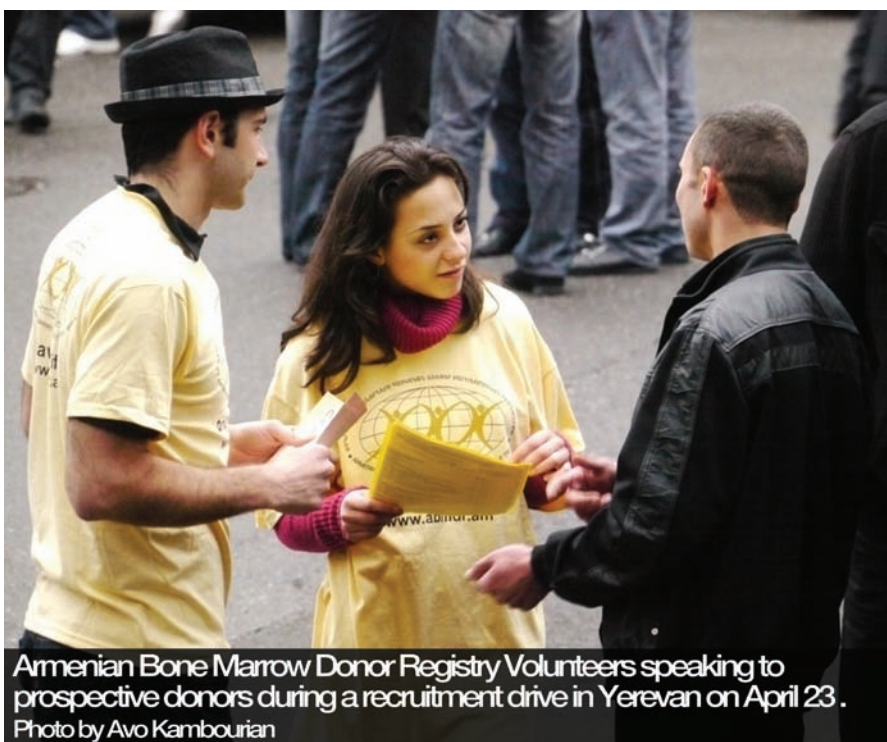
There are many organizations in Armenia, which have a national preservation mission and the Birthright Armenia charitable organization is one of those. Ever since its establishment in 2004, with the help of the organization, 450 Armenians throughout the world have arrived in the motherland to work on a voluntary basis for a minimum of 2 months and a maximum of a year. Four months into 2010, the organization has already hosted over 10 volunteers and this year a young girl named Olivia Katrandjian is amongst them.

Olivia's mother suffers from non-Hodgkin's peripheral-cell lymphoma. This is a type of blood cancer. During her stay in Armenia, volunteering for the Civilitas Foundation, Olivia also aims to raise awareness about fatal blood related illnesses, such as that of her mother and help the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry (ABMDR) find more donors for bone marrow or stem cell transplantation to all Armenian and non-Armenian patients worldwide. ABMDR was founded in 1999 as an independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and is a member of the World Marrow Donor Association (WMDA) and Bone Marrow Donor Worldwide (BMDW) sharing its database information with other registries around the world.

On April 24, the day we will once again climb the steep slope to Dzidzernakabert, Olivia and the professional staff of ABMDR

will be waiting for us all to join their fight, which I view as another type of national preservation mission. So, on the day we commemorate the memory of our victims, the day we march to Dzidzernakabert, lay flowers, pray for the souls of our ancestor to rest in peace and bow our heads in front of the eternal flame to show the world that we will not forget; that we will not retreat from this historic truth and injustice which needs to be recognized; a day when we lost so many Armenian lives, let us also join the struggle to save those we still can.

On April 24 no matter where you live remember to stand up, join your local march, open your mouth and shout slogans, open your mouth and speak the one and only truth and as part of the day of commemoration also save those still alive by donating a sample to a WMDA member registry. We have seen too many tragedies, we have lost too many lives, why lose the chance to save the living?



**Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry Volunteers speaking to prospective donors during a recruitment drive in Yerevan on April 23.**  
Photo by Avo Kambourian

borders. I am talking about the loss of 1.5 million Armenians; a number which would have probably tripled by now, had it not been exterminated.

1.5 million lives were taken, and now we work to bring them justice by fighting for recognition and restitution. Moreover, we have to honor the martyrs by being vigilant today to protect and cherish the lives of fellow Armenians.

There are several blood related fatal diseases such as leukemia, myeloma and lymphoma and life threatening anemias or immune disorders, the treatment of which requires finding a match. When it comes to finding a match, the choices of people first of all narrows down to immediate family members and if there is no match, the search is spread to other people. Having a unique genetic make up, it is nearly impossible to find suitable matches for Armenians among the existing international registries. We have to rely on each other and there are



# Say Hello to iZartonk



## **A 21st Century Zartonk:** *An iRevival in the Modern Age of iFedayees*

*95 years of questioning the reality of planned, brutal mass executions, the ethnic cleansing of a people from their place is far too long. Up against a looming deadline, a threat of losing their history and identity, a new generation of Armenians is waking up to an economic collapse, disappearing Diasporas, and questionable leadership. The time has come for modern-day Fedayees to take action, to use modern technologies and create global media messages about their legacy, history, and their future. This is our prophecy.*

By Paul Chaderjian and Allen Yekikian

At twenty-four minutes past four o'clock on the afternoon of April 24, a war for cultural survival wages on the streets of this metropolis. In the fight of their lifetime are young Armenians on the sidewalks of Wilshire, changing the rules, questioning Baby Boomer values, inventing a new movement, and sending a message to the world that justice will be served and their ancient culture will survive and thrive.

On the front lines of this epic war are the Digital Natives, Generation Z, armed with nothing more than their cell phones, cameras, and their laptop computers. This war is a battle for cultural revival, a battle to re-energize the Armenian spirit in the far corners of the Diaspora and in suffocated and abused community like Javahk. This fight is for the universal acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide and global recognition of the independent Republic of Karabagh. This battle for national survival is not only being waged on these streets of La La Land but in the abstract place called the Internet.

Why is this generation - born into the most pampered of lives - out on the sidewalks instead of sipping beers at a beach-side cantina off the Pacific, on rides in Disneyland, or in the great malls of commerce, shopping, eating, or enjoying a Saturday afternoon matinee?

Where is this sense of injustice and this passion for change coming from? How is their passion being fueled? Why does the world outside their suburban lives matter more now than ever before? And why does a 95-year-old crime against their ancestors warrant the display of such passion - nearly a century later and a world away - on the streets of California?

### **A Generation in Question**

Perhaps these questions are because the progeny of the Genocide has awakened to an uncertain, apocalyptic future. A new generation of young men and women are coming of age to the threat that their lifestyles may be a memory of the good old days.

Young people are opening their eyes to headlines that those in their 20s and 30s are facing 50% unemployment. Their jobs have been shipped off to China

and India. Their universities are broke and have no room for new students. Their forests are cut down and natural resources fast depleting. Their bankrupt government is waging unnecessary wars overseas, throwing billions of dollars in smart bombs on foreign lands, and their corrupt leaders throwing billions of bonuses to those sociopath capitalists who bankrupted a bogus financial industry.

Perhaps their stark realities are now coming into focus because they wake up to accusations that their very existence as Armenians is based on a lie. This rabid movement is being ignited because they turn on CNN to hear the Turkish Prime Minister say that there had been no such thing as Genocide and that Armenians had been the criminals that victimized the Turks.

Baby Boomers' democratic leaders have not only failed at setting the record straight on the Genocide, but they have also failed at guaranteeing that our way of life can be sustainable for the next generation and for generations to come.

Youth today are threatened with the possibility of never owning their own homes, not affording to go on vacations to their ancestral Homeland, and no longer being able to afford to provide an Armenian education to their children or keeping the doors of their ancient

churches open that is fueling the crisis.

How does their government and their President get away with destroying their future and making empty promises like 'change.' Hadn't Mr. Obama promised Genocide recognition? Wasn't he now turning his back on his promises and bowing down to the lying Ottoman politicians of the 21st century?

### **21st Century Re-awakening**

The activists in the 6300 block of Wilshire are following a noble path, a path reversed by their forefathers. One which they were destined to retrace.

When they realized the older generations, in their affluent self-assurance, wasn't going to listen to their ideas about





cultural preservation and nationhood, this generation looked back to their people's history. They found inspiration in stories about fools and revolutionaries who dared to question authority. They found hope in the actions of those in the late 19th century who ventured into the villages and founded schools, and who brought the European enlightenment to the Armenian countryside.

From Madras/Chanai to Venice/San Lazzaro, in the seminaries, merchant communities, and universities of the Armenian Diaspora, Armenians of the day began to look toward their Homeland with despair. They sought solutions to the nation's problems. Having grown tired of being told what they couldn't do by their parents, these individuals began to imagine a better future. They envisioned it and then worked to create it.

What began as a spark became a movement of awakening, a Zartonk, and it spread like a modern-day viral video across the Armenian world. The medium of that era was not the Internet but the printing press. Newspapers, pamphlets, and books created a Diaspora-wide dialogue about cultural, linguistic and social demands. The printing press created a consciousness and awareness that resulted in change.

In the 1700s when Armenians were living under foreign rule, Armenians in the Diaspora experienced the Age of Enlightenment and closely followed the French and American independence movements and the births of democracies.

As the framers of the US constitution were dreaming up their new nation, free from British rule, Armenians like Shaha-mir Shahamirian were thinking up a bill of rights for Armenians and a means for liberation from Turkish oppression. Their weapon was a printing press, which spread new ideas to the masses.

Through the printed word, ancient tales of heroic exploits and battles were brought to life, dialogue about democratic governance and social justice were popularized, and Armenian students studying in the universities of Europe were given a struggle in which to believe.

Armenians in the Age of Enlightenment gave birth to young enlightened thinkers, selfless teachers, and the fearless

Fedayees.

### **The iPeople**

One of the historic acts of the enlightened Armenians was the development a modern language that could be understood by the masses. This Askharabahr became the language of their revolution. It defied the Church and authority to become the medium through which dreams and means for emancipation and liberation were conveyed.

Today, 21st century Fedayees also have a new way to speak the language of the new masses. Their Ashkharabahr--the language of their world--is the Internet and social media. This new media in the age of hyper-connectivity is the foundation of this reawakening. That any two or ten million Armenians anywhere can come together at anytime through the unfathomable global access of the Internet is what makes the iZaronk a reality.

Armed with their laptops, cell and smart phones, this new breed of freedom fighter is waging a struggle for freedom from their people's established norms, norms which are staid and are slowly suffocating if not killing a new generation of young Armenians.

Clear, concise messages, video images in abundance, passionate Armenians speaking up, jumping in front of their cameras, getting behind their iPhones, punching their keyboards with words small and big -- these are what can and will turn around a people in a deep sleep in the early years of the 21st Century. The time has come, and the alarm is sounding; the war of yesterday is now the war in Cyberspace. The weapon is new media.

Armen loads his video camera with a fresh tape. His batteries are charged. His tripod is set-up. He has his MacBook, and he's on the front lines of the Armenian Cause in the 21st Century. He knows that supremacy in the information age is getting his messages heard, using the information superhighways prolifically, and producing sexy, viral messages that are watched by millions of people, scoring thousands of hits on the net.

Varant is clicking photos of police

officers guarding the Consulate doors. He's uploading them with captions via his BlackBerry to thousands who are checking his real-time Facebook updates.

These youth are on the front lines of the Internet, where video, audio, and viral messaging can help Armenians reach the tipping point into nationhood, where democracy and social justice prevail; ensure cultural survival; secure the international recognition of the Armenian Genocide; achieve autonomy and self-rule in Javakhk, and protect the inalienable right of self-determination of the people of the Republic of Nagorno Karabakh. Alina clicks away all day, texting friends, posting messages, videotaping images. She is not wasting her time communicating about which movie she saw or who is dating whom. Instead, she is living and breathing the Armenian Cause, by making the issues on the table more intriguing than what and who is walking on the red carpet or getting drunk in Vegas.

Like Armen, Varant and Alina, thousands of Armenian youth today have greater power than any government, than any conglomerate, than any old-world call-to-arms. Their war of a lifetime is waged through thoughts, through outspokenness, and through clicks on their communications technologies.

The time has come for a 21st century Zartonk, a national revival using the new weapons of modern civilization --the communications tools that every citizen of the world either has access to or knows someone with access. These tools, cameras, keyboards, editing software, iPad and iPods, FlipCams and iPhones, are all what can create the iZartonk.

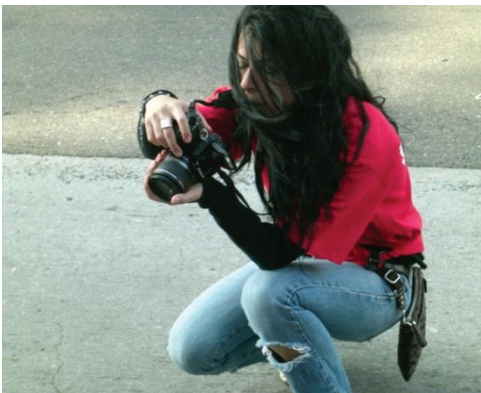
### **iMedia**

From the dance halls of the Ani barakhoomp, to the Armenian language classes at Mesrobian, from the film sets of the aspiring filmmakers, to the performances of young playwrights, iZartonk is Armenians breaking free of their pedagogical restraints, free of the capitalist poison of accruing more wealth, free of the game of politics.

Along the way, young Armenians are using their Internet connections and their keyboards to not only report about what their generation is doing toward their

community's collective goal of cultural preservation, but they are also using all these platforms of media and communication to ask the questions that needs to be asked. They are asking each other, expressing their opinions, spreading unique stories about the Armenian-American experience and challenging each other for new dreams, new ideas, and calls to action.

What should we believe in? What should we stand for? What should be our plans? How do we protect our community and our rights? These are the messages that are floating back-and-forth on the Information Superhighway. Instead of banal messages on Facebook about what people are having for dessert, how about asking what is a good insurance carrier or where there are new job openings? Instead of feeding the livestock on Farmville or repeating a joke from a morally bankrupt cartoon on cable, why not promote a group fighting to stop capitalist endeavors destroying the Earth?



### **iFedayees**

The iFedayees want a say in what their community stands for, what the collective should focus on, not merely accept the ways of their parents' world. They want to decide whether this community needs multi-million dollar cathedrals, lavish banquet halls, and obscene weddings and parties - all which are depleting resources that could otherwise go towards timeless endeavors.

iFedayees must roll up their sleeves and know more than just their people's history. They must also learn about the climate of the world, the Chinese economy, the worlds of the Islam and the South Americas, and how all these factors shape their modern Armenian-American experience.

iFedayees must learn, they must take a stand, and they must be involved in every aspect of their lives and hence their future. This is what revolutionaries do; and this is what young Armenians must do to ensure the survival of their six-thousand year-old-culture and nation - be it in the Homeland or in its vast and ever-relocating Diaspora.

### **iDo and iWill**

In today's Armenian media, instead of stories about the legendary heroes of the people who took up arms to protect their fellow Armenians, there are stories of the mafiosos stealing from the government, the masses, and each other. Instead of notions of equal rights and freedoms, instead of stories of revolutionaries in

the turn-of-the-century Anatolia who inspired a nation and defied the odds to found an independent republic amid the ashes of Genocide, community broadcasters are promoting Armenian criminals as the heroes of the day.

Instead of preaching and promoting service to community and to others, Armenian media is selling laser hair removal, lap bands, and glamorizing those who take from the innocent, those who kill for financial gain, and those who have no morality and humanity. These are not the role models today's young people are seeking., and these broadcasters needed to know that the viewer always has the last word.

The solution is for every Armenian to become a media practitioner, participate in creating and using alternative media and ignore the obnoxious mainstream media outlets. Ignore the info-tainment on your cells, computers, and television channels and hear what alternative media sources are saying. What do Link TV reports say about the European headlines? What are the Arabic channels reporting about the Middle East? What are blogs saying about the Homeland? And what is the individual Armenian saying?

After you learn and listen, become a media content creator by picking up your audio recorder, your notepad, your video camera, and record your voice, broadcast it to your friends. Even if you don't have the answers, ask the questions, put your concerns on paper or on videotape and send them off into Cyberspace.

Every single Armenian should take it upon him or herself to write a few paragraphs or videotape 30 to 60 second news reports to let others in our community know what everyone else is doing as members of the "Armenians."

We saw a glimpse of how powerful and active our community became when hundreds of thousands of you followed the Asbarez and Horizon TV during the committee vote on the Genocide Resolution, the Protocol protests, the hunger strike, and the Armenian President's visit around the Diaspora. Thousands watched ANC YouTube videos; Asbarez and Horizon pages had thousands of hits; and AYF members reported the news by videotaping interviews from the front lines





and posting it for Armenians and non-Armenians around the world to watch.

The momentum that we glimpsed and that we collectively created around the Stop the Protocols campaign was unprecedented. Our story and our collective engagement with the creation of media was viral. Not only did we engage the story, but we engaged our peers and made them active. On top of that success, our viral messages reached mainstream media, the LA Times, and all the television networks. Our Tweets and iPhone videos reached the “Tipping Point” and put our people at the forefront, at least for two weeks, during the Information Age.

But why stop now? Why not continue this grassroots Armenian revolution of the 21st century and continue and build upon the creation of media messages as we did during the Protocols Campaign. And why stop at Facebook and Twitter? Why not report about all of our individual and community successes to our own media network. And why stop with our media? Why not write letters to editors, engage your lawmakers, create YouTube videos, submit stories to Current TV, Reddit, CNN iReports, and other media outlets?

This reawakening, this iZartunk, is based on your participation, you sharing your small and big steps, ideas, concerns, and news items in this whirlpool of information. The revolution, the change, can continue if you and your friends, colleagues, the Armenian community-at-large, and the world knows what we are all talking about.

Share your news, share what's new and different, promote your successes, highlight and advertise whatever makes you proud by writing, videotaping, blogging, Tweet-ing and Facebook-ing. If you have a keyboard, you're a journalist. If you have a video camera, you're a reporter.

Take creating media one step further and find the candidates who are concerned about your concerns and vote them into office. If those candidates aren't there, then you run for office, be it for your university board of regents, your town parish, church council, city council, or state or federal offices. A democracy serves the masses only when the masses serve the democracy, when they vote,



when they express their concerns, and when they go door-to-door talking to people.

Why should your government, your democracy, your representatives on Capitol Hill NOT vote for Genocide recognition. That question should be enough to make you ponder whether they really care about justice and have your best interest in their hearts. Or are they merely banking on empty promises so that they can sustain their cushy jobs and their affluent lifestyles and donors?

If your representatives in government aren't providing what you need them to provide, if they aren't worried about your future, your career, your education, if they are able to convince you that your government needs to wage war overseas instead of fixing roads, developing new industries and renewable energy sources, then their tenure as public servants is over.

Now it's your turn. Participate in the reawakening of the Armenian spirit, create media, voice your concerns, vote, and talk to people.

Remember, in the Information Age, we are on an equal playing field with anything that mainstream news organizations are producing. Your thoughts, your concerns, your opinions are as valid as those of the pundits who are using the mainstream channels that are in the business of making money by gathering the most eyeballs at any given time.

Don't patronize mass media to appease their shareholders with bigger profits. Instead, create your own media and change the game. Whether you attended a protest rally on April 24, attended a book signing, wrote a play, or heard a new artist, everything is relevant to your community.

So speak up, speak loud and participate in the reawakening of the Armenian Soul through iZartunk.

# Canons Against Self Slaughter

By Vahe Abrahamian



*"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."*

For as bright and innovative as the Ittihadists, Nazis and Hutus were in the murder, slaying, raping of peoples, races, religions etc, etc. They really could have turned our very own omniscient and all-knowing deity for harbingers of holocaust. In the passage above we see «Ուր էիր աստուած» himself getting a little more proactive and asking King Saul to head out in the desert and make Paul Pot look passive. This sacrosanct yarn is an example of a greater problem when it comes to nationalist topics, a complacent tendency to leave the "sacred" unquestioned.

From the depths of the red meat and waxy cholesterol infused diets of our most pious children; whose elated eyes absorbed the refracted light of apostolic, stained-glass windows come an appropriately distorted concoction. But I can assure you a diversity of opinions on the theme "White Genocide," and I'd like to speak on behalf of the fringes and factions of the modern Armenian people.

When I refer to these fractions, I'll leave that category vague. I want to cast a wider net here, from the Atheist types to the Consumerists. From those with an existential view of the new era, who have seen the calamity and chaos of the nations' history, and chosen more sensible goals, like tallying Facebook friends or finishing the Criterion Collection. Or Tarantino-generation types who think

Drive-in Cinema references are the height of intellectualism.

The Armenian camp isn't just Mamikonites and Tehlerianites, and I think perhaps we should start embracing this dichotomy. I come from the atheistic, nihilistic, bleeding heart, apologist milieu, and I have some bones and marrow to pick.

The concept of "White Genocide" runs clamorously towards a new genre of Armenosploitation; A generation of consciousness, so enveloped by Armenia's greatest tragedy that the word "Genocide" now serves as an engine rather than an enigma. Exploitation so thorough, that to many members of our human comedy, the words "Armenian" and "Genocide" have become inseparable. This exploitation sees the same chestnuts repeated ad Pavlov: the Armenian grade school reading that awful William Saroyan passage on creating a new Armenia, armchair historians referencing "the Hitler Quote" and of course, grayscale genocide event posters of somber and wrinkled grandmothers holding worry beads. Oh, and worse yet, people who think Ararat is a good movie, and much like that film, our nationalism tends to be overindulgent.

So with all the faux-organic posturing of a plastic fruit basket, "White Genocide" appears like a ghostly King Hamlet back to foretell against a new specter; using calamity as a crutch, and recycling a term that practically dominates our

entire nation's discourse already. The set of suckers who fell for the pitch of the massacre novelty advertiser, who couldn't quite sell "White Auschwitz" or the "Khmer White," and the concept is as errant as the name.

"White Genocide" implies with some patriarchal, aristocratic arrogance that there are those who can define what denigrates Armenian culture. The natural conclusion we can follow is that these elitists can also define the entire Armenian nation as a whole. This makes serving up "White Genocide" exclusionary, and it antagonizes international influence. The pitfall is, of course, that we absorbed ideas like Darwinism, Democracy and Feminism largely from outside influence, and they have dominated previously conceived Armenian notions. Just as Armenian achievements have likely broadened other cultures, "white" culture and others have enriched our nation. So what is the true incentive? Well it's your garden variety "Gulf of Tonkin"--a fear based power play.

Living under phantom nuclear threats, gay marriage bans and constant god-peddling in America is a nice contemporary play of conservative backlash that "White Genocide" represents. The cardiac murmur of the red blooded right-wing nostalgic who wants to serve Christianity, Conservatism, Militarism, Nationalism as one big Armenian cure-all dose of steroids.



This solution is not only claustrophobic and aggressive, but it is an admission of defeat. Radicalizing our rhetoric after years of fascist, intolerant and diabolic enemies of our past is about as smart as your great-uncle picking up that Committee of Union and Progress brochure from the soapbox salesman at the Turkish Bazaar. So slowly from the rigid categorizing, stereotyping, schema-crafting inclinations, the well intentioned hope of creating an Armenian Uber-man, just creates a hollow caricature.

Popular American media has already latched on to this cartoon facsimile, serving the same sappy Christian-victims narrative we've so categorically reinforced. The latest "60 minutes" piece on the Armenian Genocide is this kind of calamity. CBS interviewed a priest and displayed him praying on mass graves, as if the opinion of some human hallucinogenic is at all research journalism. Here we are a nation with no shortage of researchers or scholars, and yet we are being patronized by the media as a society driven by mystics. This sort of Spielbergian Girl-in-a-pink-dress corn syrup drags down our achievements and our causes and,

unless we heighten our senses, I expect it to continue.

And believe me, I know the sunken feeling of fleeting time that tingles your stomachs...I know nostalgia, and empathy and pride. It is natural reaction for those seeking to breathe life into older concepts to pray on these sensibilities, but they are selling Hobson's choice. Eventually we must loosen our fist from the glass walls of the hourglass and realize how inevitable change will come to replace an indelible past.

Did you really expect a generation gap that saw us sipping the waters of Nasirabad to plowing the fields of Farmville to not change world view? It's like spinning the kaleidoscope and hoping to land on the same image twice, it's not impossible... it's just stupid.

Our nationalism must be far more flexible, if it is really the case that we would "like to see any power of the world destroy this race, then perhaps we shouldn't be scared of our shadows. I would hope Armenian language, culture and history will survive on the merits of our accomplishments, but if not that, it certainly won't survive by packaging

paranoia. Rather, it will be embracing the breadth of our passions. So many of our achievements drew from rebellion and iconoclasm; Parajanov, Saroyan and Gorky have become Armenian heroes precisely because they embraced new influences in art and found themselves on the front end of entire artistic eras.

These are hoisted Armenian achievements precisely because they weren't afraid of some enforced purview of their culture. Yet, here we are on the tail end of Soviet-Stalinism, Khomeini-Islamofascism and other cluttered political maw, and we are returning to the same intolerant assumption; having a leader guide our moral compass isn't bad; it just needs a better navigator.

But everyone has to sit around and question the dogma once in a while. For instance, do you know what did end up happening to the prospective holocauster King Saul? Well this monarch found it a little offensive to do the Lord's deed...and was promptly punished. "Because you did not obey the LORD or carry out his fierce wrath against the Amalekites, the LORD has done this to you today." Now...how is that for A Shameful Act?

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# When Genocide Turns into Suicide

By Skeptik Sinikian

When I was first asked to write a guest column for *Haytoug* that addressed the issue of a “white genocide” and the perceived evils of assimilation, I was tempted to write this entire piece in Kra’par (Classical Armenian). After all, it is my humble opinion that if you do not know how to read Kra’par, then you’re not a “real Armenian.” Then I thought to write it in Armenian but I couldn’t decide what language to water our mother tongue down with – Turkish? Arabic? Russian? Farsi perhaps? But then I thought, “The one language that we all can or should understand is English.” – plus, I don’t know how to use an Armenian keyboard or anything that resembles one. So using the King’s English, let’s address the issue of Armenian assimilation and the “jermag chart.” (I hope I’m not the only one who sees the irony in that.)

I find myself growing increasingly perturbed by the term “white genocide.” First of all, we can’t use the word genocide to describe a trend where Armenians living in the United States are losing their sense of ethnic identity because nobody held a *yatağan* to your neck and forced you to name your child a non-Armenian name or forced you to stop speaking Armenian. Not to mention that comparing it to an actual genocide is not only disgusting but insulting to the memory of countless Armenians who perished or the thousands who survived the Turkish persecutions. Let’s call it what it is – cultural suicide. We can try to blame television, music, cross-cultural dating or marriage, the cultural vacuum created by capitalism or other theories but the reality is that we have no one to blame but ourselves – or as the comic strip Pogo once wrote – we have met the enemy and he is us.

We are our own catalyst of assimilation because we not only set the bar very high for being a “real Armenian” but we also fail to reach our own markers. For instance, many Armenians consider the speaking of Armenian as



being a critical element to staving off assimilation, yet who do you consider to be more Armenian – a person who doesn’t speak the language but sends money to Armenian charitable organizations, calls their member of Congress to urge support of Armenian issues, and patronizes Armenian-owned businesses or the person who does none of the stuff the first guy did but instead listens to Armenian music, speaks Armenian and associates only with other Armenians. Popular opinion would label the first person as assimilated and the latter as Armenian. But who is doing more to advance the Armenian Cause? If you said the first guy, then move up to the head of the class. We agree on that. Also, of those who said the second person is more Armenian, I would want to know how extensive your own knowledge is of core topics of Armenian competency – literature, art, political history, grammar,

spelling, amongst other issues and topics. I would guess that even the kids who go to Armenian schools in America and learn to read and write the language have a reading proficiency and vocabulary that does not go beyond the 5th grade level. But let’s move on.

Why should I care if a person speaks fluent Armenian but won’t take the time to make one phone call to a politician who can vote to contribute tens of millions of dollars for foreign aid to rebuild Armenia and Artsakh? This question may sound tired and redundant but it’s necessary to ask and understand the answer. After all, this discussion is important but the people who would benefit the most from participating in it, probably would never pick up an issue of *Haytoug* unless there was a picture of the Kardashian sisters on it. The answer is, that we shouldn’t. I’d rather have 1000 Armenians who are informed on American issues and process and are engaged in making a difference than 100,000 who don’t care about anything other than expanding the ghettos of their mind.

So if we can agree that a person’s true Armenian identity is defined by their commitment to preserving the culture and society of the Armenian people in Armenia and worldwide, then all the other preconditions (spoken and written fluency in Armenian, listening to only Armenian music, eating only Zankou Chicken) are irrelevant.

Having said that, I understand that an appreciation for all things Armenian isn’t exclusive from the efforts to preserve them or be an advocate for all things Armenian. But we can’t deny a path to either by being overly judgmental of people who are trying to return to their ancestral roots or labeling people on the peripheries of our community as “white washed” or “assimilated.” I’ve seen it happen on more than once, where a person who knew very little of their Armenian ancestry began to explore his or her roots and this led eventually to a trip to Armenia and eventually a desire



to learn how to speak Armenian. In fact, one person I'm thinking about actually moved back to Armenia to help the country develop and improve.

So what term do we use to describe this phenomenon? Definitely not "white genocide." And there isn't a term that's familiar to us because we are too focused on the negative aspects of our community than on the positives. Don't worry, it's in our nature to focus on the negative. Spending 4000 years as history's punching bag will drive that emotional trigger deep into your DNA. The good news is that it's not permanent. And just by reading *Haytoug*, you've already committed yourself to a struggle whose outcome accepts nothing less than success for Armenians worldwide.

But being involved in the Armenian Youth Federation or any other youth group doesn't immediately absolve one of responsibility of preserving and caring for the Armenian people and land. Instead, of those who have great power and organizing tools, much is expected. And living in a society in America which emphasizes consumer conformity more than individuality and portrays ethnicity as a liability makes it hard to adopt the aspects of American culture, which will translate into success for the Armenian people of the United States and abroad. But it is necessary.

Yes, some assimilation or "accultura-

tion" is necessary for success. The most important things in life are usually the hardest to do and act upon. Preserving our passion for Armenian causes and mastering the English language and American customs are equally important tasks for success. Let's be honest with ourselves. If an Armenian-American is ever going to get elected to Congress from anywhere in the United States - I guarantee you that it won't be a garlic breathed someone who wears a lot of jewelry and listens only to Tata. It will be someone who is articulate and acculturated and who can speak about John Adams and Abraham Lincoln with as much ease and comfort as they can talk about Gomidas or Simon Vratsian.

So rather than worrying about how we can create a society where we sell out barahanteses and Armen(chik) concerts week after week after week, let us instead think about how we, ourselves, can engage our adopted homeland on its own terms and perhaps in the process, get it to see things our way and maybe adopt or absorb the best that our culture has to offer as well.

*Skeptik Sinikian loves baseball and baklavah. His life mission is to educate and inform as many non-Armenians about the medicinal benefits of soujoukh sausage as he can. You can reach him for comments or questions at [SkeptikSinikian@gmail.com](mailto:SkeptikSinikian@gmail.com)*

# WHO IS Skeptik Sinikian?



Skeptik was born somewhere in the Western Hemisphere. The exact location of his birthplace is classified & only available to members of the U.N. Security Council for extreme emergencies or an alien invasion.

Raised by revolutionary separatist dolphins off the coast of Mexico, Skepo was adopted by a Portuguese fishing boat captain. Before the age of 5, Skepo taught himself to read/write in 7 languages including but not limited to Canadian, Australian, American & English.

He is the defending champion for Full Contact Scrabble and Tae Kwon Do Charades. His hobbies include reverse mountain climbing (being lifted by helicopter to the top of a mountain & walking down) & translating Armenian idioms directly to English (Par example: He ironed my head!)

Sinikian is a visiting professor of culinary philosophy at the Artashat College of Khorovadz where he is completing his post-doctorate study on the benefits of eating pork vs. chicken. His previous works include "Grilled Eggplants: The Building Block of Ikra."

Skeptik is not married. No one has stolen his heart but he is willing to lease it with option to buy. Offer not valid in Montana, Hawaii or Tujung, California.

Skeptik Sinikian is the property of Asbarez Newspaper. He is on loan to Haytoug and will be promptly returned upon the completion of this issue.

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# ՎԵՐ սարածներ

Photo Story by  
Nazik Armenakyan

**SURVIVORS**



Nazik Armenakyan is an award-winning photojournalist based out of Armenia. Her photo project "Survivors", featured in this issue, was first exhibited on April 24, 2009 at the Artists' House in Yerevan. Since then, she has displayed her gripping photos of Genocide survivors in exhibits within Armenia and online, with ArmeniaNow.

In her words, "this project is another reminder, another call for justice." In the hands of the survivors are pictures from their past, serving as one end of a string tying them to their past. And on the other end of the string, they are tied to one another, to the destiny of their people--to each of us.

Armenakyan is currently working on a photo book of these survivor photos she has taken and is looking for curators interested in bringing these images to galleries throughout the Diaspora. If you would like to contact Mrs. Armenakyan or find out how you can help bring her "Survivors" exhibit to a gallery near you, please reach out to her at [nazik\\_arm@yahoo.com](mailto:nazik_arm@yahoo.com).





Բալյան Սմբատ ծնվել է 1914թ.-ին Շաալին-Թարահիսար: 1915թ.-ին գաղթել են Բուլղարիա, 1946թ.-ին հայրենադարձվել Հայաստան:



Ռնյազյան Նոյն ծնվել է 1907թ.-ին Պարտիզ-պակ գյուղում: Հայրը մեղաբաշխվել էր, ընտանիքից միայն Նոյնին է կարողացել մնալ փնթակի մեջ պահելով փախցնել հունաստան:



Էմիլյան Ռիմելյա ծնվել է 1905թ.-ին Մոսավա:



Լազիսյան Վարսենիկ ծնվել է 1908թ.-ին Մոսավա: 1915թ.-ին փրկվել է ֆրանսիացիների միջոցով մինչև 1918թ.-ը ապրել են վրասների տակ Պորո-Մալգուն: Այնուհետև՝ գաղթել Լիբանան:



Սուրխադյան Վասիլ ծնվել է 1912թ.-ին Հատին գյուղում Սիրիան ասրի տակ: 1915թ.-ին գաղթել են Լճախածին, այնուհետ՝ գաղթել են Կրասնոդար: 1930 թ.-ին հայրենադարձվել է Հայաստան:



Փանանյան Երանուհի ծնվել է 1915թ.-ին Մուշ: Գաղթի ժամանակ կրծքի երկսա է եղել: Փրկվել են ֆրանսիացիների շնորհիվ:



Հարությունյան Ավագ ծնվել է 1911թ.-ին Բիթլիսի Լեռնի գյուղ: Հայրը ծառայում էր թուրքական բանակում որսով սպանվել է: Նրան փրկել է անգլիացի մի զինվոր 1914 թ. ին փախչելով է Բաքուքա, 1915թ.-ին գաղթել է Հայաստան:



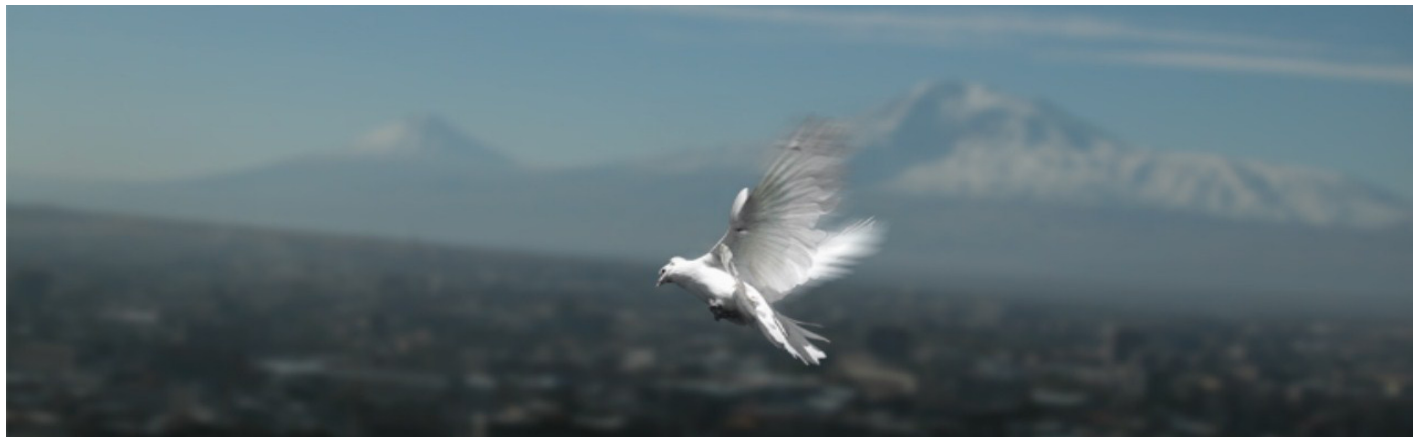
Ֆարաջյան Տիգրան ծնվել է 1907թ.-ին Կիլիկիայում: Գաղթի ժամանակ Տիգրանին աղջկա չոր են հազցրել, ակամայինոր ծակել, իսկ զգնաթի փնջերի մեջ ոսկի են կարել: Խորթ մոր հետ գաղթել են Սիրիա հալեպ ճանապարհին թողնելով 5 եղբորն ու քրոջը:



Կարամանյան Արեգնազ ծնվել է 1904թ.-ին Ալաշկերտ: Ցավոք նա ոչինչ չէր կորցրել:

# My Dream, Armenia

By Hovig Keushkerian



This struggle...It keeps me awake at nights. It courses through my veins; it kicks at my beating heart ruthlessly. It lights an inferno in my soul and my body smolders under it. It wracks my mind and my emotions, for what is the place of an Armenian-American living in America?

We struggle and fight from seas abroad so that our homeland off in the horizon will remain untouched and prosperous, without any hindrance. Yet when have we asked ourselves the question, "Will I ever live in my homeland again?"

I fear we become victims of pseudo-patriotism. A sense of urgency that arises when our cause is in check, yet quickly creeps away when we have shown our surroundings that we cared enough to take the initiative to act. Yet we look down upon our brothers and sisters living in our homeland, relics of a lost cold war and a fallen soviet empire, wondering when they will ever become as educated as us. We are blind to the fact that they are the true patriots. They live with the land. Every morning they wake with the sun on their shoulders that rises from the east, and stands guard above our national symbol of Mt. Ararat. They culture and harness the land; they give it life and nurture it. They tame both the mountainous terrain and the riches she keeps hidden in her bosom. They are the true descendants of our fedayis and true patriots who saved our fragile people from the clutches of an empire

whose only legacy was an insatiable lust for power and domination.

We are the scattered children of our motherland. When the genocide occurred, we fled to the middle-east. When Syria restricted our growth and endangered our way of life, we fled to Lebanon. When the civil war broke out, we fled to the United States. We never returned. Our love for our homeland bled and dried up into an affection and obsession with the abstract idea of what our motherland had been.

We never stopped once and held our ground. We always fled. We protected our people, but we never fought for the land on which we lived. We took the lands we lived in for granted and abused our right to live there. We never repaid our freedom. We bled for survival, but we didn't bleed for the land, because it wasn't ours, nor did we want it to be.

So we came to The United States, land of the free and home of the brave. We sang songs, read books, and published newspapers by the hundreds. We created organization and opened schools so that our communities and future generations will always remember our identity and our story. And here we stayed, for the sake of our offspring, for a future, and most importantly, a promise which few realized was a warning in disguise.

The life expectancy for our identity was only as long as our willingness to master it. Yet in a society where Capitalism is king, where you are responsible for your

own share of the pie, where morality and justice are but fantastic ideas on a piece of parchment drying up in a box in Washington D.C., it became apparent that our survival in such a society would come at the slowly increasing cost of our identity.

Such is the burden of the patriotic Armenian-American youth today. We struggle on all fronts. We fight for our homeland abroad, we fight for our survival in our environment, and we constantly grapple with the idea of dropping our way of life to move back to the homeland because it is the right thing to do. America and a globalized military-industrial complex have diminished our sense of nationality and patriotism, by dangling the myth of the American Dream in front of us, while keeping us in fear that it is unobtainable anywhere else in the world. We fight our gut feelings that call us traitors every time we decide to remain here so secure a better way of life for our diasporas and generations to come, for why shouldn't those people have the chance to live and grow in their own country?

We have the burden of fighting for our existence and the preservation of our identity in an unprecedented context, under the guise of assimilated Armenians.

Yeraz Im Yergir, Hayreni. That is what you have been for us, for the Diaspora Armenians from Western Armenia.

A dream. The dream of our motherland.



# Անապատի օրագրից

Հեղինար Մելքոմ Մելքոմյան

Հմուտ էր դահիճը.

Լավ էր մտածել, շատ էր փորձարկել, անվերջ երազել,

Թե ինչպես է պետք վերջ դնել կյանքի այնպես, որ մինչեւ հոգին մարմինը լքի, անվերջ գալարվի,

Որ մինչեւ մարմինս իր վերջին շունչը փչի, ապրած կյանքի ամեն մեկ պահի շունչը անիծի,

Որ մինչեւ աչքին երեւացող վերջին պատկերը խամրի, անվերջ անիծի իրեն ծնողին:

Շատ էր լսել նա աղերսող ճիչեր, շատ էր տեսել նա սովահար դեմքեր

Ուզում էր տեսնել ինչպես են մեռնում, երբ նրանց բաժին հացը հենց ինքն էր կրծում,

Ուզում էր տեսնել տապից ինչպես են խեղդվում, երբ նրանց բաժին ջուրը հենց ինքն էր խմում,

Ուզում էր տեսնել ինչպես են մայրերը խելագար դառնում, երբ մասնատում էր նրանց մանուկներին,

Ուզում էր տեսնել կանանց աչքերում ցավ ու սարսափ, երբ պատռում էր ողջ-ողջ ընկերքը նրանց

Ուզում էր իրեն տղամարդ գալ,

Երբ բռնաբարում էր կանանց ու աղջիկներին,

Մարդկային կյանքը լոկ խաղ էր դարձել,

Ինչպես ձախ ձեռքի թզբեխը նրա՝ պատրաստված կանանց պտուկներից:

Եւ բարձրացնում էր դահիճը կացինն ահարկու՝ աներեր ձեռքով

Սեւ քողն էր ծածկել երեսը նրա՝ աչքերի փայլը թաքցնելու համար

Բարձրացնում էր կացինն ու մեկ-մեկ խլում մեկ ու կես միլիոն կյանք

Եւ նրանց արյունը սնում էր հողը, նրանց մարմինը սնում էր երկրին...

Չոհերից մեկը փրկվեց մազապուրծ եւ պատմեց ողջ աշխարհին

Իր տեսածները դժոխային այդ անապատում,

Մինչ դահիճը նրան դատապարտել էր սովի, սնվում էր նա իր բախտակիցների մարմնի մսով

Եւ հագեցնում ծարավը նրանց արյան անծայրածիր ծովից:

Ու չկարողացավ ընդունել դահճի որդին, որ իր հայրը արյունոռու էր եղել

Եւ ստախոս պիտակեց զոհին, ով մինչեւ կյանքի վերջին իսկ օրը

Վեր էր ցատկում իր խորը քնից եւ շնչակտուր սկսում աղոթել,

Որ իր զավակը երբեք այդքան անգուլթ չդառնա

Եւ որ այնքան ապրի այս պատմությունը եւ այնքան հոլովեն դահճի անունը,

Որ նրա հոգին հանգիստ չգտնի մինչեւ այն օրը,

Երբ նա վերջապես դադարի հերքել եւ բարձրաձայն ներում աղերսի...

# What Georgia Can Learn from the US Census

**By Vahe Sargsyan**

Analyst with the Mitq Analysis Center

<http://www.ac-mitq.org>

Photos by Tamar Baboujian





In anticipation of the 2010 Census, a large effort is being made in the U.S. to reach out to the Armenian population and make sure they mark themselves as Armenians. According to U.S. federal law, if there is a large enough number of an ethnic group in a region, than that ethnic group is entitled to a certain level of representation within its locality. The U.S. Census counts all citizens—including illegal aliens—who pay their taxes and, thus, deserve basic rights in local issues. The government is also mandated to accommodate to the linguistic needs of large ethnic groups, through things such as bilingual education and translation.

In the Republic of Georgia, a population count in 2002 estimated that there were 207,598 people living in the region of Javakhk. Of these, 55% were Armenians, while Georgians made up 43% of the population. In addition, the count held in the historically Armenian region of Dsalga estimated that there were 11,484 Armenians, 2,510 Georgians, 4,589 Greeks, 1,992 Azeri's, and 313 other ethnicities residing there.

With this background on the U.S. process in mind, as well as the numbers from the Georgian census, let us take a more in-depth look at the situation confronting Armenians living in Javakhk.

First of all, in the sphere of education, language classes in Armenian schools in Javakhk have to be taught according to the program of the Georgian government and the teachers are directly paid by the state. In theory, the Georgian government is responsible for ensuring that the population's mother tongue (Armenian) is taught, but this responsibility is neglected and policies are carried out with the exact opposite effect. For example, Georgia's

Ministry of Science and Education has made numerous attempts to convert the teachings in Armenian schools into strictly Georgian instruction.

This continues today, as the state seeks to change all textbook materials from Armenian to Georgian. At the same time, Armenian school textbooks are being sold at extremely high prices which are often times too expensive for the people of Javakhk to afford. On top of all of this, the quality of the material in these books is very poor.

The Georgian Education Ministry proceeds to deflect criticism of this severe textbook shortage for Armenians in Javakhk as an issue facing Georgian society as a whole. However, when we are talking about the critical maintenance of a native people (Armenians) living in their motherland (Javakhk), these feeble excuses are simply unacceptable.

Georgia has a friendly neighbor, the Republic of Armenia, who has consistently been prepared to provide such Armenian textbooks for schools in Javakhk and the rest of Georgia, and has done so for over the past 1-2 years. Rather than facilitate this assistance, however, the Georgian authorities have forbidden Armenia from continuing to send schoolbooks to Javakhk (presently, Armenia is permitted to only send language textbooks, with literature and other subjects being strictly forbidden from entering Georgia). It is due to such destructive policies that the spate of supposedly "unsolvable" problems facing schools in Javakhk has surfaced.

Another urgent problem facing Javakhk is the official requirement that all public writings be in the Georgian language, putting the Armenians in the region in extreme isolation. Through these steps, Georgia is seeking to





continue — in contradiction to its responsibilities under international law — its ethnic-based policies of withering away the Armenian demographic in exchange for sprouting up Georgian populated areas.

However, this policy of attempting to do away with the Armenian population from the region is bound to fail. This is because there is an unwritten rule that the Georgian government has yet to realize: the Armenian people cannot be destroyed on their historical lands and mountainous regions. Even when force and brutal means are used, the Armenian people will never disappear. The Hamshen and 'hidden' Armenians still living in Western Armenia today

provide the perfect example of this.

On the other hand, the pursuit of such a coercive process can produce an opposite effect, which is the reaction of a people subject to such harsh policies of destruction. Currently, due to Javakhk's circumstances, this reaction is, in fact, occurring. The steps Georgia is taking are deepening the opposition between the Armenians in Javakhk and the authorities. For Javakhk, it is impossible to repeat what has happened in Gakhet and other regions of Georgia.

In such tense circumstances, different foreign powers with varying interests can manipulate the internal situation, which Georgia never ceases to make noise about. However, neutralizing such powers would be considerably simple if steps were taken by Georgia to decrease the concerns of the Armenians in Javakhk, similar to what is occurring in Iran with their Azeri minority.

The Azeris are connected in countless ways to Iran's government and are invested in the common life of that society. As such, it is very difficult to use the Azeris against Iran as is desired by the U.S. and its allies. The Azeris, like the Armenians in Javakhk, are not a cultural minority. The Azeris in Iran are natives there, who have participated in the formation of the Iranian state and culture.

However, unlike the Azeris in Iran, Armenians in Javakhk do not have any relation to the lineage of the Georgian people. Nevertheless, they have played a significant role in the formation of the post-Soviet, independent Georgian state. Suffice it to point out just one example: when on March 17, 1991, Georgia boycotted the referendum on whether to maintain the USSR intact, Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia did not support Georgia. The latter two regions voted to protect the USSR and to maintain their assistance from Russia. At the same time, Javakhk's Armenians supported Georgia's position, coming forward with a special pronouncement along such lines.

Unfortunately, the continuation of this "tradition" of reliability on behalf of Javakhk's Armenians — as happened again during the days of the 2008 Russia-Georgia War — has been completely ignored by Georgia's governing leaders. Similarly, the Georgian media also chooses to forget this record of loyalty and, instead, everywhere hurls lies and insults against the activists and common people of Javakhk.

Turning back to the obstacles placed before the people of Javakhk, we must draw our attention to the imbalance in Armenian representation in the local civic bodies. When it comes to



Photo: Tamar Baboujian





political representation, the country's laws of local self-government have subtly and slyly reduced the quantity of Armenians elected or appointed to municipal bodies. For example, in the cities of Dsalga or Asbintsa (Asbnchag) it is impossible to find an appointed Armenian official, even as these two municipalities are made up of approximately 60% and 20% Armenians, respectively. Taking into account that 37% of the Akhaltskha municipality is Armenian and 62% is Georgian, we again see a strict imbalance in executive official distribution. Similarly, in the municipalities of Akhalkalak and Ninodzminta, there is a daily increase in Georgians running executive positions. Added to all of this is the fact that within Samtskhe-Javakhk's state administration there are virtually no Armenians, even though Armenians make up 55% of the population while Georgians only 43%. This proportional makeup of the population should have resulted in the governor of Samtskhe-Javakhk, as well as 55% of the worker's in the administration, being Armenian. However, instead, the current governor, L. Jkadua, is Georgian.

In a recent interview, Jkadua exposes himself to be a naïve youngster whose dream is to see one day see a beautiful Akhaltskha. In Jkadua's worldview, there is generally no place for Javakhk's volatile issues. Again, besides the beautification of the city of Akhaltskha, he does not see any problems in Javakhk. The reason for this is simple: he either does not know or is avoiding the deep-rooted causes of Javakhk's problems.

This detachment from reality of the governor is reminiscent of Communist-era officials in Armenia at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921, when the country's Education Minister was brought in from Siberia and the person responsible for Agriculture was "invited" from the Chukotka Peninsula. Of course, we all remember that the result of this was the famed and historic February Rebellion of 1921.

Comparing these conditions in

Georgia and Javakhk with the more sound policies of the U.S., mentioned in the beginning of the article, puts this sad state of affairs into even clearer perspective. And this specific comparison was not done out of mere coincidence.

It is clear to all observers that there is a heavy influence of American thinking on the authorities in Georgia. Government leaders constantly praise the U.S. for its way of life and rule of law in their public pronouncements. You could say

that, for many of them, the US has become an idol of worship.

At the same time, as a junior ally of the US in the region, many Americans work in the high offices of the Georgian state, helping direct the nation's course. Sadly however, in the case of the Armenians of Javakhk, the Americans deal with their Georgian counterparts by following the famous saying, "My child, don't live in the way that I am living, but rather in the way that I'm teaching."

Photo: Tamar Baboujian



# Culture: the Indestructible Bridge

By Lori Najarian



The horrendous crimes of genocide committed by the Ottoman Government against the Armenians in 1915 will forever be a bitter truth in Armenian history, but it does not identify us as a people.

We have much to celebrate in our few thousand years of existence and, most importantly, we must feel proud to have survived through what I hope was the worst of it. However, our existence today does not mean that our fight for survival is unnecessary; on the contrary, every day we are fighting for the survival of our language, our faith, our homeland, and especially the survival of our future.

This fight, of course, cannot be won if we continue to create divisions among ourselves. It is not a fight meant to be faced only by the Armenians of the Diaspora or by those living in Armenia. As different as the struggles and concerns are for both, they are not separate; we are not

separate people, and the sooner we bring down these barriers, communicate and become aware of one another's situation, the easier it will be to find proper solutions to our problems. It is the unity we are lacking that is necessary to win this fight for survival, and for this we can always count on the treasures of our culture as a means to unite.

I was born and raised in Toronto, Canada and blessed with parents who are full of Armenian soul and have been devoting their life to Armenian causes ever since I can remember. My brother and I grew up surrounded by every Armenian thing imaginable. Aside from attending Armenian Day School, my parents would take us to every Armenian event that took place. Of course, at the time, it seemed like a drag, but I love them for it and am forever grateful.

Armenian music was played not only in our house but in the car; I grew up watching our videotape collection of Armenian State Dance Ensembles and remember trying to mimic the graceful movements. Although I have been taking ballet lessons since childhood, I desperately wanted to learn Armenian dance but there was nowhere that offered this opportunity until I reached adulthood. When I heard the news of Hamazkayin bringing a dance teacher from Armenia I was among many who were thrilled. Unfortunately, our dance instructor was only able to stay for a little over a year, but it was enough to give me a good base and a great passion to pursue studying and performing Armenian Folk Dance.

Thanks to my parents' undying support and the help of my dance instructor, I was recently given the opportunity to study Armenian ballet and character dance and graduate as a teacher and performer at the Yerevan State Dance Academy. Although I had been to Armenia several times before with my family and with Homenetmen Scouts, when I traveled to Armenia to study dance, it was different. I was no longer playing the role of the tourist.

I was excited, yet nervous to start this new chapter of my life in a completely different world. To everyone's surprise, I adapted rather quickly to the lifestyle in Armenia. It felt as if I had been here for



years. Despite the many obstacles I have faced during my time in Yerevan, I feel much wiser and have a greater understanding of certain things about this wonderful and crazy country; things that perhaps others might judge with criticism because they have not had the chance to see the 'real' Hayastan.

I have learned so much within the walls of the Dance Academy. Every one of my teachers has helped me gain as much knowledge in dance as possible and I am very thankful to them. Aside from the actual dance classes, the program I am enrolled in also offers classes on the history of art, music and dance. I have learned about Armenian composers, artists, choreographers and dancers. I also had the privilege of practicing with professional dancers from the various Armenian state ensembles; and, most recently, I had the honor of dancing on stage in my Motherland--an experience that words cannot describe.

Outside of school I have taken advantage of seeing Armenian plays, admiring the state dance ensembles and ballets, listening to operas and Armenian music, and so on. My life in Armenia is mostly spent being surrounded by or taking part in anything cultural. After all, it is culture that brought me here to Armenia, my home.

My coming to Yerevan to study dance has created an unbreakable bond between myself and my Hayrenik. As sad as I am to be leaving Armenia in a few months after graduation, I am also looking forward to my return to Toronto so that I may pass along every bit of knowledge I have learned about our culture to our future generations. Yes, being active politically and socially is also crucial for our survival, however, it is our culture that fills the gaps and truly connects all Armenians as one.

Celebration and awareness of our culture creates an indestructible bridge and automatically connects us all to each other. I urge all Armenians to take part in building this bridge and embracing our culture as a means to unite.



## AYF SUMMER CAMP 2010

<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>July 5 - 11</b> <small>Monday</small>
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<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>July 18 - 25</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>July 25 - August 1</b>
<del><b>WEEK 5</b></del>	<del><b>August 1 - 8</b></del> <b>SOLD OUT</b>
<del><b>WEEK 6</b></del>	<del><b>August 8 - 15</b></del> <b>SOLD OUT</b>
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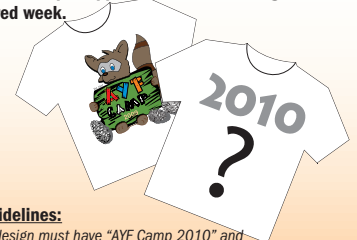
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## T-SHIRT CONTEST WIN A FREE WEEK AT CAMP

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### Submission Guidelines:

1. The design must have "AYF Camp 2010" and "Est. 1977" on it.
2. The design must be appropriate for camp.
3. The design must be mailed before May 31, 2010 to:

**AYF SUMMER CAMP**

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# Men in Black in Little Armenia

By Tamar Salibian



In 1915, over 1.5 million Armenians were removed from their homes and subsequently massacred by the Ottoman Turks in what is known as the Aghed (catastrophe) or the Armenian genocide. Each year, April 24 is the day when Armenians around the world remember the death of their ancestors under the brutal hand of the Ottoman Turkish government. The year is 2007, this year, the cloudless sky and warm California weather made for an apt setting to commemorate April 24 in Los Angeles' Little Armenia. Thou-

sands of Armenians prepared to meet near the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Hobart Street for a commemorative march across town.

I awoke to the sound of my alarm clock blaring at 8:30 and immediately rolled over to try to sleep for a few more minutes. "I'll make it in time, it starts at 10," I thought to myself as I drifted back into slumber.

Awaking with a start at 9:08, I jumped out of bed and proceeded to search for an outfit that was somber enough for the day's events yet comfortable enough to walk

around in. Black slacks, black shoes, charcoal grey tee shirt, done.

At Turkish scholar Dr. Taner Akcam's lecture at Glendale Community College the previous day, I'd been bombarded with paraphernalia for the April 24th events, yet I did not choose to wear my new "1915: Stop the Denial" tee shirt, nor did I affix the "Boycott Turkey" bumper sticker to my car that I'd been given as I left the lecture where Dr. Akcam attempted to promote dialogue between Armenians and Turks. I wondered if the students who abruptly



left Dr. Akcam's lecture early were given the "Boycott Turkey" bumper stickers or if the stickers were only awarded to those who stayed until the end of the presentation.

Running to my car, I quickly made it to the 101 South and exited at Hollywood Boulevard where I was suddenly stopped in my tracks by a massive traffic jam.

"It's to be expected today," I thought as I took the time to look around at the people in their cars in Little Armenia. BMW's, Mercedes Benzes and other opulent cars were adorned with Armenian and American flags. I chuckled, wondering if the tourists across the street thought there was a soccer match going on because of all of the fanfare. A black BMW with tinted windows passed me and I noticed a group of young men, cleanly shaven with shorn hair and black 1915 tee shirts, laughing and watching intently as a group of young girls in tight blue jeans and platform sandals walked towards the march. The search for parking seemed endless but I finally found a spot near Hollywood on Edgemont.

The air was thick with the pungent scent of hair gel and aftershave. Old men stood on the street corners awaiting the start of the event. In the distance, I could already hear the chanting of the crowd. "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now! Shame on Turkey! 1915, never again!" A group of men stood nearby smoking cigarettes and watching the crowd as many young Armenian boys and girls with gelled hair, Jamba Juice and Starbucks drinks and T-Mobile Sidekicks attached to their hands as if with Krazy glue walked around sending text messages and laughing with

each other. The social aspect of such events was to be expected and yet the longer I watched the crowd, the less I wanted to stay.

At the head of the march was a group of Armenian archbishops and priests who solemnly walked without chanting. Their presence was in stark contrast to the general public who, with fists raised, chanted, yelled and screamed. As the crowd reached Normandie Avenue, the religious leaders quietly stepped away from the crowd, passing me to disappear from the march. The yelling started to give me a headache.

Sure, I want justice like any other self-respecting Armenian whose ancestors survived the genocide. My maternal grandfather was rescued from under a pile of corpses as an infant and spent his entire life in silence trying to live under a shadow he never discussed. Yet this tragedy is something that I wish to remember in a different way.

I want to mourn the dead rather than hold up slogans and walk down avenues as though I were part of a parade. I felt the anger rising up in my chest. Are we Armenians replacing the commemorative root of this day with a kind of bravado mob mentality? Was it ever any different? "What would happen," I thought to myself, "if all of a sudden the genocide magically did receive worldwide recognition? What would our agenda be then?" Sensing that my frustration might lead me to say or do something I would regret, I turned and walked back toward my car. But it wasn't time to go home.

What did I really want today to be about? I got in my car and drove east on Hollywood, North on Vermont, onto the 5 and then to the 134 until I reached the place that I knew was

the right place to be on this day.

Forest Lawn Cemetery welcomed me with its quiet, its calm and its simple, somber atmosphere. I picked out a bouquet of white flowers in the flower shop and made my way up through the grounds. "Akh medzmayrig, oor es?" ("Great-grandma, where are you?") I whispered to myself as I trudged through the grass in search of my great-grandmother Araxie Oshagan's grave. "Eem havidenagan hartsus" ("My eternal dilemma") I thought, as I remembered the same search for her grave I have each time I visit this cemetery. Was it two rows down from the stone bench or two rows up? Damn it, should I call my cousin for directions?

And then, I found her. The emotions arose within me as I slowly began to wash her gravestone with water and arrange the flowers I had bought.

Araxie Astartjian was born in Bulgaria in 1895. As a young teen, she met her future husband when on one cold night, the writer Hagop Oshagan knocked on her parents' door asking if they could put him up for the night. From Bulgaria all the way to her death in Los Angeles in 1987 just two weeks after moving to the US, my medzmayrig's life was one full of trauma, strength, pride and loss.

I remembered how she would sit in the corner of her room, her head turned to look out the window, searching for the ghosts of her long-lost husband and family members. I noticed a car pass by with an Armenian flag attached to its passenger window. A solemn family exited the car to pay their respects to their loved ones at the cemetery. Slowly, I realized that all was not forgotten.

# Channeling a United Community: H.Res 252 and Beyond

By Shant Hagopian

As another April comes and goes, and we mourn the loss of our ancestors almost a century ago, we again look toward recognition. States, counties, cities and municipalities will pass resolutions in their legislative bodies acknowledging truth, paying homage to social justice and international human rights. Rallies will assemble, protests will emerge and we will unite with our brothers and sisters around the world demanding that the Republic of Turkey accept guilt for its atrocities beginning in 1915. Such has been the case for decades and we have made inroads in our battle for justice. With that said, there are still many milestones toward recognition which the Armenian community is still looking to accomplish.

Those working toward these efforts can be found among those few remaining survivors the latest generation of Armenians. As diverse and multi cultural the Armenian race is, spread across every continent of this earth, we are united by



Wilshire at San Vicente and McCarthy Vista in Los Angeles was shut down on April 24 as thousands rallied in the street across from the Turkish Consulate to demand justice and recognition for the Armenian Genocide after 95 years of cover up from the Turkish government. Photo: Allen Yekikan



Community members and political officials gather at the Montebello Genocide Memorial on April 24 to pay their respects to the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide. Photo: Nora Yacoubian

opposition started with a few powerful lobbyists and has transformed into a campaign encompassing international diplomacy, academia and the media. This, along with shifts in geopolitics and a war on terror, has allowed the Republic of Turkey to take advantage of opportunities in its efforts to rewrite history. Their fight, like ours, does not end in Washington. The effort to ensure an accurate historical record stretches far beyond the halls of the nation's capitol and requires attention of our entire community.

As we inch closer to 100 years after the start of the Armenian Genocide, we must not only remember to stay united but also to remain activated. When this April comes and goes, let's not put our efforts on hold for a year. In order to pass a resolution in Congress, we must channel the passion felt on April 24 into action throughout the year.

Our community is strong but only with participation of our already united nation can we fulfill all of our efforts toward recognition.

a common struggle for justice. From our highly successful professionals to our passionate youth, our ever-expanding community is utilizing every tool at its disposal to ensure the tragedies of our ancestors are not forgotten and efforts to rewrite history prove unsuccessful. Almost a century after the near extermination of our race, our voices have become louder and every passing generation sees our Cause embolden.

Each passing year, the Armenian Genocide becomes more widely known and accepted. On every front, the Armenian Diaspora is educating the public through all means possible across the globe. Just this year, another handful of countries added its name to the laundry list of those who formally recognize the genocide. With that said, the heyday of Armenian Genocide recognition remains in the future. As much progress has been made, the passage of the resolution in the United States Congress still awaits a full vote.

Behind the scenes, opposition has been mounting to the proper characterization of the Armenian Genocide. This



More than 400 took part in a bike-a-thon through the San Fernando Valley on April 25 to commemorate the Armenian Genocide. The event, titled Cycle Against Denial, is organized annually by the Armenian Youth Federation San Fernando Valley "Sardarabad" chapter. Photo by Sevag Tchekidjian





# END TURKEY'S GAG RULE

DESIGN BY ARKREATIVE

[www.anca.org/endthegagrule](http://www.anca.org/endthegagrule)

**Who Decides When  
America Speaks on  
Genocide?**

**You should... Not a  
foreign government.**

Turkey has forced a gag rule on America's recognition of the Armenian Genocide, using threats to block bipartisan legislation that simply seeks to empower our government with the lessons of this atrocity in order to help prevent future genocides.

**End Turkey's gag rule.**

**Pass the Armenian Genocide  
Resolution H.Res.252**

# Through the Lens

## Culture & Purpose in Today's Armenian Reality

There are hundreds of young, talented Armenians exploring the bounds of art and identity through countless means including music and film. They interpret culture through their own individual lens. Haytoug sat down with some of these creative individuals to explore their thoughts on culture and identity.



Andrew is a graduate student at Columbia University studying diplomacy and international finance. Kzirian is a licensed attorney and has served as Executive Director of the ANC-WR and as the Chairman of the AYF-ER.

Kzirian is a student of the oud and is a member of Aravod, Viza, the History project series and performs regularly with a diverse array of musicians from around the world.

### Antranig Kzirian The Oud Player

<http://www.theoudplayer.com/>

**Haytoug:** Describe yourself in 5 words.

**Antranig Kzirian:** Committed. Creative. Adaptive. Persistent. Stubborn.

**H:** Where did you get the inspiration to pursue your field?

**A.K.:** The Armenian oud tradition of the Eastern United States strongly motivated me to explore and study the oud and the role Armenians played historically in mastering it. Growing up I also incorporated various influences into my understanding of music and performing on the instrument. I believe that traditions must be kept alive but also developed and grown so that they remain a living, breathing part of our perception of art and life.

**H:** Please describe your proudest achievements.

**A.K.:** Working with great musicians in various genres and learning as much as I can while striving to be a flexible musician. Working with Viza, Aravod, History, Ara Dinkjian, Serj Tankian, Gor, Sonya Varoujan, and several musicians from all over.

**H:** Do you think identity is something that must be preserved or something that can evolve?

**A.K.:** Both - we must preserve but also help it evolve and survive in its surroundings. Adding our own experiences and seasoning helps to keep identity fresh and current while still maintaining core values that we hold dear as Armenians and people of good conscience.

**H:** What are your thoughts about Armenian culture today in the Diaspora? In Armenia? Where is it headed? What do you see your role as?

**A.K.:** I see Armenian culture as dynamic - especially given the richness and complexity of the Diaspora. I believe it's headed in a positive direction generally, but we must work hard to make sure not to disqualify or marginalize certain components of our diverse art and music history. I see my role as trying to preserve one piece of the puzzle as best I can.

**H:** What does the future hold for you?

**A.K.:** More writing, performing, recording and collaboration. Raising awareness of the Armenian oud tradition.



**Haytoug:** Describe yourself in 5 words

**Ara Soudjian:** Mexican/Armenian filmmaker living in Los Angeles. (let's count Los Angeles as one word.)

**H:** Where did you get the inspiration to pursue your field?

**A.S.:** My inspiration came from my Mother, who was an actress, and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*.

**H:** Please describe your proudest achievements.

**A.S.:** First, winning two 2008 MVPA (Music Video Production Association) awards for best music video under 25k (Serj Tankian's Money) and best Hip-Hop video (Wiz Khalifa's Say Yeah). Second, producing content for the ANCA (Armenian National Committee of America). Third meeting my wife at an AYF Kebab night in Orange County! (Most important!)

**H:** Do you think identity is something that must be preserved or something that can evolve?

**A.S.:** The customs, language, history must be pre-

served but I also believe that a person's identity can evolve over time. We are human after all....

**H:** What are your thoughts about Armenian culture today in the Diaspora?

**A.S.:** The Armenian culture today in the Diaspora has evolved from 10 years ago. I feel that our culture is strong. I don't think it's as strong "culturally" as it was in the past, but I do believe we are stronger on the activism front. I believe we have assimilated, which is only natural. Some people may say that a lot of young Armenians can't read or write the language. The white genocide is upon us, etc. Is that bad? Some would say so...but there are those who don't speak the language but are still active in the community.

I would prefer having young "active" Armenians who care about our community and country any day over those who speak the language and do nothing positive.

**H:** What does the future hold for you?

**A.S.:** A successful filmmaking career along with a successful marriage and some future AYF-ers.



**Ara Soudjian The Director**  
<http://www.TOSfilms.com>

Photo: Ara Oshagan





Eric is a film director and screenwriter who was born in Armenia and moved to the United States at a young age. His first feature film, *The Blue Hour* premiered in 2007.

## Eric Nazarian The Film Maker

<http://www.thebluehourmovie.com/>



**Haytoug:** Describe yourself in 5 words.

**Eric Nazarian:** I am a human being.

**H:** Where did you get the inspiration to pursue your field?

**E.N.:** My father Haik inspired me to become a filmmaker and screenwriter.

**H:** Please describe your proudest achievements.

**E.N.:** Being awarded the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Nicholl Fellowship in Screenwriting for my screenplay "Giants" and making my first feature film, "The Blue Hour."

**H:** Do you think identity is something that must be preserved or something that can evolve?

**E.N.:** I believe in the evolution of our identities. Identity evolves with age and experience. I'd like to believe that I can evolve as a human being and preserve and advance my spiritual, cultural and artistic identity.

**H:** What are your thoughts about Armenian culture

today in the Diaspora? In Armenia? Where is it headed? What do you see your role as?

**E.N.:** I can only comment as an Angeleno. In Los Angeles, Armenian culture is alive and well. So many events, screenings, concerts, lectures, etc. Armenians as well as non-Armenians have several cultural activities to choose from. In Armenia, the culture and history lives and breathes in the faces and stories of the Armenian people, the ancient monuments and churches, and the cinematic heritage now slowly being resurrected. The Golden Apricot International Film Festival in Armenia is doing a phenomenal job with their annual film festival. They attract so many countries and filmmakers to participate. I see my role as a bridge builder through cinema, making films that can hopefully be interesting to international audiences.

**H:** What does the future hold for you?

**E.N.:** I don't think anybody can answer that question truthfully since we don't know what will happen ten seconds from now. I'd like to think the future holds great movies, amazing sunsets, lots of "kef" music, phenomenal food and wonderful friends dancing "shoorjbar". Cheers to the future!



# Never Want to See...

Recently a stream of Armenian-on-Armenian violence has captured headlines in Southern California. Among the most tragic is the story of Mike Yepremyan, a 19 year old Armenian who was shot to death in a Sears parking lot in North Hollywood by another Armenian after they argued about a text message.

**I should like to see any power of the world destroy our race.  
Before we do it ourselves...**

**This small tribe of insignificant people,  
Who fought wars to keep their identity,  
Who died for inches of land,  
Who starved to give their children a chance,  
dying on hot sand...  
That small tribe of unimportant people,  
with more enemies than friends,  
With more misery than hope...  
Has begun destroying itself.  
And we're nearing the end of our rope.**

**Violence fills the world,  
from wars in the fields to wars in our homes.  
Hate fills your heart like gasoline in a bomb,  
Waiting for a spark and when that time comes,  
The only time you rest is a fist to the face,  
Or blasting a hole in their chest.**

**Martin Luther King once said that a man who won't die,  
for something is not fit to live.  
But what about a man who's willing to kill for nothing.  
That man I cannot forgive.  
A man who's never felt, never heard of a thing called brotherhood.  
Never understood the meaning of fighting for good.**

**Go ahead prove your manhood.  
Destroy what you think is your enemy.  
See if you can do it.  
If they come at you with words, respond with fists,  
If they come at with you with a bat, you better bring a gun,  
And if they shoot well that's just no fun,  
Because dying without revenge means that they've won.**

**What's with the evil that plagues the male ego,  
That makes us puppets of lust and weak people.  
Is it a cultural phenomenon?  
Touch my badeev and then it's on,  
Or is it society that says life's so cheap,  
That you're willing to put a complete stranger to sleep.**

**And all for what...  
Because you think that your ego is worth more than a life.  
Because you whore the word honor like it's a badge or a knife.**

**I know that it takes much more than fists to make a man,  
And all it takes are words to make you raging mad.  
That anger isn't because god made you a warrior man,  
It's because you're confused over how to deal,  
Incapable of making a plan.**

**Think about this while you're worried about a diss,  
There's a kid in our homeland worried about the hiss,  
Of a sniper rifle's bullet finding its mark in his heart,  
On the front lines of a battle field strewn with land mines.  
No BMs or Hummers, but with real honor,  
Ready to die to protect the land of all his fore-mothers.**



Mike Yepremyan and his parents (above) are the latest in a growing list of victims afflicted by inter-communal violence among Armenians. Mike's murder occurred against the backdrop of a festering criminal culture fostered by Armenian television shows (like "Immigrants") glorifying a mafioso life of crime, drugs, and murder.

**You want to fight,  
Well there's a war against our people,  
When they take the cross off of a steeple,  
Or rewrite the lives of our people,  
Are you ready to die to fight the lies,  
As they try and trample our people?**

**The price of life is equal amongst all Armenian people,  
Think before you act,  
Tell your friends and any other people.**

**People will read Mike's story and think absos,  
But they will learn to live and laugh again,  
And to sing again and I pray,  
That when two of us meet anywhere in the world,  
We won't unfurl hatred and anger and kill because of words...**

**I should like to see any power of this world,  
destroy our race...**

**Before we do it ourselves.**

**By Vaché Thomassian**



# ATTENTION

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