

○ LESSON PLAN ○

Voices of Survivors

The Armenian Genocide

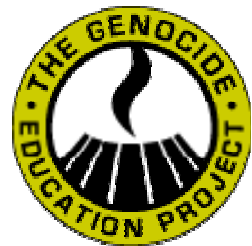
by The Genocide Education Project



Utilizing the
“Twenty Voices” Map
by Araz Artinian

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Genocide Education Project
51 Commonwealth Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94118
(415) 264-4203
info@GenocideEducation.org
www.GenocideEducation.org



Also from The Genocide Education Project:

Online Resource Library for Teachers
www.TeachGenocide.com

Online Classroom for Students
www.LearnGenocide.com

INTRODUCTION

Over 1.5 million Armenians perished in the Armenian Genocide. Those few who survived were exposed to extreme violence and virtually the complete loss of family, property, homeland, and national future, at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish authorities who had carried out the genocide. The survivors were forced out of their homeland and were permanently exiled from the land their ancestors had lived in for over 3,000 years. Some eventually moved to the small portion of land in the Caucasus that many years later became today's Republic of Armenia. The majority formed diasporan communities around the world.

From Lebanon to Egypt to Argentina to the United States, the survivors had to rebuild their lives from nothing. One Armenian survivor recounted how he arrived in Lebanon with his two sisters, brother, mother, and no money or possessions except a few photographs that had miraculously survived—just like them. From nothing, they began a new life and were eventually able to own a small home and go to school. The life he had lost in the Ottoman Empire was never forgotten and always haunted him. He described it once as being like a mirage in the desert. It looked so real—his family home, his father at the dinner table, the Armenian church down the street—but as soon as he thought he could touch them again they were gone.

Of course, all these things had existed for this survivor until 1915, when the Turkish authorities executed their plan to annihilate the Armenians. To truly understand the magnitude of loss the victims of genocide experience, one must first learn where they came from and what they experienced during the Genocide.

Focusing on the experiences of individual survivors helps to personalize and contextualize the massive numbers of people who perished in the Armenian Genocide as well as other genocides. Numbers like 11 million, 1.5 million, and 800,000 become abstract figures that students accept without much thought. By learning about individual experiences during genocide, students gain a stronger sense of connection to the event—the numbers are humanized.

This exercise allows students to get a glimpse of the historic homeland of the Armenians that was completely erased in only a few years, from 1915-1923. Students learn what survivors had, what was lost, and can begin to imagine the impact of this trauma on the rest of their lives.

OBJECTIVES

- To gain a stronger understanding of the impact of genocide on individuals.
- Research the living conditions for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire.
- Analyze survivor testimony.
- Draw conclusions regarding how survivor testimony can help one understand genocide.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

- The “20 Voices” map CD-ROM (included)
- Online version of the “20 Voices” map at www.twentyvoices.com/survivors.html* (optional)
- Selected Transcripts from “20 Voices” (optional/included)
- A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide (optional/included)
- *The Armenian Genocide* by Two Cats Productions ---A documentary by award winning producer Andrew Goldberg (optional/not included)

USING THE “20 VOICES” CD-ROM

To complete this lesson, students will need to use the map on the “20 Voices” CD-ROM. To do so,

- each student can separately use the CD-ROM to launch the map or,
- you can copy the content of the CD-ROM on multiple computers for students to simultaneously use the map or,
- students can access the online version of the map at www.twentyvoices.com/survivors.html* (Internet connection required for this option only).

How to launch the “20 Voices” map off the CD-ROM:

1. Insert the CD-ROM in the CD drive of a computer (compatible with PCs and MACs)
2. The “site” should launch automatically. If it does not launch automatically, double-click on the “ClickToStart.html” file on the CD.

* The online version is not managed or maintained by The Genocide Education Project and the content of the site is regularly updated by its owner, Araz Artinian.

How to copy the content of the CD-ROM on a computer and launch the “20 Voices” map:

1. Create a folder on the computer called “20 Voices”.
2. Copy and paste all the content of the CD-ROM into the “20 Voices” folder created in the previous step. (CD-ROM is not needed after this step.)
3. To launch the “site”, double-click on the “ClickToStart.html” file in the “20 Voices” folder.

Hint: To make it easier for students to launch the “site,” you may want to create a shortcut of the “ClickToStart.html” file on the desktop of the computer and rename the shortcut “20 Voices” (do not change the name of the original file). Students can then simply double-click on the shortcut to launch the “site.”

How to access and use the “20 Voices” map:

1. Once “site” has launched, click on “Click Here to Enter” and then click on the “The Survivors/The Provinces” banner.
2. After the introduction ends, click on “Begin Your Journey.” This will launch a map of Turkey with its various provinces.
3. Click on each province to hear a survivor from that province describe their experience during the Armenian Genocide.
4. Click on “Information” and “Music and Photos” for additional information about the selected province, the background music and photographs.
5. To go back to the map, click on the “Map” tab. A rose will appear on each province that has been visited during a particular session.
6. Move mouse in the direction of the provinces that are hidden from view to see and select them.
7. To close, simply click on the “X” in the top right corner of the window.

Note: Although not required for this lesson, we encourage teachers and students to visit other sections of this CD-ROM.

PROCEDURES

PART ONE

Duration: One Class Period or Part of a Class and Homework

As you begin a unit on the Armenian Genocide, you may find it helpful to provide an introduction to the Ottoman Empire and the Armenians, as many of your students will be unfamiliar with the subject. You can show the first eight minutes of the documentary, *The Armenian Genocide*, by Two Cats Productions. This section of the documentary provides a basic foundation for an understanding of the Armenian plight in the Ottoman Empire before the Twentieth Century. For information on how to order this documentary, go to www.teachgenocide.com/videos.

For homework, prior to covering the Armenian Genocide in class, students can read *A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide*. The reading includes a list of vocabulary terms that can be edited and used as an additional assignment, if desired. If students have access to the Internet they can also watch a five-minute news story about the Armenian Genocide from ABC News' *The Century*, with Peter Jennings. The video clip and guided questions can be found at www.teachgenocide.com/videos.

After students have learned about the Armenians and their history preceding the Genocide, ask them to write a paragraph describing what life was like for the Armenians in the 1800's and early 1900's. Students' products should contain the premise that while Armenians were second class citizens, they had relatively comfortable lives.

PART TWO

Duration: One Class Period

Ask students to choose three survivors from the map on the "20 Voices" CD-ROM. Students should create a "profile" of each survivor they have chosen and then summarize the experience of those survivors. Students can use *Worksheet A: Survivor Profiles* to complete Part Two.

After students have completed *Worksheet A: Survivor Profile*, bring the class back together and ask students to share their summaries and thoughts about the survivor testimony. This can be an emotional exercise for some students. Teachers may want to ensure that the class is able to discuss the subject matter in a responsible way.

PART THREE

Duration: One Class Period or Part of a Class and Homework

Distribute the paragraphs students completed in Part One along with the "Survivor Profiles" and ask them to respond to the questions in *Worksheet B: "Recountings."* Review the worksheet with the students. Students should complete the unit with a basic understanding of life for Armenians in the Ottoman Empire prior to 1915, the Armenian Genocide, and a deeper sense of the cost of genocide on individual victims.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENOCIDE: A CASE STUDY OF THE FIRST MODERN GENOCIDE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

After completing this activity, consider implementing another lesson on the Armenian case. Various lesson plans and resource books can be found at www.TeachGenocide.com. One of the lesson plans available on the site is *Human Rights and Genocide: A Case Study of the First Modern Genocide of the 20th Century*. This plan can be downloaded in its entirety for free. It includes a 1-day, 2-day and 10-day unit with all the materials teachers will need, including more than two dozen overheads, interactive classroom exercises and more. Discussions include a wide range of topics related to the Armenian Genocide: the history of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, primary source documents, witness and survivor memoirs, maps and political-economic timelines, and the problem of denial. The lessons also consider the links between the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust, and capture other major human rights violations such as the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Rape of Nanking, and the Cambodian and Rwandan genocides.

GENOCIDE AND THE HUMAN VOICE: NICOLE'S JOURNEY

Another option is *Genocide and the Human Voice: Nicole's Journey*, an interactive online classroom for students which can be found at www.LearnGenocide.com.

This interactive unit provides students a background to the history of the Armenian Genocide and the effects of the denial of the Genocide on subsequent generations. Based on Nicole's (an Armenian American) real life journey to the village of her grandmother, now in Eastern Turkey, it illustrates the continued pain that genocide brings and the fortitude of those searching for truth.

The tutorial is divided into five sections. Each section includes an assignment composed of short answer questions and a writing-based assignment. Teachers will be able to create classrooms within this interactive plan where they will list their students, (no personal information about students will be collected) obtaining for each a user name and password to access the lesson. As students progress through the plan, the assignments they complete will automatically be saved under their user name for teachers to view at a later date.

WEBSITES ON GENOCIDES

Also, with minor alterations, you can expand on this particular lesson to teach about the survivor experiences of other genocides. The following websites include genocide survivor testimony.

The Holocaust: Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation
www.usc.edu/schools/college/vhi/testimonyviewer/TV-Main.htm

Cambodia: The Digital Archive of Cambodian Holocaust Survivors
www.cybercambodia.com (Select "Survivor Stories")

Rwanda: Aegis Trust
www.aegistrust.org (Select "Genocide" from the left margin, then "Survivors")

CONTENT STANDARDS

The following eleven states have either mandated the teaching of the Armenian Genocide or included it in their standards: California, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Virginia. For more specific information on content standards for your state please go to www.TeachGenocide.com.

The *Voices of Survivors—The Armenian Genocide* lesson plan may be used to address the academic standards listed below. These standards are drawn from Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education: 4th Edition (www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks) and have been provided courtesy of the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (www.mcrel.org) in Aurora, Colorado.

Language Arts Standard 1 - Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process. Benchmark: Writes reflective compositions.

Language Arts Standard 7 - Uses reading skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational texts. Benchmark: Summarizes and paraphrases complex, implicit hierarchic structures in informational texts, including the relationships among the concepts and details in those structures.

Historical Understanding Standard 1 - Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns. Benchmark: knows how to identify the temporal structure and connections disclosed in historical narratives.

Historical Understanding Standard 2 - Understands the historical perspective. Benchmarks: Understands how the past affects our private lives and society in general; knows how to perceive past events with historical empathy; and uses historical maps to understand the relationship between historical events and geography.

Thinking and Reasoning Standard 3 - Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences. Benchmark: Identifies abstract patterns of similarities and differences between information on the same topic but from different sources.

WORKSHEET A: *Survivor Profiles*

Name	Location	Age
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Provide a brief description of the survivor's life before the Armenian Genocide began.

Describe the events the survivor endured during the Armenian Genocide.

What happened to the survivor after the Armenian Genocide?

After reviewing the information you collected about each survivor, summarize the experiences of these survivors during the Genocide. You will share this summary with your class.

WORKSHEET B: “*Recountings*”

Understanding Oral Testimony of Genocide Survivors

Read the quotes by Linda M. Woolf and Henry Greenspan below and answer the questions. Draw from the paragraphs you wrote about Armenian life prior to the Genocide, the survivor testimony you read, and your understanding of the historical details of the Armenian Genocide.

The quotes are from Woolf’s review of the book *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* by Henry Greenspan. Greenspan is a psychologist who writes about Holocaust survivors, but the message he sends can apply to survivors of other genocides as well.

1. Linda Woolf writes:

To retell a story implies a beginning, middle and an end. The pieces of the tale are available to both the teller of the story and the listener. For Jews, the story of the Exodus from Egypt, the miracle of Hanukkah, and the Purim tale involving Esther, represent such retellings. The element of each tale is visible, organized, and invites the listener along a path towards redemption and freedom. However, the experience of the Holocaust does not lend itself to traditional forms of retelling. Much is unspeakable, fragmented, or fleetingly visible. According to Greenspan, one can not simply retell the Holocaust. Rather, he argues that survivors recount their experiences of the Holocaust through a variety of forms including the expression of their current lives. To truly hear Holocaust survivors, we need to listen differently and to be engaged in an interactive process.

- What does it mean to “retell” a story versus “recount” an experience?
- Provide an example of a story retold by your family, friends, or cultural traditions.
- Why do you think survivors of genocide recount instead of retell their experiences?
- What does recounting the experiences instead of retelling provide us, as the audience?
- Describe how the survivor testimonies you have read fit with the description of “recounting” that Greenspan gives.

2. In a paragraph, respond to Greenspan’s quote: “For the sufficient reason to listen to survivors is to listen to survivors. No other purpose is required.” (p. 171). What is gained from hearing the testimony of those who have survived tremendous atrocities like genocide?

3. Reread the paragraph you wrote about Armenian life before 1915, review three survivor testimonies, and reflect on the quote:

“[Greenspan] argues that we need to listen to survivors’ stories of their pre-Holocaust life as well as their present life. The survivors’ pre-Holocaust life provided a framework shaping their Holocaust experiences.” (Linda Woolf)

- Describe the difference between the survivors’ lives prior to the genocide and during the genocide?
- What can be learned from understanding survivors’ lives before they were victims of genocide?
- Extrapolate what survivors’ lives were like after the genocide. How might surviving such an event impact the remainder of their lives?

A Closer Look: *If time allows, find a narrative by a survivor that extends after the violence is over. Do they discuss the impact of their experiences on their daily life after the event concluded?*

“20 VOICES”: *Selected Transcripts*

VARTANOUSH KAMIAN

When we got to the Arabian Desert, that's the worst thing that started because we see so many people who got killed and they made us walk among the people that were dead already. And they told us we're gonna die like them. We walked... A thousand here, two thousand there, three thousand there... There is no stitch of cloth on them. The people that they were going to kill, they make them take their clothes off. That's the way it was. We walked in the desert. My feet were all bleeding and sore... Hot sun up there, hot sand down here... No hot water. Very seldom we came across the water in the desert. No food. Sometime we starved in 2-3 days.

There were four soldiers. Three of them they had machine guns. One went among the people. All of a sudden, we saw it. He held one young woman. She was pregnant. So he brought her down. The poor girl she's crying "let me go, let me go." Why! He had something else in his mind. ...Another thing you know it... I was standing there with my mother. And all of a sudden, he tore the girl's dress, cut the stomach and pulled the baby out. Oh!! That I will never forget. I see so many things but that was...pulled the baby out. And the *baby scream*. The woman she's down. Couple of ladies they fainted. And the *baby cry* so he chopped the head so he don't want to hear it. But the other soldiers had the machine guns on us. "If anybody moves, we're gonna kill every one of you. So who could move? They have machine guns. Who's gonna move? Anyway, he got the baby. He got the baby's legs and started chopping the baby as if he's chopping the vegetable. That's the one thing I'll never forget.

MARY PACHAIJIAN

I was born in Bursa, near Istanbul. And we were deported from our place with wagons. And from there on we walked. And we lost my grandfather over there, within one day. He had a stroke. And from there on, we walked... and nothing to eat, nothing to wear... Whatever we had on, that's all we had. And we didn't even have money because they didn't give us time (or of course the way my mother told me that, they didn't give us time) to take any money from the house. We just left whatever we had on. And then near Der Zor, when we went there, before we went to Der Zor we left my father on the road. He couldn't walk anymore. So we just left him. And we just walked on because if we stay there they would have their, whatever they would have and they would hit you. "Go, walk". So we just walked to Der Zor with my three brothers and I was the youngest of my family.

They killed my brothers... Three of them at one time... In front of our eyes

They dropped them all in there and burnt them up...All the kids... And then they were looking for us too. My mother ran away from me and I don't know where she went. It was dark. And one gendarme, he put me down just like a chicken. He put his feet on my legs and my hands and he was asking me in Turkish, of course, "where did that woman go?" about my mother and I said "I don't know, honest to God" I said "I don't know, I don't know where she went." And my poor mother she was hearing me from far and then when I said "I don't know," he put his sword on my chin... So I have a scar over here of this sword. So after he went, there was another lady running around. He left me there and ran after the other woman. So I went and found my mother again.

REV. VARTAN HARTUNIAN

So we were at our home in Smyrna and we were having dinner in the basement floor when we heard screaming in the household next door and the Turks had attacked, they were raping the women there and killing the husband. So we just left the table. We didn't touch the food at all. We snuck out of the basement window. My father put a fez on and we ran one or two blocks to the American center there where the American marines had gathered and the American power was there. And thousands of Armenians had taken refuge there. So we knocked on the door and eventually they took us in. And what I remember, while I was in there, an Armenian came and said to my father "the Americans are leaving the building from the back. What shall we do?" My father hesitated and said "-Open the doors and follow them." And when we came out, there were Turkish soldiers lined up in front of us. They didn't shoot. My father later told me that they probably thought that we were part of the American contingency. It was a mob of desperate people surging toward the quai [French for the bank of a body of water]. My mother almost fainted on the way. My brother and my father had to carry her practically. We reached the key and we sat down among thousands of people. And the city in back of us was burning. The Turks had carte-blanche to do anything they wanted in the city... to arrest, to kill, to rape, to burn and soon the whole city was in flames.

CHARLOTTE KETCHEDJIAN

My dad made new shoes. My grandfather was a jeweler. They were all in good businesses and trades. I don't remember my father because he was killed. I remember being hungry. That I remember. Once my grandfather (we were about in the family—not in my own family but in the immediate family) 4-5 children and the oldest would have been 7). We were hungry maybe for days. My grandfather said "Wear something with big pockets and soft shoes, whatever you have, slippers or what. We're gonna go, there's a tree. There's a lot of apples on it. That's gonna be our meal for the day." And we listened. And we did that. As we were walking out, the Turk came, took all of the apples, threw it on the floor and stepped on it. So my grandfather started to cry. He said "Today too we're not going to eat anything. We have nothing to eat." And I remember that so well. Lot of hunger days I remember... And losing my younger cousins because they were too young to stand hunger...

But you know what my grandfather used to say? "If it wasn't for the good Turks, we wouldn't be alive today." They came and warned us "Please don't look for anything, just go". And that's what we did. Otherwise, we wouldn't have been saved.

HAGOP BAHTIARIAN

My father told Mom that if you have to accept Muslim as a religion, maybe you can save the children's lives and yours. So we became Muslims. At age 5, not knowing anything about what Christian or Muslim is, (...) they wanted to circumcise me. I thought it was a game they wanted to play. So one guy held my hands and they started to say a few prayers in Turkish. La el la la , Mohammed el rasu ala and the next thing I know, I got circumcised. Then we had to leave our house so they can confiscate all the belongings that we had and we moved to a Turkish quarter. And I went to a Turkish school. My name was changed from Hagop to Khayri Bakhtiarogholou instead of Bahtiarian.

...They took my father away and I held on to his jacket at that time and I said "My father isn't going anywhere. Where are you taking him?" But of course, he had no choice. And they put him in jail.

....My father went and that was the end [of] it. Then about two or three hours later, they brought all their clothes into the market place and sold them at auction. And all the buyers were Turks because there were no Armenians left. And the Greeks didn't feel very comfortable. So that's the way things went...

....It's impossible to forget all that. These are impressions that hit you so hard, it is impossible for anyone to forget.

HAGOP ASADOURIAN

In 1915, it must have been in June, they came and circled the village at night and we did not know anything about it, no notice or anything. They encircled the village and early in the morning, they gave us 3 hours to move from our ancestral home with anything that we could carry. That's all. It was a cruel thing. It was a terrible thing.

The young were conscripted into the army first and the elderly people were dumped into prisons for various alibis...And we walked forty days, from our village to Aleppo, Syria. Forty days. Sickness, hunger and lice... It was an awful thing because there was no water to keep clean or to wash or to even drink.

The two daughters of my third sister, they passed in one day. One in the morning and one in the afternoon...Two of them...So eleven of them I lost in that Genocide and still they say it was no Genocide. Those children did not have any arms to kill any Turks. They did not know what the world was. Well... that's life.

I took my own mother, we put her on a bed sheet and we took her to the well and pushed [her] in foot first. But it was an awful site. Millions and millions of flies at the mouth of the well...Somehow something held me. I stayed there to see how she would be falling down. As the other part was heavier, the down part of it, her head hit once one side of the stone and then the other side and then sank down. Then I ran away. Well... I didn't feel much at the time. Because in a situation like that, you always think that tomorrow is your turn. There's no point in thinking about it...You never forget those experiences. You are not a child anymore. Any child going through a calamity like that is not a child. He is a grown-up person.

That experience in itself, it can never be written about, it can never be explained as to what experience that is because all the cruelty of the world is concentrated on that person and you can't forget it. You can't forget these experiences.

In 1918 when I ran away from the desert and came to Jerusalem, there I was put in an orphanage. When I rested for a while, I had 3 meals a day, I felt safe, then you start thinking and the most poignant part of the whole experience that nailed me constantly, what kind of a son to take his mother and drop her without any remorse and it just kept on nailing and nailing for years. In the evenings we used to sit down and tell our experiences to go through it every night almost. And there was no two boys having the same experience. Every one of them had something different. And you thought that yours was the worse. But there were worst ones yet.

KEVORK BALIAN

My father, they took him right away. All the men they were taken and killed. We use to go from one village to the other. There were stopping points. We will stop somewhere and the Turks and the Kurds will come and attack the group and take whatever they could get. And whatever they could get mostly was boys and beautiful girls. My mother use to hide me in clothes so that they won't kidnap me.

I was walking with my mother, and we saw a gathering in a square. And you know what I saw? Three people hang. I got so scared that I got sick. I got nightmares. They pushed us in a mosque and they converted us to Islamism.

One thing that I remember that my mother...I was thirsty and there was no water around. We were in what they called the Syrian Desert. We had...there was some mud from the rain water and she squeezed that handkerchief and I sucked it so that I could have some liquid in my system.

A baby without any food, without milk, without clothing, I survived.

ARIKA DISHCHENIAN

We were one thousand people in the St. Stepanos Church. The Turks wouldn't shoot us, they would put us in fire. We were helpless people. No ammunition. My mother had an 8 month-old baby. And she said "Arika hold this baby one minute." I held the baby. I was 12 years old. Then I went to the wrong place with a few other people. I was in the church yard. I was looking for Mama, Papa, crying. The next day, one cousin came and found me and said "Sleep over here." I said "Guluzar sister, the baby didn't cry last night". She said "Arika, the baby died." I was going to cry and she said "Don't cry, you're better off without him." Then all the people came from the hospital and they picked up the orphans from the yard. They put us in the wagon trains and sent us to an orphanage. I went to Ghazir orphanage. They used to give us some bread or some orange or something. But we went to school over there too. We were very safe over there because there were no Turk...

MANOUG KHATCHADOURIAN

I was born in Kharpert. And at the age of three, I started going to school. First I attended the Sourp Hagop School for a period of 3 years and then I spent another three years at the Sourp Stepanos School. I then attended the Euphrates College. In 1915, on April 24th, the Turks arrested our teachers at night. The following morning, we noticed that the school was closed and they told us about the arrests.

They would rip women's stomachs. They would look for gold and diamond. Armenians were rich. The women had swallowed, they had swallowed diamonds. They would undress us, they would undress the women, the girls... the virgin girls were naked under the sun. What can you do? They deported us. They undressed me too, naked under the sun. There was no water, thirsty, we would suffocate... I went and I hid under the rocks. I fell asleep there until my three friends came and said "Manoug, what are you doing here?" I said "My cemetery is here. This is where I'm going to die." They asked "Where is your mother? Where is your sister? Nobody's left? Nobody was left. They would take away all the 12-13 year-old children like me. They would all take them away."

AZNIV MEGUERDITCHIAN

At nights we would sleep in a house or in a barn. They would empty the houses or barns and put us in there. Of course, we couldn't sleep. Sometimes we would squat. Sometimes, us children would sit on our mother's lap. At nights, the soldiers would come and, holding lanterns on our foreheads, they would lift our heads and pull our hair back. They would hit us, take a few of us and leave. They would do that in every village. They would come and get the girls. Once I jumped from excitement and my grandmother said "sit, sit."

They would target shoot for fun. Every time we would go up and down a mountain, we would think "they will come and kill us now." They started shooting and a bullet came and hit my leg. At first, I didn't know that I had gotten shot. Another bullet had shot my aunt's leg. I stared crying and saying "Dada, I got shot, I'm bleeding." She said "I got shot also." She took her scarf, split it in two and wrapped half around my leg and half around hers. They then took us to Jabakh Water and we sat on the streets. Some gendarmes stayed to guard over us and some went in a building. Then, they took us to a river. We stood in a row, held each other's hands and threw ourselves the river... the river separated us and all of a sudden, I realized the current was taking me away. An older person took his cane and buried me under the water. I lost myself. I don't know how many hours later, I found myself on another shore. I was totally alone. My hair was filled with sand. It was dark. What was I going to do? I stood up and started walking...

ALICE CHLOODIAN

I was born in Van, Aykesdan. They came, knocked on the doors and they said "Get whatever you can, go to the church and hide." The next thing I knew was that we had to evacuate. They brought a donkey, they put two canvases on each side of the donkey and they put me in one side. I don't know who they put on the other side. On top of me, they put the little kids. They piled them on me. We started walking...We walked and walked and we landed in Yerevan. My mother was always crying.

October 12 1916, we landed in Ellis Island. And the first thing my father did, he says "Get me a banana." He brought my brother and me one. And I didn't know how to eat a banana. I had never seen bananas in my life. I went to have a bite and he said "No, no, no you have to peel the skin off. And we landed in America."

BERJOUHE TUTUIAN

When we were exiled, I was still too young. It was more or less like a play for me. You know, we were going some place...Because in the beginning when they took us we were in a ...carriage... After they took us out, they changed us into oxcarts. But still it was a play, we were going some place, we were riding...When we came back, my cousins were with us. We were all children. When we came back, we didn't have enough food, we didn't have light. We were always...in the evenings there was no light, no candles or anything. It was always in darkness. And mother wasn't around all the time. She had to go to sell things... But I didn't see all those things as much as when we came to Constantinople. I was old enough to realize that it was hard to have every day's bread... At that time I realized that hard life wasn't very easy life. My mother had to work so we could have something to eat and a roof over our heads. But we were luckier, due to my mother, than most of the people because most of the refugees were living under tents. They had to wait for the Red Cross to come to have something to eat... We used to go to Yerortoutyan, a church that they had opened up, a department where young children like us could go and they were teaching us to do hand work and things like that so were kept busy.

KEY TERMS: *A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide*

Anatolia: A peninsula that forms the western edge of Asia. It falls between the Black Sea to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Aegean Sea to the west and the Taurus Mountains to the east. Today, most of Anatolia falls within Turkey.

Armenian Apostolic Church: The earliest accounts of the introduction of Christianity into Armenia date from the 1st century A.D. when it was first preached by two Apostles of Jesus, St. Bartholomew and St. Thaddeus. Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its official religion, in 301.

Diaspora: The dispersion or “breaking up” of a group of people, causing them to settle far from their ancestral home or lands they have inhabited for a period of time.

Genocide: The deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.*

Ottoman Empire: An empire which lasted from 1453-1922 ruled by Seljuk Turks in South East Asia. At its height, the Empire stretched from Eastern Europe to North Africa. The Empire ended with the formation of modern Turkey.

Pan-Turkism: An ideology seeking the creation of a new Turkish empire stretching from Anatolia into Central Asia whose population would be exclusively Turkic.*

Scapegoat: One that bears the blame for others.*

Ambassador Henry Morgenthau: (1856-1946) The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. Morgenthau sent reports to Washington, DC that “a carefully planned scheme to thoroughly extinguish the Armenian race... a campaign of race extermination is in progress.” (p. 419*)

Nationalism: Loyalty and devotion to a nation, especially a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.

Sultan: The title of a ruler or king of a Muslim state. It was the title used for the leaders of the Ottoman Empire.

Talaat Pasha: (1847- 1921) The principal architect of the Armenian Genocide. In 1909 he was appointed Minister of the Interior, and then by 1913, Secretary General. After the Genocide, Talaat fled to Germany and in 1921 was gunned down by an Armenian who had lost his family to the genocide. (p. 531*)

Turkification: The process of destroying cultures of non-Turkic origin within the Ottoman Empire during the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the early years of modern Turkey.

* Source: Israel W. Charney (editor) Encyclopedia of Genocide (ABC-CLIO, Inc., 1999)

A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide

Sara Cohan

“I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared with the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.”
Henry Morgenthau, American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, 1913–1916.¹

Who Are the Armenians?

The Armenians are an ancient people who have existed since before the first century C.E. Armenia has gained and lost a tremendous amount of territory throughout its long and turbulent history. Boundaries of the past have extended from that of the present-day Republic of Armenia and through most of modern day Turkey. The name “Armenia” was actually given to the country by its neighbors; inhabitants of Armenia refer to it as “Hayastan” derived from the name Haik, a descendent of Noah (from the Bible), and “stan” which means “land” in Persian. The Armenian language is unique from other Indo-European languages, with its own distinct letters and grammar.

Christianity is a deeply rooted aspect of Armenian history and culture. Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, in 301 C.E. This early Christian identity has greatly influenced Armenian culture, setting it apart from most of its neighboring peoples. The majority of Armenians belong to the Eastern or Western dioceses of the Armenian Apostolic Church, an orthodox form of Christianity.

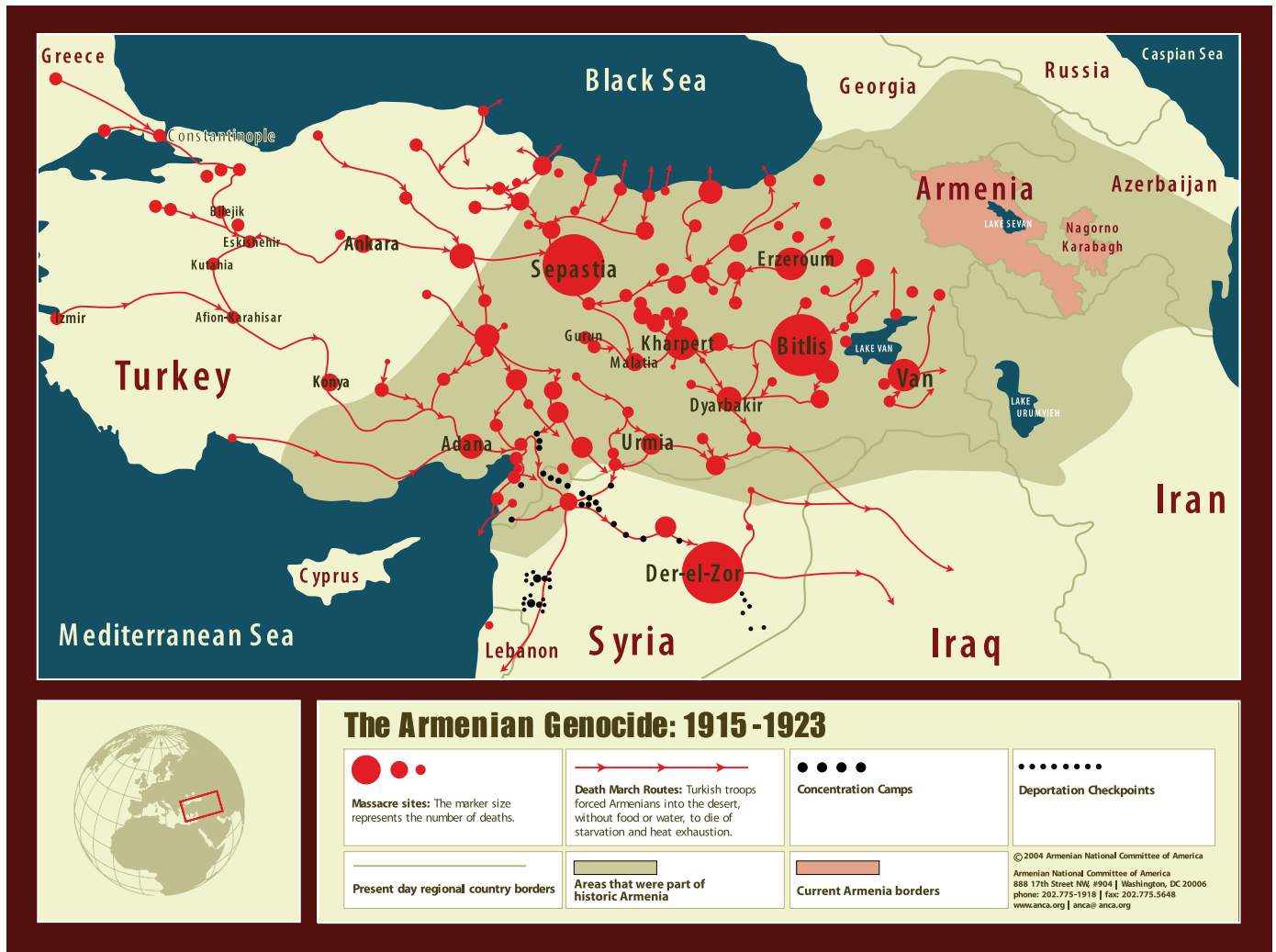
Although Armenia was at times a kingdom, in modern times, Armenia has been an independent country for only a few years. It first gained independence in 1918, after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I, but this ended when Armenia was invaded by the Red Army and became a Soviet state in 1920. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia was the first state to declare its independence, and remains an independent republic today. Armenia is a democracy and its borders only include a very small portion of the land that was historic Armenia.



1919: An Armenian refugee woman and her son.
(Photo by Percival Richards/Hesketh Collection/Getty Images).

Early Massacres

The Seljuk Turks began to inhabit Anatolia as early as the eleventh century and by 1453 their descendants, the Ottoman Turks, had captured Constantinople (now Istanbul), firmly establishing the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was a multinational state that incorporated several ethnic groups including



the Armenians. The Armenians were second-class citizens of the Ottoman Empire and while they were granted some freedoms, including the ability to practice Christianity, they were faced with extra taxes and discriminatory laws extending to their participation in the justice system, government, and their civil and property rights.

By the mid-1800s, as the idea of constitutionalism swept through Europe, some Armenians began to demand more rights, such as protection from corrupt government officials and biased taxation. While most Armenians saw themselves as members of the Ottoman Empire, organized groups of intellectuals protested the discriminatory laws, seeking reform from the government, though not an independent sovereign state.

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire experienced a period

of decline, during which it lost territories to Russia, Great Britain, and new states created by nationalities that had once been part of the Ottoman Empire, such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. Early in the century, Russia had gained some of the eastern Armenian provinces, including Tiflis, which became a cultural center for Russian Armenians. Russian Armenians became increasingly interested in supporting Armenians within the Ottoman Empire in their quest for human rights. The newly created Ottoman Armenian political organizations received some support from Russian Armenians and Russia in their quest to gain equal rights under Ottoman law.

The Treaty of Berlin (1878) included a clause that would provide more rights for Ottoman Armenians, including fair taxation practices, protec-

tions from tribal attacks, and the right to give evidence in Ottoman courts of law. Unfortunately these rights were never granted as the Sultan was empowered by the treaty to serve as the protector of the Armenians. This was in contrast to the terms of the earlier Treaty of San Stefano, which the Treaty of Berlin replaced, and which had assigned the Russians the responsibility of ensuring that the Armenians in Ottoman territory would gain more rights. The reason for the change was that the presence of Russian troops in the region was of concern to Great Britain and the other “Great Powers” of Europe who wanted to deter the expansion of Russia.

After the Treaty of Berlin, Ottoman Armenians continued to protest discriminatory laws and eventually the Sultan responded to these protests with massacres. Massacres of the Armenians

began in the late nineteenth century under Abdul-Hamid II, the last of the Ottoman Sultans actually to rule the empire. The worst massacres during this time occurred from 1894-1896 after a tax protest by Armenians. They are now known as the Hamidian Massacres and some believe represented a foreshadowing of the genocide to come.

During the Hamidian Massacres, 100,000 to 300,000 Armenians were killed in towns and villages throughout areas of the Ottoman Empire. Thousands of Armenians fled and found refuge in Europe and the United States. Some who stayed converted to Islam in order to save their own lives.

The massacres caught the world's attention because of their unique nature. Armenians were unarmed and adhered to the perimeters set forth by the Ottoman government. The massacres were publicized in newspapers throughout the world. The U.S. media paid particular attention to the events. *The New York Times* as well as other news sources regularly published articles about the brutal killings, coverage that would continue through the Armenian genocide.

Many American missionaries and diplomats who worked throughout the Ottoman Empire witnessed the atrocities firsthand and helped mobilize relief efforts. Aid for Armenian victims became the first international mission of the American Red Cross.

Later during the genocide, a society known as the Near East Relief would raise more than \$100 million in assistance to Armenians; the funds collected saved countless Armenian lives in the 1890s and during the genocide, which at the time represented more money than all the aid raised to help tsunami victims this year. While the funds collected saved countless victims' lives, it was the only aid Armenians would see.

Hope to Despair

In 1908, Armenians and other minorities of the Ottoman Empire began to rejoice in what promised to be a new era of tolerance and the establishment

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of a participatory government in the Ottoman Empire.

Armenians, Arabs, Greeks, Jews, and Kurds had begun working with a group of Turks to challenge the authority of the Sultan. This group was known as the Ottoman Liberals and the Turkish coalition of the group adopted the name "Young Turks." They wanted to create a modern state that represented inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire more equally and render the Sultan politically powerless. In 1908, one of the Young Turk groups, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), marched on Constantinople, and overthrew Sultan Abdul-Hamid.

Over the next year, the Ottoman Empire developed a constitutional government providing equal rights for all of its citizens. Ottoman Armenians hoped that the new constitution would protect them from the violence they endured under the Sultan. However, as time passed, advocates of liberalism in

the government lost out to a group promoting authoritarian rule and a radical policy of Turkification.

In April 1909, Armenian hopes were dashed as Hamidian supporters in the city of Adana carried out a massacre of Armenians as part of an attempt to re-establish the power of the Sultan. Adana was heavily populated by Armenians and had at one time been part of Armenian territory. Despite attempts at resistance, in the end almost 30,000 Armenians were killed and nearly half the city destroyed.

The Armenian Genocide

The culprits of the Adana Massacre were never punished and after 1909, an extreme nationalist political movement promoting a policy of Pan-Turkism ("Turkey for the Turks") gained backing from Turkish populations throughout the Ottoman Empire. In addition, the Ottoman Empire, now known as the "sick man of Europe," was weakened

ORGANIZATIONS:

The Genocide Education Project

(www.genocidededucation.org)

The Genocide Education Project is a nonprofit organization that assists educators in teaching about human rights and genocide, particularly the Armenian genocide, by developing and distributing instructional materials, providing access to teaching resources and organizing educational workshops.

info@GenocideEducation.org
51 Commonwealth Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94118
(415) 264-4203

Facing History and Ourselves

(www.facinghistory.org)

Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism.

National Office:
16 Hurd Road
Brookline, MA 02445
Phone: 617-232-1595
Fax: 617-232-0281

The Choices Program (www.choices.edu)

The Choices Program, a civics-based education program based at Brown University, created the curriculum "Confronting Genocide: Never Again?"

The curriculum provides a five-day lesson plan on five genocides of the twentieth century. The lessons trace the international response to each genocide including the Armenian genocide.

Choices@Brown.edu
Box 1948, Brown University
Providence, RI 02912
401 863.3155
fax 863.1247

by the loss of its lands in south-eastern Europe in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

One of the Ottoman Empire's greatest enemies was Russia, as Russia was constantly threatening the security of the Ottoman borders and controlled parts of the eastern edge of the Ottoman Empire that was populated by Armenians. Since the Russians had advocated for Armenian reforms in the past and because the Russian army did have Armenians serving as soldiers, the Ottoman government was concerned that Ottoman Armenians might commit traitorous acts. This fear helped to fuel Turkish public sentiment against Armenians.

The Ottoman Empire entered World War I in 1914, fighting against Russia in

campaigns that straddled territory inhabited by Armenians on both sides of the border. The Ottoman Empire was badly defeated by Russia in a campaign in the winter of 1914-15, and the government then made the Armenian community a scapegoat for the military losses that had occurred at the hands of the Russians.

By the spring of 1915, leaders of the ruling party, the CUP, seized the opportunity of a world preoccupied by war to erase the Armenian presence from almost all Ottoman lands. The CUP was a triumvirate led by Mehmet Talaat, Ismail Enver, and Ahmed Jemal. Beginning on April 24, 1915 (now commemorated as the beginning of the Armenian genocide), Armenian civil leaders, intellectuals,

ONLINE RESOURCES:

www.TeachGenocide.org (www.TeachGenocide.org)

www.TeachGenocide.org is a cyber resource library published specifically for teachers by The Genocide Education Project where various teaching resources on the Armenian genocide and other gross human rights violations are available to download for classroom use. Available resources on TeachGenocide.org include: lesson plans, newspaper articles, a streaming video, survivor accounts, maps and recommendations for further research.

Facing History and Ourselves (www.facinghistory.org)

FHAO not only provides wonderful print resources on the Armenian genocide but also offers online lesson plans. Lessons and Readings on the Armenian Genocide section was developed in collaboration with *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*. (The fall, 2002 issue of *Teaching Tolerance Magazine* includes a feature article on the Armenian genocide, titled "The World Was Silent.")

The Legacy Project (www.legacy-project.org)

The Legacy Project provides a collection of visual and literary art created by the descendants of those who survived some of the most horrific atrocities of the twentieth century including the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and the Cambodian genocide.

The Armenian National Institute (ANI) (www.armenian-genocide.org)

ANI is a small research institute dedicated to studying the Armenian genocide. ANI provides a website with historically correct and well organized information. The site also includes a section for educators the author updated in 2004.

The Forgotten (<http://www.theforgotten.org>)

This award winning website is designed with students in mind. The information on the site is brief and dynamically displayed.

doctors, businessmen, and artists were rounded up and killed. Once these leaders of the Armenian communities were killed, the genocide plan was put into motion throughout the empire. Many Armenian men were quickly executed. Using new technologies, such as the telegraph and the railroads, CUP leaders sent orders to province leaders to gather women and children and either load them onto trains headed for the Syrian Desert or lead them on forced marches into the desert. Embarking with little food and few supplies, women and children had little hope of survival.

On these journeys, Turkish gendarmes regularly subjected Armenian women to sexual violence. Special militias were created by the government to carry out the deportations and murders; and Turkish and Kurdish convicts who had been set free from jails brutalized and plundered the deportation caravans winding through the severe terrain. Some women and children were abducted and sold, or children were raised as Turks by Turkish families. Some Armenians were rescued by Bedouins and other Arabs who sympathized with the Armenian situation. Sympathetic Turkish families also risked their own lives to help their Armenian neighbors escape.

Within months, the Euphrates and Tigris rivers became clogged with the bodies of Armenian women and children, polluting the water supply for those who had not yet perished. Dysentery and other diseases were rampant and those who managed to survive the march found themselves in concentration camps.

By 1918, most of the Armenians who had resided in this historic land were dead or in the Diaspora. Under

SARA COHAN is the education director of *The Genocide Education Project*, a nonprofit organization that assists educators in teaching about human rights and genocide, particularly the Armenian genocide. She will present a paper on this subject at the NCSS Annual Conference in Kansas City, MO, in November.

the orders of Turkey's new leader, Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), the remaining Armenians in western Cilicia (the region of the Ottoman Empire originally inhabited by Armenians) were expelled, as were the Greek and Assyrian populations.

By 1923, a 3,000-year-old civilization virtually ceased to exist. One and a half million Armenians, more than half of the Armenian population on its historic homeland, were dead, and the Armenian community and personal properties were lost, appropriated by the government, stolen by others or deliberately destroyed. Only a small number of Armenians remained in the former Ottoman capital of Constantinople.

The Denial

The term "genocide" was not created until 1944. It was devised by a legal scholar, Raphael Lemkin, who had been strongly influenced by his study of the Armenian case and the persecution of Jews under Nazi rule. In 1946, the United Nations adopted the language and two years later the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide was passed.

Despite the affirmation of the Armenian genocide by the overwhelming majority of historians, academic institutions on Holocaust and Genocide Studies, and governments around the world, the Turkish government still actively denies the Armenian genocide. Among a series of actions enacted to counter Armenian genocide recognition and education, the government even passed a law in 2004 known as Article 305 which makes it a criminal offense, punishable by up to 10 years in prison, to discuss the Armenian genocide.

Most of the survivors of the Armenian genocide have now passed away. Their families still continue to demand recognition for the suffering inflicted upon their beloved ancestors more than 90 years ago. 📖

Notes

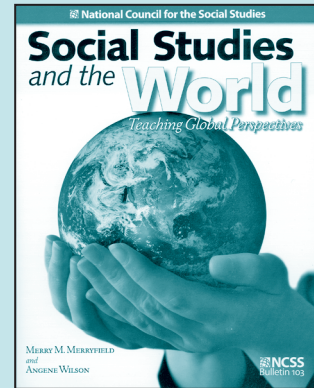
1. Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (London: Taderon Press, 2000), 213.

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NCSS, Bulletin No. 103, 141 pp., 2005



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