

HAYTOUG

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STATE
OF THE
DIASPORA
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THE SEEDS OF OUR FUTURE

The struggle to maintain one's identity and culture outside of his or her homeland is not a new one for Armenians. For centuries, we have survived exile, domination under foreign powers and life on foreign soil.

Despite even the decimation wrought by the Genocide, Armenians everywhere transformed their existence from one of refugees, orphans, and scarred survivors to flourishing, tight-knit and successful communities. Through the invaluable strength of organization, we were able to build new schools, churches, and cultural institutions. Thanks to the perseverance and will of our parents and grandparents, the youth of today were provided the proper avenues for maintaining their identity and preserving their heritage in the diaspora.

But this struggle to stay Armenian outside of our indigenous homeland has always been daunting. In the Western societies of Europe and North America, especially, the fight against assimilation and apathy is a daily challenge. The cultural homogenization now propelled around the world by the process of globalization has only further expanded this obstacle.

Adding to this complexity of life in the diaspora is the changing landscape of communities themselves. An influx of more

recently arrived immigrants from Armenia has challenged the traditional dynamics of many diasporan communities. What's more, regaining an independent Armenian Republic--one with all the powers available to a state and an impetus to engage the seeds of its nation spread across the globe--has opened a new page for what lies in the future.

These realities demand the need to take a fresh new look at the state of the Armenian Diaspora and grapple with the modern challenges that face it. In this special Tri-Regional AYF collaborative issue, we set out to do just that.

One thing continues to remain crystal clear: more than ever, it is the responsibility of the youth today to recognize the accomplishments of previous generations so as to build upon them with vigor and determination, and ensure an even brighter future for generations to come.

The countless Armenian diasporan communities and the Republic itself are like the seeds of a sunflower. While some are larger than others, they exist in unison to form our blossoming Armenian Nation.

It's up to our generation to keep that flower beautiful.

EXPLORING REPATRIATION THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHS

AN INTERVIEW WITH ARSINEH KHACHIKIAN

by Ara Khachatourian

Photos by Arsineh Khachikian

Arsineh Khachikian repatriated to Armenia in 2006. She tells a story of a diaspora upbringing and a life-long calling from the homeland through personal photographs she has compiled in a book called “My Nation: The Trails and Trials of an Armenian Repatriate.” *Asbarez* newspaper English Editor Ara Khachatourian interviewed Khachikian about her book. They explore issues of identity and repatriation in a frank conversation that is presented below.

ASBAREZ: Your book is called “My Nation: The Trails and Trials of an Armenian Repatriate.” What is a repatriate?

ARSINEH KHACHIKIAN: A lot of people have a very specific definition of it. For me it’s a little more broad. It’s somebody that returns to what they call their homeland, with the intention of living, and staying and contributing to society. I moved to Armenia twice, the first time in 2001 and then in 2006 with the intention of staying. And I am becoming part of every day life, doing business and living there as if I were a citizen—as if I were a repatriate.

ASBAREZ: The book chronicles your life as an individual who goes through that process. Tell me about how you came up with this concept—the book.

A.K.: I was looking for a way to tell this story through my photos: about the Armenian experience. The only way I knew how was to tell my story. So,

because I was involved in so many aspects of the Armenian community in the US, as well as in Armenia, I felt it was a good way to show that perspective—the active Armenian’s type of perspective—on all of these different aspects of our community, from cultural to

political to community centers and just every day life. And, since I had collected so many photos throughout the years, that was the way I wanted to convey the message. The fact that I grew up in the US and moved to Armenia is something that I think a lot of people will be doing in the future. I wanted to make my mark and tell my story to inspire other people to do it as well, and give them a little more incentive to do it.

The most important aspect of it is that I believe Armenians have a very unique place in the world, where we have a very large Diaspora relative to the population in Armenia. It’s a unique story; I thought one person out of millions of Armenians around the world can tell a story that relates to everybody else. That’s the reaction I’ve

gotten from other people—that they can relate to it, that they know what it’s like to live in a foreign country and feel so attached to their identity, and search for their identity as well.

ASBAREZ: That has largely happened in the United States because we have the infrastructure for it—the organizations, the churches, the schools. How





Citizens gathered in Yerevan after Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink's assassination in Istanbul in 2007.

about in the communities that don't? How will they relate to the book, in your opinion?

A.K.: The one place that I can think of--that I have been to--that may not have as large a community as we do is Dubai. I went to Dubai and a lot of people I met there have this feeling that they missed out on it, but they still have this connection to other Armenians.

I have met a lot of Armenians who end up in random places where there are very few Armenians, but they still feel this need to connect. Even in America, we might not have huge communities in every single city, but in places like Iowa, Wisconsin or Alabama, I have met people who want to connect to something so they can continue their Armenianness.

I think that no matter what Armenians generally grow up with this sense of community and family, that one way or another they are going to relate to the book.

There are parts of it that I believe express the individual—personal—side of me, of my own childhood, of my going to an American school where there are no Armenians, that many people also face as well. So, I think there's a little bit of everything for Armenians to relate to.

ASBAREZ: In your opinion, having lived in Armenia, why is there a misunderstanding?

A.K.: I think we've had little exposure to each other. As much as diasporans have gone to Armenia, and Armenians have visited the diaspora communities,

I think there are still a lot of people who haven't been thoroughly exposed to each community. A lot of people that I've met in Armenia have false impressions that they've heard through word of mouth, so they don't really understand it.

I think we need to engage in a lot more conversation. We need to interact with each other in order to understand each other.

While I've been touring, I've talked to a lot of people whose experience in Armenia lasted only for two weeks and they have experiences that either turn them on or turn them off. I've been living there for three years, and I've gone many times before that. I've been going there since 1994 and every single experience is quite different—good and bad. So, it's hard to judge what defines Armenia in a couple of weeks or a couple of months--likewise for people of Armenia to judge what the diaspora is like based on one person they've met. We have just as many different types of Armenians in the diaspora as they do in Armenia. We have to appreciate that. I think it's very important for us to start sharing these ideas and thoughts with each other, so there is less miscommunication.

ASBAREZ: Please, talk about the process of putting the book together.

A.K.: It was actually a year long process. It started with conversations with friends of mine who said "you have a lot of photos and they tell an interesting story. You should do something with it. You should publish a book."

For me, the beginning of it was figuring out what story to tell. As I mentioned before, I felt like the only way to talk about the Armenian experience is through my own eyes—through my own photos. So, I started writing down my memories from childhood, starting from my first memory when I was three years old, and writing about major events through each stage of my life that affected me—things that stood out to me that may have changed my life. Like going to many protests when I was eight years old during the Karabakh movement and being involved in the earthquake relief efforts and watching my mother go to Armenia after the earthquake.

So, I went through all of these memories and I researched to see what events took place in the last 20 years to figure out how I reacted to them and what photos I had that show not just my involvement, or perspective on it, but everybody else's around me.

I went through memory after memory after memory, finding the photos that spoke to each story; those thoughts and those events—those images in my head.

Editing was, maybe, the hardest part--going through every single photo that I had and taking the ones that speak the truth. I may have left some of my favorite photos out of the book, but these [the photos in the book] are the ones that best tell the story.

ASBAREZ: What other projects do you have coming up?

A.K.: Tons! I don't know where to begin. For now I'm just freelance designing in Armenia and I'll always be doing the small projects in between. But, I have a few ideas related to photography, like opening a photo studio in Armenia. I'm thinking of organizing some sort of media conference in Armenia. For me the most important projects are the ones that bring talent from abroad to Armenia to engage in these types of conferences that allow people to exchange ideas. I think one of the industries that needs that extra push is media, from television to journalism to photography to design and the arts I think that might be my next big project.

ASBAREZ: Why do you think people should repatriate?

A.K.: I believe that people who have thought about and could see it happening should take it seriously. It's a very personal choice. It's a very difficult choice. For me it was an easy one because I was in the right situation and I was at a point in my career that it made sense. Although I had stayed in the US to save up in order to go back. So it wasn't that easy, but for me it was my plan. I had set out to stay in the US to save up,

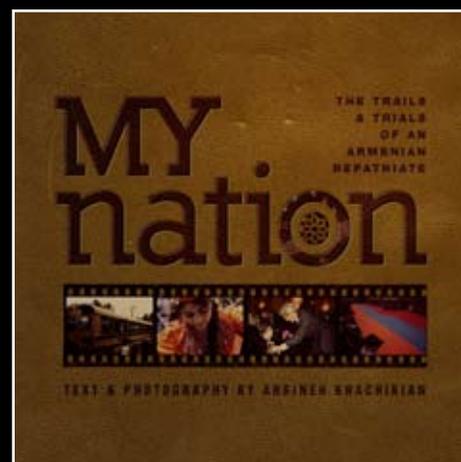
work, get the experience and go.

Why is it important? Because, I think Armenians tend to struggle a lot around the world in terms of figuring out what being Armenian means to them and, I think for their sake, if I can be one example to show that living in Armenia brings that identity issue to an end. Not a complete end, but I do have that sense that I'm now complete. I know where I belong and I don't have to search anymore to figure out "do I fit in here or do I fit in there?" If people in Armenia don't like me, that's fine. I am where I want to be. And, I think it's important for people to realize that that's possible.

ASBAREZ: Why does one's search for, as you say, one's Armenian identity come to an end?

A.K.: I struggled a lot with it, because I was torn between my American and my Armenian identities. I was going to an American school in Virginia where people didn't know where Armenia was on the map. They thought that I was from Romania! Then, I was going to Armenian school on the weekends, where Armenians were coming together and it was like we shut out the American world. I felt schizophrenic because I was entering two different worlds on a weekly basis trying to figure out who I'm supposed to be that day! I asked myself, "Why do I have to deprive myself of this Armenian aspect all the time?" I constantly felt like I had to sacrifice Armenian things in order to do my job. I felt like combining the two; if I work as a designer in Armenia, then I think I'm combining everything that I want to do. In the end it worked out for me. I really enjoy it. I have my frustrations, but, in the end I wake up every day feeling happy about my life and go to bed every day feeling the same exact way.

Arsineh Khachikian's "My Nation: The Trails and Trials of an Armenian Repatriate" can be purchased at Sardarabad bookstore in Glendale, California or online at sardarabad.com.



ARMENIA VS. DIASPORA:

The Myth of Diverging Interests Over the Genocide

by Serouj Aprahamian

When asked in 2007 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC why he thought the “historic issue” of the Armenian Genocide continues to come up again and again all over the world, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan responded by saying:

“This is a problem of the Armenian Diaspora. The Armenian Diaspora is looking for a way to create some sort of benefits for itself and this is what they have found. If it works, then they look to achieve some gains from it. If not, the world will have lost a lot of time.”

A few months later, on the eve of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee’s adoption of the Armenian Genocide Resolution (H.Res.106), the State Department’s Assistant Secretary for Eurasian Affairs, Dan Fried, called for the defeat of the measure so that “Turkish-Armenian relations will move ahead strongly and in a positive way.” He added, “There are many people in Armenia who also, obviously would like to have better relations with Turkey. These are serious people and I think good partners for Turkey if we can get past this resolution.”

So, the argument goes, the issue of the Armenian Genocide is simply a concern of the Armenian diaspora and those living in Armenia are more interested in forget-

ting the past and gaining Turkey’s friendship. This line has been parroted ad nauseam, at least, since Armenia’s 1991 independence. Ankara and Washington, among others, have gone to great lengths to paint the diaspora as “extremists” obsessed with the Genocide, as opposed to Armenia which is much more “reasonable” and willing to “move forward from its past.”

This article will attempt to show that, especially when it comes to the issue of the Genocide, this notion of diverging interests be-

tween Armenia and the diaspora is utterly and ridiculously false. The fact that it is repeated so often has more to do with a political desire to divide the Armenian nation than with any factual grounding in reality. Indeed, if anything, Armenians living in Armenia are just as equally, if not more, adamant about achieving justice for the Genocide than those in the diaspora.

History as a Guide

Those who are serious about evaluating the argument that the



This summer, Armenian President Serzh Sarkissian met with his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gul in Yerevan amid a sea of demonstrators in the background calling on Turkey to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

Armenian Public Opinion on Genocide Recognition and Relations with Turkey, 2003-2008

<i>Title of Poll</i>	<i>Polling Agency</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Results</i>
“Armenia 2020”	Aslan Group, Arlex International	May 2003	80% of Armenians in Armenia and 70% in the Diaspora believe international recognition of the Genocide should be one of the top priorities for Armenia’s leaders
“The Armenian Genocide: 90 Years and Waiting”	Armenian Center for National and International Studies	April 2004	93.5% of respondents in Armenia believe their government “should claim reparations from Turkey” and 80.8% believe it is “the role of the Republic of Armenia to contribute to the recognition of the Genocide by Turkey”
“Poll of Armenian Youth”	Sociometer	April 2005	90% of respondents said Armenia should not normalize relations with Turkey if this requires giving up territorial claims or without Turkey’s acknowledgement of the 1915 Genocide
“Armenian National Voices”	USAID, Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization	July 2006	51% of Armenians said that the border with Turkey “should not be opened” unless Turkey recognizes the Genocide
“Prospects for Armenian-Turkish Relations”	Armenian Center for National and International Studies	Oct. 2007	76% of Armenian respondents believe reconciliation with Turkey is either impossible or unlikely unless Armenia capitulates to Turkey’s preconditions
“Political Segmentation in Armenia”	Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization and IPM Georgia	Nov. 2008	46.3% of Armenians polled say “Armenia should be very careful in its relations with Turkey” and another 25% believe “We should not cooperate with Turkey until the Armenian Genocide is recognized”

Genocide is an issue exclusive to the diaspora would do well to take a brief look at history.

First of all, more than half of the current citizens of Armenia trace their family roots to Western Armenia and have relatives who were direct victims of the World War I Genocide. These families fled to Armenia either as survivors during the massacres or later as survivors and children of survivors repatriating to Armenia during the waves of *nerkaght* immigration from the diaspora. Those who ended up in Soviet Armenia held on to a very strong identification with the culture, life and history of their ancestral towns and villages in Western Armenia.

Similarly, it is worth remembering where the modern interna-

tional campaign to attain recognition and justice for the Genocide was initially sparked. It was in Yerevan in 1965—on the 50th anniversary of the Genocide—where the people took to the streets, in an unprecedented display of defiance to the Soviet state, and held mass demonstrations calling for “Our Lands! Our Lands” and “Justice! Justice!” This was a major wake-up call to the entire Armenian nation and, in Armenia itself, forced the Soviet authorities to allow the building of the Tsitsernakapert Genocide Memorial in 1968, as a way to appease the growing wave of nationalist sentiment.

However, this sentiment did not die but only resurfaced in the form of underground organizations and groups such as the Na-

tional Unification Party (NUP), which called for the return of Western Armenian lands and reparations for the Genocide, among other demands. By 1974, there were some 80 Armenian activists imprisoned for such nationalist activity in Soviet Armenia.

As another indication of the attachment Armenian citizens always held for the Genocide, one of the most striking factors of the movement for Artsakh’s independence in the late 1980s was the prevalence of similarities and connections made to the Genocide of 1915. From the slogans used in mass demonstrations to the accounts of those involved in the movement, it has been shown that the tragedy which befell Armenians at the hands of Turkey was

fresh on the minds of those suffering and resisting Azeri occupation and oppression.

Public Opinion

Aside from the historical record documenting the centrality the Genocide has always played in the politics and life of Armenians in Armenia, let us come more up to date and see what Armenian-citizens have been expressing in public opinion surveys over the course of the last decade.

In a 2003 survey of both Armenians in the diaspora and Armenia conducted by the Aslan Group and Arlex International, nearly 80% of Armenians in Armenia said they believe that “international recognition of the Genocide should be one of the top priorities for Armenia’s leaders.” This was in comparison to their counterparts in the diaspora, only 70% of whom shared the same view. Thus, we see in this case that the Armenians living in Armenia actually had a more steadfast approach to the Genocide than those in the diaspora.

A similar finding occurred on the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, when a poll was carried out by the Armenian Center for National International Studies which found 93.5% of respondents in Armenia saying that their government should claim reparations from Turkey and another 80% insisting that it was the role of the government in Armenia to actively push for Turkey’s recognition. This clearly illustrates an Armenian citizenry that wants to see its leaders not only more engaged on the international rec-

ognition front, but also to move further into securing proper restitution for the crime that was committed against it.

One year later, a 2006 Sociometer Poll found that 90% of young Armenian citizens were against normalization of relations with Turkey if this required giving up Armenians’ territorial claims or came without Turkey’s recognition of the Genocide. Again, rather than seeing a passive or indiffer-



Youths protested Abdullah Gul’s visit to Armenia this summer.

ent population in Armenia, we see one that is overwhelmingly in agreement—one would probably be lucky to get 90% agreement on this in the diaspora—about the need to resist Turkey’s efforts at denying and avoiding the consequences of the Genocide it committed.

More recently, an October 2008 survey was carried out by the Gallup Organization in which respondents were asked about the overtures from Armenia and Turkey surrounding the so-called ‘soccer diplomacy’ process. The results were that 47.3% of respondents felt that “Armenia should be very careful in its relations with Turkey” and another 25% expressed opposition to establishing

any sort of relations until Turkey recognized the Genocide. Do the math and you can see that the vast majority of Armenians in Armenia, again, are not eager to forget the past and place heavy emphasis on achieving justice for the Armenian Genocide.

These same basic results are seen over and over again in countless other public opinion polls and surveys (see Chart A). Whenever

Armenian citizens are asked such questions they actually tend to take a more assertive position on the Genocide than many diasporans would. Aside from whether or not this consensus in Armenia gets fully translated into government policy, the simple fact of the matter is that Armenians living in Armenia care deeply about the Genocide and share a similar, if not higher, level of support for recognition and reparation efforts as those in the diaspora.

Recent Developments

For those who still might not be convinced by the historical record and public opinion data, it is worth pointing out a few other key observations from recent developments that further reveal the nature of Armenia’s stance on the Genocide.

In October 2007, when the US House Foreign Affairs Committee passed H.Res.106, government and opposition politicians alike in Armenia openly welcomed the passage and gave a standing ovation in the parliament. Despite pressure from Turkey and the US, these parliamentarians went on record calling for a full official recognition vote by the entire US

House. Similar support and elation was witnessed all throughout the press and society in Armenia.

More recently, when the head of the Armenian Football Federation, oligarch Ruben "Nemets Rubo" Hairapetyan, decided to remove the image of Ararat from the logo of Armenia's team in the run-up to their soccer match against Turkey, citizens throughout the country raised such an uproar that the Federation was forced to reinstate the logo. Hairapetyan himself publicly admitted, "We could not imagine that the change of the Football Federation's logo could elicit such a wide response and become a politicized matter."

Finally, on December 9, an open letter signed by over 300 of Armenia's leading academics, artists and intellectuals was sent to Turkey's President, Abdullah Gul, calling on him to recognize the Genocide as a necessary condition for Armenian-Turkish relations. The letter insists that the crime of Genocide "has no statutory limitation" and states, "We should all accept the fact that Ottoman Turkey is responsible for the genocidal crime against Armenians, while today's Turkish state has inherited this responsibility. The current Turkish diplomacy and propaganda cannot cover up this macabre page of our history."

All three of these examples are recent expressions of the Armenian people's determination to ensure proper recognition and restitution from Turkey on this matter. These are expressions originating from within the mainstream of Armenian society and reflect the reality that the centrality of the Genocide is anything but a strictly diaspora concern.

Facts in Perspective

This cursory review of some of the vast body of evidence debunking the myth that Armenia and the diaspora have conflicting interests

on the issue of the Armenian Genocide should be enough to put to rest this silly notion once and for all. Nevertheless, we can expect that the agents of Ankara and Washington will find it in their interests to continue ignoring the facts and parroting this myth in the hopes of dividing the Armenian nation in its struggle for justice.

Unfortunately, it is also likely that officials in Yerevan may continue to succumb to certain geopolitical and economic pressures to stay pliant over this issue. Hence, we can expect that the overwhelming consensus of the Armenian citizenry for proper recognition and reparations for the crime of the Genocide will not be adequately reflected in Armenian government policy anytime soon.

It is in this light that the role of the diaspora in the overall struggle for recognition and justice becomes all the more critical. Those of us who live in relative freedom, economic prosperity, and comfort in the West have a special obligation to be the torchbearers of the Armenian Cause throughout the world. We must represent the interests of our people in national and international circles with an understanding that we have certain privileges in the realm of political and economic activity that our brothers and sisters in Armenia do not.

When it comes to the importance of achieving justice for the Genocide, there is absolutely no difference between an Armenian in Armenia and one in the diaspora. The only difference lies in the resources, advantages, opportunities and institutions available for each actor to make this goal a reality.

Let us never forget that, as Armenians, we share the same interests in the Armenian Cause no matter where we may be in the world. With this reality in mind, we can more effectively move forward, united and working together to achieve all our just aspirations.

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9 "Political Segmentation in Armenia," Baltic Surveys/The Gallup Organization and IPM Georgia, November 2008.

10 Although the Republic of Armenia's declaration of independence itself clearly states, "Armenia stands in support of the task of achieving international recognition of the 1915 Genocide in Ottoman Turkey and Western Armenia," successive Armenian governments have often taken a much more passive, if not appeasing stance.

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THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA IN THE EASTERN USA AND THE HOMELAND

by Sossi Essajanian

“There once was, and there once was not...” This sentence has served as the beginning to many Armenian fairytales as they weave stories about the handsome prince, the peasant girl, or the poor beggar who sings beautiful songs to lure the animals to feast with him. With such a standard commencement, the listener is left wondering if the entire world just described really existed or not. Unlike “Once upon a time...” which insinuates a moment once did exist, the Armenian version leaves one in doubt if such a place existed. These questions are familiar to Armenians in the Eastern USA in cities such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Providence as we think about where we live and how much we consider “home” as tied with our identity.

Three generations removed from their ancestral lands and living in the Eastern USA, Armenian youth still learn about the ancient city of Ani and the Holy Cross Church on Akhtamar Island as great cities of Armenian history as well as places of trauma and death. They also use names of cities and villages employed during Ottoman and pre-Ottoman times to refer to these locations even though today many are not used in Turkey as the actual city names. Frequently when asked “Where is your family from?” many use these old city names to establish relations creating the sense that they still exist. But establishing a historic connection to these places is not merely an end in itself.

Anthropologist Susan Pattie discusses the various conceptualizations of diaspora that might be applied to the Armenian case. She refers to William Safran’s



Armenians from the Eastern USA visit Khor Virap as part of the 2008 AYF-YOARF Summer Internship

understanding of diaspora as an eventual return to the homeland, as well as Robin Cohen’s counter argument against the concept of homeland that there may be positives for living in the diaspora. However, in the Armenian case Pattie concludes that “this tangled mass of approaches to the question of ethnic identity and diaspora/homeland relations is highly appropriate.” Adding to this complexity for the recent generation is the opportunity to visit the Republic of Armenia. Through the help of various internship and volunteer programs diasporans from the East Coast of the United States have joined others around the world in visiting Armenia and returning to the homeland. But how many consider moving there for good?

Thus for many Armenian-Americans living in the Eastern USA the idea of home and homeland seem to differ, making the diaspora here so grounded. Pattie notes that “with each generation in place, diaspora becomes more comfortable and a home itself.” In conversations with diasporan Armenians about culture Pattie writes that for them homeland is implicit; it is a group of behaviors and traditions that when changed, “the culture is lost or in danger of being lost.”

In the Eastern USA Armenian youth grow up with the option to be Armenian or not. It seems as though the Armenian culture of community directly collides with the American mentality of individualism. Thus, many cities’ Armenian “areas” do not exist where one can find all Armenian churches, stores, and businesses within walking distance of each other; one has to commute via car, bus or train in order to reach an Armenian Center, club, or church. Thus Armenian identity seems to be one of choice; it is not imposed and one has to seek out those places to find things that will make them Armenian.

In her recent essay “Learning to be Armenian: Understanding the Process of Ethnic Identity Development for Armenian Adolescents” Ani Yezedjian echoes these sentiments when she says that “although the existence of cultural markers can provide tools for individuals and institutions to manipulate, their existence alone will not ensure the persistence of the ethnic group.”

So let us no longer say “there once was and was not”; let us make our home and homeland one and flower Armenia with our talents, passion, and humanity.

Sossi Essajanian is an AYF Alumnus from the New York “Hayortik” Chapter.



LOS ARMENIOS

ROCK OUT IN ARGENTINA

They're Armenian. They're Argentinean. They're Los Armenios. They're the Armenian music sensation coming out of South America.

This exciting new band is made up of Mariela Moumdjian, Pablo Kaloustian, Jacqui Boghosian, Gabriel Giogourtzian, and Juan Abadjian, all of whom met as youth in the Armenian community of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Each one of them came from a different area in this community and grew up listening to different styles of music.

The bandmembers all attended separate Armenian schools where they forged their passion for Armenian culture early on. Pablo and Gabriel went to St. Gregory School, Jacqui went to AGBU, Mariela attended the Mekhitarian School of Buenos Aires and Juan, the Tertzakian Institute. In addition, they stayed active in the Armenian community through such organizations as the AYF and Homenetmen, competing regularly in sporting events and various community activities.

Naturally, with such an upbringing and circle of friends, the band members had a great sense of Armenian pride; they felt the need to combine this pride with their creative talents and form an

Armenian band.

Los Armenios has achieved a great deal of notoriety since the release of their first album *Republica Diaspora* ("Republic of the Diaspora") in December 2006 and when they were nominated in 2007 for an Armenian Music Award for best alternative album. When asked if there was one piece of advice they would give to the Armenian diaspora, Moumdjian urged the following: "Make an effort to keep the traditions and--what is really important--keep on speaking the Armenian language."

Indeed, this is one of the main goals of Los Armenios itself, whose original compositions are penned and performed in their native Armenian. As artists, they hope to make Armenian culture better known in Argentina. "What's more," adds Giogourtzian, "we consider that through music we can awaken the Armenians of the new generation to do something for Armenia and for the diaspora--just as our exiled Great Parents did for us."

"Eternas Esperanzas" ("Eternal Hopes"), the band's latest album, is now available at the band's website losarmenios.com.

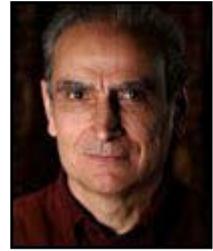
--Ani Nalbandian

Անունը Լեզուիս Տակ

On the
Tip of my
Tongue

հեղինակ՝ Գրիգոր Պլըտեան

French-Armenian author Krikor Beledian offers a Post-Structuralist perspective on the age-old question of the Armenian Genocide: could it be enough to just never forget?



Յետ-կառուցապաշտութիւնը (Post-Structuralism) 1600-ական թուականներուն Ֆրանսայի մէջ սկիզբ առաւ: Այդ ժամանակաշրջանին քաղաքական մտահոգութիւն գոյութիւն ունէր, որովհետեւ ուսանողները յեղափոխութիւն կազմակերպած էին կառավարութեան դէմ այն նպատակով, որ հին մտածելակերպն ու սովորութիւնները փոխուին եւ կեդրոնական ուսման եւ գործի վրայ:

Յետ-կառուցապաշտութիւնը գրական ոճ մըն է, ուր հեղինակը կարդացողին գրութիւնը հասկնալու մթնոլորտէն դուրս կը հանէ եւ կը ջանայ զայն մղելու կարդալ այն ինչ որ գրուած է՝ լոկ կարդալու սիրոյն: Այս ոճը կ'ուզէ կարդացողը գրութեան խորը շթափանցէ, այլ եզրակացութիւններու հասնի թէ գրուածին նպատակը ի՞նչ է: Հեղինակը հիմնական դեր չի խաղար եւ դժուարութիւն կու տայ ընթերցողին հասկնալու գրութեան միտք բանին: Նշանաւոր դէմքեր են՝ Տերիտան, Ֆուքոն ու Պարթէզը ինչպէս նաեւ մեր գաղութէն՝ Գրիգոր Պլըտեանը:

Որեւէ կենդանի դէպք մը «իրողութեան» շրջարկումին տակ կ'ինայ: Այդ իրողութիւնը պարզօրէն իրողութիւն կը համարուի: «Իրողութիւնը» փաստուելու կարիքը չունի, որովհետեւ ապացոյցը ներկայ է եւ հանրութեան կողմէ ընդունուած է: Ծարունակելով, ամէն մէկ իրողութիւն ունի իր լրագրողը: Այդ լրագրողը կրնայ բացայայտ ըլլալ կամ ալ քողարկուած: Բացայայտ կամ քողարկուած, լրագրողը կը փորձէ ձայնը լսելի դարձնել, ճոյնիսկ խուկերուն, որովհետեւ տեսողութեան հեռացում հետեւանքներ կրնայ կրել յաջորդող սերունդներու վրայ: Յաջորդող սերունդներուն պարտականութիւնն է մեկնաբանել մինչեւ իսկ ամենէն յետին մանրամասնութիւնները, որովհետեւ այդ մանրամասնութիւններն են, որոնք պիտի պատկերազարդեն ապագայի դիմագիծը:

Իրողութիւն մը ընդունելով, մենք մեր անձը կը պատրաստենք յաջորդ քայլերուն եւ չենք մնար ժխտումի կամ մերժումի աստիճանին մէջ: Իրողութիւն մը մերժելով, մեր իմացական կարողութիւնը

կը դադրի ու մենք տակաւին կառչած կը մնանք անցեալին:

Այդ վերջին խոչընդոտին ծագում տալով, մենք մեզ կը գտնենք հզօր դժուարութեան մը դիմաց: Պլըտեան կ'ըսէ. «...Կարելորը մեկնաբանութիւնն է, ոչ թէ ցաւին, տառապանքին նկարագրութիւնը... կարելորը... իմաստն է, այս բոլորը իմաստ ունին...»: Այո՛, կարելոր է, որ գիտնանք թէ Դէպքը ինչպէս պատահեցաւ, որպէսզի կարենանք հաստատել կառչած մնալու մեր պատմութեան հազարաւոր սեւ օրերուն: Սակայն, աւելի կարելոր է հասկնալ այդ Դէպքերուն մասին որոնց զոհ գացին ստուգապէս ժողովուրդին կէսէն աւելին. 1,500,000... Մտածեցէք վայրկեան մը, 15 անգամ «Rose Bowl»-ը լեցուած: Արեւմտահայ գրականութիւն մը ամբողջովին ջնջուած, լեզու ու մշակոյթ ոտնակոխուած եւ թալանուած, ՍՊԻԻԲ եւ ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ բոլորովին անջատուած: Այս է ցաւալի իրականութիւնը: Ինչպէ՞ս կարելի է անուանել այս կորուստը: Այս է դժուարութիւնը, որ Պլըտեան կ'ունենայ «Անունը Լեզուիս Տակ» վէպին մէջ:

Իմ կարծիքովս Պլըտեան կը խրատէ որ հայութիւնը ընդունի Յեղասպանութիւնը իբրեւ իրողութիւն մը, որ գտած է համաշխարհային ճանաչում (չեմ ըսեր որ պէտք է դադրեցնենք մեր արդարադատ պայքարը եւ աշխարհի ճանաչման ծրագիրները) ոչ թէ տակաւին ժխտումի հանգրուանին մէջ կը մնանք (in denial):

Կ'ենթադրեմ որ «Անունը Լեզուիս Տակ»-ի գլխաւոր նպատակն է՝ ամրանալ (մտքով եւ հոգիով) եւ ամրացնել իրարու, ընդունիլ Յեղասպանութիւնը իբրեւ իրողութիւն (accept the loss, let go, but not forget), յառաջ երթալով նոր գրականութիւն մշակելով ու մշակոյթ զարգացնելով եւ ամենէն կարելորը՝ թափ տալ Սփիւռքի եւ Հայաստանի ներկայ սեռ ռունդներու մերձեցման աշխատանքներուն (engagement process between diaspora and homeland):

-Սարո Հարուն

ՈՍԿ Է ՀԱՅՐ

Who is the Armenian
Կորին
Gorün

Արդիօք անուն է հայը,
Իսկ թե անուն չէ,
Արդիօք տիտղոս է հայը,
Իսկ թե տիտղոս չէ
Արդիօք պաշտօն է հայը,
Իսկ թե պաշտօն չէ
Նոյնիսկ անուն չէ,
Եւ տիտղոս էլ չէ
Բա ինչ է հայը:
Հայը մի ազգ է
Բայց դեռ անելի
Նա ազգից էլ բարձր
Մի զգացում է,
Դա գաղափար չէ
Բայց զգացում է
Հոգու մի մաս է
Մարմնաւորւած ազատութիւն է
Տառապանքների արտայայտում է
Հնութիւնների սուրբ թանգարան է
Թէկուզ համաշխարհային փոքրամասնութիւն
Անհատական մեծամասնութիւն է հայը
Հայը մի ժայռ է
Որը քանդակելու ու վանք է դառել
Հայը պաշտօն չէ այլ պաշտամունք է
Հայը հէնց ժայռ չէ
Այլ Սուրբ Գեղարդ է
Պիտ հպարտանաք մենք հայ կոչւելով
Թող լինենք ոչ միայն հզօր ու վէհ, ամրացած սուրբ ժայռ,
Այլ կրենք այնպիսի մի սիրտ,
Որում վառուում են Գեղարդի մօմեր,
Եւ թող պահպանենք այս ժայռը շքեղ
Որ չհանգչի հանկարծ մեր սրտում վառւած
Գեղարդի մօմը
Անուն դարձնելով այս պաշտամունքը
Հայ զգացմունքը:



Anahid Yahjian

THE ARMENIAN DIA

HISTORY Armenians first began to migrate to the UK in the 19th century as traders, small manufacturers and retailers. The first Armenian Church in Britain was built in 1870. Larger waves of immigrants arrived as a result of the 1915 Genocide and in the aftermath of World War II.

SIGNIFICANCE In 2004, the municipal council of Cardiff, the capital of Wales and one of the largest cities in the United Kingdom, passed a resolution officially recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Two years later, an Armenian khachkar (stone-cross) monument was erected in the city's local park in honor of the 1.5 million victims.

CURRENT POPULATION According to a 2006 article in the UK's Sunday Times, Armenians in England are considered to be "the most successful ethnic group in the country," with more than 1,600 businesses and prominent figures in economic and social life. The overall ethnic Armenian population in the UK is estimated to be around 18,000.

United Kingdom



HISTORY As one of the oldest Armenian communities in South America, Uruguay is home to the third and fourth generation descendants of many who fled early atrocities committed in the Ottoman Empire. A further wave of Armenian immigrants arrived from Iran following the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

SIGNIFICANCE In a resolution passed on April 20, 1965, Uruguay's Parliament became the first in the world to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide. A public square in the capital city, Montevideo, is officially named Plaza Armenia.

CURRENT POPULATION With somewhere between 15,000-20,000 Armenians, Uruguay is behind Argentina as the second most populous diasporan community in Latin America. Most Armenians live in the capital, Montevideo.

Uruguay



DIASPORA UNLOCKED

HISTORY The Armenian presence in India is said to date as far back as 2000 BC. But the earliest documented reference to Armenians traveling there is from an ancient Greek work by Xenophon (430 BC – 355 BC). From the 7th century on, Armenian merchants steadily established both large and small settlements throughout India, as they traveled there for trade and commerce. These merchants created very important centers of Armenian culture, education, religion, and intellect.

SIGNIFICANCE The first Armenian newspaper ever published was in Madras (now Chennai) in 1794; it was called Aztarar. The earliest traces of Armenian ideas on liberation and independence can be traced to the booklets and writings of late 1800 Armenians in India such as Joseph Emin, Movses Baghramian and Harutiun Shmavonian.

CURRENT POPULATION Today, it is estimated that fewer than 600 Armenians remain in India. However, visitors can still find the St. Mary Mother of God Armenian Church standing in Chennai and the famous Armenian College, established in 1921, in Calcutta.

India



Ethiopia



HISTORY Due to the close religious ties between the Ethiopian and Armenian Orthodox Churches, small Armenian communities established themselves in Ethiopia as early as the 7th century. By the late 19th century, large numbers of Armenians were concentrated in cities such as Addis Ababa, Harar, and Diradawa, where they prospered in business, government and diplomacy.

SIGNIFICANCE The first official orchestra of Ethiopia was made up of Armenian orphans from the Genocide, adopted in 1924 by the famed Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Salassie I. Terenik Poladian of Lebanon was appointed as the first dean of the Ethiopian Theological Seminary in 1960.

CURRENT POPULATION The Armenian community in Ethiopia today is estimated to be no more than 400 but maintains a church and school.

HISTORY The “land down under” is home to one of the youngest and most diverse of all diasporan communities. Starting in the late 1960s, the relative peace and prosperity of Australia attracted Armenians from around the world to relocate and establish themselves there. Today, the Armenian community includes members born in up to and over 43 different countries.

SIGNIFICANCE Australia has become one of the key centers of the Armenian diaspora and is the second largest in the English-speaking world, following the US. The community has established its own brand of vibrant cultural, educational, youth, athletic, media, humanitarian and political institutions.

CURRENT POPULATION The estimated community size is in the range of 45,000 – 50,000 with most Armenians residing in Sydney, the country’s largest city.

Australia



This page was sponsored by a generous donation from Mr. and Mrs. Raffi Gourdikian and family.

ARMENIANS IN TURKEY TODAY

AN OVERVIEW



Clement Saccorani

Statues of Atatürk and Turkish flags, required by Turkish law to be displayed in every room and corridor, are ubiquitous and adorn the walls of all the schools in Turkey, including the Getronagan (Central) Armenian School.

by Ari Esayan

Currently, estimates place the number of Armenians in Turkey between 55,000 and 75,000. While most of them belong to the Armenian Apostolic church, a small portion of these Armenians are Catholic or Protestant. The Armenian community is concentrated in several districts in Istanbul including Bakirkoy, Sisli, Kurtulus, and Samatya.

During Ottoman times, Armenians who obeyed the law got by as long as they accepted a legal and

social code that was different than that which was applied to their Muslim countrymen. However, harsher methods—such as outright killings and deportations—were employed as the empire neared its end, especially during the Hamidian and later transition years (the Young Turk era) towards the new republic.

Things changed following the creation of the Turkish Republic. One can say that the government followed a certain “path,” rather than the institutionalized segregation reminiscent of Ottoman times. In other words, the Ottoman-style

discrimination became much more discreet, yet was nevertheless still prevalent. This newer “path” can be described as an accumulation of methods, such as: indirect intimidation of the minorities; arbitrary laws that create and support legal uncertainty; and policies that aim to create weariness among the Armenian population to pass on its religion, culture and language to the next generation.

In 1942, along with the other non-Muslim minorities, Armenians in Turkey were forced to pay a wealth tax which was arbitrarily imposed to bring about the

impoverishment of non-Muslim segments of Turkish society. As an open example of the impetus behind such discriminatory measures, the then Prime Minister Sukru Saracoglu delivered a speech on August 5, 1942, where he described the Turkish administration's program and stated that his nation is, "Turkish, pro-Turkish, and will always remain pro-Turkish. As much as being a blood matter, Turkishness is also a matter of conscience and culture. We want the authority of neither monarchy nor capitalism, nor the authority of classes. We only want the dominion of the Turkish nation."

Later, in the mid-1950s, Armenians and Greeks in Istanbul became the victims of Turkish mobs, inflamed by the issue of Cyprus, which rioted through their communities destroying personal property churches and cemeteries with the indirect help of the military.

Today, although Armenians do have a legal minority status in Turkey, their religious leadership organs are not recognized in the same way. For instance, the Armenian Patriarchate continues to this day to seek legal recognition of its status as patriarchates rather than foundations. This particular problem prevents it from having the right to own and transfer property and train religious clergy.

Outright killings of Armenian civilians do not occur anymore, as far as we know; however, the intensive anti-Christian (or, more broadly, anti-foreign) propaganda by the media outlets—which are heavily influenced by the government—do result in attacks by nationalists on Armenian individuals, churches and cemeteries. This is especially true since the Armenian community represents the largest non-Muslim element in Turkey. Even though it may not be appropriate to blame the entire Turkish government for these attacks or



Clement Saccorrani

Slain journalist Hrant Dink's grave at Balıklı Armenian Cemetery in Istanbul.

for the recent murder of journalist Hrant Dink, powerful elements within the government are certainly responsible for them.

Furthermore, the Armenian community in Turkey faces the burden of often being blamed for the country's image problems abroad. International Genocide recognition efforts create resentment and public anger towards the Armenian community. This active anger is fueled by active propaganda which results in the creation of a society where the average Armenian living in Turkey feels like a stranger—despite the fact that he or she is born in that country, and is supposed to be a part of the fabric of Turkish society.

It is worth mentioning here that Hrant Dink's murder, along with other developments, created a slight ripple of change in public opinion in Turkey during recent years. More and more intellectuals have publicly recognized the Armenian Genocide. Furthermore, a group of intellectuals started an apology campaign. However, it is too early to say that the Turkish government or the people are ready to do what is right. Apology

campaigns and seminars that shed light on the Armenian Question are not taken seriously by the authorities, and are resented by the vast majority of the general public.

The problem seems to be that the Turkish government is still extremely worried about the Armenian Question; even an insignificant minority population that has no right of association is recognized as a "potential threat to the national security" by this government. This fright leads the government to create an environment in which the average Armenian will feel so uncomfortable that eventually they will end up emigrating or losing their identity and assimilate.

The Genocide and the events that led up to it caused the disappearance of a significant portion of Armenian existence. In addition, after the World War I, the political, cultural and financial harassment led to the present situation of Armenians in Turkey. The Armenian community will not have much left to recover if Armenians abroad do not act to do something to protect their compatriots from this new way of oppression.

Մայրենի լեզու մինչև վերջ

Fighting assimilation each day, diasporan Armenians musn't forget that they are armed with the greatest weapon of all:

Language.



Anahid Yahjian

The sculpture of Armenian alphabet creator Mesrob Mashtots outside the Madenataran museum in Yerevan has become an icon for the perseverance of the Armenian language.

«Ազգ պահողը, իրարու միացնողը լեզուն եւ հաւատքն են:
Ջեզի կ'ըսեմ, հայոց նորահաս երիտասարդներ, ձեր լեզուն,
ձեր հաւատքը ամուր պահեցէք»

Խաչատուր Աբովեան

Որեւէ ազգի գոյատեւման աղբիւրը լեզուն է: Հայոց համար հայ լեզուն եղած է այն կարեւոր ազդակը, որ կարողացած է կանգուն պահել հայ ազգը, կրօնքը, մշակոյթը եւ հայոց պատմութիւնը:

Յայտնի չէ հայերէն լեզուի պատմական ծնունդը, սակայն յստակ է, որ երբ Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց

հայ գիրերու գիտը յղացաւ, արդէն իսկ գոյութիւն ունէր հայերէն բանական լեզուն:

Փաստօրէն հազարաւոր տարիներէ ի վեր հայերէն լեզուն կարողացած է գոյատեւել ժամանակի խոչընդոտներուն դէմ: Այդ կուգայ փաստելու, թէ հայերու գոյատեւման համար կենսական տարրը եղած է լեզուն:

Ըլլայ հայ ժողովուրդի բարգաւաճ դարերուն կամ օտար պետութեանց բռնատիրութեան տակ, հայ լեզուն եղած է հայ ժողովուրդի միասնականութեան աղբիւրը:

Տարիներու ընթացքին, բազմիցս ազգեր փորձած են մեզ մոռցնել տալ մեր լեզուն, մեր ինքնութիւնը կորսնցնելու նպատակով: Սակայն, թանկագին այս գանձը, որ կարեւորագոյն մասնիկը դարձած է մեր ինքնութեան պահպանման, յաղթահարած է բոլոր տեսակի գիշումներուն:

Եւ անգամ մը ես, հայ լեզուն դէմ հանդիման կը գտնուի տարբեր տեսակի պատուհասի մը: Պատուհաս մը, որ աշխարհի տարբեր ցամաքամասերու վրայ հայերէն խօսող տարրը իրարմէ կը տարբերէ: Կը զգանք արդէն, որ մարդոց մտքին մէջ տատանումներ կամ երկմտանքներ գոյութիւն ունին հայ լեզուի պահպանման կարեւորութեան մասին, նամանաւանդ այսպիսի օտար ափերու վրայ:

Յայտնի բանասէր McLuhan-ի ամենաճանչուած խօսքերէն մին է, «The medium is the message», այսինքն՝ Միջոցը պատգամն է:

Այս գաղափարէն մեկնելով, կրնանք ըսել, թէ դարեր շարունակ հայ լեզուն եղած է այն կապը եւ միջոցը, որ ժառանգական սովորութիւններու ջահը փոխանցած է սերունդէ սերունդ: Այժմ, այդ միջոցը եթէ սկսի կորսուիլ կամ կիսատ մնայ, հետը կը կորսուին նաեւ մեր բոլոր սովորութիւնները, մեր մշակոյթը եւ մեր ինքնութիւնը:

Հայերէն լեզուն կապն է մեր դարաւոր պատմութեան, անոր էջերը նկարագրող դէպքերուն եւ յայտնի ու անյայտ բոլոր հերոսներուն միջեւ:

Կորսնցնել այսպիսի կարեւոր բան կը նշանակէ՝ կորսնցնել այն պատերազմը, որ սկսաւ երբ ցեղեր եւ ազգեր որոշեցին մեզ վերացնել այս աշխարհի երեսէն:

Ուրեմն ինչպէ՞ս պահպանել հայոց լեզուն: Ինչպէ՞ս պաշտպանել այն ինչ, որ մեզ պահպանած է այսօր դարեր: Դիւրին չէ՛: Դիւրին չէ նամանաւանդ նկատի առնելով, որ մեր ժողովուրդին մեծ մասը իր սեփական հողին վրայ չապրիր: Դիւրին չէ՛: Անդրադառնալով մանաւանդ այն իրողութեան, որ օտար բարքեր ու սովորութիւններ հետզհետէ մաս կը կազմեն մեր աօրեային շուքի մէջ ձգելով մայրենի լեզուն:

Դիւրին չէ, եթէ մեր մեծերը պատրաստ չեն զայն մեզի սորվեցնելու: Չյուսահատինք երիտասարդներ: Չյուսահատինք՝ եւ աշխատինք եւ պարտադրենք, որ նոյնիսկ եթէ օտար ափերու վրայ կ'ապրինք, նոյնիսկ եթէ մեր ծնողքը երկրորդական կամ երրորդական կը նկատէ հայերէն լա

խօսիլն ու գրելը, թող մեր պարտականութիւնը ըլլայ, մեր պարտքը մեր ազգին, որ սորվինք հայ լեզուն, եւ փոխանցենք այդ գանձը եկող սերունդներուն: Մեր պահպանման հարցը կը սկսի հոս: Ուրեմն մեր արմատները զօրացնենք եւ վերադառնանք մեր արժէքներուն:

Միջոցները շատ են: Հայ դպրոց յաճախել, ըստ կարելիութեան, եւ դաստիարակուիլ ներկայ թարգմանիչներով՝ լաւագոյն միջոցներէն մին է:

Սակայն տրամադիր անհատներ կրնան նոյնիսկ ինքնաշխատութեամբ զօրացնել իրենց պաշարը: Կրնան արձանագրուիլ դասընթացքներու, կամ պարզապէս պարտադրել հայերէն խօսակցութիւնը հայկական միջավայրերէ ներս: Իսկ եթէ այս բոլորը անկարելի են, պէտք է միջոց մը գտնել, որ կարողանանք գոնէ թարգմանութիւններու միջոցաւ մենք մեր հայ գրականութեան ծանօթանալ:

Անշուշտ խօսքը կրնայ տարբերիլ թարգմանութիւններու ընթացքին, սակայն գաղափարը նոյնը կը մնայ:

Միջոցները շատ են եւ իւրայատուկ բոլորին: Կը մնայ որ իւրաքանչիւր հայ երիտասարդ անդրադառնայ կարեւորութիւնը հայ լեզուի գործածութեան եւ պահպանման եւ ինք ճշդէ թէ ինչպէս կրնայ սորվիլ գործածել այս գեղեցիկ լեզուն:

*-Նորա Արուշեան
Հ.Յ.Դ. Գ.Ե.Մ.
Լեւոն Ծանթ Մասնաճիւղ*

«Ժողովուրդ մը ազգ կոչուելու եւ ազգերու շարքին դասուելու համար, անհրաժեշտ է, որ ունենայ լեզուն, հայրենիք, եւ բարոյական սկզբունքներով օժտուած կրօնք:»

Անձանօթ



NEW ARMENIAN MINISTRY SEEKS TO ENGAGE DIASPORA

Led by Hranush Hakobyan since its inception in October of 2008. Its mission: to preserve, utilize and repatriate the diaspora.

by Tamar Yardemian

Diasporan people have become increasingly common in the 21st century, as people immigrate into more economically advanced countries in search for better living opportunities. Yet it is quite uncommon for small republics to dedicate a ministry of their government to the diasporan entities of that country. Does Armenia's bold move of dedicating an entire Ministry of Diaspora Affairs in October 2008 illustrate the importance of diasporans to the vitality of the Republic of Armenia?

Either way, this is an unprecedented opportunity to fully engage diasporans in reconnecting with their homeland both physically and emotionally. The Ministry is an opportunity for an organized method of connecting the Armenian government with its people abroad.

The general goals of the Ministry have been emphasized through interviews with Hranush Hakobyan, the newly appointed head of Diaspora Affairs: (1) Preservation of Armenian identity – culture, faith and language; (2) Utilizing diasporans to empower the homeland in progression; (3) Repatriation – return to the homeland and to one's roots. These goals are quite general and can be pursued through many avenues. Thus far, Hakobyan has made several visits abroad and has been speaking publicly about newly initiated programs.

"Ari Tun" ("Come Home") is the name of the campaign being launched to encourage diasporan tourism in Armenia, and thereby instigate spiritual and financial efforts towards the development of Armenia. Another project has been titled "Days of Honor," where famous and influential diasporan Armenians

will be celebrated in Armenia through specified days named in their honor. Among these figures are actor and musician Charles Aznavour, entrepreneur Kirk Kerkorian and Alek Manookian. More substantial examples of launched programs are the building of ties with Armenians living in Latin America--a community in danger of alienation. The Ministry is facilitating educational programs to exchange teachers and enter diasporan youth into Armenian universities. Educational programs and technological opportunities have taken the forefront of all news related to the Ministry.

Are these programs nearly enough to fulfill the goals of preservation, utilization and repatriation of the diaspora? There are continuing conversations about long-term implementations of these objectives. But the true question lies in the selection of the goals themselves. What if all efforts were geared toward the broader objective of securing the existence and future of Armenians at home and abroad? As we enter the era of globalization in the 21st century, it may be more realistic to work towards the unity and continuity of the Armenian people across the world. Unification not only by language and culture, but also through citizenship, paying taxes, full cooperation in lobbying efforts and undeniable opportunities for employment of diasporan Armenians in the private, public and nonprofit sectors of Armenia and Kharabagh.

As the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs works to engage us who live outside our homeland, we should take the initiative to respond with opinions about our destiny as diasporans.



Stunned and heartbroken family clings to what they have left-- each other

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In Media: Restaurants a bright spot among franchises!
" WASHINGTON (Jan. 7, 2009) Restaurants are one of few franchised businesses actually expanding, even if only slightly, during this economic downturn, according to an International Franchise Association Educational Foundation report released Wednesday." (Nation's Restaurant News 2009)

Shish Kebab Plate
Kebab Plate Falafel Plate
Mediterranean Salad Tabouli
Grape Leaves Lentil Shish
Shanouj Hummos Chick
Shish Kebab Plate F
Plate Mediterranean Sal



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Turkey

November 2008

by Maro Siranosian

36 churches, 15 schools, 18 choirs, 3 newspapers, and a handful of dance groups. This is the answer you will likely get from an Armenian living in Istanbul if you ask the question: “How many Armenian [insert institution name here]’s are there in Istanbul?” If you asked a similar question to an Armenian in Beirut or Los Angeles, chances are, you would not be satisfied with the answer you received.

The Armenians of Turkey, mostly located in the city of Istanbul, do not like to be referred to as a diaspora. After all, they are living on their ancestral lands and, along with the Armenians of Iran, represent one of the oldest Armenian communities outside of Armenia proper. Prior to 1915, there were over 4,000 Armenian churches in Turkey and an estimated 2 million Armenians. Today, the churches which remain are centered in Istanbul, with some others partly scattered across eastern Turkey, including a church in the village of Vakif (the only remaining ethnic Armenian village in Turkey) located in the province of Hatay near the Syrian border.

The Armenians in Turkey can be found in almost any commercial sector and are well represented in most trades, and even dominate in some, like the silver trade in which Armenians have been working for over 600 years. They are well integrated into Turkish society and generally enjoy the same rights as the average Turkish citizen. Of course, there are some exceptions to this, as the community does not have the right to teach Armenian history at their parochial schools.

This past November, I had the opportunity to travel to Turkey with a photographer to work on a photo project about Armenians living outside the Republic of Armenia. Almost every Armenian with whom we spoke in Istanbul expressed very positive feelings towards their Turkish compatriots. They seemed not to hold grudges and recognized certain events of the past as “history”; which, though they believed should never be forgotten, they also felt should have no place in dictating current relations.

Having been active in the Armenian community of Los Angeles, I had strong notions about what it meant to be Armenian. Those ideas changed when I moved to Yerevan two years ago, and traveling to Turkey to meet with the Armenian community has added yet another layer to this understanding.

The Armenians of Turkey approach the issue of the Genocide, the most salient issue for most diasporans, with much caution and prefer to live without drawing unnecessary attention to their community. Although not a single one



Clement Saccorran

Armenian varbeds (masters) dominate the silver trade in Turkey.

of the Armenians we spoke with mentioned outright repression, they are well aware of the subjects which they are to avoid if they wish to live in relative peace and keep their churches and schools open. The murder of Hrant Dink, editor of the Armenian newspaper *Agos* based in Istanbul, is all too fresh in their memories. Dink, who was convicted by the state under Article 301 and targeted by Turkish nationalists in January 2007, played a big role in chipping away at the taboo surrounding the topic of the Genocide and awoke people’s interest in the subject.

Living in Turkey as an Armenian seems to require somewhat of an intricate balancing act. Oftentimes, efforts to simultaneously be “good citizens” of Turkey while still preserving their Armenian identities counter each other and something has to give. In certain cases what gives in the end is the former, but, according to the Armenian school principals we spoke to, accepting that Armenian history will not be taught is a relatively small price to pay to ensure that Armenian children have a school to attend where they can learn the Armenian language with their peers.

Though I cannot speak for them, it seems that the Armenians of Turkey find themselves in a paradoxical situation, struggling to preserve their Armenian identities, while at the same time being forced to sacrifice parts of that identity to be able to remain Armenian.

Unlike the Armenian communities of Los Angeles and Beirut, the Armenians of Turkey need to strive for balance while still dealing with the same issues of assimilation faced by diasporan Armenian communities. Although some may criticize the Armenians of Turkey for what they have seemingly given up, it is important to realize that they are driven by a deep understanding of what it is they stand to lose and it is only to preserve this that they sacrifice so much.

VISITS

Bulgaria

Dec. '08-Jan. '09

by Anahid Yahjian

This past winter, I received a grant from Occidental College to spend a month in Bulgaria and conduct research on the assimilation of the Armenian community there. I'd been back to Bulgaria several times since first immigrating to the U.S. when I was a year old, but never on such terms; what I expected to be a largely educational journey turned out to be more personal than ever. Each day, I would come across people and places that I discovered dual connections with--both as a member of my family and of the Bulgarian-Armenian community.



1. The Armenian Center in Sofia houses offices for organizations, a book store, meeting rooms and a functioning church imbedded in its unassuming, communist-era rectangular exterior. My parents were married and I was baptised here.

2. The concrete skeleton of St. Mary's Church, designed by local architect Agop Karakashian. Construction has been halted for months due to a lack of funds.

3. The Armenian section of the Sofia cemetery.

4. The historic quarter of Plovdiv, home to the largest and oldest Armenian community in the country, was once known as "Armenian Hill"--local Armenians still affectionately refer to it as such.

5. Plovdiv's St. Kevork Apostolic Church and Armenian school currently has 250 students of mixed ethnicities, most Armenian. My paternal grandfather was an elementary school student here.

6. My maternal grandfather prepares assignments and lectures for his students on his custom-made Armenian typewriter. He is a professor of Armenian Studies at the University of Sofia.

7. Zaven Sargsyan, founder of the Sergei Paradjanov museum in Yerevan, gave a lecture on Armenian architecture to the Armenian Studies majors--all ethnically Bulgarian.



Photos by
Anahid Yahjian

ARMENIAN LIFE ON HELLENIC SOIL



by Thora Giallouri

The Armenian presence on Hellenic ground dates back to antiquity. In fact, many villages and areas in Greece are named after the Armenian communities that lived there in ancient times. Until 1890 though, Armenians in Greece counted less than 1000 people. They only took the character and feeling of a Diaspora after 1921-1922 due to the Asia Minor Holocaust, when close to 80,000 Armenian refugees fled the area along with 1,000,000 Greeks.

Before their mass arrival in Greece, some Armenians, particularly those who had fled the 1894-1896 massacres, managed to establish the first Armenian Church in 1905. Some years later, in 1921 Dikran Chayan became the first ambassador to represent the Republic of Armenia in Greece. During that same time, from 1921 to 1923, the two countries established proper diplomatic relations, with Armenia opening up two consulates in Athens and Thessaloniki.

A Refugee Community

By 1923, Athens had 26,000 Armenian refugees, with thousands more spread throughout the rest of Greece. But the number of Armenians on Greek territory began to shrink soon after, as more and more sought asylum in other parts of the world. By the end of the 1920s, the Armenian population in all of Greece totaled only about 42,000. In the years that followed, the number of Armenians in Greece continued to decrease as they immigrated to Argentina, Canada, and the U.S. A large portion of the community also left in 1947 during the repatriation drive to Soviet Armenia. Ever since then, their number has remained more or less steady; around 18,000-20,000 people, most of them residing in Athens, Thessaloniki and northern Greece.

Community Life

The Armenian Blue Cross, with financial help from their U.S. chapter,

as well as members of the community, was able to establish Armenian kindergartens, elementary schools and high-schools throughout Greece. Until the Armenian community was able to stand on its feet, those charitable organizations undertook the task of feeding, lodging, clothing and offering health services to the refugees and orphans.

These organizations also dedicated themselves to maintaining strong cohesion within the community, encouraging the teaching of the Armenian language and history, and preserving the Armenian culture and tradition. The community was built in large part through the work of Armenian schools, financial support to Greek-Armenian press, the issuing of grants and scholarships to Greek-Armenian students, the establishing of a blood-bank, the hosting of camps for poor children and adolescents, as well as through cooperation with many other Greek-Armenian foundations.

As the years passed, the community found itself less and less in need of philanthropic contributions. The economic boom of the 80s and Greece's membership in the European Economic Community- the precursor of the European Union- enabled Greek-Armenian businesses, along with the rest of the population, to flourish. The vast majority of Armenians own businesses that can be described from successful to very successful, while many occupy themselves in administrative positions within the community and artistic professions. Only recently, have Armenians begun to seek careers in academics, entering the social sciences to study fields such as political science, history, public administration, psychology and journalism.

A Cause to Rally Behind

Prosperity offered the community the opportunity to help Armenians elsewhere; funds were allocated to face the difficulties that tormented then Soviet Armenia and still torment

the Republic of Armenia. On numerous occasions throughout the 90s, the Greek-Armenian community mobilized to assist the emergent Republic of Armenia, contributing greatly to relief efforts after the 1987 earthquake.

But it was not until the outbreak of the Karabakh conflict that humanitarian aid to Armenia became a systematic effort adopted by the Greek Armenian community. Greece was one of the first countries to offer asylum to Armenian refugees fleeing Azeri aggression. The community mobilized itself along with the Hellenic State to address the difficulties Armenia faced during its first years of independence, mobilizing aid to combat famine, the lack of fuel resources, the stranglehold caused by the Turkish-Azeri blockade. Two kindergarten schools were also established in Nagorno-Karabakh due to donations from the Armenians of Greece.

After 2000, financial aid to Armenia also took on the character of investments in Armenia's economy from Greek corporations. Unfortunately, such ventures are still limited due to the difficulties investors face in Armenia's market. There have, however, been examples of successful cooperation such as the launch of a Hellenic Aid Chapter. The chapter, managed in collaboration with the Greek ANC, is responsible for collecting fruit crops and pushing them in other European countries' markets.

Challenges

Despite these accomplishments, the community finds itself facing some serious challenges. Years of prosperity have created an environment of political and cultural apathy among the community's younger generation. A very serious generational gap also exists in the community. The older generation, in a sense, retired from cultural and political life after Greece recognized the Armenian Genocide in 1996. While the younger generation, born into assimilation, is largely apathetic to pan-Armenian issues outside

their own community. Traditionally, the majority of the community had supported the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and thus, participated in the activities of the Greek ANC. But having grown up in a prosperous environment, the younger generation had very little incentive or encouragement to become active in Armenian issues. Although integration is very important for an ethnic community's ability to thrive in a host country, the fact that Armenians did too well within Greek society, may eventually cost them their identity.

One could expect that residing in a more than friendly state would have led Armenians in Greece to fight harder for Armenian interests and set grander goals than simply providing humanitarian aid to Armenia in times of need. This not being the case, the outside observer is led to the conclusion that social success, as well as success in the genocide recognition issue, may have given reason for the community to rest on its laurels.

Even though political parties have expressed their support on Greek-Cypriot issues and have urged the Hellenic state to act in the case of Karabakh, there has not been much done other than verbal expression. Cooperation between the community and the Greek government in common areas of interest is nonexistent, while representation of Armenians in the Greek Parliament has been limited to one single occasion, once when Kevork Papazian was elected to the Parliament for the 1920-1924 session.

When observing the community one is presented with an image of older members idly watching the course of events, void of ideas that will rejuvenate the political will and movement of a younger generation. Despite the existence of an Armenian Youth Federation chapter, Greek-Armenian youth seems to mobilize itself only once a year in the month of April, with the organized events receiving minimal media coverage and the attendance of people decreasing each year.

It was only 20 years ago that the Greek-Armenian community presented a more vivid and militant image of Armenian activism, now the political element is steadily wearing off.

The community seems to be active only through holding cultural events; the quantity of cultural, athletic and educational associations shows the great tendency and talent of the community towards the arts and letters.

Each year, many dance, music and theater performances are held, usually organized by the Hamazkayin Association, while the Homenetmen Association has a soccer, basketball and volleyball team under its wings along with the Armenian Boy Scouts. In addition to that, the charity foundations mentioned above organize bazaars and camps, where children and youngsters from Armenia participate in cultural



activities.

Since 2001, there has been an exchange of cultural groups between Greece and Armenia through the Sister Cities Association. The Halandri municipality in the greater Athens area is now sister-cities with Noyemberian. Through this relationship, the aforementioned municipality has been able to offer assistance for the renovation of Noyemberian's main square, the set-up of a public computer and web classroom and the reconstruction of public streets. On a similar base, the Nea Smyrni municipality donated medical machinery and street-cleaning vehicles to Sissian while the city of Korinthos is now connected to Vanatsor.

Thanks to cultural events, the few Armenian schools left in Greece and the existence of two newspapers and a periodical, the majority of Greek-Armenians are still able to speak their mother language. Unfortunately, the importance of the written language has also been neglected by a large part of the community and gradually fewer

and fewer people know how to write in Armenian.

Another matter of concern is the influx of economic immigrants from Armenia in the past years; their numbers are estimated around 20,000 people. That means that they count almost the same as the traditional diaspora in Greece, even though they find themselves in a significantly worse position. Most of them do not speak Greek and have a hard time integrating into Greek society. However, the community has exerted much effort to helping them in any way possible, offering work positions and providing for their education. It is of great interest whether newly arrived Armenians will trigger the inactive and indifferent community to take action in a more meaningful way, thus ensuring, for the new generation of Greek-Armenians, a more sustainable community.

Will the community be able to preserve its Armenian element in 20 years from now? Chances are gloomy. Being an active and informed citizen within one's community is no easy task. It takes time, effort, knowledge and passion. And if there is no passion, then the community is bound to lose its character and motivation.

The only solution would be for the younger generation to wake up, realize the favorable position in which it has evolved all these years and take advantage of it to pursue Armenian interests more effectively.

Unfortunately, the Greek-Armenian community has failed to do that partially because it did not entrust its organization and management to professionals. That is Armenians with a background in history, politics and the social sciences--people who would make the pursuit of Greek-Armenian interests a profession and not a once-a-week activity by people passionate, but nevertheless unable to thoroughly occupy themselves with the needs of the community and the Armenian state.

The community, as it grew, became too comfortable and did not make use of its prosperity the way it should have. It has also shown stubbornness in changing its ways when the need for evolution was evident. One can only hope that the new generation of Armenian scientists and students will aspire to bring about a much needed change.

FROM BAKU TO MLS: Yura Movsisyan

by Ani Nalbandian

Only 21, Yura Movsisyan has already played on two MLS professional soccer teams, competed with the best players in Europe, and is being sponsored by Adidas. But he did not reach his goal of becoming a professional soccer player by just wishing for it.

Movsisyan was born on July 6, 1987 in Baku, Azerbaijani SSR, Soviet Union. As a boy he learned to play soccer on the streets of his hometown and grew to love the game. Unfortunately being in Baku as an Armenian was not safe, especially during the pogroms of the late 1980s and 1990s.

Armenians generally were not respected or tolerated in Baku and, in 2000, Movsisyan and his family fled Azerbaijan to come to the United States. They were able to move to Pasadena, Calif., where they started a new life, with new hopes and dreams. This is where his dreams truly started to come true.

He quickly joined an organized soccer club called Lazio FC. When asked what drew him to join the team, he replied, "I had a lot of love for soccer ever since I was a child. I wanted to be a professional soccer player and I felt proper training was key." He went on to join two more club soccer teams: Flyers FC, and Arsenal.

Movsisyan explains that maintaining his Armenian identity was initially a daunting task, but he vowed he would never forget where he or his family came from. "Soccer did help me feel more comfortable to be in the United States," he explains, "and it was a way for me to get away from the rest of the world, it made me feel really happy." Even though Yura's life is and was completely surrounded by soccer he didn't forget about his roots. He maintained his culture by doing what he knew best: every year he would play Forward for the Homenetmen "Azad-amard" soccer team at the Navasartian Games.

The young Movsisyan also attended Pasadena High School (PHS), playing for his school and his future mentor, Cherif Zein. He shattered the PHS goal record by seven goals, making 32 goals in 13 games. "Breaking the record in high school was nice," recalls Movsisyan. "During the season it wasn't the amount of goals I wanted to make, for me it was just making goals till the end and it was nice to have it on my resume."



While living in the United States and even in Baku, Movsisyan did not attend any Armenian Schools. "The other day, I went to Pilibos Armenian School to speak," says Movsisyan, "and that is the only time I have ever been inside an Armenian School." Yet, to this day, he knows how to read and write fluently in Armenian.

After high school Movsisyan moved on to college soccer. While, at first, he was not very interested in attending college, his mind was quickly changed after his mentor Cherif told him that if he played for Pasadena City College (PCC) for one season, he would guarantee that professional coaches would see him. Movsisyan played his heart out, becoming the MVP of the Pacific League, scoring 18 goals in 19 games, and accounting for half of his team's goals for that season. Cherif's promise proved to be true as he was pronounced eligible for the MLS draft within three months of playing for PCC.

Movsisyan's dream had finally come true. He was a professional soccer player playing for Kansas City. "It was a dream come true playing for Kansas City. It was the best feeling actually attaining my goal," says Movsisyan. He admits, however, that, "I did feel out of place being in Kansas City, not being with my family or other Armenians."

Since then Movsisyan has moved on to play for the MLS soccer team Real Salt Lake. This past season he scored eight goals and assisted one goal. When asked what his goals are for the upcoming season his answer was, "to score more goals and be healthy."

This past summer, Movsisyan was invited to play at a tournament hosted by Adidas called "Generation Adidas"—where the best in the MLS are asked to compete. For the future, Movsisyan has his sights set on one day playing for a soccer club in Europe. "Eventually I want to end up playing in Europe whether its next year or in the next five years, I really want to go," says the ambitious Movsisyan. "Any good team in Europe is fine with me; any good team would be good." Currently, he is also hosting a soccer camp in Arcadia, Calif., where he is teaching and training many young athletes. Movsisyan will also continue to play for Real Salt Lake this upcoming season.

“NEW”/“OLD” DIASPORA: SALVATION IN POWER OF UNITY

by Mikael Kourinian

For countless centuries Armenians have migrated to various parts of the world, seeking a safer environment to conduct business and live their lives in relative peace. Especially after the collapse of the last Armenian kingdom in Greater Armenia, Armenians were left defenseless against barbaric hordes that ravaged our country and forced thousands to seek refuge in foreign lands. The 20th century in particular was unmerciful for the Armenians, when one million and a half million Armenians were massacred by the Turks and the rest left to wander to distant corners of the world.

We are all aware of the Diaspora communities that formed as a result of the Genocide, as most of us can trace our roots back to Western Armenia along with the migration of our surviving relatives to countries like Iran, Lebanon, France, Argentina, etc. These communities have since flourished, and many Armenians have rooted themselves in all aspects of life in those countries. Many have preserved their culture, language and family name, by interacting with fellow Armenians through community and social organizations.

Although these developments tend to be associated with the ‘traditional’ Armenian Diaspora communities, my interest here is to focus on the newer generation of migrants from Armenia.

Armenians from Soviet Armenia began immigrating to the West as early as the 70’s. Larger waves of migrants followed soon after in the 80’s and 90’s. For example, between 1980 and 1988 it is estimated that 112,000 people emigrated out of Armenia. From 1991 to 1996, another 667,000 Armenians, 18% of the population, left the homeland. A large number found themselves in places such as the United States, one of the traditional Armenian Diaspora communities.

For the older communities, Armenians from Armenia seemed different, speaking a different dialect and having mannerisms almost alien to them. As wave after wave moved to various parts of Europe, and the Americas, we witnessed some resistance from the traditional communities towards the recent immigrants. Communication was the major barrier, as the older communities adapted words from the host country whereas the Arme-



nians from Armenia, under Russian influence, frequently utilized Russian words. For instance, the word tomato for an Armenian from Armenia is a “pamidor”—Russian, and for a western Armenian, a cart is an “araba”—Arabic. Unfortunately, a host of minute problems such as these created rifts among the community, especially in the Los Angeles area.

While some may choose to focus on these trivial differences and seek to exacerbate stereotypes, it is important for us as a people to rise beyond these minor obstacles and take a practical look at the very serious challenges facing our nation. It is a fact that the majority of Armenians currently live abroad, making the imperative for us to unite in the Diaspora even more critical. We should acknowledge our commonalities and common interests as a people exiled to foreign lands. Given our situation, we simply cannot afford to be divided.

Furthermore, we should seek to utilize the advantages our position presents for our nation. Unlike other ethnicities, Armenians speak countless languages and have a keen understanding of the mindset of various cultures worldwide. These skills can help us build Armenia’s economy and political ambitions in today’s increasingly globalized community.

Let us look beyond the differences and realize that one type of Armenian is not superior to the other. We must embrace our differences and utilize all available resources to further our interests.

Speaking from my experience as an Armenian who moved from Armenia to Los Angeles in the early 70s, I have accepted all Armenians as my equals and actively cooperated with all organizations—traditional Diasporan and the ‘new’ Armenians from Armenia—to push our cause forward. I would like to see all of us work more cooperatively in the future and pool our collective resources for our nation’s common interests.

The days of division and alienation within our community must come to an end if we want to see a strong and prosperous Armenia. We have several challenges to overcome as a nation and we cannot be hampered by petty, antiquated differences. We must embrace our commonalities and organize together, around our points of unity. This is the only way our people can move forward.



THE “RISIN SON” OF HIP HOP

a conversation
with R-Mean

The Armenian-American community of Southern California can be proud to count one of its very own as a “Rising Son” in that segment of the Hip-Hop community still striving for substance and talent when at the microphone.

We are referring to R-Mean (Armin Hariri), a seasoned Los Angeles rapper who is perhaps best known in the Armenian community for his track, “Open Wounds,” which deals with the pain and injustice of the Armenian Genocide.

R-Mean recently released his latest album “Risin Son” Visit www.myspace.com/RMEAN for details.

How did you first become interested in Hip-Hop and a career in music?

As much as Hip-Hop was everything to me, I never thought I could be a part of it musically. It never even crossed my mind. But I used to get a lot of single cd’s that had instrumentals on it and one day I was listening to the ‘Paparazzi’ beat by Xzibit and I just started flowing. Then, gradually, a hobby turned into my main passion in life.

You grew up in Amsterdam for the better part of your youth. How did that influence you as an artist?

As an artist anything you experience influences you and your art in some way, so absolutely. The lifestyle and mentality you grow up with is different than if you would grow up here in LA, for example. But most of the type of Hip-Hop I was exposed to growing up in Holland was really different as well. To this day Hip-Hop is in a more pure form out there than here so I grew up with a great sense of what Hip-Hop was really meant to be.

Which artists would you like to work with?

There are a lot of artists I would love to work with. I get excited when I see real talent, no matter what style or genre of music. In regards to Armenian artists I would love to collaborate with Serj Tankian, of course, and I would love to do something with Jivan Gasparian. I am a big fan of using Armenian instruments and influences in my music. As far as Hip-Hop artists and producers there are too many to name but, of course, all the great ones like Eminem, Fifty Cent, Nas, Jay-Z.

Can you talk about the track “Open Wounds”?

The first time I wrote a song about the Armenian Genocide is when I took an Armenian History class in college. I wrote the whole song in class. After that, Blind and I did a couple

tracks but every time it wasn’t the one. So when we were working on the Broken Water album we thought let’s do another one but this has to be “the one.”

I had the idea to use duduk in the beat so I got a bunch of CD’s with duduk stuff on them and brought them to Blind for him to sample. I had also met Soseh, the girl that sings the chorus, at UCLA and so I already knew I wanted her on the song too. Once Blind created the beat, I wrote my verses and Soseh came up with the idea of doing the chorus in Armenian and using “Kilikia.” It just all came together perfectly, and when it was done we definitely knew it was “the one.”

I think the song conveys the message perfectly both in words and emotion. The best thing for me was that so many non-Armenians learned about the Genocide through that song because people that don’t speak Armenian still get the message through the raps and the emotion and pain through Soseh’s voice. Hopefully one day we can still push the song to an even greater audience.

What inspired you to write a song about the Armenian Genocide?

I was raised with the Armenian Cause instilled in me from a young age so it was always important to me. I want my music to convey an important message and I always knew that I wanted to express the pain and frustration I feel about 1915 and pay tribute to the 1.5 million Armenians that were annihilated during the Armenian Genocide through my music.

I always wanted to help somehow but just going to protests and all that wasn’t enough for me. Once I started making music I knew my voice can be heard and especially the youth—which is the most important portion of the population but, at the same time, the hardest to reach—can be educated.

Can you explain the title of your new album?

The Risin Son is a nickname I acquired years ago....It symbolizes the rise of the next generation....the next generation of Hip-Hop. Originally it was just going to be a mixtape of some of my unreleased material but as we were putting it together it sounded so good that we had to make it a complete album. Ras Teo and Soseh are featured on the album as well as Romeo from the Goodfellas, Roscoe from DPG, and a few other guest appearances. It’s an incredibly well put together album and if you love Hip-Hop you’re going to love this album.

Thank You.



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