

THE ARMENIAN CAUSE IN AMERICA TODAY

While meager Turkish American NGO assets are dedicated to cultural events and providing education on a wide range of political issues, approximately \$40 million in Armenian American NGO assets are primarily dedicated to what is referred to in Armenian as Hai Tahd, 'The Armenian Cause'. Hai Tahd includes three policy objectives: Recognition that the 1885-1919 Armenian tragedy constitutes genocide; Reparations from Turkey; and, Restitution of the eastern provinces of Turkey to Armenia. This paper examines the Armenian American strategy and the response of Turkish American via the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA).

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The Ottoman Armenian tragedy of 1880-1919 is a dark episode in the history of Turkish and Armenian relations. Over one million Muslims, mostly Kurds, Turks, and Arabs, and almost 600,000 Armenians perished in eastern Anatolia alone. WWI took the lives of 10 million combatants and 50 million civilians. While Russia suffered the greatest population deficit, the Ottoman Empire lost over five million, of which nearly 4 million were Muslims, 600,000 were Armenian, 300,000 were Greek, and 100,000 were Ottoman Jews.¹ Moreover, the millennial Armenian presence in eastern Anatolia ended.

The tragedy means different things for the two peoples. For the Armenians, their deaths constitute genocide. This means that the Ottoman government hated the Armenians as an ethnic or religious group, and destroyed them as such. With respect to Muslim deaths, the Armenians are silent, some because they do not know, some because they are in denial, some because Muslim deaths implicate Armenian responsibility.

For the Turks, the deaths do not constitute genocide. The deaths are massive on both sides, and caused by a large scale revolt by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Army 1880-1919, the Armenian-spearheaded Russian invasion of eastern Anatolia in 1915, the Ottoman crackdown on Armenian rebel leaders and related relocation of Armenian civilians from the eastern war zones in 1915, the Armenian-spearheaded French invasion of southern Anatolia in 1917-19 and Ottoman counter-attack, fighting between Armenian and Muslim villages for domination of the eastern and southern provinces, disease, and starvation.

Furthermore, for the Turks, the Armenian revolt is one of many by Christian nationalist groups seeking to create their own nations from the lands of the Ottoman Empire. While the vast majority of these revolts resulted in territorial gains for the various nationalist groups and the deaths and expulsions of hundred of thousands of Ottoman Muslims and Jews, the Armenian revolt, as devastating as it was to Ottoman national security, is one that failed.

The Armenian Cause

While the mainstream Armenian Assembly of America (AAA) and right-wing Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) serve as umbrella organizations for most Armenian Americans, there are over 450 Armenian American and 54 Turkish American NGOs throughout the United States. It is safe to say that perhaps only half of the Armenian American NGOs are active in any meaningful manner; that's 225 Armenian American NGOS in contrast with 25 Turkish American.

While meager Turkish American NGO assets are dedicated to addressing a wide range of issues, nearly 40 million dollars in Armenian American NGO assets are primarily dedicated to what is referred to in Armenian as *Hai Tahd*, "The Armenian Cause." *Hai Tahd* includes three policy

¹ See generally, Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey, A Disputed Genocide*, (University of Utah Press, 2005), pp.233-240. See also, Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities, The Population Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the of the Empire*, (New York University Press, 1983).

objectives: (1) Recognition that the Armenian deaths constituted genocide; (2) Reparations from Turkey; and, (3) Restitution of the eastern provinces of Turkey to Armenia.²

Political Capital

At a presentation at the Holocaust Museum in 2002, Samantha Powers, author of *A Problem from Hell* and expert on the mass killings in Rwanda, opposed the idea of a court determination of whether the Armenian case constitutes genocide. She stated that it would be a “waste of political capital” for the Armenians, given that the legislative and public relations approach heretofore employed by the Armenian American lobby promised to be a more successful route toward a moral conviction, albeit not a legal determination, against Turkey and the people of Turkey.

At the National Press Club on June 10, 2005, asked whether Armenia might take to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) the issue of whether the events of 1915 constitute genocide, Armenian Foreign Minister Vardan Oskanian and graduate of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy responded to me that Armenia preferred a political approach.

This was a bit difficult to hear from legal and diplomatic scholars as Powers and Oskanian, given that under the UN Convention, genocide is a crime that can only be determined by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague or domestic courts of member states that have laws against genocide. Nevertheless, Powers’ and Oskanian’s positions provided insight into the political expediency that may underlie the many resolutions and proclamations concerning the Armenian case.

The Armenian American lobby decided long ago to invest its financial and human resources in achieving *Hai Tahd* in the political arena, where it was vastly more powerful than the Turkish American community. According to ANCA, of the 50 states, 38 have passed or issued over 110 resolutions and proclamations, respectively, declaring that the Ottoman Armenian case constitutes genocide. The first state measure was a New Jersey resolution on April 1, 1975, and the most recent was Kansas Governor, Kathleen Sebelius’ proclamation of April 28, 2005. The Armenian American lobby in California and Rhode Island have demonstrated the greatest discipline, producing a resolution or proclamation every year since 1987 and 1990, respectively. Four states with significant Armenian American populations—California, Rhode Island, New York, and Michigan—account for 70% of the state measures, while metropolitan north eastern and south western U.S. regions with large Armenian and Greek American populations account for 95% of the measures. Indeed, Greek American politicians lead in the Armenian Cause, as New York Governor, George Pataki holds the record for the most “Armenian Genocide” proclamations. At the federal level, the Armenian American lobby has facilitated the acceptance of six federal measures. None of the federal measures have defined the Armenian case as genocide.

Aram Hamparian, Executive Director of ANCA commended Governor Sebelius on her proclamation and expressed: "We are hopeful that the growing pressure on the White House from

² Simon Payaslian, “After Recognition,” *The Armenian Forum*, Vol. 2, No.3, (Winter 1999), p.49.

state governments and U.S. legislators will impress upon the President that he should not stand in the way of Congressional legislation marking this crime against humanity."³ However, Professor Payaslian questions the yield on Armenian resolutions and proclamations:

The problem most official statements and resolutions regarding the Genocide are familiar. They lack a clear statement of the fact that 'Turkey' committed 'genocide' against the Armenian people; they neglect the issues of retribution, compensation and restitution; and they particularly ignore the fact that as a result of the Genocide, Armenians lost their historic territories. Moreover, they do not constitute a formal recognition of the Genocide.

In response to the politicization of this otherwise legal and historical matter, Turkish Americans, via the ATAA have implemented an education program for legislators that states that: (1) under the separation of powers legislators cannot adjudicate via politically-biased resolutions, (2) under principles of fairness and justice an accused is innocent until proven guilty by a competent court of law, (3) under federalism foreign affairs is a federal executive branch function, and, (4) the prosecution of the crime of genocide under the U.N. Genocide Convention is a federal executive branch matter before the International Court of Justice. Indeed, the ATAA has argued that the most a legislator may legitimately and should resolve to do is encourage honest and complete research into the Ottoman Armenian experience, without passing judgement and by providing equal treatment to matters involving American history as well, e.g., African American slavery, the Japanese American relocation in WWII, and the massacres of Native Americans. In 2001, the ATAA implemented this program of *Education in American civics and American fairness* with respect to an Armenian resolution in the Maryland State Assembly. The results were a more enlightened legislative body and a Maryland-record- number of abstentions.⁴

Capitalizing on the Holocaust

The Armenian American lobby not only portrays the Armenian case in terms identical to the Holocaust, but its individual members seek reparations in the exact legal fashion as Holocaust survivors. In 2000, State Senator Chuck Poochigian sponsored and facilitated the passage of a law (*The Poochigian Law*), which: (1) required insurance companies who did business in the Ottoman Empire to turn over policyholder lists; and, (2) extended statute of limitations ten years from date of enactment. *The Poochigian Law* is a near carbon copy of a similar Holocaust reparations law.

³ Yerkir Armenian Online Newspaper, www.yerkir.am

⁴ House Joint Resolution 3, April 9, 2001. HJ3, which required a minimum of 71 votes in the House, passed 79-11, with 50 legislators abstaining. The Greek American hand was strong in securing the support of the African American Caucus with promises of a Maryland State apology for slavery; such an apology has not been issued to date. Delegates reported that Greek American Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes made personal calls to legislators urging passage of the resolution. Greek American and Baltimore baseball team owner, Peter Angeles, and H&S Bakery chain owner, John Paterakis, were said to help fund the massive assault that was coordinated by one of Maryland's most prestigious and expensive lobby firms, Alexander & Cleaver. Lockheed Martin's primary lobbyists, John Manis, also a Greek American, refused to assist his client in opposing the Armenian resolution, despite the fact that Lockheed-Martin contracts with Turkey employ hundreds of Maryland residents.

In anticipation of the California law, class actions were filed against various insurance companies: *Martin Marootian et al. v. New York Life*; *Ofik Kyurkjian et al. v. AXA*; and, *Vartkes Movsesian v. Victoria Versicherung*. In these cases, Armenian plaintiffs sued to recover the life insurance benefits of their Ottoman ancestors for what the plaintiffs claimed were deaths arising from genocide.⁵ However, in the unrelated case of *AIA v. Garamendi*, the Supreme Court declared the particular Holocaust reparations law on which the Poochigian Law was based unconstitutional, calling into doubt the Poochigian Law itself. Almost immediately, the Armenian plaintiffs settled their claims. Marootian settled for 20 million dollars, with 4 million dollars reportedly going to the lawyers, and 8 million dollars going to Armenian NGOs and churches. Kyurkjian settled for 17.5 million dollars, with 3.15 million dollars reportedly going to the lawyers and 3 million dollars to a French Armenian NGO. *Movsesian* was dismissed for other reasons.

Importantly, in both settlement agreements, the plaintiffs' demands to characterize the cause of the deaths as genocide were rejected by the insurance companies. First, it is not the practice of insurance companies to characterize the cause of death in the payment of claims. Secondly, during each of the settlement proceedings, Turkish Americans educated the insurance companies and their lawyers with respect to the contra-genocide position.⁶ Still, in the AXA case, the parties had finalized a settlement agreement that characterized the deaths as genocide "under French law" and were about to submit the agreement for court approval, when Turkish Americans educated Turkish-based consumer groups with respect to the mischaracterization, who in turn persuaded AXA's Turkish partner, OYAK, a military pension provider, to convey to AXA that the settlement agreement as such was unacceptable. In its final form of December 6, 2005, the settlement agreement did not characterize the cause of the deaths. Furthermore, the agreement conditioned the grant of 3 million dollars to a French Armenian NGO to: (1) the approval of AXA; (2) for the sole purpose of helping the needy and for public education in France; and, (3) the ban against the use of such monies for any political purpose, e.g., resolutions, censorship, and rationalizing Armenian terrorism.

In its public education program, ATAA underscored the fraudulence of portraying the Armenian case in a manner identical to the Holocaust, the collateral damage to the understanding of the Holocaust, and any resolution of the Armenian case in an honest and sustainable manner, as articulated by Princeton University and celebrated Middle East historian Bernard Lewis' statement of April 14, 2002, at the National Press Club:

[T]hat the massacre of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire was the same as what happened to Jews in Nazi Germany is a downright falsehood. What happened to the Armenians was the result of a massive Armenian armed rebellion against the Turks, which began even before war broke out, and continued on a larger scale.

⁵ In a slightly different lawsuit, *Vahe Tachjian v. Deutsche Bank*, the plaintiff sued not just for monies in unclaimed accounts, but for conspiracy and accessory to the alleged crimes of the Ottoman Empire. Among some of the wildest claims submitted to the court, *Tachjian* stated that Deutsche Bank facilitated the slave labor of Ottoman Armenians in the building of the Baghdad Railway.

But to make this a parallel with the holocaust in Germany you would have to assume the Jews of Germany had been engaged in an armed rebellion against the German state, collaborating with the allies against Germany. That in the deportation order the cities of Hamburg and Berlin were exempted, persons in the employment of the state were exempted, and the deportation only applied to the Jews of Germany proper, so that when they got to Poland they were welcomed and sheltered by the Polish Jews. This seems to me a rather absurd parallel.⁷

It is perhaps due to the absolute difference between the Armenian case and the Holocaust, and the gravity and uniqueness of the crime of genocide, that the defendant insurance companies and banks in the aforementioned lawsuits do not address the genocide accusations. They defeat the cases on other issues or honor only settlement agreements that do not define the Armenian case as genocide. The Armenian plaintiffs do not appear to mind.

The Turkish Awakening

On July 10, 1919, Marmaduke Pickthall, a British author, expert on the Middle East, and former Chaplain to the Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, eminent British expert on and later-convert to Islam, and writer for *The New Age*, a British intellectual journal edited by a French Jew, Alfred Richard Orage, commented on the inability of the Ottoman government to make its case at the Paris Peace Conference:

As I have often had occasion to remark in these columns, the Turk never sticks up for himself in the controversy against Europe. He does not know how to do so. With a strong case which any advocate could make convincing, he puts himself in the wrong from a tendency to accept the point of view of his opponents—a tendency which results from a sense of material defeat or helplessness. It is natural for a warlike people to accept the condition of defeat in war, and to think that by accepting that condition they appeal most strongly to the generosity of the conqueror. There is also the feeling that it is a waste of time to seek to demolish prejudices so robust as those which Europe cherishes regarding Turkey, even though those prejudices may be based upon false information. The Turk is thus the worst possible champion of his own cause. Anyone in possession of the facts could state his case much better than he can state it. ... [In Paris,] they have thrown away their own true case, and accepted the mere ‘propaganda’ case of the Allies; instead of taking the offensive in discussion, as they had the right to do, for the treatment Turkey had received from the Allies conducting to the war was downright infamous, they assumed a deprecating, defensive attitude and apologetic tone, and positively asked for what they got - a snub the more offensive for its bland hypocrisy.

Today, the picture is quite different with respect to the Turkish American community, which has become more educated and active. While the Armenian American lobby’s efforts certainly enhanced Turkish American awareness of the Armenian tragedy and the Armenian strategy, an

⁷C-SPAN2, www.bookdstv.org. Full text also viewable at www.ATAA.org.

unexpected result was the increased knowledge of the substantial harms suffered by Turkish Muslims and Jews at the hands of the Armenians in the past as well as today. Accompanying that knowledge, there is tremendous interest and activity not only to learn about the Ottoman Armenian experience, but to insist on a fair treatment of Turkey and people of Turkish origin on the issue of whether the experience constitutes genocide.

Furthermore, Turkish Americans are seeking justice for the harms they suffered from the Armenian Revolt, Armenian terrorism and ethnic violence, and the suppression of freedom of speech by the Armenian American lobby's efforts to censor from public education scholarly information that question the Armenian allegation of genocide.

On April 24, 2005, approximately 1000 Turkish Americans convened at the White House and the Armenian Embassy. First, they thanked President Bush for not defining the Armenian deaths as genocide and demanded that next year his annual proclamation pay respect to the 1.1 million Muslims who died during the same period in the same region. They then marched to the Armenian Embassy, covering four city blocks, to lay a black wreath in memory of the victims of the Armenian Revolt in WWI and Armenian terrorism since the mid 1970s.

The Armenian Revolution

From the predominate Turkish American perspective, the Ottoman Armenian tragedy finds its roots in the Armenian Revolution of 1880-1919, in which Armenian rebels staged massive revolts throughout eastern Anatolia against the Ottoman state and its non-Christian citizens, mostly Kurds, Circassians and Turks.

In 1895, members of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) captured the Ottoman Central Bank in Istanbul. The Central Bank incident caused a riot in which over 900 Armenians and 700 Muslims died in Istanbul. By 1914, ARF had recruited over 100,000 militants. In the spring of 1915, ARF seized the city of Van, massacring tens of thousands of Muslims and Jews, and spearheading a Russian invasion of eastern Ottoman Anatolia. Two years later, ARF spearheaded a French invasion of the Adana region of southern Ottoman Anatolia, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands.

William Langer, Harvard University diplomatic historian and expert on the fall of the Ottoman Empire, wrote that starting in 1880 leaders of the Armenian rebels established their central committee in Trabzon from which:

agents were sent out to organize revolutionary cells in Erzurum, Harput, Izmir, Aleppo, and many other places... visiting the peasants, talking the night through with them, speaking with them of their sufferings unceasingly - impatiently, preaching the gospel of an eye for an eye - a tooth for a tooth, rousing their crushed spirit with high resolves and mighty aspirations.⁸

⁸ William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, Vol. 1, Bureau of International Research, Harvard University and Radcliffe College, (New York & London, Alfred A. Knoph, 1935), pp.145-166.

Langer reported that by 1890,

“Europeans in Turkey agreed that the immediate aim of the agitators was to incite disorder, bring about inhuman reprisals, and so provoke the intervention of the powers.”

Professor Lewis’ April 14, 2002 C-Span statement provided:

Great numbers of Armenians, including members of the armed forces, deserted, crossed the frontier and joined the Russian forces invading Turkey. Armenian rebels actually seized the city of Van and held it for a while intending to hand it over to the invaders. There was guerilla warfare all over Anatolia. And it is what we nowadays call the National Movement of Armenians Against Turkey. The Turks certainly resorted to very ferocious methods in repelling it.

To the extent the Armenian Revolution does not receive proper treatment in the study of the Ottoman Armenian tragedy, great setbacks are rendered to an honest and complete assessment of the Ottoman Empire’s response to the Armenian rebels and the civilians, particularly to the issues of whether such a response constituted genocide or some other crime.

Armenian Terrorism

When Armenian American Bernard Ohanian was Editorial Director of *The National Geographic*, read by over 19 million worldwide, a propaganda piece entitled, “The Rebirth of Armenia” (March 2004) and arranged by a Frank Viviano and Alexandra Avakian, stated “dozens of Turkish diplomats and nationals were murdered, *allegedly* by Armenian terrorists.” However, the national and personal identities of the Armenian terrorists have never been in dispute.

According to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, between 1980-86, Armenian terrorism accounted for the second highest number of terrorist incidents in the United States.⁹ According to the FBI, two Armenian groups were directly responsible for this terrorism: the left-wing “Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia” (ASALA) and the right-wing “Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide” (JCAG). Since 1973, Armenian terrorists have committed 239 acts of terrorism that have killed at least 70 and wounded 524 innocent people, mostly non-Turks. Armenian terrorists have taken 105 hostages, “executing” 12, one of them an American woman. The Armenian terrorist bombing campaign that accounted for at least 160 of the 239 attacks caused the vast majority of the deaths and injuries. In addition, the Armenian terrorist bombing campaign caused 160 incidents of property destruction, totaling several hundred million dollars in property damage in the United States, Europe, Middle East and Australia. Of the 239 terrorist attacks, 71 were conducted by Armenians from North America, and 30 occurred on American soil. Twenty-two terrorists from the Armenian American communities of North America were captured, tried, convicted, and incarcerated.

⁹ FBI Analysis of Terrorist Incidents in the United States in 1986, p.53. U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Investigative Division, Terrorism Section. For further information regarding Armenian terrorism, see [www. EthnicTerror.org](http://www.EthnicTerror.org).

That was just the tip of the iceberg. Unseen actors include movers in the Armenian American community, such as Mourad Topalian, former Chairman of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA). On January 24, 2001, Judge Ann Aldrich, of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio sentenced Mourad Topalian to prison for weapons and explosives crimes the federal authorities linked to Armenian terrorism.¹⁰

Under the leadership of former President Tolga Çubukcu, ATAA submitted a Victim's Impact Statement and appeared at the criminal sentencing hearing of Topalian. Constitutional Law expert, Bruce Fein, spoke on behalf of the ATAA.

Aggrieved ethnic groups worldwide may look at Armenian terrorism as a successful method of forcing attention to their causes. A bad precedent, the Armenian terror campaign nevertheless achieved the initial stage of recognition: rendering WWI history relevant to today. Since the mid 1980s, the baton toward recognition appears to have been handed to the Armenian American lobby. However, neither ANCA nor the Armenian government has condemned Armenian terrorism.

Suppression of Freedom of Speech

An area in which the rights of all Americans are threatened by the powerful Armenian American lobby is freedom of speech, particularly in public education. On March 1, 1999, the Massachusetts State Board of Education issued a teacher's curriculum guide that included sources that questioned the Armenian allegation of genocide. The sources were provided by ATAA's regional component organization, The Turkish American Cultural Society of New England (TACSNE). The State Board of Education's committee of history curriculum experts accepted the sources as educationally relevant to an historical controversy. Unfortunately, bowing to political pressure from the Armenian American lobby, on August 31, 1999, State Senator Steven Tolman, Governor Paul Cellucci, Board of Education Chairman James Peyser, and Commissioner of Education David Driscoll forced the removal of the sources from the curriculum guide. The message was clear: (1) Massachusetts shall support solely the Armenian view of Ottoman WWI history; (2) Massachusetts shall not make available to teachers, thereby students, even educationally valuable sources that challenges the state's position; (3) teachers risk violating state law and their jobs, if they introduce such information to their students; and, (4)

¹⁰ The Federal authorities, led by then-Federal Agent and current ATF Marshall, Pete Elliot, used DNA evidence to link Topalian to weapons and explosives that were in turn linked to four major attacks by the nationalist, JACAG terror organization: (1) October 12, 1980, New York, Car bombing of the Turkish Center, Jewish American B'Nai Brith Center, and African American Center at the U.N Plaza; (2) June 3, 1981, Los Angeles, Bombing of the Orange County Convention Center in Anaheim, site of an Evangelical Convention and Turkish folkdance and music show; (3) November 20, 1981, Los Angeles, Bombing of the Turkish Consulate building in Beverly Hills; and, (4) October 22, 1982, Los Angeles, Attempted bombing of the offices of Philadelphia Honorary Turkish Consul General by four JACAG members recruited from the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF) (a fifth JACAG co-conspirator is arrested at Logan International Airport in Boston the same day). On June 12, 2005, NBC Dateline's segment, "Time Bomb", reported that Topalian acquired and stored weapons and explosives in a public storage facility near a childcare center, public school, gas station, and major highway near Cleveland. The explosives, dating back to the late 1970s, were deteriorating and highly volatile. Agent Elliot expressed that had the arsenal ignited and exploded, it would have killed at least 750 people, mostly children. Dateline reported that Topalian was incriminated with the assistance of his wife, Lucy, and many former Armenian American JACAG operatives who have since become "teachers, doctors and bankers"

future generations of Massachusetts citizens shall know and believe only the state-approved version of Ottoman WWI history. Similar prohibitions exist in France, Switzerland, Armenia and Turkey.

This modern style book-burning by Massachusetts, as well as by most of the states of the United States, which have followed the example of Massachusetts in education, continues today. Under the leadership of President Vural Cengiz, on October 26, 2005, the ATAA decided to be a party to a lawsuit against the Massachusetts Board of Education and Department of Education, *Griswold v. Driscoll, et al.* ATAA joined a student and his parents and two teachers – none of whom were of Turkish origin – to support freedom of speech for all Americans, and perhaps for the community of civilized nations.

Griswold concerns protecting public school access to scholarly sources pertaining to a legitimate historical controversy for educational purposes. It concerns obtaining as well as providing scholarly information that supports the contra-genocide position with respect to the Ottoman Armenian experience.

The importance of the *Griswold* civil rights case can be best understood from the perspectives of its plaintiffs. The primary plaintiff, Theodore Griswold, is a Jewish American student at Lincoln-Sudbury High School. Appearing on behalf of Theodore, his father, Thomas Griswold, believes that his child is denied the opportunity to receive contra-genocide viewpoints (censorship) and is forced to learn and accept the position of the government (state orthodoxy), in contravention of the United States Constitution.

Plaintiff William Schechter is a Jewish American and a teacher at Lincoln-Sudbury High School. Mr. Schechter has been teaching history for 33 years and believes there is a genuine and continuing academic and historical controversy concerning whether the Ottoman Armenian experience constitutes genocide. His approach to teaching historical controversies is to present students with opposing points of view among legitimate historians. Mr. Schechter believes that the Massachusetts Department of Education's decision to exclude the contra-genocide materials from the Curriculum Guide teaches the wrong lesson – that historical right and wrong should be decided by censorship and state orthodoxy rather than by research and reasoned argument. Mr. Schechter also believes that censorship of the contra-genocide materials from the Guide infringes upon the state and federal constitutional rights of teachers and students to inquire, teach, and learn (censorship) and be free from the imposition of the government's point of view (state orthodoxy).

Plaintiff Lawrence Aaronson is a Jewish American and a teacher of social studies, history and civil rights at Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, a public high school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Like Mr. Schechter, Mr. Aaronson believes that censorship of the contra-genocide materials from the Guide infringes upon the state and federal constitutional rights of teachers and students to inquire, teach, and learn (censorship) and be free from the imposition of the government's point of view (state orthodoxy).

Plaintiff ATAA has concerns on several levels: freedom of speech, nation-wide public education, and anti-Turkish racism. ATAA serves as an umbrella organization to 54 local Turkish American

organizations. ATAA is a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to promoting public education and awareness about Turkey and issues that concern Turkish Americans. ATAA's website that provided a bibliography of scholarly sources that were deemed by Massachusetts education experts as educationally suitable to understanding a legitimate historical controversy, was censored by the Board of Education after substantial Armenian American lobby pressure came to bare. ATAA and its members are concerned that students in Massachusetts public schools are being taught only one side of controversial and controverted historical events that span from 1880 to 1919, whereas the legal and historical characterization of the Ottoman Armenian experience is disputed by eminent and respected historians. Furthermore, ATAA is concerned that since the state of Massachusetts serves as major role model to other state boards of education, the censorship that has occurred in Massachusetts, if not corrected, may serve as an example – a wrong example – to other states. Finally, ATAA believes that the disputed Armenian allegation of genocide, supported by the censorship of scholarly defenses, is racist and prejudicial against people of Turkish origin, and stigmatizes Turkish Americans in Massachusetts as well as nationwide.

Conclusion

Whether the Armenian case constitutes genocide or some other crime is a legal question, in which historians play a critical role as expert witnesses. The inquiry requires utmost honesty and discipline in the use of documentary evidence, testimonies, and experts. But before this legal inquiry can be made, the complete historical record must be placed on the table. That requires freedom of speech.

The modern-day Armenian Cause relies heavily on censorship. It is the most sophisticated strategy the Armenian American public advocacy network has employed to promote its version of history as the undisputed truth. If left to take its course, this censorship involves a process by which generations will learn only one part of the facts of the Ottoman Armenian experience and come to accept it as the complete facts and the undisputed truth. It is a process by which history will be revised.

However, Theodore Griswold, his attorney Harvey Silverglate, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) who will be joining the suit on the side of freedom of speech, and the American media which is providing wide coverage of this civil rights law suit, are making more and more Americans ask:

By the censorship of contra-genocide scholarly sources from curriculum guides and school libraries, the re-writing of history textbooks in order to omit the contra-genocide point of view, the imposition of college entrance examination questions to which the correct answers are “Armenian genocide”, the omission from “scholarly” panels scholars who support the contra-genocide point of view, and the inclusion on such panels Turkish nationals who support the Armenian allegation of genocide, and claiming that such panel participants are providing the Turkish perspective, what is the Armenian American lobby afraid of – what is it hiding from – what is it hiding? Can truth they claim not withstand the strongest counter-evidence?

By 1919 when WWI ended, over 60 million people had perished in Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East from conflict, starvation and disease. The fighting was so vicious, the destruction so massive, that WWI was called “the war to end all wars.” The Ottoman Empire had lost more than five million people. The same year, as attorney Harvey Silverglate, wrote in the introduction to the *Griswold* civil complaint, United States Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes declared that the “best test of truth is the ability of thought to prevail in the free marketplace of ideas.”¹¹ Censorship is not a permissible marketing tool.

¹¹ *Abrams v. United States*, 250 U.S. 216 (1919).