

## Armenian Genocide: the Perseverance of Systemic Racism

Ever since the 11th century the independent people of Armenia have been dominated and subjugated to unjustified abuse by their conquerors - the Turkish empire. The Armenians were deemed second class citizens due to their religious beliefs and cultural customs. The Armenian genocide began April 24th 1915, it was the first genocide of the 20th century. The Armenian genocide set the tone for the genocides to come. This "cultural cleansing" resulted in the untimely death of 2 million Armenian citizens at the hands of the Young Turks'. For decades the Turkish government has tried to cover up the atrocious act but over time minute details have slipped out. The Armenian peoples culture and history traces back to Armenia, Turkey for over 3,000 years. Many of the sub governments within the Turkish territory hold biased opinions and maintain racist customs 100 years after massacring 2 million civilians based solely on ethnicity. To this day the Armenian genocide hasn't been officially recognized by the Turkish government. In 2014 the U.S. Senators called for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide - to show honor for those who died and those who still live. The United States hopes to help end the blood feud between the Armenian people and the Turkish government. Racism within the Azerbaijan jurisdiction and other Transcaucasian regions between SW Asia/SE Europe has persisted to this day. In April of 2011 the Turkish government decimated a 100-foot statue that was built in remembrance of the people who died. [1] The Azerbaijan government refuses to allow people of Armenian descent into the country, stopping them at the airport based on their personal identification card and passports. [2] In 2011 the Azerbaijan government lied to the United Nations - claiming there are 30,000 people of Armenian descent within the region when there were only 306. ([Armenia reminds UN about racism in Azerbaijan and Turkey](#)).

In my opinion, the continuous development of sciences based on the preservation of white dominance and resources resulted in the occurrence of the Armenian genocide. By the early 19th century the idea of race/racism seemed like the natural order of the world; race became a science that defined colonized people as inarticulate and nontechnical. Therefore, they are incapable of competing for resources and should be awarded nothing. During this period in time the sciences of social Darwinism were initially taking root, founded on the premise of "survival of the fittest". Herbert Spencer an English philosopher at the time developed his theories on the backbone of social Darwinism, claiming all life forms are in competition for a limited amount of resources - securing said resources is of the utmost importance. As time passed these sciences developed into the idea of Eugenics, it's important to note the relationship between this social philosophy and politics. The global community as a whole feared change. Eugenics is the improvement of human genetics through the systematic elimination of undesired genes, this is accomplished through: forced sterilizations, marriage laws and genocides. Social practices similar to political movements have a tendency to spread like wild fire - Eugenic practices first took root in Great Britain. In no time it had spread to other European empires, traversing the oceans to America and Canada. Many of the empires adopted these practices in order to bolster the genetic stock of it's citizens. The Armenian massacre was designed around radical nationalists' desire to exterminate an entire gene pool in order to create a pure civilization, in essence it was the ethnic

cleansing of an empire.

The global transference of social practices are guided by two common elements: The momentary international culture and political opportunity - in essence the mindset of those in power at the given moment [6]. An example of the transgression of practices is slavery, it began in the 1400's in Portugal as a means to derive free labor. It was later introduced to other colonial powers and by the 1600's it had become a global phenomena. Slavery much like eugenics was created out of belief of necessity. Eugenics was founded on the fear of the unknown, through the scientific study of heredity (genes) the ERO and Eugene fischer concluded that the outcomes of interracial breeding are all negative therefor it must be prevented by any means necessary. Other examples of political/social movements that transcended the natural boundaries of a nation are: colonialism, capitalism and communism. The process by which the practices are implemented may change but the shared ideals remain constant, enabling for them to manifest in different ways. In the United States eugenics was practiced via forced sterilizations and marriage laws, but in Germany and the Ottoman Empire it was practiced through forced sterilizations and genocides. Eugenic based practices developed out of control ultimately resulting in the murder of millions.

Turkish and Armenian relations date back to the 10th century in which the nomadic Turkic tribes from Central Asia invaded the Armenian province of Anatolia, pillaging the city and seizing control. This became the Ottoman Empire, which was ruled by the Turks an Islamic people. Over the duration of a couple of centuries it absorbed the surrounding territories; the Armenians held to their Apostolic-Gregorian roots, which made them second class citizens within the Ottoman Empire. Due to their prestige and unwillingness to conform to Islam, their lives and property were not protected by the government [7]. The original territories of the Armenian people were divided between Russia and the Ottoman Empire - in essence losing all connection to their historical roots, resulting in them being outcasts in their own land. As the Ottoman Empire declined in the 19th century, the Armenian people finally asked the big question: when will they be allowed representation and participation in the government. The Muslim Turks despised the thought of sharing power over their territories; this resulted in the Sultan Abdul Hamid ordering the mass slaughtering of 300,000 Armenians as a means to "dampen their expectations" between 1894-1896 ([Encyclopedia Entries on the Armenian Genocide](#)). Ultimately the Turks' justification for the repetitive disenfranchisement of the Armenians was to dissuade future attempts to politically organize and to send a message that Western pressure held no value. As the empire continued to decline a new political group called the "Young Turks" seized control via revolution in 1908. The Young Turks created The "Committee of Union and Progress" (CUP) which initiated the genocide.

The government in power at the time ultimately had the final say in the decision making process. The Committee of Union and Progress also known as the 'Young Turks' controlled the government from three angles. The three officials responsible for the development of the genocide were: the minister of the interior, Mehmet Talaat; the prime minister; and the minister of war Ahmed Jemal. The CUP relied heavily on convicts and irregular troops, called the "Special Organization" [5] to carry out the deed, outfitting them in secret uniforms. The primary focus of the special

organization was to massacre the Armenians' who had not yet been deported. The CUP relied heavily on the propaganda produced by the media to pronounce their ultranationalistic ideologies - 'Pan-Turanism' which was the creation of a new empire spanning from Anatolia to Central Asia, comprised strictly of Turks ([Encyclopedia Entries on the Armenian Genocide](#)). The extensive propaganda and eugenic based practices of the Ottoman Empire justified the mistreatment of the Armenians'. The process by which these practices were implemented were vastly different than those in other nations. Most simply deported the unwanted races or forcibly sterilized them, the Young Turks were not patient by any means. The Armenians' had been living there for over a thousand years, they were forced to make a difficult decision... abandon their motherland or die at the hands of the invader, those who didn't leave died in the thousands, being butchered in the streets or by malnutrition in the concentration camps ([The Young Turks Crime against Humanity](#)).

Under the guise of ww1 conflicts, the CUP began systematically eradicating Armenians throughout the nation. As the army retreated and advanced in relation to the wartime effort they slaughtered all Armenians in their path. This secret plan was developed by the 'Young Turks' as a means to hide the excessive death as part of the secret genocidal plan ([Encyclopedia Entries on the Armenian Genocide](#)). Following the 'Young Turks' ascension to power; all Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman Empire's army were disarmed and killed in small batches.

Community leaders led to the interior by Turkish soldiers where they were slaughtered in secrecy. The tactical removal of leaders and the able bodied men made for little resistance. The deportation of the Armenians in secret was a means to plunder the Armenian wealth by forcing them from their homes without causing serious damage to the properties, enabling for their immovable objects to be pillaged without anybody noticing. The deportees were forced to walk making them easily spotted by passing militant groups. Women and children were taken from their families and redirected to Turkish homes as slaves, forced to assimilate to their captors language and culture ([Encyclopedia Entries on the Armenian Genocide](#)). The government made no preparations of food or water for the deportees in an attempt to hasten their deaths. The survivors of the death march were collected and put into concentration camps to slowly rot and die. The tactical planning implemented in the Armenian Genocide illustrates the intention of the CUP, transparently showing what they'd been planning from the start. The Armenian genocide claimed 2/3 of the population within the Ottoman Empire, reducing it from 2.5 million to 1 million. Those that survived were exiles, losing their culture and life.

The CUP was far from discrete in their efforts to exterminate the Armenian population. "The Murder of a Race... How Armenians were Exterminated" contains a plethora of first hand accounts of the genocide. Firstly the use of the word exterminated has a very negative connotation; it relates to the extermination of an invasive species such as cane toads, weeds, roaches, insects, etc. Its a fitting title in relation to the abominable events that took place during the Genocide. The source is a newspaper article published based on the first hand testimonies of Armenian refugees and missionaries of Muslim, German, and American descent that were in the region during the time of the genocide. The articles primary target is the world; to shine light on the atrocious events that unfolded from 1914-1920. Through bringing the genocide to the forefront of global conversation it forced the Turkish government to acknowledge its occurrence or dispute it with facts, which are blatantly non-existent. These first hand accounts vividly described the events that unfolded in the beginning of the Armenian Genocide. One of the witnesses told of how there were thousands of mutilated bodies piled high in the fields rotting and emitting a horrid odor. Armenian bodies filled the sides of streets and were squished into regionally located ravines. Most of the piles consisted of thousands of dead bodies ranging up to the tens of thousands. Armenians who had been killed and thrown into the water filled with liquid and rotted, washing up on the surface of the land, making the water toxic and undrinkable. A Muslim missionary told of the heavily guarded camps which were for "future deportation" when in reality they were holding grounds for mutilation and mass murder. The Armenians would be shackled and put into stables covered in flammable liquids, the Turks would then simply set the stable ablaze killing thousands at one time, the survivor of the genocide told of the "Horrific screams" [3]. The thing that I found disturbing is these are holy people (priests/ministers) traveling and living in these horrific conditions in which thousands of people are being slaughtered daily. For the most part the witnesses telling their stories are peoples of different ethnicity, which is why they weren't targeted as a result of the ensuing conflict. The organized bands or "Shotas" would line men, woman, and children alike up and massacre them one by one. Rape and pillaging of land and personal belongings were common occurrences as well.

April 24th, 2015; Armenians throughout the globe converged in commemoration of the fallen and to once again bring to light the atrocities committed by the Turkish empire during World War 1. Peaceful protests were held in New York, London, Beirut, Erevan and Bombay as a showing of their pride and desire for a long over-due justice. Turkish embassies and airports to this day hold biases and prejudices against Armenians, refusing to accept them into their society. There is a small congregation of Armenian settlers in the eastern providence of Turkey today, prior to April 24th, 1915 there were over two million. Following the Armenian genocide no Turkish leaders were tried for their involvement in the slaughtering of millions of innocents. The massacre was centrally administered through a carefully plotted plan yet the Turks refuse to acknowledge that they'd unjustifiably killed woman, children, the elderly and so forth for their own gains (Pan-Turkism).

Although the Turks refuse to state their true motive for the massacre, "Apologists in the Turkish Government" [8] state that many Armenians within the territory hoped for an allied victory which directly went against the Turks seeing as they were allied with Germany. Furthermore, some Armenians fled to Russia to join an Armenian-partisan group to fight the Turks. The Turkish

Government firmly believed that an uprising in Zeutin was planned with the assistance of the Russians. Armenians at the time in Van which is located close to the border of Russia were revolting against the Turks as well. In the Turks minds, these perceived acts of revolution coupled with centuries of dissent constituted a justifiable reason to slaughter 2/3 of a population ([The passion of a broken race who still wait for justice](#)). In my opinion the Turks developed this reasoning following their defeat in World War 1 at the hands of the Russians, the modern Turkish government also collapsed soon after which was a harsh blow to the expansionist ideals of Pan-Turkism. In essence, they'd lost everything and killed millions in the process, so finding an excuse was a necessity. In retrospect who wouldn't revolve? The Turks came and plundered their land and wealth and took their homes, then made them second class citizens. The Turks then slaughtered 300,000 Armenians for simply asking for political powers. Why would the Armenians want the Turks to win the war? Why would they want to remain a member of such a corrupt and evil empire? Revolution was their only option and the result was the death of nearly two million.

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## ILLUSTRATIONS:

Figure 1. Armenian community leaders rounded up and slaughtered, 24th April, 1914.

[http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~kotik22a/classweb/armenian\\_genocide/history.html](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~kotik22a/classweb/armenian_genocide/history.html)

Figure 2. Congregation of Armenian refugees in Syria, 1915. <http://www.fandm.edu/news/latest-news/2015/10/01/from-wwi-to-isis-genocide-casts-a-long-shadow>

Figure 3. Massive march in LA, California for 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, 24th April, 2015. <http://news.trust.org/item/20150424224156-i1jbr/?source=search&view=quickview>

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Key Words: "Armenian" and "Genocide" or "Massacre" / "European" and Eugenic\*

Geographic Focus: Armenia, Turkey

Primary Source Date limiter: 1913-1922 (event took place 1914-1920)

Historical Question(s): How did the Armenian Genocide come about? What role did the international spread of Eugenic practices play in the development of strife prior to the Armenian Genocide?