

## **Honorable Mention – High School Category**

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### Genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries

Armenian, Russian, and Sudanese genocides, what do they have in common? These three genocides are all very different and have nothing to do with each other, but they have something to do with me. I am personally affected by the Armenian genocide of 1915, Stalin's genocide in the Soviet Union, and am affected by the horrors of the Darfur genocide, as the world has turned its back on humanity.

The Armenian genocide, led by the Ottoman Turks, took place in Turkey. Starting in the 1890s, the Ottoman Turks started massacres of Armenians in different villages, culminating in Talat Pasha's final solution in 1915. The Armenian genocide officially began, under the reign of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Turks killed more than one and a half million Armenians between 1915 and 1922. Stalin's genocide occurred between 1929 and 1953 and took place in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin killed about 40 million innocent civilians, not counting 20 million who were in World War II. The Darfur genocide started in 2003 and continues today in Sudan. The Sudanese government, led by Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's president, has killed 400,000 and displaced over 2,500,000 people. All three have been masked by the illusion of war and nationalism.

As the great-granddaughter of a survivor of the Armenian genocide, it has affected me because the Turks killed most of my father's extended family on his mother's side who had lived and prospered in Erzurum. Only my great-grandmother Manoushag Mangassarian and her young daughter Pearl survived. They immigrated to the United States and years later, I was born in Michigan.

The Stalin genocide affected me because my grandfather, Dr. Hamazasp B. Darian, was born in Armavir, Russia. He was born during the reign of Stalin in the Soviet Union. There were also other Armenians living in Russia. When Stalin came to power, he carried out racial cleansing (genocide) and killed Armenians, among many other ethnic groups. It was after two of my grandfather's uncles were sent to Siberia to never be

heard from again, that his family fled to Iran for safety. Much of the Iranian-Armenian community was made up from refugees from Stalin's reign of terror. If Stalin hadn't terrorized the Soviet Union, I would probably be living in Russia, instead of the United States.

The Darfur genocide affects me because it is a genocide that is happening in my lifetime. My family has dealt with two horrific genocides, and now I am watching a third one take place. When the Armenians needed aid during their genocide, they got some help (not enough), so now it is my turn to help the Darfur civilians, so they don't perish as the Armenians did.

There were many different precipitating events for all three genocides. The Ottoman government, headed by the three Pashas, Enver, Talat, and Senal Pasha, took our land away from us, made Armenians pay higher taxes, and Armenians were considered second-class citizens. Nationalist Turks wanted an empire spreading all the way from Turkey to Central Asia. The Turks decided World War I would be a perfect time to "resolve the Armenian question" and annihilate the Armenian race and claim it was a result of the war.

The events that precipitated the Stalin genocide began with Joseph Stalin's thirst for power. He succeeded in his goal to become the leader of the Communist party because he killed his opposition. He was paranoid and killed anybody who was a risk to his success. Since Stalin grew up poor, he was an anti-elitist. He was also racist and hated all cultures but his own: Georgian; he carried out racial cleansing.

The events that precipitated the genocide of Darfur were a combination of decades of drought and overpopulation. The event that mainly started the genocide was the rebellion in 2003. Two Sudanese rebel groups rebelled against the Sudanese government. They accused the government of favoring Arabs over non-Arabs. In response to the rebellions, the Sudanese government started murdering and displacing innocent civilians. In addition, President al-Bashir has masterminded to destroy three tribes because of their ethnicity.

These three genocides are similar because their governments murdered their own people. Each chose a scapegoat and attempted to destroy them. All three genocides involved marches through geographically undesirable areas, such as deserts or Siberia, as well as torture, destruction of property, and rape. The similarities between the Darfur

genocide and the Armenian genocide are that the Sudanese and Ottoman governments both changed evidence of massacres. The Sudanese government tried to tamper with the evidence of mass graves, while the Ottoman Empire hid all the documented proof and blamed the genocide on Armenians. In Turkey, there is a plaque that says the Armenians committed a genocide against the Turks. The Sudanese government killed any witnesses and so did the Ottoman Empire. The Stalin and Armenian genocides were similar because none of the Soviet mass murderers were ever brought to justice and neither were the Ottoman Turks. Stalin and Talat Pasha both believed that other people's lives had little value. Pasha even stated, "Kill every Armenian woman, child, and man without concern for anything."

Genocide demonstrates man's inhumanity to man in its most horrific form. We must learn from the mistakes of past governments, learn to identify precipitating factors, aid those who are presently suffering, and prevent future genocides.

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