

2nd Place – High School Category

**Katie Markham, 12th Grade
Huron Valley Lutheran High School**

Let's play a game, I say two words and you tell me what makes them opposites and what they have in common. Apple and orange. Black and white. Cat and dog. I am guessing you could easily think of things the pairs had in common and things they did not. What if I said Africa and Armenia? You could probably think of numerous things that made them opposites, but what could two totally different countries have in common? The truth is that they do not have much in common, what is comparable is genocide.

If you talk to someone about, or mention genocide the first thing they may think of is the Nazi holocaust of the Jews that took place during World War II. What most people do not realize is that the genocide of the Jews was not the first, or last, act of genocide to take place in the world. I mentioned before that genocide was the one commonality between Africa and Armenia. I am speaking of the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994 and the Armenian genocide that took place in 1915.

In 1994 the genocide of the Tutsi people swept Rwanda, killing everyone from babies to elderly people. And most of the world stood by and watched, or denied it happening, even though they saw it happening right in front of them.

The genocide took place between the Hutu and the Tutsi people of Rwanda. Rwanda was a colony of Belgium, and the Belgians favored the Tutsi over the Hutu, they viewed them as more like them, wealthier, and better mannered. Hutus were traditionally crop-growers, so the Belgians viewed them as a lower person.

This divide between them started tension and soon a bloody civil war broke out, and the genocide of the Tutsi people began.

The same thing happened to the Armenian people when they were invaded by

the Young Turk party also known as the Committee for Union and Progress. From 1915 to 1918, over one and a half million Armenians were murdered or deported, losing their lives.

The start of the Armenian genocide is observed on April 24, 1915, because on this day over 5000 Armenians were killed in the streets. Innocent people, professionals, leaders, all of them slaughtered . To carry out this heinous crime the Turks created a special organization to carry out their plans, they called them Teshkilati Mahsusa. The Teshkilati Mahsusa was composed of violent criminals released from jail, ordered to kill without mercy.

To this day the Turkish government denies that this tragedy happened, they claim that they were only relocating people out of the war zone. This does not make sense though considering that the genocide happened all over Anatolia, outside of this war zone they speak of. More proof that it was carried out by the Young Turk party is that it was systemically done.

The Young Turk party disarmed the Armenian armies leaving them defenseless. Next they gathered their political leaders, and assassinated them on April 24, 1915. They also slaughtered 5000 innocent Armenians in the street, the rest of the Armenians were forced to march. On these marches they were denied food and water, or they were killed by the guards.

This does not sound like a "relocating", this is a "deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political, or cultural group" this is genocide.

I believe the world has not addressed genocide since the holocaust and even then many people are not familiar with it or understand how much damage can come from it. Even though it was obvious that it was taking place and other countries did try to help the Armenians, the Turkish government is still trying to deny it happened. People

need to be educated to about it so that we do not forget, if we forget history is bound to repeat itself. Just as Hitler said before he invaded Poland.

Accordingly, I have placed my death-head formation in readiness—for the present only in the East—with orders to them to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women, and children of Polish derivation and language.

Only thus shall we gain the living space which we need. **Who, after all, speaks to-day of the annihilation of the Armenians?" - Adolf Hitler**

This is proof that we as people will only continue to repeat history if we do not educate ourselves and learn from the past. We will be caught in a never ending destructive loop that can only be broken by the truth. Even if governments did not step in to stop these events, or if some would like to deny it happening, this is our responsibility now, to never forget and to learn from both of these tragic events.

Bibliography

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