100

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Category: Opinions

By Vicken Gulvartian, Los Angeles, 5 December 2009Who is Armenian? What makes an Armenian? Is there such an individual as a 100% Armenian?

On this topic there are no absolute answers, although it is generally accepted that Armenians who speak the language have "made the grade". But that can be misleading since as absence of knowledge can cancel the value of linguistic proficiency. This column is about the knowledge factor of being Armenian.

I believe that in a nation few in numbers, anybody who chooses to be considered (or claims to be) Armenian should be given the title. But that's easier said than done. After all, we own an elaborate, 4,500-year-old culture with a unique language, and a very special brand of Christianity. There's more to our identity than DNA or just being born into it.

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Some years ago, I had the privilege to head a task force of parents and educators at my children's school in Los Angeles, to prepare a list of "things" we believed each student graduating from an Armenian school should know in terms of Armenian literacy. It was our attempt--as parents, devotees of Armenian schools, and as educated Armenians--to define the parameters of our identity beyond language, religion, and a willingness to belong.
I will list the 100 points of interest without elaboration. As far as I'm concerned, mastery of a reasonable number of topics is good enough to get the "pass" mark. Our doors must remain open to all individuals who wish to be identified as hye, provided they know why!

Here's the list. It is not compliled by priority or importance.

1- Your family name & family tree
2- William Saroyan
3- The Tricolor (*yerakooyn*)
4- Mt. Ararat & the city of Ani--as spiritual homeland
5- Yerevan

6- Lake Sevan
7- Battle of Avarayr & Vartan Mamigonian--451 AD
8- Cilicia--sovereignty & the Crusades
9- The Ottoman Empire
10- The Young Turks
11- Christianity & St. Gregory the Illuminator-301 AD
12- The First Republic 1918-1921
13- Soviet Armenia 1921-1991
14- Independence & the Third Republic 1991--present
15- Battle of Sardarabad (1918)
16- Mustafa Kemal
17- Pan-Touranism
18- Treaty of Sevres & Wilsonian Armenia (1920)
19- Repatriation--from the *spiurk* to Armenia (1946-1948)
20- Earthquake (1988)
21- The Karabagh Conflict
22- *Khatchkar*
23- Sasoontzi Tavit--mythology
24- Haig *Nahabed*--patriarch
25- The *Aypupen* & Mesrob Mashdotz--406 AD
26- *Zoravar* Antranig & the Armenian liberation movement
27- Tigran the Great--conquest & expansion (*Dzove Dzov Hayastan*)
28- Gomidas
29- Khrimian *Hayrig*
30- Governor George Deukmejian of California
31- Monte Melkonian--from Visalia to *Yeraplur*
32- Architecture--important features
33- *Etchmiadzin*
34- The *Badarak* & church etiquette
35- Nareg--Armenia's own holy scripture
36- The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem
37- Antelias & the Catholicosate of Cilicia
38- Genocide & dispersion
39- Armenian land claims
40- The survivor generation & Antranig Zaroukian
41- Armenians in Istanbul--past & present
42- *Hye Tahd*--Genocide documentation, education, recognition & reparations
43- PACs--The Armenian Assembly & the ANC
44- Prof. Vahakn Dadrian & Genocide historiography

45- Prof. Richard Hovannisian of UCLA (& the Oral History Project)
46- The *Madenataran*
47- US-Armenia ties
48- Iran today
49- The "*Trkeren khosoghin hayeren badaskhane*" campaign
50- Turkey today
51- Russia-Armenia relations
52- Georgia today
53- The Kurds-- friend or foe?
54- ASALA
55- Turkey & the European Union
56- Azerbaijan today
57- The Armenian Diaspora
58- Armenian in the US--Worcester, Fresno, & elsewhere
59- Political parties--SDHP, ARF, ADL
60- Armenian studies in American Universities-– UCLA, U. Michigan, Harvard U. etc.
61- Armenians living on historic lands today--the Hemshins
62- The AGBU and Alex Manoogian
63- Armenian newspapers
64- Cities of ancestral origin--Van, Zeitoun, Kharpert, Hajin, Aintab, Urfa, etc.
65- Armenian culinary specialties
66- Sayat Nova--*koosans & ashooghs*
67- Movses Khorenatzi
68- English language writers--Levon Surmelian, Michael Arlen, David Kherdian, et al
69- Dzizernagapert
70- Why Turkey denies the Genocide?
71- Glendale
72- Treatment of Armenians by the American media
73- Assassination of Vazgen Sargsyan and Garen Demirchyan in Armenia's parliament (1999)
74- Attempts to pass Genocide resolutions in the US Congress
75- Armenian internet websites
76- Assimilation v. Integration
77- *Madagh*
78- The Mekhitarists--Venice & Vienna
79- The pomegranate as national symbol
80- Armenians in the Olympic Games
81- Your local congressman
82- Project Save--photographs of ancestors
83- Traditional holidays--*Paregentan, Vartavar*, etc.

84- The Duduk
85- Persian Empire & the Armenians of New Julfa
86- Countries that have recognized the Genocide
87- Armenians in the Arab world--Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, etc.
88- The Armenia Fund
89- Armenian Schools
90- Arshille Gorky
91- Armenia's economy
92- Aram Khatchaturian
93- Armenian Christmas
94- Hagop Baronian
95- The Golden Age of Armenian culture (vosketar)
96- Contemporary pop culture--concerts, TV, theatre, etc.
97- NAASR & the Society for Armenian Studies
98- Dialects--*Arevmeda/Arevela hayeren*
99- Collectibles--books, stamps, coins, newspapers, craft
100-Typical Armenian traits--the good, the bad, the ugly.

Clearly much has happened since the "List of 100" was compiled in 2000. I can think of many other topics that have emerged since that are equally essential for an up-to-dated study of the Armenian experience. While the core of the list may stay the same, some topics may be removed and others added, thus accommodating the necessity to include the most relevant information for a satisfactory attainment of "the big prize" i.e. Armenianess.
Here are seven more:

Meg: **Petro-politics**. Oil from Central Asia will pass in the vicinity of Armenia (and Turkey) via the Nabucco pipeline on its way to where it's coveted most--Europe and the US. There's no limit to the insatiable thirst for the black brew, and it has a bearing on all the countries in its path.

Yergoo: **Peter Balakian**--is the preeminent American-born scholar to take on the topic of the Armenian Genocide. His work "The Burning Tigris" (2003) is a masterpiece as a study of the Genocide from the American perspective. A must read. He has lately published another marvel entitled "Armenian Golgotha", another must read.

Yerek: The assassination of journalist-intellectual **Hrant Dink** in Istanbul (2007) has shifted the Genocide recognition debate from "might makes right" to an issue of human rights.

Chorss: **Robert Fisk**--if you wish to know what odars think about us read Robert Fisk's columns in the "The Independent". He writes regularly, eloquently, and freely in defense of the Armenian cause.

Hink: The 10/10 **Protocols** (2009) may yet change the course of Armenia. But it has already changed

the dynamics of the Armenia-Diaspora relations (maybe forever). The government in Yerevan has unwisely chosen the politics of exclusion, playing a very risky game of "we know what we're doing" with the Turks without the most reliable ally by its side--the millions of Armenians who live outside Armenia's borders, while keeping their ties alive.

Vetz: **Corruption in Armenia**. The small nation of Armenia will suffer, lose population, and its viability as a relevant nation as long as its leaders lie, cheat, bully, harass, intimidate, and steal at the expense of the people they are supposed to inspire, lead and protect.

Yot: **Article 301** of the Turkish Penal Code (adopted in 2005. Yes! In modern times) is proof that Turkey is not free or democratic, and is in fact devoid of the basics of a civil society and cannot be trusted.

The next item on the list is . . . the one you had on your mind. If you insist that's the one to add to the list, go ahead and do it! Thank you for your consideration.