



By **Peter Musurlian**, The California Courier, 4 December 2014

Now that I have read Meline Toumani's superficial, quasi coming-of-age, touchy-feely, self-indulgent mess of a book, "There Was and There Was Not," I am even more stunned at her abject dismissal of attempts by the worldwide Armenian community to continue to secure genocide recognition by governmental bodies, genocide scholars, and increasingly Turks.

The genocide was kind of a big deal. And, it continues to be aggressively and unconscionably denied to this day by those who inherited that criminal history.

Toumani says she has had enough of the "all-consuming campaign." She is ready to move on and screw you if that is all you seem to care about.

By **Peter Musurlian**, The California Courier, 4 December 2014

Now that I have read Meline Toumani's superficial, quasi coming-of-age, touchy-feely, self-indulgent mess of a book, "There Was and There Was Not," I am even more stunned at her abject dismissal of attempts by the worldwide Armenian community to continue to secure genocide recognition by governmental bodies, genocide scholars, and increasingly Turks.

The genocide was kind of a big deal. And, it continues to be aggressively and unconscionably denied to this day by those who inherited that criminal history.

Toumani says she has had enough of the "all-consuming campaign." She is ready to move on and screw you if that is all you seem to care about.

Of course, that is not all Armenians care about. It is at the top of the list, but has Toumani not seen the incredible diversity of cultural and social and political interests and expressions in the Armenian- American community? Her view of the Armenian community is myopic.

Before reading the book, I was very interested in hearing her speak at Glendale's Abril Bookstore in late November 2014.

Kudos to Abril for expanding its great tradition of hosting authors and speakers.

This particular author is well educated and did something quite impressive: she lived in Turkey for a couple of years and talked extensively with Turks and Kurds in an attempt at some solid journalism and reportage.

The result, though, is a brutal and insensitive rejection of what Armenians experienced 100 years ago, and what the children and grandchildren of those victims have fought for: something resembling justice.

Those of us alive today, under the age of 55, are not genocide victims, no matter what

psychobabble you want to latch onto. Those alive and dead, from the late 1800s to 1923, are the victims.

And Toumani is certainly not a victim. She has had the privilege of a comfortable upbringing with two parents, and an enviable American education.

Why does she whine about her life seemingly surrounded by people who are obsessed with the genocide and how those people "hate Turks" and "demonize Turks." That is much of the thesis of her book. It is a poor premise and a false foundation upon which she builds a fractured infrastructure of her "personal journey."

At Abril bookstore, Toumani's behavior was pathetic. She articulately and engagingly read the introduction to her book, which, on the face of it, was well written. Ultimately, I discovered that it was not well-reported or well-thought-out. Her logic and lucidness would be right at home in a Louisiana swamp.

When she was ever-so-softly challenged about her premise or what exactly she could offer as far as solutions -- instead of just unsupportable criticisms -- she became defensive and rude, a quality of an overly-sensitive person who cannot explain away intellectual sloppiness and/or dishonesty.

When queried by Asbarez columnist Garen Yegparian, who was uncharacteristically mild mannered in his questioning, she said immediately, in full snark mode, that she was familiar with his work and knows they agree on very little. That is a pretty bold, in-your-face comment by someone claiming not to be tearing down the Armenian American community.

She actually snapped at Dr. Levon Marashlian, as he politely asked a question, looking for the most very basic clarification. Dr. Marashlian has a UCLA Ph.D., in Armenian Studies, has taught at Glendale College for more than three decades, and is a Vietnam combat veteran. He deserves respect.

Her childish outburst at him is a telling personality trait and an indication she is mentally out-of-her-league or academically suspect or outright dishonest or doing the bidding for someone other than herself or all of the above.

I do not know, since I am neither a psychiatrist nor an FBI profiler. She had read in the intro, "...and most importantly, how to remember a genocide without perpetuating the kind of hatred that gave rise to it in the first place."

Dr. Marashlian wanted to know what that meant. What hatred?

The supposed hatred Armenians have toward Turks? Or, the hatred Armenians create in today's Turks by fighting for genocide recognition? Whatever she meant, he gently suggested, it was potentially wrong and alarming.

She interrupted him and said, "I'm in charge here." I would have actually like such bravado, if she then answered Dr. Marashlian's question forcefully and convincingly, but she did not. Instead

She offered-up some insecure ramblings and ambiguity, something like "my book is nuanced."

Oh really? If only Dr. Marashlian could someday grasp your "nuanced" sophistication.

I welcome a contrary examination of the Armenian community.

Everyone and every organization with an opinion in the Armenian Community is not always correct.

I welcome a good debate where people defend their positions.

People should be called-out to defend their opinions.

I love a good fight between sharp minds.

So, she thinks there is an epidemic of hatred toward Turks here in America. Really? Prove it, otherwise she is just perpetuating the stereotype of an ignorant, immature, and angry 16-year-old Armenian boy. That is not the demographic of the Armenian community.

Not too insightful. It is a crass caricature.

She suggests that Turks and Armenians are "equally fanatical."

She asks whether the objective of genocide recognition by Armenians is worth its emotional and intellectual price. Good question, if you work for the Turkish government.

She wonders why Turkey just can't admit it? Well, we have known the answer to that question for a very long time. Why is she asking that question as if she has some insight to offer?

The Turks do not want to pay for the crime with reparations and restitution, while also admitting their forefathers are murderers and thieves! That's why. Toumani can now stop pondering an already-answered question. She might serve the community well, fighting for justice. And, if the fight for genocide recognition has grown tiresome for her, she can perhaps write a book about the health benefits of kale.

Toumani focused on herself and her psychological musings. I am not interested in her feelings and her soul-searching, when they lead to her rejection of a large majority of good-hearted and well-intentioned Armenian-Americans.

If she wants to find herself or the meaning of life, she can do it in a graduate-school-seminar bull session or in group therapy. To attack the Armenian community in its backyard -- and do it so poorly-- is a disgrace.

She is a victim of nothing, except her own First-World self-absorption.

Emmy-award winner Peter Musurlian, has been nominated for seven Los Angeles Area (News) Emmys and is currently completing two documentaries: "Historic Armenia" and "The 100-Year-Old Survivor," about the political efforts of a now-deceased survivor, and many Armenian-American activists, seeking genocide recognition.

Click on [Kojo Nnamdi Show](#) to listen to Meline Toumani

