

2003

2004



ANNUAL REPORT

ARMENIAN YOUTH FEDERATION

ARF YOUTH ORGANIZATION OF THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

MISSION STATEMENT



The Armenian Youth Federation - ARF Youth Organization of the Western United States was founded in order to assist in achieving the following goals:

A free, independent and united Armenia.

Armenia must be a democratic and socialist independent republic.

The boundaries of united Armenia must incorporate the territories awarded to Armenia by the Treaty of Sevres as well as the regions of Nakhichevan, Akhalkalak, and Artsakh.

The Armenian people, including its dispersed masses, must assemble on the territory of independent Armenia.

The still unpunished crime of the Genocide against the Armenian people must be condemned and redressed by the return of the occupied territories and by the just reparation for losses to the Armenian people.

The basic laws of the Republic of Armenia shall be decided by the constitutional assembly of Armenia elected on the basis of universal, equal, direct, secret and proportional representation.

These primary goals shall be served by accomplishing the other goals of the Armenian Youth Federation, as below:

To guide in the moral, social and intellectual advancement of Armenian youth in order to gain a better understanding of themselves and to prevent assimilation of Armenian youth by stimulating interest in and promoting political, cultural, educational, athletic and social activities within the Armenian community.

POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Protest Against Shimon Peres

Approximately 20 AYF members, ANC activists and supporters gathered in front of the Pasadena Civic Auditorium to protest a speaking engagement by former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, a denier of the Armenian Genocide. The activists responded to an ANCA-WR Action Alert that encouraged community members to protest his visit to Southern California. Nobel Laureate Prize winner Peres was the keynote speaker at the Distinguished Speaker Series of Southern California.

As the audience of almost 3,000 made their way into the auditorium, they were greeted with flyers handed out by the demonstrators. The flyers laid out quotes and examples of Shimon Peres's disregard for the historical record of the Armenian Genocide and his denialist statements made to the Turkish press.

While serving as Israel's Foreign Minister, Peres told the Turkish press that he does not believe the events of 1915 could be categorized as genocide or that there is any comparison between the Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust. Despite Israel's close ties to the Republic of Turkey, Peres's statements on the Armenian Genocide have spurred international outrage including criticism from Genocide and Holocaust scholars in Israel.

City of Glendale

The AYF participated in the City of Glendale Genocide Commemoration Youth Committee, which organized a blood drive, art exhibit, and an April 24 commemorative program and vigil.

System of a Down Souls 2004

With the help of the ANCA Washington Office the AYF obtained an AYF booth at the System of a Down Souls 2004 concert on April 24. The booth served largely as a means to get the youth involved in Armenian issues.

April 24th Posters

This year the AYF took on the responsibility of producing the "This Establishment is Closed" posters, 3000 of which were distributed to local Armenian businesses through public service announcements in three Armenian newspapers and Horizon 24 Hour Armenian Television.

April 24 Programming

The AYF sponsored one hour of Horizon 24 Hour Armenian Television April 24 programming through donations received from members.

Rally Against Genocide Denial

On the eve of April 24, the AYF along with the ARF Shant Student Association and the ANC Professional Network organized the "Rally Against Denial" at the Homenetmen Glendale Chapter hall. With an audience of over 1000, Keynote Speaker David Barsamian, National Assembly of Armenia member and ARF Faction leader Levon Mkrtychyan, community singers, and video presentations reaffirmed that the youth of today continues to be serious and determined in their quest for justice.

Protest at Turkish Consulate

On Saturday, April 24, the AYF held a protest at the Turkish Consulate in Los Angeles with close to 5000 participants. More than 80% of the protesters were young Armenians, making the protest at the Turkish Consulate the largest Armenian Genocide Recognition assembly comprised of Armenian-American youth in the United States. The protest attracted favorable media coverage from all major television and print news outlets.



Scene from the protest at the Turkish Consulate in Los Angeles

Armenian Genocide 90th Anniversary

Right after the April 24 Protest the AYF began discussing the 90th Anniversary of the Genocide. It was decided that the AYF must play a vital role in making political progress in the efforts of Genocide recognition. Given the fact that the accomplishment of such a goal takes a lot of planning and work, a Genocide 90th Anniversary committee was brought to life to create and implement large scale Genocide awareness and recognition campaigns.

Helping the ANCA

Throughout the course of the fiscal year the AYF made itself available to the ANCA to help with its needs in furthering the goals of the Armenian lobby in Congress. The AYF assisted the ANCA in petition drives, postcard campaigns, phone banking, action alerts and voter registration efforts.

EDUCATION

Member Education

All members of the AYF have an opportunity to participate in the Annual Educational Seminar, educational lectures, and educational discussions. Throughout the course of the 2003-2004 fiscal year AYF members received educationals about the role of the AYF in the political and social climate today, current developments in Armenia and Artsakh, the strategies and tactics of the ARF Bureau, grassroots political activism, the Armenian Genocide and the political changes accompanied by its 90th anniversary, and an analysis of the capitalist and socialist economic policies.



Group of AYF members during the Annual Educational Seminar

Nanor Krikorian Scholarship

The AYF continued offering its Nanor Krikorian Scholarship, established during the 2002-2003 fiscal year, to graduating high school seniors. From over 30 applications, seven graduating high school seniors were chosen to receive grants totaling \$3500. During its two years of existence the Nanor Krikorian Scholarship has awarded 16 exemplary graduating high school seniors with over \$6500 towards their college education.

Youth Corps Sponsorship Program

This year, the AYF created the Youth Corps Sponsorship Program. Also targeted to graduating high school seniors, the YCSP is aimed at providing one graduating high school senior with all expenses paid participation in the AYF Youth Corps program.

Sons of Armenia

This year the AYF also created www.SonsofArmenia.org, an educational initiative directed at educating the public about the liberation struggle of Artsakh and the heroes that were born from that struggle.

Annual Educational Seminar

Every winter the AYF holds its Annual Educational Seminar at AYF Camp, where members from all chapters have the opportunity to come together in a fraternal and social atmosphere to learn more about our history, our political struggles, and current events concerning the Armenian Cause.

This year the Annual Educational Seminar, held on the weekend of March 19, attracted over 100 AYF members. The director of the seminar was Karnig Sarkissian. Alongside three in-depth educational lectures about grassroots political activism in the American political system, an overview of the ARF 29th World Congress, and a discussion about the application of revolutionary ideology among the youth today; the members had ample time to socialize, meet new members, share and discuss organizational issues and keep the tradition of singing patriotic and revolutionary songs.

Education for Novices

Over the past several years the AYF has been faced with the challenge of providing its novices with a uniform educational curriculum. This year the Novice Educational Handbook was created, and will serve as the uniform educational program for all novices. The handbook consists of 17 educational topics spanning over 48 pages and covering early Armenian history to the post-soviet Armenia.

Armenian Literary Project

In an effort to translate important Armenian literature so they may be more attainable both to AYF members and the youth in general, the AYF created the ALP. The current project of the ALP is the translation of a publication produced in Armenia by the ARF. The publication, a booklet, provides answers to common questions about ARF ideology, platforms, worldview, and activities. This booklet is an excellent text for those who wish to learn more about the ARF, as well as a great educational tool for AYF members. While each section of the booklet is being translated, it is being published in *Haytoug*. Once finished, the translations will be printed and available to the public.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Office

The AYF Garo Madenlian Public Affairs Office is located at the AYF Central Executive Office in Glendale and is named after long-time AYF member Garo Madenlian whose life was cut short abruptly in 1999. The office is the administrative location at which the editing, layout, and art work is done for the central council that publishes *Haytoug*. The office is also the location at which the AYF Public Relations Central Council conducts its operations, including the creation of public service announcements, organizational websites, and promotional material for community events.



AYF's Second Annual Little Armenia Cleanup

Youth Guidance

As members of a society undergoing constant change and evolution, the Armenian youth are at risk to drinking and driving, violence, and drugs. The involvement of Armenian youth in such problematic realities effect not only the involved youth, but the Armenian community as a whole. To counteract the reality of drugs, violence, and alcohol among our youth, the PRCC created the Youth Guidance Program. Through the program the PRCC has already created two public service announcements which continue to air on Horizon 24-Hour Armenian Television. The announcements are geared towards the parents of Armenian youth, encouraging them to speak to their children about drugs and violence. As only a few months have passed since the creation of the program, the PRCC is continuously researching new ways to reach out to the youth of our community.

Little Armenia Beautification Program

In an effort to understand the community's feedback about the Little Armenia Cleanup held at the end of the last fiscal year and the "Welcome to Little Armenia" light-post banners, the AYF conducted a poll of 25 Little Armenia businesses. All but one business were satisfied with AYF efforts in Little Armenia and wanted to see more AYF involvement in the community. Given the results of the poll the PRCC decided to create the Little Armenia Beautification Program. The program includes AYF's participation in LA City Council's efforts of removing graffiti, cleaning litter from streets, continuously adding "Welcome to Little Armenia" light-post banners, and participating in LA City Council's Little Armenia and Thai Town Improvement Committee.

Video/Photo

Throughout the course of the fiscal year the AYF organized dozens of events, projects, and programs. All such venues created by the AYF were videotaped and photographed. All footage and photos were used for the purpose of creating publicity materials and archived for future use, such as the creation of AYF yearbooks.

Media Relations

Throughout the fiscal year the AYF maintained strong communication and relations with Armenian print and broadcast media outlets. By writing and distributing press releases and media kits to the media, the AYF received favorable media coverage with appearances of many AYF news stories in Armenian newspapers and television programs. On occasions of major events such as the April 24th protest, interviews with AYF representatives aired on several Armenian television programs.

Websites

In an effort to supply the ever-increasing demand of web-based information gathering and dissemination, this year the PR Central Council created new websites for AYF Summer Camp (AYFCamp.org), AYF Youth Corps (AYFYouthCorps.org), Haytoug (Haytoug.org), and launched the educational initiative of SonsofArmenia.org (explained in the "Education" section). The PRCC also revamped the main AYF Website. The websites serve as the portal through which all interested individuals access detailed and interactive information about AYF programs, projects, and news.

SOCIAL & FUNDRAISING

71st Anniversary Dinner Dance

It has become somewhat of a tradition for the AYF to celebrate its anniversary with an annual dinner dance. Alongside serving the goal of celebrating the organization's anniversary, the dinner dance is a medium the AYF uses to provide Armenian youth with a healthy social setting. The entertainment for the dinner dance this year, held at the Pasadena Armenian Center, was provided by Harout Pamboukjian and Karnig Sarkissian and attracted over 700 youth and community members. The dinner dance also served as the AYF's largest fundraiser, generating \$21,000 in net income.

Sponsorship Package

After studying the demographics of our donors, we saw that a significant portion owned businesses. To provide donors who own businesses the option to receive exposure while contributing to the AYF, a sponsorship package was created. Businesses that donated through the sponsorship package received recognition in event advertisements, press releases, and commercials. In its first year of existence, the sponsorship package generated \$5000 in net income.

Donors

Starting in October of 2003, the AYF contacted community members and businesses requesting donations to fund the the April 24 Protest, and the May 28 Picnic Festival. We were grateful to receive huge support from those we contacted, allowing for the successful execution of the aforementioned efforts.

Other Social Venues

All AYF chapters organized various public and intra-organizational socials throughout the course of the year. Socials included ski trips, fun camps, kebab nights, dances, dinner dances, and other outings. As a result of income producing social events, some chapters have adopted Armenian orphans through the Armenian Relief Society "Adopt a Child" program, helped with the upkeep expenses of AYF Camp, and donated to the Youth Corps program.

May 28 Picnic-Festival

In celebration of one of the largest turning points in Armenian history, the first independence of Armenia in 1918, the AYF held a picnic-festival at the Holy Martyr's Ferrahian Preschool in North Hills. The celebration attracted more than 1500 youth and community members who enjoyed Armenian music, food, and dancing. Eight well-known Armenian community singers volunteered their talents for this festive occasion.

George Tutunjian & Karnig Sarkissian CD

Toward the end of the fiscal year, the management of Hollywood Music Center approached the AYF with an offer to obtain licensing rights for a second release of the 1996 "George Tutunjian & Karnig Sarkissian Live in Concert" CD.

Seeing the opportunity to spread our revolutionary and patriotic songs to an audience otherwise unreachable, while generating a new source of income, the AYF decided to take up the offer.



A Scene from the 71st Anniversary Dinner Dance

Youth Corps 10th Anniversary

The AYF celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Youth Corps program this year, with a dinner at Rococo Restaurant in Pasadena where close to \$1000 was collected in the form of donations for this summer's program. Through the AYF Youth Corps program, close to 100 Armenian youth have traveled to our homeland to help the people of Artsakh rebuild and recover after the damages of the war.

HELPING OUR HOMELAND

2004 Youth Corps Program

The tenth AYF Youth Corps group spent close to five weeks in Armenia and Artsakh this summer. The group helped rebuild and revamp the Parapalegic Rehabilitation Center in Stepanakert and worked with schoolchildren at the "Soseh" kindergarten. The group also had the opportunity to meet with government officials, local ARF representatives and AYF members. Furthermore, the group visited all the major sight-seeing locations in Armenia and Artsakh.



The AYF in Armenia

The AYF is an international organization with over 100 chapters in more than 15 countries, spread across four continents with a membership of more than 5000. It goes without saying that the AYF has a vibrant presence in Armenia with more than 1000 members. The AYF Western Region Central Executive, has begun a campaign to help its counterpart in Armenia in their efforts to create youth centers and new chapters. Although this effort began in the final quarter of the year, the Western Region has already allocated over \$5000 towards this important project.



AYF CAMP

Now in its third decade of operation, the AYF Summer Camp this summer was home to more than 450 Armenian youth between the ages of nine and 16 for a full week. Campers learned Armenian patriotic songs, Armenian dance, heard lectures about our history and culture, and had the opportunity to make new friends and reunite with old ones.

CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

ARF Shant Student Association

During the course of the fiscal year, the AYF Central Executive held a meeting with the leaders of the ARF Shant Student Association, where representatives from both groups briefed one another about their activities and laid the foundation for the collaboration of Armenian Genocide Activities.

International Union of Socialist Youth

The International Union of Socialist Youth is essentially the youth counterpart of Socialist International. It is made up of 143 socialist, social democratic, and labor youth organizations from all over the world. It was founded over 90 years ago, on August 24, 1907, and is currently the largest student and youth political organization in the world. Its purpose is to establish bonds of solidarity between its members and promote the principles of democratic socialism throughout the world. The AYF is a full member of the IUSY.

The IUSY held its World Congress in Budapest, Hungary and as a member organization the AYF exercised its full member status by sending four delegates to the congress. This year, the Western Region had the opportunity to be present at the congress with its own delegate. The congress provided the opportunity for the Western Region to share with the rest of the world's leading youth organizations its mission and activities, while learning from and networking with them.



AYF Delegates to the ASF putting up Armenian Genocide posters

Youth & Student Conference in Armenia

The AYF Western Region participated in the ARF Youth and Student Conference held in Armenia, where all AYF regions and ARF Student Associations from around the world were represented. The delegates to the conference shared with one another their respective region's experiences, activities, and challenges. The conference also discussed possible global collaboration among all the regions.



Delegates to the ARF Youth & Student Conference in Armenia

Americas Social Forum

The AYF participated in the Americas Social Forum between July 25-30 in Quito, Ecuador with the delegation of the International Union of Socialist Youth. The ASF is a part of the World Social Forum which is an open meeting place where groups and movements of civil society opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism, come together to pursue thinking, to debate ideas democratically, formulate proposals, share experiences, and network for effective action.

The ASF debated alternative means of building a globalization, which respects the universal human rights of all human beings; and is grounded in democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and sovereignty of peoples.

AYF Tri-Regional Conference

The AYF Central Executive of the Western Region held one conference in Montreal, Canada with the Central Executives of the Eastern Region and Canada, where the three CE's discussed possible tri-regional activities for the 90th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

HAYTOUG

CHAPTERS

Haytoug, created in 1978, is the official publication of the AYF, Western Region and is distributed free of charge. The *Haytoug* is a quarterly publication, which is usually published every season; however, due to various difficulties the publication schedule does not always remain consistent. During the 2003-2004 fiscal year the AYF was successful in producing an issue each season. The AYF was also able to increase the number of *Haytoug* subscribers by over 500%. By writing about a variety of topics including AYF news, art & literature, culture & Diaspora, Armenian history, and politics, the *Haytoug* Central Council has generated interest from new young readers.

The AYF Has 13 chapters in the Western Region (west of the Mississippi). Ten of the 13 chapters are based in Southern California and there are chapters in Fresno, the Bay Area, and Houston, Texas. Unfortunately, for the past few years the Burbank "Varak" Chapter had been inactive and recently the East Valley "Shahen Megherian" also became inactive. With the help of the Glendale "Roupen" Chapter the AYF was able to revitalize its Burbank chapter this year, which now has more than 20 members. The case, however, was not the same for the East Valley chapter, which still remains inactive. The organization is currently reviewing the situation to formulate a permanent solution for the chapter.

Due to its decentralized mode of operation, the AYF chapters are of utmost importance to the organization. Each chapter carries out the AYF mission in its own community.



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AYF ALUMNI

The AYF considers all those who have held membership in the AYF and graduated its ranks, its alumni. The alumni of the AYF is responsible for many of the successes of the organization, the education of several generations, and the shaping of the organization today. The AYF began to go through its archives this year in an effort to create a database of AYF alumni. We were successful in confirming contact information for more than 2000 AYF Western Region alumni. Although this number only represents a fraction of the actual number of alumni, it is a good starting point from which to begin developing communication with our alumni.

VISION CHALLENGES



The AYF has several challenges both internally and externally. Internally, the AYF is an ever-changing dynamic due to the consistent influx of youth from different generations and backgrounds. This dynamism challenges the leadership of the organization to create new methods of educating its members, generating activism within the ranks of the AYF, and effectively catering to the needs of the youth and public at large. The latter of which carries on to some of the external challenges faced by the AYF:

1. The growing risk of assimilation, aculturation, and unpatriotism;
2. An ever-increasing number of Armenian youth falling victim to drugs, violence, and drinking and driving;
3. Denial of the Armenian Genocide;
4. The economic, social, and political sustainability of our homeland
5. Lack of involvement of Armenian youth in the American political process

With more organized and efficient modes of operation, with the support of our community, and with the financial assistance of our supporters, we believe that we can overcome all of the aforementioned challenges.

While some may take longer than others, we stand strong behind our capabilities. While some may be more difficult to overcome than others, we look to our our powerful history and our past accomplishments. While some may require more resources than others, we remain focused and resolute.

Burbank
Varak

Crescenta Valley
Zartok

East Valley
Shahen Megherian

Fresno
Kevork Chavoush

Glendale
Roupen

Hollywood
Musa Dagh

Houston
Dro

Montebello
Vahan Cardashian

Orange County
Ashod Yergat

Pasadena
Nigol Touman

San Francisco
Rosdom

South Bay
Potorig

West Valley
Sardarabad

“If you want to predict, and see the future of a people, look at its youth.”

-AYF Founder, General Karekin Njteh

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