

# Bill McEwen: You can help tell story of the Armenian genocide

By Bill  
McEwen

- Armenian genocide centennial events

**April 17-19:** “Nine Armenians, a play by Leslie Ayvasian, Fresno Art Museum.

**Now through May 29:** Armenian Genocide Exhibit at the Fresno State Peters Ellipse Gallery in the Madden Library, second floor.

**April 16:** “Valley of Hope: The Armenian Journey from Terror to Triumph” debuts on ValleyPBS, 7 pm.

**April 23:** Genocide remembrance, 2 p.m., at Charlie Keyan Armenian Community School, 108 N. Villa Ave., Clovis.

**April 23:** Requiem service, 5 p.m., at the Memorial of the Unknown Martyr in Ararat Cemetery, 1925 W. Belmont Ave., Fresno.

**April 23:** Unveiling of the Fresno State Armenian Genocide Monument, 7:30 p.m, at the Maple Mall.

**April 24:** Annual flag raising, 9 a.m., on the steps of Fresno City Hall, 2600 Fresno St.

**April 24:** Traditional community commemoration, 7 p.m., St. Paul Armenian Church, 3767 N. First St., Fresno, featuring Bruce Janigian of the American University of Armenia.

**April 24:** World moment of silence and tolling of bells and chimes, 7:15 p.m.

**April 25:** “Witness & Rebirth: An Armenian Journey,” 7:30 p.m., a Fresno Philharmonic concert commemorating the Armenian Genocide at Saroyan Theater.

A complete listing of events is available at [www.agcfresno.org](http://www.agcfresno.org).

Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush share a deceit.

When running for president and hoping to drum up votes, they promised to recognize the Armenian genocide.

Upon election to the Oval Office, however, each did the political calculus and walked back from the pledge.

Bush’s explanation was that it wasn’t the time to rile our ally Turkey by addressing horrors of the past.

Obama has never offered a reason for why he has failed to keep his word, although it’s apparent that he, too, lacks the backbone to confront Turkey about the massacre of 1.5 million Armenians carried out by the Ottoman Empire beginning in 1915.

Obama, however, would be doing the Turks a favor if he officially recognized the Armenian genocide. Until Turkey acknowledges these atrocities — including the thousands of Armenians asphyxiated in caves that foreshadowed Nazi gas chambers — it will be chained to its shameful past.

“In order to understand Turkey and its denialism, you have to compare it to apartheid in South Africa,” Taner Akçam, a Turkish professor of history at Clark University told The Washington Post. “If Turkey wants to play an important role in the political development in the Middle East, Turkey has to face its own history.”

History should not be for sale, but Obama and Bush have, in effect, put history on the auction block. And by placing a higher value on the United States' relationship with Turkey than on the truth, they have made our country complicit in the genocide.

Understand: There will never be a politically convenient time for the U.S. to recognize the Armenian genocide. If the world should ever calm down, the president's advisers will say, "Why rock the boat with Turkey? Things are good."

And we can surmise what the inner circle is whispering in Obama's ear: "You can't go there, Mr. President. Not with Vladimir Putin and ISIS on the march."

The first American president to recognize the Armenian genocide will have courage, a passion for the truth and a disdain of situational ethics. Until that president is elected, it is left to other Americans to carry on the fight for their Armenian brothers and sisters — and the loved ones they lost.

So, The Bee's Editorial Board is asking, "Who do you stand for?"

By putting a face to the Armenian genocide recognition movement, we hope to inspire President Obama and Congress to finally do the right thing.

One can hope, right? Look at how Pope Francis brought renewed attention to the effort with his declaration Sunday that the slaughter was "the first genocide of the 20th century."

Send us a photo of yourself and the name of a family member who was killed in the Armenian genocide. If you aren't of Armenian descent, include the name of a friend's ancestor who was a victim of the Armenian genocide with your photo.

The deadline to submit photos and names is Tuesday, April 21. The address is [letters@fresnobee.com](mailto:letters@fresnobee.com).

We will publish the names and faces Friday, April 24, on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

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