

Who do you stand for? Families embrace souls lost in Armenian genocide

Lisa Erganian of Altadena and Susan Ginosyan, and Alyce, Gregory, Kazar and Gurgun Khanzadian, all of Fresno: We stand for our grandparents, Kazar and Prandzem Keteian, above, who survived the genocide. The child is Mary Keteian-Khazadian, our mother.

“It was the night of April 24, 1915, when the Armenian intellectuals, professionals, editors, and religious leaders in Constantinople were rounded up by the Ottoman authorities, and almost all of them were executed,” novelist Chris Bohjalian writes in a Boston Globe op-ed.

“In the years that followed, three out of every four Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire were systematically annihilated by their own government: 1.5 million people. The majority of Armenians alive today are descendants of those few who survived.”

Bohjalian is one of them. His grandparents escaped. But he knew little about his great-grandparents.

Then he dug an old book out of his attic, Bohjalian explains in “The Souls and Stories That Vanished in the Armenian Genocide of 1915” in the April 21 edition of Newsweek.

With help from a friend who translates Armenian, he learned that his great-grandfather Nazaret was not just a tailor, as he had been told, but a writer and troubadour. And that Nazaret had witnessed the Hamidian massacres, which in the mid-1890s preceded the Armenian genocide.

Says Bohjalian: “When we discuss genocide, we always begin with the numbers: the 6 million. The 1.5 million. But it’s not just the souls that we lose, it’s the stories.”

It’s this devastating loss of souls and stories that moved us to ask, “Who do you stand for?” on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide’s beginning.

May their lives never be forgotten.

