

Remembering the Armenian Genocide: Lessons for Peace and Reconciliation

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This summer, I had the opportunity to attend the Heravi Peace Institute's study abroad program in Armenia. The trip focused on the theme, "Crossroads of Culture: Genocide and Reconciliation," more specifically the Armenian Genocide and the lasting impacts of the genocide on Armenian culture, society, and relationships with Türkiye.

Our group consisted of myself, the Staff Assistant for the Heravi Peace Institute; the faculty lead and Psychology Professor Dr. Sara Boghosian; Charles Carpenter, an International Studies major; Lilly Mckinnon, an Art History major; Aliah Duffin, an Archaeology major; and Sophia Gee, a Psychology major. While traveling with a group of students from a range of academic disciplines, my learning

was enhanced as they shared insights about art and archeology that deepened my understanding of Armenian culture.



What I Learned

The study abroad experience in Armenia helped me understand the value of engaging in experiential learning. Before traveling, we were required to read Orhan's *Inheritance* and other materials on the Armenian Genocide. Studying the genocide from afar gave me a general understanding of Armenian history, yet the stories were difficult to truly wrap my head around. My understanding of Armenian history grew while standing in the places where the history occurred and conversing with people whose lives continue to be impacted by it. Learning through experiencing Armenian culture and interacting with locals shifted my knowledge from something I had studied in the required readings to something I could begin to understand at a human level. This study abroad taught me that visiting the places we learn about enhances our education in a way that is difficult to accomplish at a desk with a textbook.

The Armenian Genocide remains a crucial part of Armenian identity. The hardships previous generations endured continue to define the way Armenians view themselves and the world around them. Traces of generational trauma impact the way many Armenians view Turks today. Throughout the trip, I saw reminders of this conflict all around me: from the closed border separating Armenia and Türkiye to the flooded village that was intended to provide a barrier between the two neighboring

countries. Traveling on planes with Armenians raised in the diaspora returning to their ancestral homeland for the first time in their lives, truly made the experiences of this country come to life.



I was constantly reminded that reconciliation is an ongoing process in a post-genocide society. Working through generational trauma and towards healing after a genocide requires ongoing dialogue and commitment to promote peace. In these situations, peace is not the absence of conflict; peace requires action from both sides to see each other's humanity, while acknowledging the hurt from the past.

Bringing it Home

Upon returning home, I find myself reflecting often on the importance of learning from the conflicts of our past to move forward more informed and committed to promoting peace.

In the final room of the Armenian Genocide Museum, there is a quote from Adolf Hitler spoken before the Holocaust, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" This quote provides a warning as the history of genocides from all around the world are displayed on the walls, reminding visitors that forgetting history creates the opportunity for it to repeat itself. This experience has strengthened my desire to educate and be educated on history, conflict, and reconciliation and to help equip society with conflict transformation skills, in the hope of inspiring more peaceful communities.



Meet Bailee Fox

Bailee Fox is the Staff Assistant at the Heravi Peace Institute. She graduated from Brigham Young University–Hawaii, where she earned a dual degree in Intercultural Peacebuilding and Social Work, with a minor in Psychology. Her background includes experience in program coordination, peace and conflict education, and administrative support across both community-based and academic settings.