

Meaningful World

Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention
(ATOP)

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Genocide Prevention, Upholding United Nations Human Rights Declaration and Sustainable Development Goals

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What is Genocide? How do we prevent Genocide? How do we nurture the Human Rights Declaration? How do we keep chanting “Never again”, and it is happening as we speak? The gathering unfolded in an atmosphere of reflection, urgency, and shared responsibility. Participants came together with open minds and hearts, creating a space for meaningful dialogue, remembrance, and collective commitment. On 25 April 2026, on the 111th Anniversary of the Ottoman Turkish Genocide of Armenians, ATOP MeaningfulWorld organized and presented an informative and timely program at Fordham University on **“Genocide Prevention: Upholding United Nations Human Rights Declaration and SDGs.”** The event shared United Nations Genocide Convention, explored mechanisms for preventing genocide and practical strategies for healing, educating, empowering, and raising awareness of its impacts that can be individual, generational, collective, vicarious, and systemic. The program

aligned with multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 16, and 17, emphasizing partnership in fostering peace, justice, and strong institutions.

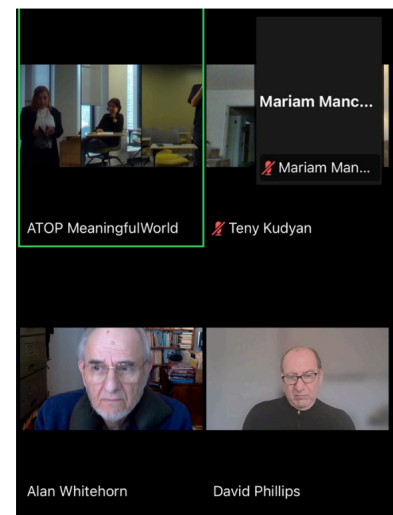
Nairy Bzdigian, Education Coordinator of ATOP MeaningfulWorld, opened the workshop by welcoming guests and speakers. She introduced **Prof. Harold**



Takooshian, Professor Emeritus at Fordham University, who emphasized the importance of oral history and preserving genocide narratives. He shared insights about interviews with Armenian Genocide survivors conducted with **Dr. Ani Kalayjian in 1975**, now housed at Columbia University’s Oral History Archive, ensuring that survivor voices remain accessible for education and research. He also emphasized how storytelling helps younger generations understand history and strengthens cultural memory. **Prof. Takooshian** highlighted the annual Krieger essay contest organized by ATOP MeaningfulWorld.

Dr. Kalayjian then led a moment of silence in honor of genocide victims worldwide and read the White House statement on the occasion of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Nairy then shared a statement from Mayor Zohran Mamdani acknowledging the ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Annika Jawanda, Intern Coordinator at ATOP Meaningfulworld, introduced the first speaker, **Amy Fagin**, a visual artist and independent genocide scholar. Her presentation, **“Upstream Prevention: A Case for Thinking Through Art,”** demonstrated how illuminated manuscripts and visual art can be transformed into meaningful works that educate audiences encourage reflection on human rights, while promoting genocide awareness and prevention.



Dr. Alan Whitehorn, Professor Emeritus of political science at the Royal Military College of Canada, followed, sharing his grandmother’s survival story and reading his poem Siroun’s Lament from Just Poems: Reflections on the Armenian Genocide. He underscored the enduring importance of survivor testimony. You can find his work here:

<https://keghart.org/whitehorn-my-grandmother/>



Next, **Consolee Nimishee**, author, motivational speaker, and survivor of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda reflected on her personal journey and emphasized resilience through forgiveness, storytelling, and activism, offering hope for future generations rebuilding Rwanda.

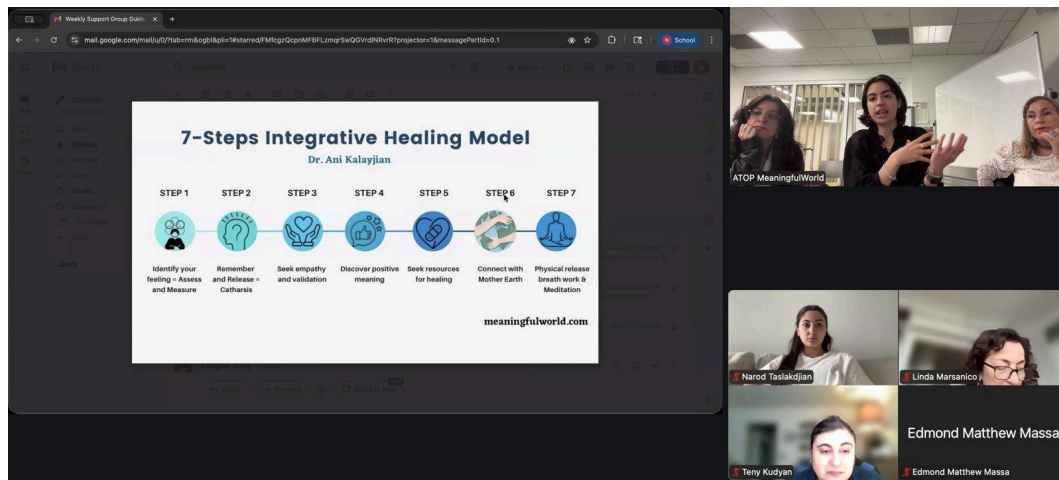
She then showed a short film prepared by [Kwibuka Rwanda](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_wUrS1Kd8) (Kwibuka meaning Remember) that highlighted the survival stories and reconciliation within the country. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_wUrS1Kd8

David L. Phillips, Visiting Academic at St. Antony's College, Oxford University, spoke about the historical and ongoing realities of genocide against Armenians. He emphasized the importance of recognition, truth, and accountability, noting U.S. acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide and the persistence of denial. He also addressed recent events in Artsakh, including displacement, cultural destruction, and the need for international accountability. He highlighted his experience with the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission (TARC) that held hearings with Turkish and Armenian lawyers and worked with the International Center for Transitional Justice. Dr. Ani Kalayjian was part of TARC as a psychologist and mediator.

The program continued with a screening of **Faces of Persecution: Genocide 2.0**, highlighting the 2023 attacks on Armenians in Artsakh and the displacement of over 120,000 people. The first part of the workshop concluded with a heart-to-heart circle of love and gratitude where the participants stood in a circle with their hands on each other's heart and sent out healing, peace and remembrance to the world.



The second part of the day continued with **Nairy Bzdigian**, who guided participants through a healing session based on the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model. Participants openly shared emotions such as frustration, sadness, fear, and worry. This group discussion created a supportive environment where individuals felt heard and understood. During the 4th step, which focuses on transformation, participants reflected on lessons learned from the workshop and considered ways to apply them in their lives. As part of the 7th step, physical and emotional release, we practice **Soul-Surfing**, a series of exercises stretches and affirmations that address each of the 7-chakras, colors, and the areas in our bodies. The workshop concluded with a short meditation to recenter participants and prepare us to embrace our day.



Overall, the ATOP MeaningfulWorld workshop fostered a strong sense of awareness, responsibility, and hope among participants. The program demonstrated that genocide prevention requires not only education and historical knowledge but also empathy, healing, and collaboration. By combining storytelling, academic discussion, artistic expression, and emotional healing practices, the workshop showed how communities can work together to promote justice, support survivors, and build a more compassionate and peaceful world.