



# The Armenian Weekly

## Rendahl: No!

Posted by Kristi Rendahl on January 25, 2012 in Kristi Rendahl · 8 Comments · Email · Print

### About the Author

[Like](#) 49 people like this.



**Kristi Rendahl**

Originally from a family farm in North Dakota, Kristi Rendahl lived and worked in Armenia from 1997-2002 and visits the country whenever possible. She works with The Center for Victims of Torture as the Organizational Development Advisor to 10 torture treatment centers around the world, and is pursuing a doctorate in public administration. Through her travels, she has met Armenians in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Ethiopia, and across the U.S. Currently, Kristi resides in St. Paul, Minn.

My great-grandmother was a suffragette. She was born in 1886 and is said to be the longest serving woman legislator in the country, having been elected to 19 terms in the New Hampshire state legislature. Does anyone remember what it means to be a suffragette? Have we forgotten how many decades and droves of people it took for women and others to gain the right to vote?



One woman silenced by fear is everyone's battle. One woman isolated by manipulation is everyone's battle. One woman tormented by narcissistic revenge is everyone's battle. If I don't fight, it becomes my niece's battle. If you don't fight, it becomes your daughter's battle.

But the example isn't just about voting. It's about rights. It's about respect. It's about responsibility.

Her name was Hilda Constance Frederika Brungot, and I am told that she was as formidable as her name. She was the overbearing mother of my grandmother. She was elected to the

legislature at age 45. She had six children before then. She was divorced in her 60s. She used to host salons in her home to talk about women's issues. We differ on some of those issues, but we do not differ in our pursuit of justice.

To say that I am proud of that heritage is an understatement. Each and every day, I find strength in her story. And I don't mean that in a superficial way. I mean that I have a *very* low tolerance for the subjugation, intimidation, exploitation, and abuse of any woman, rich or poor, white or black, American or otherwise. Any woman, period.

The term feminist has different connotations for different people. I propose that for the modest purposes of this piece, we accept that feminism is a positive movement, that it focuses on fundamental human rights and treating women as equal human beings. Does that mean men and women are exactly the same? No, that's not what I'm saying. Besides, what the hell would I know about chromosomes and the like? What I'm saying is that women deserve the same decency as any human being.

### Popular Comments Emailed



[French Senate Passes Bill Criminalizing Armenian Genocide Denial](#)



[Turkey Moves to Deport Armenian Workers after French Vote](#)



[Akcam: Genocide Recognition is about Justice, Not Freedom of Thought](#)



[Hamparian: We're All Armenians](#)



[The Armenian Side of Cher](#)



[Astarjian: The Armenian Phoenix](#)



[ANCA Condemns Clinton's Complicity in Genocide Denial](#)

### Share this Article

[Tweet this](#)

[Digg it](#)

[Add to Delicious](#)

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Stumble it](#)

[Subscribe by RSS](#)

## Մանկութեան Յուշերս Reflections of My Childhood

A collection of traditional Armenian children's songs, rhymes, and poetry with accompanying CD.  
By Houry Yapoujian Schmeizl

Regular \$29.95  
**Christmas Special**  
30% Off  
**A Great Gift**

[Order Now](#)

www.hourymusic.com

[Find us on Facebook](#)

When I stayed with a family in Ciudad Juárez for a month a few years ago, I learned all that I never wanted to know about the abuse of women. There are thousands of unsolved cases of female homicides there—*los feminicidios, las muertas de Juárez, mujeres desaparecidas*. A phenomenon of abuse and kidnapping and rape and murder. Of women. Of girls.

My host family had moved there from Central Mexico 10 years prior in order to find work. Unable to build a complete home or purchase windows, they lived in fear each night as my host father, Raul, went to work the night shift while my host mother, Aurelia, and baby girl, Monica, stayed at home. Aurelia didn't sleep out of fear, for herself and for her little girl. Monica was raised in a rightly over-protective home where she's never had five minutes to herself.

When I was in Uganda during the spring of 2010, I talked to a number of women about the prevalence of polygamy there. I didn't even have to broach the topic—it just came up again and again. Most of them hoped that their partners didn't have lovers or second and third wives, but a part of them was resigned to the likelihood, and so instead hoped that their husbands had enough respect to use condoms or that they wouldn't infect them and their babies with HIV. Desperate times call for low standards, I guess.

Unlike my family, which offers an endless source of support, love, and forgiveness, the mothers and mothers-in-law of these women offered no sympathy. "You're lucky that you're just one of two wives," they would say, "I was one of five." This statement, of course, has nothing to do with mutual romantic love or commitment. It has everything to do with distribution of resources. To be a first wife is decidedly better than to be a second. My host mother, herself a first wife, shared that she wouldn't be surprised if another woman dropped off a child one day, saying that her husband hadn't sufficiently provided for his child and so now it's her problem.

It's unnecessary to recount any stories of abused Armenian women to the readers of this paper, because you have heard and read the stories yourselves, thanks to those who work on these issues every day (they know who they are). I can't say whether or not these abuses are pervasive, because they are intensely hidden—as they are in most any society—due to inexplicable shame and fear. Shame that they've done something horribly wrong, and fear that no one will love them if they really knew.

I can only say that one story is one too many. One woman silenced by fear is everyone's battle. One woman isolated by manipulation is everyone's battle. One woman tormented by narcissistic revenge is everyone's battle. If I don't fight, it becomes my niece's battle. If you don't fight, it becomes your daughter's battle.

My great-grandmother is but one example of strength. I surround myself with pictures and memories of family members—men and women alike—who have shown might in times of distress. I serve food on my mom's trays and use my grandmother's silverware at meals. I play from my great-aunt's songbooks on my grandmother's piano. I drink wine from my aunt's wine glasses. I sleep in my grandparents' bed. I hang my great-aunt's artwork on my wall. I listen to music on my grandfather's Edison player. I soak up the journaled memories of my pioneer great-grandmother.

I am never alone, because they and an army of love and wisdom are behind me. Anything I encounter will not surpass their stories. Anything I conquer will be because of the lessons they've taught me. And we are all enveloped in this greatness, if we remember to see it and let it feed the core of our being.

Do you hear the call? Do you hear my great-grandmother saying "no" to injustice? Do you hear your own conscience saying that there are some things that are simply not acceptable?



**Facebook Public Profile**  
Login to see this content

---

### Receive our eNewsletter

Enter your Email

**Subscribe me!**

[Preview the Newsletter](#)

---

### Calendar of Events

5 February: [AGBU Super Bowl Party \(Watertown, Mass.\)](#)

11 February: [Talk: Unseen Sights in Armenia \(Lowell, Mass.\)](#)

11 February: [ASA Anniversary Gala \(Boston, Mass.\)](#)

31 March: [Performing Artists in Concert \(Watertown, Mass.\)](#)

31 August: [AYF Olympics \(Boston, Mass.\)](#)

[View the Calendar of Events](#)

---

### Recent Comments

gregg dourgarian on [Aronian Wins Tournament, Closes in on World No. 1 Spot](#)

Darwin Jamgochian on [ANCA Condemns Clinton's Complicity in Genocide Denial](#)

Mardig on [Turkey Moves to Deport Armenian Workers after French Vote](#)

Shenora on [To Maim and Kill with Impunity](#)

ragnar naess on [Akcem: Genocide Recognition is about Justice, Not Freedom of Thought](#)

Follow the call. It's not just about you: It's about the others.

[Like](#) 49 people like this.

Previous Article  
**AGBU New England Set for Revitalization with New Leadership**

Next Article  
**Akcam: Genocide Recognition is about Justice, Not Freedom of Thought**

**8 Total Comments On This Article**

[Submit Yours](#)



**gayane**  
January 25, 2012

Very powerful article Kristi jan.. apres.. May God protect you for standing on the right side of the line and May God protect all our women around the world...

[Reply](#)



**Raymond**  
January 25, 2012

Fantastic, fantastic, fantastic piece... Your emotional, and overall intelligence, logic, sense of right, and wrong, understanding of different cultures among other things, and the way you articulate them for your readers is commendable. Thank you again!

[Reply](#)



**Boyajian**  
January 25, 2012

Brilliant! The fight for genocide recognition has everything to do with the fight for all people to be treated with respect and equal rights regardless of nationality, gender, social status, religion, etc... and vice versa, of course!

[Reply](#)



**Arshag**  
January 25, 2012

Nice article Kristi Rendahl, as always. However, there's too much injustice in our world and too many cries for help as you have witnessed yourself. And the bad thing is that quite often than not it's not possible to say No to injustice as successfully as your blessed memory great-grandmother did in the land of opportunities.

[Reply](#)



**Krikor**  
January 25, 2012

One word ! WOW !!! thank you, father of three daughters and one son.

[Reply](#)



**Valerie**  
January 25, 2012

Well said, Kristi – very well said (written!). I love the way you weave your ancestry with experiences you have in your life.

[Reply](#)



**Garo Avedis**  
January 26, 2012

women can achieve anything they want,even in armed forces and in combat.  
Sose Mayrig  
Sose Mayrig (Armenian: Սոսե Մայրիկ), real name – Sose Vardanian (Armenian: Սոսե Վարդանյան) (1865 – 1952) was an Armenian female hajduk (fedayee or freedom fighter), the wife of famous hajduk leader Serob Aghpur. She was surnamed “mayrig” (mother) by Serob’s hajduks for her bravery and maternal concern for Armenian youth.  
She participated in the many fedayee fightings. In 1898, after the battle of Babshen, Sose and Serob fled to Sassoun. In 1899, along with her son, Serob and his brothers, she participated in the battle against a Turkish battalion: Serob, their son and Serob’s brothers were killed while Sose Mayrig was wounded. After the Sasun uprising in 1904, she moved to Van and then to the Caucasus. Another son of Sose

[Reply](#)

Mayrig and Serob killed during the massacre in the Erzerum. Since 1920, Sose Mayrig lived in Constantinople, then in Alexandria (Egypt), where she died in 1952. Her remains were then moved to the Yerablur military cemetery in Yerevan.

- Hayuhi magazine about Sose Mayrig
- Sose Mayrik.



**Avery**  
January 26,  
2012

Thanks for the info Garo.

Also during Artsakh's War of Survival and Liberation, Armenian women were right there on the front lines with their men.

And I am sure everyone saw the Armenian women SF soldiers during the Independence Day military parade last year in Yerevan. (they are all volunteers)

---

### Submit Your Comment

Your name

Your name is required

Your email

An email address is required

Website

Message

**Submit Comment**

- Notify me of followup comments via e-mail
- Notify me of new posts by email.



Search

- History
- Staff
- Subscription
- Community Calendar
- Contact Us