Nomination of a Notable Armenian American from California to the California Hall of Fame

To: Amanda Meeker, Executive Director
California Museum

FROM: Odeka
Senior, approaching graduation soon at the Probation Camp

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Los Angeles County Office of Education, Probation Camp Scott

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RE: Nomination of a Notable Armenian American from California to the California Hall of Fame

Nomination of Azet Spepanyan, Probation Officer

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Azet Stepanyan was born in Gyumri, Armenia. Gyumri is the second largest city in Armenia. He was 10 year old when his mother decided to take him and his older brother to America for a better life. Stepanyan’s father passed away when he was only 2 years old and it was a big impact on his life and how his life has turned.

FOCUSED SKETCH
Azat Stepanyan grew up in a cold world of impoverishment, which was a struggle for him and his family. As a child he valued and cherished every belonging he had. At 6 years old he would wake up at 5:00 in the morning to stand in line at the neighborhood bakery to buy bread and bring home to his mother. Most other families in his city had barely enough money or food to survive, so he was grateful that his family was able to afford food. At 7 years old, he completed 3 years of school before coming to America. When attending school in Armenia, the schools were very strict. A dress code was strictly
enforced and teachers were also allowed to hit students if they misbehaved. Azat learned foreign languages in school; French and Russian. As a second grader, he took pre-algebra which is considered advanced in America. Even though schools were advanced in Armenia, there was still poverty in his community. Nevertheless, he took his education seriously. He settled with bare minimum but was proud to have the family he has. He also has an older brother, 2 years his senior. Azat always looked up to him, as he was a positive role model in his life.

The Armenian Genocide had and has a direct effect on him and his family. It created open wounds on his family that will never heal, regardless of the years that have passed. Azat’s great grandfather died in the Armaenian Genocide by the Ottoman Empire alongside 1.5 million other Armenian people. Great grandfather’s valuable belongings were taken along with the belongings of others in their villages. Although the heartache of the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide was still present within his family, being raised by a single mother taught Azat strong values that he’s used throughout his life. The values his mother has shown him include to always be honest, treat people with respect, never bring shame to his family’s name, but most importantly, to never renounce his Armenian faith and religion.

As for his losing his father at a young age, he grew up knowing how hard his mother worked to support him and his brother. At the age of 14, he started working to help take burdens off his mother’s life. He attended high school but still didn’t have a clear understanding of who he wanted to become in life - but that changed in 10th grade. Azat had been at work when he lost a close friend in a shoot-out at a party. The killer was never found. He decided that very day that he wanted to become a detective or work in public service in some capacity. At 18, he started working for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health at Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall. After a few months of working with minors, he felt his experience would impact kids’ lives to help them improve their future with hope. Azat waited 8 years until there was an opening in the probation department.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

He’s been working with the probation department for over 4 years and he’s changed the lives of over a 100 minors; including mine.
I am an African-American young woman and I’ve been incarcerated for 1 year. Azat Stepanyan has been my Probation Officer this entire time. He’s helped me learn the coping skills needed for a successful future. I also relate to his life story because I, too, had to grow up fast at a very young age to provide for my family. He’s also accomplished graduating college which is a goal that he has motivated me to do. I am clearly on my way.

I didn’t expect to have been blessed with a father figure while being at probation camp, but he’s definitely been that for me. When I felt like I couldn’t do something he always pushed me and reminded me how intelligent I am. My P.O. has been an extraordinary teacher that has helped me learn from my mistakes.

TAKE AWAY

He deserves to be recognized for being the Angel that helped me change my life. In studying the Armenian Genocide, I realize that even though I am from another culture, the pain and passion in this transformation of our cultures are very relevant in both. I am proud to be African-American, just as proud as my mentor, Azat Stepanyan is of his rich culture as Armenian- American. My life has been enriched by this fine role model, and it will never be the same. Thank you for considering this wonderful man as being recognized.