

Global Youth Connect

Bosnia Program Report

Human Rights Delegation for Young Leaders

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Organized in collaboration with the Center for Peacebuilding



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A Letter to Editor

“A month ago, thousands of people gathered in Srebrenica to commemorate the 11th anniversary of the massacre and to bury 505 additional bodies.

As an American visiting Bosnia-Herzegovina for the first time, I was shocked at the condition of the small town, which looked as if violence had ended only months earlier. The war began as a war of fear; people today are still afraid.

By fostering an ethnic interpretation of the conflict, the international community has brought the ideology of the instigators and passed this ideology down to the next generation.

Until the focus is shifted to the creation of a functioning civil society where individual people are addressed rather than the ‘warring factions,’ the next generation will continue to divide the country into three.

Progress can happen only at this individual level. The international community must start to support

the smaller towns that have otherwise been neglected.”

--Rick Bennet
Bosnia delegation participant
August 23, 2006

Written and published in response to “Now Some Good News”, an editorial published in the New York detailing Bosnia’s success over the past decade and the positive role of the international community in aiding Bosnia.

Bosnia in 2006¹

Eleven years after the end of a bloody war that caused endless suffering and destruction, Bosnia and its people still struggle to find a path for reconstruction and reconciliation. While the guns and shells stopped seeding death in 1995, the country remains in a very fragile state. The root causes of the war have not been properly addressed and the international community seems unable to create conditions for a sustainable peace. The Dayton Peace Accords, signed in November 1995, brought an end to violence, death, rape, and concentration camps. However, the peace accords have also created a political and constitutional paralysis, preventing Bosnia from moving forward towards peace and prosperity. Some of the economic and social indicators show signs of improvement. For example, this year the World Bank moved Bosnia from the list of "post-conflict" countries to the list of "countries in transition." Nevertheless, what remains a critical and most difficult task -- the one of rebuilding human relationships across ethnic and religious lines -- remains largely unattended and ignored.

Around 200,000 people died in the conflict between Bosnian Muslims, Croats, and Serbs -- part of the break-up of Yugoslavia. From April 1992 to December 1995, brutal war ravaged the heart of Europe. Every second Bosnian became either a refugee or an internally displaced person. Every family was deeply affected by the atrocities and suffering that tore the multi-ethnic society apart. And while there are many gruesome

¹ All photos courtesy of Judith van Raalten and Meredith McCormac.

numbers and statistics one can cite to illustrate the horrors, we should not forget that behind each number of a person killed by a sniper or a shell, or a child maimed by a bullet, or a grandmother raped, there lies a personal tragedy that can never be measured in numbers or statistics.

The 1995 Dayton Peace Accord established the Office of the High Representative, a role currently fulfilled by German politician Christian Schwarz. The representative has wide-ranging powers to impose decisions in cases where the authorities are unable to agree or where political and economic interests are considered to be at stake. A European Union-led peacekeeping force, EUFOR, is responsible for safeguarding peace and stability. The EU force took over from a NATO-led mission in December 2004. International administration has helped the country maintain a fragile peace and work to repair war damage.

The Dayton Peace Accords set up two separate entities: a Muslim/Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Bosnian Serb Republic of Republika Srpska. Each entity has its own president, government, parliament, police and other governing bodies. Overarching these entities is a central Bosnian government with a rotating presidency. Critics of Dayton voiced fears that the two entities came too close to being states in their own right and that the arrangement reinforced separatism and nationalism at the expense of integration.

With this history of conflict and division in their minds and hearts, the members of the 2006 Global Youth Connect delegation traveled to Bosnia to explore some of the following questions:

- What are the roots of the conflict?
- Do the Dayton Peace Accords provide a framework for sustaining the peace? What are the dangers and possibilities in that framework?
- What was and is the role of international community in Bosnian conflict?
- How are the dynamics of justice, reconciliation, and peace building as experienced in Bosnia today?

- How can youth play a constructive role in these processes?
- What is the vision for the future?
- How can we support youth's efforts for peace and human rights?

"...I'm here because I lived in Sarajevo during the war and I got out in the beginning...I was very fortunate to be able to leave for the United States with my family. I think that it happened for a reason and that reason was for me to come back here and learn about how to prevent conflict and return the favor for allowing me to leave..."

Ana Bjelogrić
Washington, DC



"...It's been so inspirational for me to see how in the face of everything that has happened how kind everyone still is and how open they are...I really hope we can do something to help..."

Lydia Downing
Newburyport, Massachusetts

"...I think it is very important for people who don't live their lives through conflict to come and see something like this and truly understand it...people need to have a general understanding of what actually happens and what violence does to a community because I believe in the importance of intercultural dialogue and understanding."

Meredith McCormac
Washington, DC

Delegation Overview

Participants in the Global Youth Connect delegation to Bosnia spent time in Sarajevo, the capital of the country, which suffered from a 10,000-day siege from 1992-1995. The group also traveled to several locations in the provinces, including Sanski Most, Banja Luka and Mostar. The highlight of the group's experience in Bosnia was the visit to Srebrenica, the site of the largest massacre in Europe since the end of WWII, where approximately 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed in the course of one week. In addition to visiting these sites, the participants had an opportunity to meet with various Bosnian and international governmental and NGOs working on issues of human rights, community development, and youth empowerment and conflict resolution.

The delegation began with a conflict transformation workshop with Bosnian youth. The workshop created a space for mutual learning and sharing of the important lessons regarding different frameworks for observing and protecting human rights. This first week served as a learning laboratory and orientation to Bosnia, but was also as an opportunity for multi-cultural community-building, self-reflection, and deepening relationships with others across the differences of experience, culture, and history. The second week provided the participants with direct experience of working on some of these issues through fieldwork and volunteer projects with local Bosnian organizations; and the third week was filled with important meetings and site visits.

Transitional justice issues were a main focus of the delegation. When violent conflict ends the perpetrators and victims of violence must often resettle together in their communities. This can be immensely difficult in places like Bosnia where neighbors and even family members have attacked each other or fought on opposite sides of a conflict. The sheer numbers of participants in the violence, the various perceptions of who was in the "right" or in the "wrong" and the presence of struggling state institutions make the pursuit of justice and reconciliation quite complex. Yet it is important to have some means by which crimes committed during a period of violent conflict are acknowledged.

Center for Peacebuilding *Bosnian Partner Organization*

The Center for Peacebuilding is a non-political, non-governmental organization based in Bosnia and Herzegovina whose goals are peace building and violence prevention. They actively promote an understanding of human rights issues, especially with regards to the rights of women and children, teach non-violent communication and dialogue as tools for conflict transformation, and support a better understanding of cross-cultural, interreligious, and interethnic differences. The Center for Peacebuilding regularly conducts workshops, seminars, and meetings encouraging active listening, open dialogue and tolerance.



They have also organized three international peace camps exploring the themes of non-violent communication, the causes of conflict, and forgiveness and reconciliation. These camps are part of a larger goal to enable Bosnian participants to independently carry out peace work in their communities in hopes for a more rapid dissemination of reconciliation and peace. The Center for Peacebuilding also has programs engaging primary school children in non-violent communication workshops in order to build positive relationships and encourage peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, they work to foster a better understanding among different cultures, religions, and ethnicities and conducts workshops, seminars, and meetings where active listening, open dialogue, and tolerance are encouraged and developed.

Transitional Justice Workshop

At the Center for Peacebuilding the international participants from the Global Youth Connect delegation had the opportunity to work together with a group of 10 young Bosnians during a four-day workshop on transitional justice and conflict transformation in Bosnia. The primary focus of the workshop was to provide participants with skills and knowledge on conflict resolution and transformation. Bosnia served as a case study, but participants also gained specific tools for conflict analysis and resolution, such as models and frameworks for the analysis of the root causes of conflict and useful skills and tools such as how to engage in “action-research”.

WORKSHOP THEMES & HIGHLIGHTS

- Learning about the causes of conflict, conflict itself and conflict transformation
- Prejudice and stereotyping
- Identity and belonging
- Circle of revenge and reconciliation
- Dialogue and debate
- Transitional justice theory & mechanisms
- Learning a traditional Bosnian love song
- Attending *dzuma* prayer at the local mosque
- Visiting the “bone hall” (former concentration camp where bones and bodies are collected for identification)

In addition to building a knowledge base in the field of conflict resolution, participants focused on learning specific skills that enhance non-violent communication on both personal and group levels -- ranging from active listening to paraphrasing and from facilitation to mediation. Participants were asked to design and engage in role-plays and simulations that provided them with insights into planning, development, and implementing mediation and negotiation activities.

The workshop began with discussions and presentations on identity and prejudices based on stereotypes. This included interactive games, one of which required participants of different nationalities to project stereotypes they had encountered about each other. On this first day of the workshop, all the participants attended the *dzuma* prayer at the local mosque. After the prayer, the participants from Bosnia taught the participants from Global Youth Connect a beautiful song in their language.



Bosnia served as a case study in analyzing and understanding the two underlying values involved in transitional justice: justice and reconciliation. Although they appear to be at opposite ends of a spectrum, the goal in both cases is an end to the cycles that perpetuate war, violence, and human rights abuses. The notion of "no peace without justice" emerges forcefully in many communities. But justice can be based on retribution (i.e., punishment and corrective action for wrongdoing) or on restoration (i.e., emphasis on rebuilding relationships between the individuals and communities, by giving compensation to victims and making perpetrators compensate the community or individual for their actions). Reconciliation varies in meaning and significance for individuals. It can simply mean co-existence or it can mean dialogue, remorse, apology, forgiveness, and healing.

On the second day of the workshop, participants went on to explore the characteristics and differences between retributive and restorative justice and the identification of transitional justice mechanisms at the local, national and international levels. This session of the workshop was followed

by a presentation on reconciliation and a discussion on the “Circle of Revenge and Reconciliation.” All participants were actively engaged in the latter discussion based on the different stages that lead to peace and reconciliation. As a result of the personal and emotional nature of the exercise, this particular discussion stood out as a major bonding force among all participants. We focused on an important point about reconciliation (particularly in the Bosnian context where people co-existed for centuries) is that it is not an attempt to restore things to how they were before the conflict, but rather about reconstructing relationships in a way that allows everyone to move forward in a new way together. National reconciliation refers to a political form of consensus and interaction between parties and leaders. Societal reconciliation refers to the longer-term, more difficult process of community and individual reconciliation.

The final day of the workshop focused on the differences between dialogue and debate and the importance of dialogue in society. The participants split into different groups and were required to design mechanisms for transitional justice for Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Sample Proposal for Transitional Justice

Workshop participants were asked to analyze the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) through the lens of how 12 years of legal proceedings has (or has not) contributed to the reconciliation process on the ground. Working in small groups, participants assumed the role of civil society activists who are going to make recommendations to the international

community on how to create effective, locally sensitive transitional justice mechanisms.

Below is a sample of a proposal put forward by one group of participants:

Mission: Train facilitators who can work in Bosnia and Herzegovina to bring about peace and reconciliation.

Vision: Re-integrate Bosnia into international community and promote sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Objectives:

- Create a youth network that works together to promote sustainable peace and actively participates in the country’s development.
- Encourage everyone to transgress ethnic boundaries.
- Promote multi-ethnic participation in the educational processes of Bosnia and Herzegovina and internationally.
- Create a local center in Sanski Most that teaches and facilitates dialogue in the region.

Proposal:

- Use the Center for Peace building in Sanski Most for training
- Train 10 facilitators (from diverse ethnic backgrounds)
- Training should include fundraising methodologies
- Accommodation will be arranged by NGOs in the area (e.g. *Phoenix, Krajina Tear*)

Fieldwork Projects

As part of their time in Sanski Most, delegation participants had the opportunity to participate in short-term fieldwork projects, designed to provide them both with an opportunity to learn more about the work of local organizations as well as continue to develop their skills and knowledge through contributing to the daily work of organizations working to promote change in Bosnia. Below is a brief overview of the organizations and projects that the delegation members contributed to.

Center for Peacebuilding: Volunteers drafted a grant proposal for the building of the new Center for Peacebuilding. They also compiled and edited the activities and outcomes of the transitional justice workshop co-organized by Global Youth Connect and the Center for Peacebuilding.

GYC Volunteers: Rick Bennet, Ana Bjelogrić, Lydia Downing and Meredith McCormac

Dom Mladih Youth Center: This organization's is to support the strengthening of youth efforts in the community by providing psycho-social support, community building activities, democratization, strengthening civil society and working on reconciliation. They reach monthly more than 400 children and youth ages 5-20 years old through the following types of activities:

- Education: courses in foreign languages and computers
- Creative workshops: music, theater, journalism, dance and arts
- Recreational: table tennis, basketball, chess, dance parties, field trips
- Workshops: conflict resolution, human rights, ecology

Volunteers also drafted a grant proposal and planned interactive games and activities aimed at teaching English to the members of the youth center.

GYC Volunteers: Trish Morris and Naz Durakoglu

“Krajina Tear” Organization: For more than 10 years, “Krajina Tear” has worked to improve the living conditions of women, children, and elderly regardless of their national, racial, or political identity. Their current projects are:

- Providing direct care for a group of elderly in our space for eight hours a day;
- Ambulance/ home care for 200 patients;
- Women's club;
- Center for children with special needs.

Volunteers working with this group drafted a grant proposal, revised a program report for the previous year and helped to translate Bosnian materials into English. The group also participated in a visit to the home of an elderly woman who was left widowed by the war.

GYC Volunteers: Karen Mwaniki, Erin Vilardi and Kristy Smithson

GYC Documentation Project: This group focused on collecting interviews, video and photo footage and oral history throughout the delegation. They collected information on the work and stories of Bosnian youth activists involved in post-conflict reconstruction, the work of the Center for Peacebuilding and the activities of the organizations which Global Youth Connect delegation members met throughout the delegation visits in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

GYC Volunteers: Judith van Raalten and Eli Klemperer

Banja Luka

Helsinki Citizens' Assembly

As part of site visits to various organizations in Banja Luka, the delegation met with representatives of the *Helsinki Citizens' Assembly* to learn more about the history and activities of the organization.



The *Helsinki Citizens' Assembly* is a local non-governmental organization in Republika Srpska/Bosnia and Herzegovina, founded in 1996. The organization advocates for the equal representation and the involvement in society of all members of the community. It was originally targeted those who were not directly involved in the war because it was easier for these individuals – mainly women and the youth – to communicate with each other. They now reach out to everyone,

especially marginalized groups of people, with a specific interest in youth, women and national minorities. Through their work encouraging and promoting youth and women's participation in political and social life, they hope to reinforce the idea of individuals as "citizens" as opposed to members of specific ethnicities.

Genesis Project, UNICEF

This local non-governmental organization produces children's educational programs based on a variety of topics and their main goals are to:

- Reduce the negative impact of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO)
- Raise awareness about the on-going and long-term danger from mines and UXO
- Initiate and support "community schools"



- Provide mine risk education and education on children's rights and other topics through the use of interactive educational activities such as live puppet show performances
- Educate children and youth about healthy life styles
- Develop and support various co-existence initiatives throughout Bosnia

- Strengthen communities with the purpose of teaching people about freedom of speech, democracy, basic human rights.

As the highlight of our visit, we watched two episodes of a TV show they produced that encouraged Bosnian kids to learn more about the Roma culture and help improve tolerance and understanding in the country.

Omladinski Centar "Kastel"

Omladinski Centar "Kastel", a youth center in Banja Luka, serves children and youth aged between 7 and 27 years through three main programs:

- Non-formal education, which includes a variety of language and computer courses
- Creative and recreational activities such as drama, aerobics and dancing
- Prevention and volunteerism which includes education on drug abuse prevention, sexual and reproductive health and human rights

The youth center is always full and has a long list of individuals who are waiting to join. They are currently trying to expand their premises to accommodate a larger group of people.

Some members of the youth center work at a local radio station, *Radio Balkan* which allows young people to express themselves and interact with other young people in discussions surrounding youth issues.

Banja Luka College

The delegation met with the director of Banja Luka College, a private educational institution, who spoke about the history of the college's establishment as well as his hopes to improve the quality of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through this exchange, delegation participants shared their views on the systems of education found in the United States of America and various European countries.

Later, some students from Banja Luka College took some members of the delegation on a nature excursion which facilitated further discussion on issues in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Srebrenica

Udruzenje Sara

On arrival in Srebrenica, the Global Youth Connect visited, *Udruzenje Sara*, a youth organization which acts as an educational resource center for youth in Srebrenica and surrounding villages. A representative from the organization gave a brief presentation on the history and activities of the youth center.

Udruzenje Sara was founded in 1999, first as an educational resource center located at the local town hall, but has since evolved into the most active organization in the region with several important strategic efforts, which include:

- Education resource program
- Drug abuse prevention
- Psycho-social support through economic empowerment
- Various public information campaigns, such as promoting volunteerism and supporting local collaboration between NGOs and local government.

The organization works with the goal of promoting democracy and economic prosperity in the Srebrenica region. Most of their recent efforts have been focused on promoting peace, tolerance and co-existence through dialogue on various levels, as well as supporting local community development

though citizens' participation and strengthening citizen's initiatives. To accomplish these tasks, Udruzenje Sara has already started collaborating with other groups as part of a broad program called "Returnees Reintegration in North-East Bosnia", as the return of refugees and internally displaced persons is viewed as a major factor in stabilizing the region. Additionally, they are developing a major public campaign that will strengthen the general public's participation in local community governance, mostly through a series of meetings and town hall gatherings which will help to identify the most important priorities moving into upcoming elections in Bosnia.

The delegation members met with a group of young Bosniak men from surrounding villages, all refugee returnees to the area who were the same age as the delegation participants. All were young boys when the massacres happened and all of them lost their fathers and brothers. They were forced to come back since there were no opportunities for them in other parts of Bosnia. However, they were facing major challenges. For example, all their villages were about 25-30 kilometers from the town, yet there is not organized transportation. For 3 or 4 months during the winter, these young people are completely cut off from the rest of the world. The group really bonded with those young men and they joined us for the tour of the town, took us to a neighboring waterfall, and spend the night and the next day with us. It was in a sense a "tough" reality check. Most of the youth we met elsewhere were former refugees or have had more indirect experiences with the war. These young men are still living daily with its outcomes. Their courage and commitment to their town were very inspirational.

Potocari and Commemoration of Srebrenica Massacre

On July 11th, the delegation members joined more than 50,000 other people from all over the world to attend the 11th commemoration of the Srebrenica massacre.

In the morning, we walked over to the site where in 1995 over 20,000 people awaited their destiny: women and children were put on buses and men were murdered over the course of four days. We walked through the rooms of the Dutch battalion at the former UN base at Potocari and then visited the

museum and the site of several mass executions. Then the Bosnian Ambassador to the US came to speak with our group.



Eventually, we moved to the site of commemoration which is mostly a religious ceremony followed by a mass funeral. We witnessed the burial of 505 people. We spent the whole day at the site, attending the prayers and witnessing the funeral processions. As soon as the rituals were over, the large groups of visitors left the site and we were literally the last people left. It was very powerful to see that shift—from an empty town, to overcrowded memorial site, back to just us left at the graveyard and memorial site.

Another moving experience happened later that evening. Fadila, our host in Srebrenica, was interviewed live for the Bosnian TV so we all decided to go back with her to the memorial site. When we got there, the crew was not ready yet, so we were just talking when one member of our delegation, Judith van Raalten, had the brilliant idea to begin cleaning up the site which had been trashed with bottles and food everywhere. Our group self-organized quickly and in one hour cleaned up the mess created by 50,000 people! There is only one staff at the memorial site and he provided us with trash bags. He actually had tears in his eyes. He was very grateful for our help and said it would have taken him a week to clean it up by himself. Later, Bosnia TV mentioned our group and how we had helped cleaned up the site (although they missed the opportunity to chastise those who left such a mess in the first place). Indeed, it was a wonderful and moving experience for all!

Sarajevo

Promoting Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Bosnia

Jakov Finci, the head of the Jewish community in Sarajevo spoke to the Global Youth Connect delegation members about his efforts to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to transition peacefully through the pain caused by the war, thus facilitating effective healing and enabling the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to advance and develop. His vision is to build a commission that will have a structure similar to that of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and will be stationed in most of the major towns and cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The commission will be driven mainly by religious leaders but hopes are high to include key government officials, and broad participation from civil society.

Some argue that a truth and reconciliation commission would fill in the gaps left by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The commission would allow both victims and perpetrators to tell their stories and have them officially recorded. Jakov Finci hopes that the process would serve as a form of "psychotherapy for the victims." Although the hearings would be painful, he noted that it is better

to take a bitter pill now "than to live for 30 to 40 years in hate, and then have a new war."

In addition to promoting healing, experts say the commission could serve another important purpose. Currently, the three communities (Muslim, Serbian and Croatian) are teaching their children three different folk histories of the war. As the children age, these different stories could easily spark new violence. The commission's proponents hope that a truth commission could establish an official history for the country. Currently, the law to create the commission is before Bosnian parliament. However, many believe that it will be difficult for it to be approved by Bosnia and Herzegovina's nationalist politicians.

Randy and Amela Puljek-Shank who work with the *Mennonite Central Committee for Southeast Europe* also spoke to the delegation members about the process of reconciliation and healing. They reintroduced the "Circle of Revenge and Reconciliation" during the discussion and explained the steps taken in order to achieve peace and reconciliation in any given society, especially in a post-war situation.

Combating Human Trafficking

In a meeting with Selma Hadzihalovic, director of *Bosnia-Herzegovina Anti-Trafficking Community Mobilization*, delegation members had the chance to learn about how human trafficking has become a major post-war issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Exploiting the world's growing openness and interconnectedness, human trafficking is one of the most pernicious and elusive facets of organized crime in the Balkans. The discussion also focused on the efforts that various non-governmental organizations are putting in to lower the rates and occurrences of human trafficking both in Bosnia and in the surrounding areas. In response to the trafficking crisis, the STAR Network of World Learning has launched two related projects: the Bosnia-Herzegovina: the Anti-Trafficking Community Mobilization Project (BATCOM), started in October 2002 and the Croatia Trafficking Prevention Activity (CTPA), started in September 2004.

The common public perception is that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a "country of transit," a place where victims from other countries are trafficked on their

way to their eventual destination, but that local residents are not at risk. BATCOM focuses on expanding public awareness that Bosnia is also a "country of origin", whose own citizens can be and are being trafficked. BATCOM seeks to battle this modern scourge by developing prevention programs, expanding communication and information exchange and using public policy advocacy to press the Bosnia and Herzegovina government and international powers to make prevention of trafficking a priority.. BATCOM's approach addresses local needs through actions needed by specific communities, using local expertise.

The delegation members also met with a representative from the United Nations Development Agency (UNDP) who spoke about projects aimed at empowering women in society.

Political Representation

The director of Global Rights, Diana Sehic, spoke with the delegation members about efforts that they are taking to achieve the equal representation of opinion in government and politics. In the process of reconstruction and development of the country, Bosnia and Herzegovina aims at achieving a truly democratic society where everyone's rights are equally and fairly represented through their inclusion in decision-making processes and leadership positions.

"Good People in an Evil Time"

Dr. Svetlana Broz, a cardiologist by training and the granddaughter of the late former president of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, moved to Bosnia during the war where she worked as a cardiologist hoping to help those affected by the war. She heard many different testimonials from her patients about individuals who helped them during the war despite differences in ethnicity. This fascinated her and she began to collect and record these testimonies, inspired by the courage around her. She published the book *Good People in an Evil Time* based on these testimonials and the book was well received especially among the youth. The book included testimonials from the all three ethnic groups found in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dr. Broz went on to establish *The Garden of The Righteous*, a non-governmental and non-profit

organization based in Sarajevo. This organization enables the commemoration of human suffering in recent wars in Europe as well as serves as a memorial to those who opposed the abuse, humiliation, torture and murder of innocent people based on their ethnicities and/or religious differences.

Abraham's Vision

During our time in Sarajevo we met with an Israeli-Palestinian group which was also visiting Bosnia through the work of *Abraham's Vision*. The group included 24 Jewish and Arab students from various universities in the US. In addition to traveling around Bosnia and learning about conflicts in the Balkans, they also had intense dialogue sessions about the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Our two groups met for a dinner where participants sat at mixed tables and had a chance to get to know each other. We then watched the film *Grbavica* which tackles the issue of war-time rape and its long-lasting impact on Bosnian women and society as a whole.

Mostar

The delegation took a brief trip to Mostar, a town well known for its bridge from which divers plunge into a river over 40 feet below. The town was drastically destroyed during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but is in the process of reconstruction and attracts a large number of tourists from around the world.



Next Steps

Throughout the delegation experience, participants were inspired and moved by the stories shared with them. From the hope of the many young people they met along the way and the hope for change demonstrated by the many organizations working to promote healing and reconciliation, participants learned a lot about the ways in which they can continue to support the on-going peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia through sharing their experiences with others and through taking on projects that will contribute to the efforts for change already underway.



Over the coming months, delegation members will work to raise funds to invest into youth projects aimed at promoting human rights, conflict resolution and reconciliation in Bosnia as well as help raise awareness in communities throughout the U.S. by speaking at the schools and in other public forums, such as a public forum organized by GYC in New York City and a conference on genocide prevention held at Fordham University, about the conflict in Bosnia and the prospects for sustainable peace. One delegation member, Judith van Raalten, is hoping to use the documentary photographs she took during the trip as means to educate others about Bosnia. Another delegation member, Rick Bennett, had a letter to the editor published in the *New York Times* which pointed out the need for additional resources to be invested in areas outside of Sarajevo. Another delegation member, Meredith McCormac, is writing her master's thesis on post-conflict Bosnia.

Global Youth Connect will build off of the activities of this first delegation to Bosnia by supporting the delegation member's fundraising efforts through administering a small grants fund for Bosnia and organizing a second delegation to Bosnia in the summer of 2007. We will also continue to organize public forums for participants to share their experiences in Bosnia with a broader community in the U.S. GYC is developing an educational curriculum for high school students which will highlight the roots of conflict and the efforts for reconciliation. This educational workshop will be piloted in the spring of 2007 as part of a youth initiative underway in GYC's home community of the Hudson Valley in upstate New York. Furthermore, Global Youth Connect has invited Vahadin Omanovic, the director of the Center for Peacebuilding, to serve as a guest facilitator for a human rights and conflict transformation workshop we are organizing for young peacemakers in Nepal in March 2007.



GYC Participant Bios

Rick Bennet

Rick is a philosophy major at Yale University with a concentration in ethics. He recently returned from studying in the Czech Republic, where he focused on European politics and contemporary European political history. During his time abroad, Rick interned with the government of the Czech Republic Department of Information on European Affairs where he was responsible for the English content of the department's website and served as the department's English speaking correspondent and coordinator of visits with foreign diplomats and journalists. He is presently a Global Studies Fellow at the Global Studies Foundation in New

Hampshire where he is engaged in research on the topic of 'global literacy'. His past experiences include interning with the AIDS in Asia Initiative, Psychological Associates, and the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS at Yale University. He is also deeply involved with a university a cappella ensemble as performance director, tour manager, alumni coordinator, and member.

Ana Bjelogric

Born to a Bosnian mother and Serbian father, Ana spent most of her life growing up in DC with the exception of three and a half years living in Sarajevo. Her family moved to Sarajevo in 1989 and back to the US after the beginning of the war in 1992. These years spent in Bosnia have had a strong influence on defining her character as well as her life goals. Ana currently works as a paralegal at Harris, Wiltshire & Grannis LLP. She has a BA from the University of Maryland with a double major in English and communication. Through this program, Ana hopes to learn more about reconciliation and recovery processes in Bosnia and experience the conflict from the perspective of the international community involved in post-conflict reconstruction. She plans to pursue a graduate degree in international relations in fall 2006 and continue her career with the State Department, UN, or a development agency. Ana is fluent in Serbian and English, proficient in French, Croatian, and Bosnian and is at a self-taught beginner's level in Russian.

Lydia Downing

Lydia's passionate interest in human rights began at a young age with an intellectual curiosity concerning the Holocaust. During high school, she participated in Facing History and Ourselves, a program that focuses on human rights abuses and enables participants to travel to Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic to see concentration camps first hand. She also traveled to the Netherlands with this program to witness war crimes trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and to visit the International Criminal Court. These experiences sparked her career aspirations of pursuing a degree in international human rights law. Lydia is currently a sophomore at Colorado College where she is studying political science, especially with regards to international politics, minority issues, and human rights. Lydia recently received a grant from her college to attend an International Youth Leadership Conference in Prague where she participated in model ICC proceedings, model UN sessions, and model Parliament proceedings with students from all over the world.

Naz Durakoglu

A Turkish-American, Naz is a senior at Rutgers University. Her fascination with the mind's ability to form unique perceptions of the world inspired her

decision to double major in philosophy and psychology. She is currently writing her two honors BA theses involving in-depth analyses of the mind and its processes. She is also very interested in international politics and human rights and tries to integrate her varying academic interests whenever possible. She currently works as an expository writing tutor and this experience has enabled her to balance her personal opinions with listening to those of others. Naz has also worked as an office assistant and translator at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and production assistant at Radical Media and Rome in a Day Production in NYC. Committed to on-campus involvement, she is a member of Oxfam International, head of the judicial committee in Zeta Tau Alpha, and participates in the Rutgers University honors program. She is fluent in Turkish and has advanced language skills in French.

Elias Klemperer

Eli is a senior at Berea High School where he is involved in numerous activities, including being captain and quarterback of the football team, participant in model United Nations, and member of the environmental club. Throughout high school his interest in politics and anti-violence advocacy has resulted in his participation in anti-war protests and active volunteerism in his local community. He hopes to continue his passion for human rights advocacy through the GYC program in Bosnia. Eli spent the summer of 2004 living in the rainforest of Ecuador with the indigenous Kichwa people focusing on sustainability and preservation of their culture and environment. He is an avid photographer, has participated in numerous orchestras and percussion ensembles, and enjoys snowboarding.

Meredith McCormac

Meredith is a graduate student at the School for International Service at American University. Through this program, she is focusing on human rights, ethnic and religious conflict, and the use culture and religion as a means for peacebuilding. She received her BA from the University of Oklahoma in religious studies with a minor in philosophy. During her time as undergraduate, she spent 3 months backpacking in Europe for a course in art history, a semester abroad in Austria, and participated in the Council of the Parliament of World Religions program in Barcelona on full scholarship. These experiences ignited her desires to work internationally, especially with relation to the former Yugoslavia. She is currently working as an intern at the Journal of Peacebuilding and Development in Washington, where she recruits scholars to write and review articles for the journal.

Trish Morris

Trish is currently a sophomore at Wellesley College with a double major in French and political science. At 9 months old, she moved with her family to Kuwait, where she lived for 13 years before returning to Boston. In high school, she took a course entitled "Facing History and Ourselves about the Horrors of Genocide and the Roles of Resisters and Bystanders". With this class she traveled to Eastern Europe to visit the concentration camps of WWII and Holocaust memorials, and to the Netherlands to visit the ICTY and ICC. This trip affected her profoundly and re-defined her perspective on international relations and human rights. Since this experience, Trish has been actively pursuing her interest in human rights and international law and justice through her coursework, as well as involvement in organizations such as Save Darfur and Wellesley college democrats. Trish has advanced skills in the French language, as she has spent two successive summers in France. She also has basic conversation skills in Arabic.

Karen Mwaniki

Karen is a first year Kenyan international student at Wellesley College studying Biology. At the age of 18, she studied at the Mahindra United World College of India on a full scholarship from where she has an International Baccalaureate diploma. Community service work has always held an important place in Karen's life through her volunteering at children's homes in Kenya, a home for physically and mentally handicapped in India, and currently at Wellesley Words on Wheels, a program that helps kindergarteners learn how to read. During her schooling in Kenya, Karen played on the school hockey team and also was awarded the Best Spirit of Service Award for four consecutive years and the Philanthropy and Volunteerism Award from the First Conference on Philanthropy and Volunteerism in East Africa. Karen plans to pursue a profession in public health after graduation and hopes to improve the state of health in her home country and work in solidarity with individuals across the world to achieve a common respect for health-related issues. She is fluent in English, Swahili, French, and Kamba.

Amy Schachman

Amy is a human rights and photography major at Barnard College at Columbia University. Her extensive experience with community service work began before her freshman year when she was selected to participate in the Columbia Urban Experience (CUE), a community service pre-orientation program through Columbia University. She is now a leader for groups of incoming freshman through this program and is also active in tutoring in NYC public schools, mentoring through the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization, and counseling rape and domestic violence victims through the Crime Victims Treatment Center. She is also a volunteer

coordinator at K.I.D.S. Worldwide, a virtual intern at To Love Children Educational Foundation, and a staff member at the Cyrano Project, a non-profit organization in NYC. Amy is fluent in Italian, has extensive knowledge of Spanish, French, and Latin, and is at a beginner's level in Finnish and Arabic. She hopes to one day become an educator, through which she can have a positive and enduring effect on the world.

Kristy Smithson

Kristy is a junior at the University of Texas-Austin studying anthropology, history, and government on a full scholarship. She hopes that her chosen areas of study will guide her how to best encourage peaceful relations and address issues related to global poverty. She is also interested in post-genocide rebuilding and reconciliation processes, especially with regards to Bosnia. Kristy spent much of middle and high school working with low-income children and has been concerned with both the alleviation of poverty, as well as the addressing the root causes. She has spent four weeks traveling in the western part of Turkey as well as four weeks on an archaeological dig in Belize. She is currently studying abroad in Granada, Spain. After graduation, Kristy plans to enroll in the Masters International program with the Peace Corps and spend one year of study at a US university, followed by two years of international service.

Judith van Raalten

A Dutch citizen, Judith works as a research assistant in social psychology and lecturer in philosophy at the University of Hawaii-Hilo. She also works as a part-time teacher and fiscal assistant at the Ka Puhana Family Life Center for Hawaiian Youth at Risk and as a research assistant on issues of ethnic conflict. Through this research she is exploring the impacts of several peace programs across the world and their long term effects on participating individuals. She received her masters in philosophy from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and has extensive experience teaching in the fields of philosophy and psychology. Her research, teaching, and traveling experiences have encouraged her to continue her studies and pursue a PhD in peace and conflict and/or social psychology with an emphasis on ethnic identity in the future. She hopes to increase people's understanding of human rights (both in theory and practice) and raise awareness of people's cultural ties. Judith is fluent in Dutch and English and also has good language skills in German and French.

Erin Vilardi

Erin is currently the Program Manager of the White House Project, a national nonprofit dedicated to increasing women's leadership, where she manages the two largest programs of the organization. These programs aim at increasing women's leadership in the

national security dialogue and train women to run for office across the country. She also volunteers with the New York Metro Chapter of the Younger Women's Task Force, where she serves as the Finance Director. Erin has a BA from New York University with a double major in politics and gender and sexuality studies. Her professional experiences include working as an elections research intern and research and outreach coordinator at The White House Project and as a resident assistant at NYU. She has been recognized as a young progressive leader by Emerging Progressives, Campaign for America's Future, and National Council of Women's Organizations. Erin hopes to complete law school with a dual degree in communications or public policy and to continue her work of establishing better relationships between government and community development programs and addressing the root causes of stalled development and under representation.

Bosnian Participant Bios

Jasmina Ramic

Jasmina works as a teacher in primary school "Hasan Kikic" in Sanski Most. She provides instruction for 3rd, 6th and 8th grades, focusing on overall education and specifically teaching Bosnian language and history. She was expelled from Sanski Most during the war in Bosnia and lived as a refugee in a few European countries; she finished her education in Slovenia. Jasmina is fluent in Bosnian, Slovenian and English and I has a working level of German (she's been studying it for two years). Jasmina is a volunteer at the Center for Peace building in Sanski Most.

Aida Begic

Aida was born on January 10th 1988 in Prijedor, where she lived through the period of war and ethnic cleansing as a small child. After the war, her family left Prijedor and moved to Sanski Most, which became part of the Bosnian Federation. She finished grammar school and high school in Sanski Most with a slight delay due to the fact that the family moved around. Aida is now planning to study English language and literature at Sarajevo University (since there are no Universities or higher education institutions in this part of Bosnia, she would have to move to the capital). Aida speaks active English and German; additionally she finished elementary music school--direction piano. Her hobbies including playing classical music, all dances, reading, and taking care about all kinds of animals. Aida is a full time volunteer at the Center for Peace building in Sanski Most.

Edina Kazic

Edina was born on October 25th 1987 in Sanski Most, where she started and finished grammar school. During the war, she and her family were expelled from Sanski

Most and had to move to Travnik, where her father was killed when she was only five years old. She finished two grades of primary school in Travnik and the rest in Sanski Most. Since her father died, she has been supporting her family and helping raise her younger brother. She volunteers at women's Center "Krajina Tear" and enjoyed practicing yoga and playing basketball. This fall, Edina is planning to study social pedagogy in Zenica.

Ismir Harambasic

Ismir is a junior at a local high school in Sanski Most; he finished grammar school and high school in Sweden where his family took refuge during the war in Bosnia; due to the different educational systems, he was not able to certify his high school diploma and is forced to go to a Bosnian high school for two more years. Ismir's biggest passion is video production and he much enjoys creating and editing videos. In the future, he hopes to work in television or in a similar job where he can use his creativity and video skills. He has volunteered at a local Youth Center in Sanski Most for a couple of years; his additional passion is meeting new people.

Zarko Trivunic

Zarko was born on June 7th 1981 in Prijedor, a regional center in Republika Srpska. He finished high school in Prijedor and was enrolled at the University of Banja Luka school of journalism for a while, but could not afford to continue with his studies. Currently, Zarko is the executive director of Prijedor's youth center called "Svjetionik" (Lighthouse). The organization provides training for young people interested in media and journalism work. Additionally, he has worked as a journalist on the local TV station in Prijedor. Zarko loves to travel and meet new people.

Selma Pasagic

Selma was born on July 3rd 1989 in Sanski Most. She's just finished second grade of the local high school in Sanski Most. Last year, she was elected the best student in her class, particularly since she has focused much of her attention to the local community needs—she has volunteered at the Youth Center in Sanski Most and the women's club "Phoenix". Selma's hobbies include collecting stamps and playing guitar". Additionally, she is a president of her school's environmental section since her biggest passion is nature. Selma also enjoys reading books and listening to the music. She would love to study medicine and be involved in humanitarian work.

Almen Osmanovic

Almen was born on January 24th 1989 in Bosanski Novi, but because of the war he and his family had to leave his

hometown and move to Sanski Most. He is currently attending high school "Amir Zilic". Almin just finished 3rd grade (high school junior) and he has many hobbies: acting, "folklore" dancing, playing football, riding bicycle. Additionally, Almen is very active in local community and volunteers at the local Youth Center as well as Center for Peace building in Sanski Most

Lasic Dina

Dina's family spent most of the Bosnian war in Sweden and came back after the end of the hostilities in 1996. She now attends high school in Sanski Most, where she has finished 1st grade. Dina has a lot of hobbies: playing piano, tennis, and writing articles for local papers. She can speak German, Swedish and English a bit. Since she loves meeting new people and organizing activities, she volunteers at a local "Youth Club". Additionally, Dina loves to travel; she is hoping that she'd be able to study at the University in Sarajevo and eventually be involved in humanitarian work.

Mirjana Banovic

Mirajana was born on November 22nd 1981. She lived in Sanski Most until the October 1995, and then moved to Prijedor (Republika Srpska) where she lived for five years. There, she went to high school and came back to Sanski Most in 2000. As soon as she came back to Sanski Most, she became an active member of Youth Club and got involved in humanitarian work. In July 2002 she became involved in "Peace Trails" youth leadership adventure program, which lasted for a year. That project gave her an opportunity to work on her own project called "young amateur artists club". That project has been changed and now it's gathering young people from all over the Bosnia. Those young people involved in the projects are mostly students and volunteers. Currently, Mirjana is studying management in Prijedor. Additionally, she is working for a Youth Council in Sanski Most. Mirjana's motto: "Never give up."

Facilitator Bios

Miki Jacevic

Miki is a human rights activist and peace program specialist from Sarajevo, Bosnia Hercegovina. He is a co-founder of Global Youth Connect where he is now organizing GYC's first delegation to Bosnia. In addition, Miki works full-time as a senior policy officer at the Initiative for Inclusive Security where he oversees policy efforts aimed at including civil society in formal and informal peace processes. Before the war in Bosnia, Miki headed the UN Youth Chapter and was president of the local committee of AIESEC, the largest student association in the world. During the war, he was involved in numerous projects to ease the suffering of

youth and the elderly. In 1994, he founded and directed Collegium Bosniacum, an organization of Bosnian students in Europe. Out of that work grew the initiative, Academic Lifeline for Bosnia Hercegovina, which aimed at rebuilding the country's academic institutions. In 1995, Miki headed the Vienna office of the World University Service, dealing with education issues in troubled regions. During this time, he also lived and worked in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Palestine, and Central American countries.

Miki has consulted with many conflict resolution organizations, including Search for Common Ground, where he led efforts to develop child soldiers programs. He has led several delegations of international activists and conflict resolution practitioners to various post-conflict settings, including the Balkans, Northern Ireland, South Africa and Guatemala. He has served on the Board of Directors of several organizations, including the KARUNA Center for Peace building, Global Youth Action, Sustaining the Soul that Serves, State of the World Forum, and others. He has been honored with numerous awards, including the Fetzer Institute Fellowship, Rotary International Scholarship, Soros Foundation Scholarship, State of the World Forum ChangeMaker award 1999, and honorary President of the Bosnian Student Union. Miki holds a Master of Science degree in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University. He teaches in the Conflict Transformation Across Cultures Program, (CONTACT) Summer Peace building Institute at the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, and is an associate faculty member for the Trauma and Conflict Program at Prescott Collage in Arizona.

Vahidin Omanovic

Vahidin Omanovic is a founder and director of the Center for Peacebuilding, a non-political, non-governmental organization based in Sanski Most, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has worked as a liaison, trainer, and project manager for the organization whose goals are peacebuilding, reconciliation and the prevention of violence. Vahidin has designed and facilitated workshops and interpersonal dialogue groups, taught non-violent communication and conflict transformation, supervised personnel, created budget and grant proposals, and trained youth camps in Macedonia, Kosova, and all across Bosnia and Herzegovina. He holds a master's degree in International and Intercultural Management from the School for International Training in Vermont and a Professional Certificate in Intercultural Peacebuilding. Vahidin is also an Imam, and he graduated from Islamic theological school with an Imam, Teacher, and Preacher Diploma in 1998. Before establishing the Center for Peacebuilding, he worked as a foreign language instructor in primary and middle schools, an administrative assistant to the Bosnian Army. During the war in Bosnia, while still in his teens, he served as a counselor, liaison, teacher and religious leader at refugee camps in Slovenia. Vahidin has given numerous presentations on Bosnia and Intercultural Conflict Transformation in numerous European countries and the United States. Vahidin is fluent in Bosnian, English, Arabic, and Slovenian, and has strong conversational skills in Spanish, Italian, Turkish, and Russian.