

Global Youth Connect

Bosnia Program Report

*Human Rights Delegation for Young Leaders
June 27 – July 17, 2007*

Organized in Collaboration with the Center for Peacebuilding



Bosnia: 2007¹

Today, Bosnia and Hercegovina is no longer at war. But neither is it a country at peace. Rather, Bosnia is evolving, healing and rebuilding, caught somewhere in between peace and war. The fighting has ended, but a true peace has yet to arrive.

With this context in mind, Global Youth Connect and the Center for Peacebuilding are working in partnership in Bosnia. As part of our global work to empower youth as peacebuilders and human rights activists, we consciously and purposefully stand in solidarity with both Bosnian peace organizations and Bosnian youth activists. We join with them at a unique time in the country's development to analyze its violent past and learn what is necessary to effectively build a strong foundation for peace. It is now – in the fragile process of transitioning between war and peace – that the greatest lessons of both have the potential to reveal themselves. For this and many other reasons, Bosnia demands our attention, commands our respect and deserves our support.



Two women mourn at memorial service in Srebrenica

In the twelve years since the end of the war and the signing of the Dayton peace accords, there has been visible change and incremental progress in Bosnia. In many corners, there is optimism and hope of reconciliation, justice and the restoration of human rights. Yet, like most post-

conflict nations, there remain many challenges -- physical, political, social, and psychological – to overcome before lasting peace can become a reality. Furthermore, the international community has largely moved on, attempting to “put out the fires” of new conflicts. As resources and attention dwindle year after year, local organizations in Bosnia often struggle to attract the funding and support they need. Despite the great work that has been done to date, the process of peacebuilding is an arduous and complex task, work that is likely to be critical for the foreseeable future. Much work remains to be done to promote reconciliation, heal wounds and prevent future conflicts. Significant investment also needs to be made to engage the young generation to act as peacemakers.

The majority of our work has been centered in the community of Sanski Most, the home of our partner, the Center for Peacebuilding. Since the end of the war, the development and reconstruction of rural Bosnia has happened at an uneven pace. Some villages look as if they had never seen the war; others look as if the fires were still warm. Sanski Most suffered terribly during the war. Today, its citizens are tentatively healing, slowly trading in dark memories and fear for a brighter, more hopeful future.

For three weeks during the summer of 2007, youth leaders from the U.S. and other countries had the opportunity to learn from and work in collaboration with Bosnian youth leaders and local peace groups to:

- ✧ Strengthen conflict transformation skills;
- ✧ Learned methods, and practices used by Bosnian peacebuilders and discuss the challenges they face in their work;
- ✧ Analyze and assess the post-conflict needs of Bosnia, with a particular focus on the challenges of reconciliation and justice and the impact of a legacy of violence on youth;
- ✧ Listen to the stories of and engage in dialogue with Bosnians whose lives had been affected by the war; and
- ✧ Contribute to on-going peace work in the community of Sanski Most.

¹ Special thanks to Sean Anderson-Branowitz, Meredith McCormac and GYC staff for their contributions to this report. Photographs are courtesy of: Meredith McCormac, Sean Anderson-Branowitz, Karen Leve and Alecsa Vlaicu

Learning Community Workshop

Over the course of a 3-day workshop during their first days in Sanski Most, the GYC participants joined together with Bosnian youth for a peacebuilding and conflict transformation workshop. Participants learned at an intense pace: about themselves and about each other, about the history of Bosnia and its conflict, and about the discipline, theory, and practice of peacebuilding and reconciliation.



GYC delegates participating in the Learning Community workshop

A major objective of the workshop was to help participants better understand what needs to be done to due address and assuage the myriad of problems that arise in any post-conflict situation. For example, workshop participants discussed the following types of complex questions throughout their time together:

- ✧ What role should “forgiveness” play in reconciliation?
- ✧ How do you foster dialogue among different groups from opposite sides of conflict?
- ✧ What can be done to promote inter-ethnic cooperation in Bosnia?
- ✧ What are the necessary preconditions for lasting peace?
- ✧ What is restorative justice and is it an effective tool in the case of Bosnia?

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice is an alternative method to the standard retributive model of post-conflict reconstruction.

The restorative process encourages the healing of rifts created by violence -- rather than the punishment of the guilty -- by more directly involving the victim, the accused, and the family or community in a cycle of dialogue and revelation. Crime is viewed as an act against a human relationship, rather than as one against society as a whole and as an abstract.

Though this method has been implemented in Bosnia on a small scale by local NGOs, it has yet to gain more widespread application. However, the nature of restorative justice—relying on the intimate, communal bonds of small populations and direct relationships between the parties—plays well for those small organizations that are devoted to it.

International Commission on Missing Persons

During their visit to the International Commission on Missing Persons in Sanski Most, delegation members learned that bodies exhumed from mass graves are meticulously stored, catalogued, and identified through DNA analysis. Some bodies have been exhumed again from family plots to make the identity of the body absolutely certain, often repeating the grief of the family for a second time.

The mechanical procedure of the work betrays the brutal spectacle of the hall of bones, rows upon rows of pieces of people. Identification is made particularly difficult by the Bosnian Serb’s systematic transport of bodies from one grave to another miles away, and also by the practice of obliterating bodies with grenades. Often the only remainder of a person is a small nameless bag on a shelf.

The delegates were struck by the ad hoc nature of the facility. Workers often have no background

in forensic sciences, little training, and most crucial of all, no psychological support amidst the constant stream of bones and reminders of the savage violence: one worker showed the delegates a vertebrae with a thin horizontal scar etched through it, evidence of a throat slashed so forcefully that it struck bone.

Fieldwork with NGOs in Sanski Most

After the workshop, delegation members spent a week contributing to various fieldwork projects in several local organizations. In the process, they learned more about how NGOs work and multiple challenges they face in a provincial area of a country emerging from violent conflict.



Center for Peacebuilding

The Center for Peacebuilding, GYC's partner organization in Bosnia, was founded by Vahidin Omanovic in order to fill a void in the greater Sanski Most area for non-political peacebuilding, reconciliation, and nonviolence education. The Center has worked with both Serbs and Bosniaks to rebuild the shattered relationships and to try and erase the fear of confronting "the other."

During their fieldwork, GYC participants working at the Center revised a grant proposal, and created pamphlets and handouts to promote awareness of the Center and the work it hopes to accomplish.

Dom Mladih Youth Center

The Dom Mladih Youth Center provides one of the few places for the young people of Sanski Most to gather, play, and receive social and psychological support. The Center fosters the renewal of community consciousness through outreach to the vulnerable demographics of children and youth, aged five to twenty.

A little kitchen, a small internet hub, and rooms plastered with drawings of houses and families filled the small center and its modest backyard—spotted with battered swings and a hoopless basketball rim. The delegates played with the children and coordinated art activities -- including some incorporating practices of non-violence.

Krajina Tear

Krajina Tear began in 1994 in the besieged city of Travnik. The women and children bonded under the assault, coming together to resist the everyday suffering caused by the attack. Today, Krajina Tear continues the mission of compassion, administering direct physical and emotional care to women, children, and the elderly, as well as providing space for special needs education and an organized group of active, concerned women.

The delegates helped translate a grant proposal to provide staffing for a now empty playroom designed for children with special needs and learning center, organized a presentation on the accomplishments and activities of the center, as well as participated in site visits around Sanski Most to the homes of elderly citizens often ignored by government services and care.

Sanski Most Municipality and LORCA Local Development Center

Beginning this year, the municipality of Sanski Most partnered with *LORCA*, a local development organization focused on the dispensing of micro loans and the resuscitation of small businesses. This was a rare instance of cooperation between a government and non-government entity working for a common goal.

The delegates helped the municipality plan, coordinate and design publicity for the Sanski Most Summer Festival, and brainstormed with *LORCA* director Sanel Mahic about potential fundraising options and strategies. Though *LORCA* is financed through the municipal budget -- a minor 7.5 million KM, or around 5 million dollars -- funds are so insufficient that Mr. Mahic cannot even hire temporary staff. Nonetheless, *LORCA* has managed to assist a variety of small businesses and individuals on the path to rebuilding their livelihoods.

Banja Luka

At the conclusion of the fieldwork in Sanski Most, the delegates departed for Banja Luka, the capital of Republika Srpska. On the journey, the delegates passed through Prijedor, the site of a mass exodus of Bosniak civilians following the seizure of the town by Bosnian Serb forces -- the same forces who politicized and constitute the current town government.

Prijedor was also the host of several concentration camps, most infamously Omarska, remembered for its rape rooms and torture chambers and also for producing the first images of internment brutality that would surface in the Western media. Such images, reminiscent of the Holocaust, were a catalyst for public outrage.

A commander of the Omarska camp, Dusko Tadic, became the first criminal to be found guilty by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for “killings, beatings, and forced transfer” in the Prijedor area. He is currently serving the sixth year of a twenty-year sentence. Delegates attempted to gain entrance to the Omarska site, only to find it reactivated as a working textile factory, its war identity erased, its true history obscured.



GYC delegates learning about the effect of the war in Banja Luka

Banja Luka was spared the direct brutality of war. Its long, tree-line boulevards bear no visible scars or lingering shadows of pain. In fact, one might think the war never happened here and many of its citizens seemed to act as if that were true. The city is punctuated by absence, the missing mosques, Catholic churches and their practitioners that once marked its diversity. In such present emptiness, the weight of deliberate forgetting continues to build and press upon the city.

The delegates spent two days in the town to meet with humanitarian organizations working from the Bosnian Serb side but also to gain a different perspective on the war, often contrary to the one that they had heard during their time in

Federation territory. These perspectives were sometimes painful, but always revealing.

Helsinki Citizen's Assembly

The Helsinki Citizen's Assembly was founded in 1996 to answer a variety of needs in the newly affirmed Republika Srpska, namely to empower marginalized groups through the strengthening of civil initiatives and participation in civil society.

Since then, with the support of many international donors, the Assembly has adapted to the needs of a solidifying civil society, reaching out toward groups traditionally on the margins: women, minorities, and youth. With its staff of six full-time employees and forty volunteers, the Assembly has been able to host leadership training for young politicians and bring awareness to often disregarded issues such as domestic abuse toward women.

The representative who met with the delegates, Dragana Dardic, hopes to continue to expand the Assembly's work. "The needs find us," she said, proudly stating that she sees progress in all of the areas the Assembly engages.

Partner Humanitarian

In order to better accommodate persons with disabilities, Partner Humanitarian was formed two years ago to change the physical and mental environment in Banja Luka to one that better favors the disabled. Part of that mission includes raising standards of accessibility for the disabled, employing disabled workers, and developing job training programs and technologies.



GYC delegates and Bosnia Program Director Miki Jacevic meet with Partner Humanitarian

Beyond that, the organization also fosters the awareness of human rights as social rights, including equal care and treatment for all citizens, especially the young who find themselves under the double stresses of disability and under-presentation.

Center for Environment

The Center for Environment cultivates environmental awareness and protection, urgently needed in a country that has for so long been forced to sideline all non-war related issues. Though Bosnia must deal with immediate environmental needs such as waste management and transportation infrastructure, it has a unique position at the "beginning" of its modern growth, and the long-term pressure of sustainable development is an equally determining factor in the health of the nation. The Center works to raise awareness of this through activism and research.

The Center, established by disillusioned science faculty members in 1999, realizes that environmental awareness can be used to unify the country. "Rivers know no borders," the speaker told the delegates. "We have some problems. We should work on them together."

Youth Center Kastel

Housed in a brightly colored building on the bank of the river Vrbas, Youth Center Kastel is a refuge for youths aged 5-28. Kastel began in 1996 by providing aid to war-traumatized children, and in the eleven years since has dramatically increased the scale of its outreach and services, offering creative and educational activities, including youth delegations to other countries and the only comprehensive contraceptive service in Banja Luka.

Kastel has struggled to respond to the overwhelming popularity of its programs, stuffing their small building with art, computer, and dance space, and scrambling to find the resources needed to actualize the artistic initiatives of the youth, as well as satisfy their need for cultural venues. The Center once had to close its doors as funding dried up, but its

undeniable benefit to the community -- and much work -- brought it back.

Banja Luka University

In a former army barracks the University of Banja Luka hosted an art exhibition of works created by artists who deliberately interned themselves. Afterward, a member of the student government discussed various problems and challenges the university faces, ranging from inadequate housing to the authority of the UN High Representative.



A student at the University of Banja Luka shows some of his artwork

The student government also encourages more active student participation in the life of the university and works to welcome an increasing volume of international students. A mirror organization does not yet exist in the Federation. When asked if they have tried to assist in such an organization's formation, the speaker said "We are waiting for them to organize themselves."

Youth Partnership Organization

Youth Partnership, the last on a long day of appointments, proved to be one of the most invigorating. Youth Partnership is the only organization in Banja Luka that directly engages the issue of post-war partition, making reconciliation foremost in their mission. Their methods are as refreshing and include an array of poets, musicians, graffiti artists, and a vast network of youth clubs throughout the country, and even a cultural exchange program between

RS and Federation youth that aims to deconstruct harmful stereotypes of the former enemy. "Youth should know the real fact," one senior member said, referencing the program.

An annual and now popular aid concert in Srebrenica was initially met with criticism, but is now a popular event for youth. "It shouldn't just be a graveyard," the speaker told the delegates.

He was right; any dose of life should indeed be welcomed in Srebrenica, as the delegates would soon learn. Srebrenica was the delegate's next, most taxing and intense phase of their journey.

Srebrenica

Srebrenica. The delegates had heard the names before, listening to the news report of the genocide that took place in this town in a couple of summer days in 1995. On the softly raining morning of their departure to Srebrenica from Banja Luka, a Bosnian Serb who works on reconciliation from the Serb side sat down with the delegates and told them about his guilt over what happened in the war. But he also wished aloud to them that they could know the Serb side of the experience too, so that they might not leave condemning all Serbs for the war.

Srebrenica. Now they were here. Srebrenica was quieting. It was not quite silence to see the buildings still so freshly wounded, the graves open and ready to receive, but every word was spoken more softly.

After a brief and subdued tour of the town, the delegates traveled up into the hills to see a sacred healing springs. Nearby, the ruins of a former grand hotel were being swallowed by the forest. One stream, tasting of metal, healed the throat, the other, burning like sulfur, healed the eyes.

Returning from the spring, the delegates were hosted in the home of Fazila Catic, the first Bosniak woman to return to Srebrenica after the massacre. Once the delegates were settled and ate the food of their generous hosts, they began the short twilight walk to the Potocari memorial, where families were unloading from trucks the

light, green covered coffins while imams lead funeral hymns.



Memorial service at Srebrenica.

In the morning, the delegates retraced their steps to the memorial. Along the way, they stopped and toured the former Dutch Base where Dutch UN soldiers were housed and from which were ultimately forced to flee. The walls bear some of their messages and some, by Bosnians, in reply.

The delegates pushed their way through the immense crowd, estimated at 50,000, to a hill above the memorial and observed the prayers. When the prayers were finished, the delegates descended into the center of the memorial, amidst a sea of bobbing, calm words, the rumble of countless shovels touching the earth, the washing of hands and feet, and the all around sound of white stone.

The delegates left the same day, after lingering for a while, hoping to avoid the traffic as buses and cars and trucks all pressed and pushed out of Srebrenica. Slowly, the place grew still. The delegates waited as long as they could bear, and forced back around by the traffic, sped into the hills away from Srebrenica, but unable to leave it behind or take all of themselves away back to Sarajevo.

In Search of Justice

Seeking the shelter of the declared “Safe Area” of the Dutch United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), 30,000 Bosnian Muslim refugees had gathered in Srebrenica by July 1995. The

Bosnian Serb army (VRS) Drina Corps, responsible for many of the fleeing refugees, opened up artillery on the Dutch compound in the middle of the night on July 6th. When no reaction came, VRS tanks breached the safe area on July 9th, sending thousands fleeing into the hills, while those left behind were separated by sex—men and boys to their death, women and girls to grief and days spent wandering toward uncertain safety.

8,000 men and boys would be slaughtered in warehouses, on roads, in the dark forests by guns, blades, mines, grenades, hands of men. Others would die of exposure as they fled.

Pursuing justice for the horror has had mixed results. Many bodies were moved into RS and Republic of Serbia territory. Prosecutors have had difficulty both in finding and accessing mass graves, while the identification of bodies has been an arduous and protracted process. The monument at Potocari holds only 2,000 of the estimated total dead. This year, 463 new bodies were interned.

Radislav Krstic, commander of the Drina Corps, was the first person to found guilty by the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia for the crimes of genocide in Bosnia and Herecegovina and sentenced to 46 years in prison. However, Ratko Mladic, the Chief of Staff and overall commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, personally present during the slaughter at Srebrenica, remains at large and has been indicted *in absentia* by the Tribunal. Radovan Karadzic, the political leader of the wartime Bosnian Serbs, also remains at large, despite the several million dollar bounty on his head.

The adjudication of the genocide in Bosnia also marked the first time that systematic rape was ruled to be a crime against humanity and a war crime. Despite the fact that the two prime criminals remain free, the Tribunal has both expanded and specified the legal definition of genocide and the myriad crimes that constitute it.

Sarajevo

The war in Bosnia began in April of 1992 when the Serb forces besieged Sarajevo, commencing what would become three and a half years of torment for the city that was a living embodiment of Yugoslav unity and multiethnic Balkan history. Bosnia's declaration of independence was acknowledged by the world a day before the siege began. On average, 300 shells a day fell upon the innocent civilians of the city, who were tortured further by snipers and a surrealistic UN policy designed to keep them safe but that also greatly exacerbated their suffering. 12,000 would die, 50,000 would leave wounded, and no Sarajevan escaped without losing someone and some of his or her self.

In Sarajevo, the delegates would meet with a variety of organizations and individuals but would also experience the city and try to understand what gives it its soul and why its enemies so zealously pursued its destruction. Strength came from the history, the pride, and the persistence in preserving the ordinary existence of life in the midst of hell. For despite their horror at the guns and will of the Bosnian Serb forces, Sarajevans had not abandoned the city, and would not do so now. It was growing out of craters and casings.

Jewish Community Center

Following a tour of downtown Sarajevo, the delegates met with Moric Albahari, historian and scholar of Sarajevo's Jewish community. Hosted in the old synagogue above the Jewish Community Center, the delegates heard all manner of historical facts and anecdotes, most of them having to do with Jewish history in Europe and specifically in Sarajevo.

Jews arrived in Sarajevo after their expulsion from Spain during the Inquisition in 1492, and invited by the Ottomans, became a permanent presence in the city until World War II. The community was nearly annihilated and never recovered. Today, many emigrate, and the few that remain are elderly. Now only 700 remain of the pre-Holocaust 14,000.



GYC delegates at the Jewish Community Center

War Crimes Chamber

One of the most exciting meetings took place inside the War Crimes Chamber, the national judicial entity designated to be the successor institution to the ICTY when its mandate expires in 2009. As of now, responsibility for the investigation, prosecution, and sentencing of war criminals is slowly being handed over to the Chamber.

Delegates met with staff members and lawyers from the defense, prosecution, and administration, and viewed a portion of a witness cross-examination in one of the active courtrooms. Delegates were given a basic rundown of the court's equipment, procedure, and operations, including numerous efforts at fairness and ethnic balance such as working with regional investigation teams and fixing staff at pre-war ethnic division proportions.

Currently, the Chamber runs in the black because of international support -- judges, advisors, and most importantly, money -- but the hope is that the court can successfully step into the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia's predetermined gap, and more than that, function as an integrated, mutually cooperative state institution.

Matt Levinger, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Dr. Levinger previewed for the delegates his National Security Council presentation on the application of technology for real-time

observation and reporting of genocide, specifically in Sudan. Dr Levinger, the director of the Academy for Genocide Prevention, detailed how a simple program run through Google Earth can be used to create a “community of consciousness” and enhance “the capacity of the United States in genocide prevention.”

Acknowledging the difficulties of stopping a genocide already in motion, Dr Levinger stressed pre-emptive action. The technology allows any internet user to see details of attack, aggressive movement, and areas of destruction, and also equips them with the ability to post on-the-ground information and eyewitness accounts. Dr. Levinger concluded by advocating for a vaster network of coalitions between informed nations as an effective antidote to genocide.

Research and Documentation Center (RDC)

The RDC was established in 2004 to provide accurate information on the casualties of the war. Precedence is based upon fact rather than claims, recording the human cost of the war without interference from politics, nationalism, or ethnic division. The RDC presented in precise detail the process of gathering its immense amount of evidence -- 30,000 photos and thousands of hours of video -- and the breakdown of statistics (directly related war deaths) into age, sex, ethnicity, location, and chronological occurrence.

This sifting process often revealed deliberate patterns of genocide and mass expulsion, but the RDC qualified its findings carefully, reminding the delegates that they did not research deaths caused indirectly by the war such as accidents, exposure, or suicide. As such, the full impact of the war is not represented in their impeccable statistics—however, by establishing an objective number of deaths the RDC accomplishes much in ending politically motivated distortions of the magnitude of Bosnia’s losses.

USAID

David King, the Chief of Party for the Bosnia and Hercegovina office of the United States Agency for International Development, met with delegates to elucidate the extent and practice of

the United States’ continuing assistance to Bosnia and Hercegovina. Different from the aid supplied in the immediate aftermath of war, today USAID focuses on developing the economy, democratic governance, and humanitarian assistance. Mr. King spoke primarily about the economic redevelopment of the country, ranging from measures to create spaces for corporate business to flow in, to improving Bosnia and Hercegovina’s image as a tourist destination.

Svetlana Broz and Gardens of the Righteous

“Good people cannot behave any other way,” Ms. Broz told the delegates on the final morning of the program. Ms. Broz, granddaughter of the once leader of the once Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, met with the delegates and discussed the work of her foundation. Gardens of the Righteous strives to find and preserve the stories of those who aided the persecuted in times of terrible slaughter. Her book, *Good People in Evil Times* tells some of those stories.

“After those stories,” she told the delegates, “why shouldn’t we live in peace after war?” Delegates asked her why she thinks these genocides came to be. “The vast majority of people are bystanders. You need a critical mass of individuals to stop the conflict.”

The delegates asked her who was responsible for the war in Bosnia. “Evil leaders,” she said, blaming those who controlled the media to manipulate the masses. And she felt the masses also bore some guilt: “My generation is responsible for all wars in this region.” In the light of that, she told the delegates that: “She could not stay silent in that armchair. You cannot poison me, make me hate. Now is my time of love.”

Community of Bosnia

Community of Bosnia was created after the war to reverse the “brain drain” of Bosnia’s educated. It endeavors to bring back the highly skilled Bosnians the nation requires, placing them occasionally in NGOs but mostly in small progressive businesses.

“Bosnia,” according to the representative Natasa Musa, “has never had a large number of Western educated.” Corruption and nepotism in government disillusion many of the youth and exacerbate the problem, she added. Without a comprehensive national education program or post-graduate professional training, and youth unemployment possibly as high as 40%, connecting them with diaspora may be the only way for the country to combat the exodus and create a new intellectual class.

Sarajevo Sights

In between appointments delegates had the opportunity to explore Sarajevo through both guided and unguided perspectives. Even travel time between meetings made apparent the extent of the damage the city sustained—even now, twelve years after the end of the siege, many buildings still bear bullet and shrapnel scars, and though most major infrastructure has been repaired, whole blocks still lay decimated. At the same time, the city possessed an organic vibrancy, far different from many other places that had been rebuilt from the face inwards rather than inward toward the face, as Sarajevo has done.

Delegates had the opportunity to tour the tunnel museum, a small preserved stretch of the famous tunnel that linked the surrounded city to the outside world. Without the tunnel, Sarajevans would have surely starved for lack of food, ammunition, and letters from the outside world. Delegates also passed through Grbavica, the portion of Sarajevo that was under Serb occupation during the war. It is again a quiet neighborhood.

Mostar

Delegates spent a day in Mostar, taking in the sight of the rebuilt Stari Most -- the bridge dubbed the “petrified moon” for its shimmering elegance -- simultaneously with the rest of largely destitute and destroyed town.

Mostar is in Hercegovina, the southern tip of the country where most of the ethnic Croats make

their homes. After the war, Croats almost seceded from the inchoate state to form their own of Herceg-Bosna, and during the war fighting between Croats and Bosniaks left Mostar in near total ruin. Most infamously, Croat forces destroyed the Old Bridge in 1993, sending its white stone into the blue-green Neretva River below, literally destroying a major river crossing and symbolically destroying the link between the communities. To this day, Bosniaks live on one side of the river, Croats the other.



Stari Most

The rebuilt bridge, an epic undertaking in itself, was opened in 2004 amidst the hopes of a similarly rebuilt connection between the former enemies. So far, it is too early to pose any conclusions.

Though the tourist area has been brought back to life, the former front lines running through the center of town are among the most gutted ruins the delegates saw in Bosnia, and the parts of the city in which people live mix a similar destruction with a palatable inertia only flickering with the vitality required for true reconstruction.

Postscript ***Applying the Lessons of Bosnia?***

In Iraq, some may wonder if it would be better to live apart. Many are now suggesting that a workable peace could be achieved through a “soft-partition”, neatly segregating the ethnic communities of Iraq. This approach may appear attractive for all sorts of reasons, some desperate, some perhaps reasonable, cogent, and clam -- but it is most attractive, perhaps, because it solves the

problem by disappearing it. The nation of Iraq (if we may call it that) has been relegated to non existence: no nation, no peace, a pause. It worked in Bosnia, they said.

In an article published at the end of August 2007, Thom Shanker of *The New York Times* argued the opposite, based on the fact that the circumstance of Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1995 was fundamentally different from that of Iraq in 2007, the countries united only by the idea of the dark cut of partition, “history’s familiar first choice among last resorts.”

Did it work for Bosnia? Those that claim it did and now push the same for Iraq ignore that there is a space between war and peace, and just as a single human can live in the abyss between hate and forgiveness so too can a nation linger in the chasm between revenge and reconciliation. A cut-up nation is not one at peace -- it is merely suspended. The fate of Iraq, we hope, has yet to be decided. But so too is the fate of Bosnia, so long after the “solution” of partition.

What Iraq needs now may be what Bosniak president Alija Izetbegovic called Dayton in 1995: “un unjust peace.” Peace of any kind must be preferable to war. Anything that stitches closed -- however temporarily -- the cataracts of Iraqi blood must be more valuable than any one act of violence. But what the people of Bosnia have learned is that guns falling quiet, screams falling quiet, besieged cities, finally quiet, is that quiet is not without a noise, that quiet is not a silence of fear, hate, and nightmare, but that quiet still contains a noise, a click, a hum, a rumble, a bang, however distant, traveling fast across a great empty space unfulfilled.

A fundamental lesson has not been learned. Crossing the river of blood that streams out when war has ended is never a given and never automatic, it requires unbroken conscientiousness and persistent will, it is something else entirely from an absence of murder.

What we have learned in Bosnia cannot be extended far into Iraq. And while many devote themselves to seeing Bosnia through to peace, three times as many forget Bosnia, because, after

all, the problem is over, it is at peace. How much more do we risk by believing that the same peace will happen by default in Iraq, or anywhere else that aggressive violence is deemed an acceptable qualification for sovereignty? Peace must be learned -- it is not one thing for all, but a state of being unique to each conflict that requires it.

Peace must be crafted. Partitioning ourselves from each other is contradictory to a sustainable peace because it only delays war. It is our contemporary equivalent of Chamberlain’s “peace in our time,” a surrender to the ravaging powers of war and a refusal to overcome the minor differences that separate us from each other. It is possible to achieve peace after war, after partition, but it is not recommended. Peace is not an amicable living apart, it is an engaged living together.

Bosnian Workshop Participants

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.

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

Dina Lasic

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.

Maida Cehajic

Maida was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She spent all her life in Sarajevo. Maida is on her last of history studies at Sarajevo Philosophy University. She works for more than two years at the Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina. At first, she worked as a volunteer and latter she become Cancelor for Bejing Declaration and CEDAW Convention. She hopes that she will be able to continue hers career in the Ministry for hunam rights. Maida speaks Bosnian and English and trying to improve her French for years.

Timka Omanovic

Timka Omanovic teaches history and Bosnian language at the local primary school in the village of Hrustovo, near Sanski Most. She is originally from Bihac, the main regional center of North-west Bosnia, where she graduated from

University with honors last year. Timka uses her position as a teacher to promote the work on reconciliation and social justice; she is a part time volunteer at the Center for Peacebuilding and also provides therapy sessions for young women and girls in Sanski Most. This summer she participated in several international peace camps in Switzerland, Italy, and Croatia.

Mario Olmas

Mario was born and raised in Serbia, but had moved to Bosnia after the war. He has served in the Serbian army during the war in Kosovo and that experience deeply shaped his life. Mario is committed to peace building and conflict resolution and is one of leading peacemakers in the Serb Republic. He lives with his parents in a small village near Banja Luka. Mario is a writer who has authored and published two books with strong anti-war message; he works in collaboration with the Sanski Most based Center for Peace building with the hope that he will be able to open a similar center in Republika Srpska soon.

Mirza Catic

Mirza is in his final year of high school in Sanski Most and plans to attend the English Department of the University of Sarajevo. He is originally from Banja Luka, but was forced to flee his hometown during the war in 1992, when he was only seven years old. Since the war, he has been able to travel and gain some international experiences. Mirza is active with the Youth Center in Sanski Most and has been a full time volunteer with the Center for Peace building over the last six months.

GYC Participants

Sean Anderson-Branowitz

Sean is an English major and a philosophy minor at Colorado College. He is from Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he grew up with mountains and desert. Sean is currently studying in Athens, Greece, and over spring break he will be doing a journalism grant work in Cyprus on the psychological and cultural consequences of the prolonged schism between the Cypriot peoples. Before the seminar he plans to do a (mostly)

walking tour of the Southern Balkans. After school, Sean is not really certain, but he would like to explore a career in the field of war journalism.

Heather Baker

In Heather's senior year of high school she studied abroad as a Rotary Youth Exchange Student. She originally wanted to go to a Spanish speaking country but due to the large volume of applicants she decided to go to South Africa. Through her experience she changed her college career plans. She decided to pursue degree's in global studies, global security and political science, and pre-law as well as pursue certificates in peace studies, Middle Eastern and North African studies, and teaching English to speakers of other languages at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. After graduation she would like to become a certified teacher and join the Peace Corps. Eventually, she would like to attend graduate school at the United Nations University of Peace and eventually pursue a law degree. In the future Heather hopes to work as a professor and for the United Nations or a similar organization.

Anne Coburn

Anne is an international relations and political philosophy major at James Madison College. She plans on going to graduate school to study security in the Balkans. During the summer of 2006 Anne participated in an intensive study abroad program focused on European security issues, integration and politics at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles in Belgium. After college she hopes to work with a non-governmental organization abroad or within the public sector on security issues.

Daniel Crump

Daniel is currently a senior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison majoring in legal studies. He has applied for the AmeriCorps NCCC programs for next year and in 2008 he plans to go to law school. Daniel is still unsure what type of law he wants to practice but he is interested in working at the UN or for a larger international NGO like Amnesty International. He may also want to practice immigration law in California or be a lobbyist and law-writer in Washington D.C.

Matthew Dinan

Matthew is a sophomore at the College of William and Mary majoring in international relations. He has worked for Americans for Informed Democracy to help bring speakers on international issues to his university. He has also worked for Students Taking Action Now: Darfur (STAND) raising approximately \$4,000 to sponsor a refugee camp for two months with food, water and basic school supplies. Last summer, Matthew interned at the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia in the Federal Major Crime Section. He also served as a member of the William and Mary Undergraduate Honor Council. In the future Matthew hopes to work for the United States Federal Government, the UN, the International Criminal Court or a non-profit NGO in enforcing international human rights law. Matthew also hopes to graduate from law school with a focus on international law.

Kiersten Downs

After graduating from high school Kiersten joined the US Air Force and was stationed in Abilene, TX for three years. In the Air Force, Kiersten learned the values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all. In 2005 she transferred to NY Air National Guard in order to get a degree from college. Kiersten spent seven weeks in Iraq and returned in January 2007. While in Iraq she volunteered at the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility. What struck her the deepest was walking through the hospital and seeing the faces of men, women and especially the children who became the victims of violence. Kiersten plans to graduate from Binghamton University with a major in Political Science and a minor in Economics. In the future she hopes to be working for the CIA/DIA or the FBI.

Katherine Herbst

Katherine recently graduated *magna cum laude* from Mount Holyoke College where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations. She spent her junior year in Bologna, Italy as a student at Dickinson College's K. Robert Nilsson Center for European Studies. After returning from Italy Katherine completed an educational internship with Integrated

Industrial Systems. During the internship she traveled to three cities in China, as well as Manila and Singapore. Katherine spent her senior year writing a thesis entitled "A Federal Future for Europe: The Possibility of European Federalism in Comparison to the American Governmental Experience." She focused on the main themes of democracy, citizenship, the role of the European Parliament, and the role of a new European Constitution. After graduating she moved to Washington D.C. to begin an internship at the Sunlight Network. Katherine plans to go to graduate school in the fall 2007.

Laura Hudson

Laura will be graduating in May from the University of Iowa with a double major in Vocal Performance and Linguistics. Laura became interested in Bosnia when she became friends with a Bosnian student in high school. She became close friends with his grandma (Baka) and started studying Croatian/Bosnian in order to speak to her. Laura received a scholarship to study in Zagreb for a semester and was able to visit Baka's family in Mostar. In the next several years Laura would like to spend life abroad, most likely in the former Yugoslavia helping those in need.

Karen Leve

Karen is currently participating in a two year Masters in Social Work program at New York University. She received her honors Bachelor degree in 2001 from McGill University in Montreal, Canada. Her concentration was in International Development Studies, with a minor in Political Science. Karen completed an internship in Washington D.C. at Human Rights Watch in December 2005. She also spent six months abroad in Central America volunteering with Global Vision International and La Esperanza in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In the future she hopes to help immigrants and newly landed refugees settle into the United States and ensure they are receiving all the benefits and protections they are entitled to. Karen also hopes to work abroad in war stricken countries, as part of an interdisciplinary team to ensure that all measures are being taken to protect civilians when human rights violations occur.

Michelle Mays

Michelle is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Ethics Peace and Global Affairs at American University. She has a Bachelors of Science in Nursing degree from the University of Maryland and has worked as a pediatric nurse at Johns Hopkins Hospital for over two years. Michelle has also worked and taught at a children's home and nursing school in India. She hopes to expand her role as a nurse to outside hospital walls, working to build environments where children do not suffer from preventable injury as a result of conflict but can live in peace. In the future Michelle hopes to be working with children in conflict or post conflict areas.

Tamara Nisic

Tamara was born in Sarajevo, Bosnia and moved to Spain when she was six years old. Her entire family still lives in Sarajevo which facilitates her understanding about the hardships and improvements the country is undergoing in the post-war years. Tamara is currently studying International Relations while on the pre-medical track at Lehigh University. Tamara was the president of the Progressive Students Alliance in the fall semester of 2006. After graduation she hopes to join the Peace Corps or work for a nonprofit organization against human trafficking or sweatshops. Two years after graduation she hopes to enroll in medical school.

Imran Rahman

Imran was born in Saudi Arabia and lived there from 1987-1998. In 1998 his family moved to California in order to live and work in a more politically and economically stable country. Imran is currently an International Studies major at the University of California - Irvine. He has recently become involved with an independent research study on Orientalism and Western foreign policy in the Middle East. In the future Imran would like to go to law school and focus on the protection of human rights.

Jefferson Sommers II

Jefferson is a junior at Florida State University and majoring in Russian and International Affairs. This summer Jefferson plans on doing study abroad with FSU's International Programs

office. He will be flying from Moscow to Sarajevo. In the future Jefferson wants to get his Master's degree in International Affairs from George Washington University. He would also like to intern in graduate school with the State Department and work in an embassy in a Slavic country.

Alecsandra Vlaicu

Alecsa has been studying in the United States since she graduated from high school Bucharest, Romania. She is now in Vassar College majoring in International Studies and French, with a concentration in international relations in Europe, specifically on France's foreign relations, the rise of the European Union, the Common Foreign and Security Policy and France-Africa relations. Alecsa has interned for the Department of Population and Migration of the French Ministry of Social Affairs, and for the Embassy of Romania in Paris. She is applying to M.A. programs in international affairs and plans to continue her studies in order to later join the Romanian diplomatic service.

Elizabeth Waste

Elizabeth is a senior at Clark University majoring in Geography with a minor in Music. In college she has been on the cross country team, musical groups, outing club, and participated in various service activities including a trip to Nicaragua to build a house. Last summer she traveled to Bosnia to learn Bosnian music with a group called Village Harmony. In the future Elizabeth plans to go to graduate school and continue in environmental science, cross-cultural education, and ethnomusicology.

Staff Biographies

Mirsad "Miki" Jacevic Bosnia Program Director Global Youth Connect

Miki is a human rights activist and peace program specialist from Sarajevo, Bosnia Herecegovina, where he directs the Bosnia program. In addition, Miki works full-time as the deputy director 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 Herecegovina, 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 Director Center for Peacebuilding

Vahidin is a founder and director of the Center for Peacebuilding, a non-political, non-governmental organization based in Sanski Most, Bosnia and Herecegovina. 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 Herecegovina. 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.

Meredith McCormac
Special Project Assistant
Global Youth Connect

Meredith recently received her Master's degree in international peace and conflict resolution from the School of International Service at American University. Her areas of research included post-conflict reconciliation and transitional justice issues with a regional interest in the former Yugoslavia. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Oklahoma in Religious Studies with a minor in Philosophy. Meredith participated as a GYC Bosnia delegate in 2006, and was thrilled to return in 2007 as a program assistant. For the past year, she worked at the United States Institute of Peace as a research assistant on issues relating to transitional justice in Bosnia and Herecegovina and has recently begun a job in the International Development Program at the American Institutes for Research, where she works on projects to strengthen education systems in Zambia. She also hopes to do more fieldwork in the future.