

One by One in Bosnia

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**1. An Infusion of Dialogues
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By Paula Green**

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For more information about the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding see www.karunacenter.org

In an unusual, highly charged and successful experiment in dialogue infusion, a group of Muslim and Serb educators who participate in inter-ethnic dialogue met for four days with members of One By One, a German and Jewish second generation Holocaust dialogue group. The meeting was arranged and facilitated by the author, Dr. Paula Green, director of Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, who works with both groups. Ann Hoewing from the Foundation for Community Encouragement co-facilitated, with translation by Lutvija Rokov and Vesna Arsovski of Zagreb, Croatia.

The Bosnian dialogue group, the Project for Dialogue and Community Building (Project DiaCom) consists of educators from the cities of Sanski Most in the Bosnian Federation and Prijedor in the Serb Republic, the two entities currently comprising Bosnia. The post-Holocaust group, One by One, meets in the US and Germany and includes members whose families were directly effected by the Holocaust.

I initiated the Bosnian Dialogue Project three years ago at the request of Serb and Muslim educators whose previously intertwined lives have been split asunder by the violence that destroyed Bosnia. They wished to explore relations and to prepare their schools for the arduous tasks of repatriation and restoration of community. For the One by One group, I

have facilitated advanced dialogues for members to deepen their relationships. Some participants also wanted to explore the relevance of their experiences in dialogue for others suffering from the legacies of war.

Issues in Inter-Ethnic Dialogue

In assembling this mix of dialogue groups, several questions interested me. Observing the skills of the One by One group in the dialogue process and the intimacy many of them have achieved across seemingly impossible barriers, I wondered what they could model and teach to the Bosnians. Most of the German and Jewish members of One by One are second-generation survivors of the Holocaust or people whose parents were engaged in the Third Reich. Very few of the One by One group are first generation, or those who directly participated in the slaughter or survived the concentration camps. The Bosnians, on the other hand, are all immediate victims or members of by-stander or perpetrator families, or perpetrators themselves. In both Project DiaCom and One by One, there are few histories of rescuers.

What is the relationship between dialogue and cultural norms? The second generation Jewish and German One by One members frequently develop their skills through a process of psychotherapy, group work and the norms of subcultures comfortable with self-disclosure and emotional expression. The Bosnians come from extended family clans, fifty years of Communism and limited experience with structured group process. As Milka, a Serb educator reminded me, *"We were taught not to interfere with public policies, express our emotions, or talk about our problems outside the confines of the family."*

Another question that concerns peacebuilders is the influence of the passage of time on dialogue and the healing process. The Bosnian war ended five years ago. In Bosnia, memories are immediate, the destruction visible and the wounds palpable. For the Germans and Jews, more than fifty years have passed. The dialogue participants are descendants of victims and perpetrators. What is the right time to begin inter-ethnic dialogue after war? When it is too soon? What factors of time and readiness need to be considered in beginning dialogue besides the request of the participants and the need for safety?

The political and economic environment in which dialogue is embedded clearly affects the process and outcome. Unlike Holocaust descendants, Bosnians must create a shared future as neighbors. Adding to their burdens, Bosnians face struggle with a stagnant economy, shattered infrastructure and a demoralized, unemployed population. The international community seems resistant to prosecute war criminals and to provide the long-term fiscal, political, judicial and psychological support essential for recovery. In this atmosphere, dialogue stands outside the norms of ongoing estrangement and lack of cooperation. A dialogue participant observed that if Sanski Most and Prijedor remain economically marginalized and the 80-90% unemployment rate does not shift, *"we will keep on electing the same old nationalist politicians."*

Cooperation, empathy and compassion, hopeful fruits of the dialogue process, do not flow easily in times of deprivation and struggle. Furthermore, dialogue partners frequently experience family and community pressure not to cooperate with the perceived enemy, and

politicians protecting their own lives or interests can threaten dialogue members with loss of jobs or worse. Split loyalties that ripped apart mixed Bosnian families during the war now tug at families around issues of inter-ethnic relationship-building, an issue also familiar to One by One. In the best of circumstances, dialogue would be supported and augmented by public rituals of peacebuilding such as Days of Mourning, Memorials, Truth Commissions and trials for war criminals. This is not the case in Bosnia, at least in the present moment.

In an informal discussion after a One by One dialogue, a Jewish group member remarked that he wished healing and peacebuilding efforts had existed after World War II. He believed that his parents' lives as Holocaust survivors might have been eased if structures had existed to ease the transition away from the unrelenting violence and dehumanization of the concentration camps. My colleague did not envision his parents in dialogue with Germans but wished there had been some care and attention for their devastated emotions. He commented: *"had my parents received psychological support during these years I might have had a childhood less damaged by the Holocaust."*

His remarks encouraged my thinking that One by One might have experiences useful to the Bosnian participants in Project DiaCom who struggle so bravely to speak to each other. I sensed that the Jewish and German group could bear witness to the importance of telling the truth in the first generation, to the legacy of unprocessed trauma and to the betrayals caused by family secrets, lies and distorted histories. It was on this basis that I invited One by One to select delegates to accompany me to Bosnia. An unexpected benefit was the effect that the Bosnians would have on the One by One group, opening a way to their own future of service to others.

Public Presentations

In October 2000, two German and two Jewish members met me in Sanski Most for four intense days of dialogue with Project DiaCom. Preceding and following our days in this region of northern Bosnia, we arranged for One by One to speak in Zagreb, Croatia and Sarajevo, Bosnian Federation, two capital cities that also survived war and have long histories of victimization and perpetration. Unlike Sanski Most and Prijedor, members of the Jewish community still live in Sarajevo and Zagreb, adding a poignancy to our presentations there. A Zagreb Jewish elder unexpectedly appeared at our hotel breakfast the next morning, laden with gifts of Sephardic music for Jewish and German One by One members and filled with tears of gratitude for our witness and dialogue work.

Another layer of history complicating relationships was Serb resistance to German aggression, the German World War II bombing of Serbia, the fascist government of Croatia, and the Croatian Jasenovac concentration camp where Jews, Serbs and Roma met their death. In addressing Serbs, especially in the Serbian Republic city of Prijedor, we noted the irony of German citizens whose parents were Nazis speaking to Serbs whose parents were victims of Nazism but whose present-day members were perpetrators of ethnic violence against Bosnian Muslims. The lesson for all of us as peacebuilders is the repetitive nature of genocidal violence, with victim and perpetrator groups rotating roles, and the themes of revenge and collective trauma present either consciously or in the collective identity of the community.

Prijedor gained notoriety as a center of war crimes and ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian War. Formerly a well-integrated city of 100,000 Muslim and Serb Bosnians, 58,000 Muslims were expelled from Prijedor early in the war. Most of the survivors now live 30 minutes away in Sanski Most, another previously mixed city from which Serbs were pushed or fled toward the end of the war. Predominately Muslim villages surrounding Prijedor lie in ruin, heaps of rubble marking former homes, schools and mosques. While the Dayton Accords allow repatriation, enormous psychological and physical obstacles block the process of return. There are no welcoming banners inviting Muslims or Serbs to reclaim their occupied or destroyed homes on either side.

In Sanski Most, we met each day with our dialogue leaders-in-training and with educators who had participated in at least one previous Project DiaCom workshop. In the evenings we gave public presentations in both cities, one to a largely Muslim audience and the other mainly Serb. Because the Serbs in Prijedor almost uniformly deny their responsibility for the expulsion of 58,000 Muslims and the presence of several concentration camps inside their city, the public talk in Prijedor was especially difficult.

A Serb responded to our presentation angrily: “*The Serbs have never caused any war in history, since the days of Kosovo Polje (1389). We have always defended ourselves—victims in World War II like the Jews. We have never been aggressors.*”

A Muslim listener remarked to the largely Serb audience: “*How do we tell the truth to these young people here?* (Serb high school students brought by our trainees). *New York and Berlin know more about the truth than people here.*” (Referring to the censored media of the Milosevic era and the silence of the Serb population).

In these venues, the One by One presenters told their personal stories, allowed their emotions to surface and maintained their equanimity and balance in the face of challenges and denial. As moderator, I felt it appropriate that we not become involved in responses that would lead to counter-arguments. Encouraging reflection and stimulating dialogue between local residents was the hoped-for result of the One by One presentations. Observing post-Holocaust dialogue partners who obviously care deeply about each other gave hope to people who feel helpless in the face of their extreme estrangement from each other. Listening to the Jews talk about the effects of multi-generational trauma and the Germans speak about the legacy of falsified history offered guidance to Bosnians struggling to raise children, to speak about the war, to give words to the carnage visible on every street. “*How do we tell the truth,*” a participant asked. “*Help us not wait for 50 years.*” A fifteen-year-old student countered: “*I don’t want any more information about the war. I have lived it for ten years. I’ve heard of my grandparents’ past and I’m not proud of it but I can’t do anything about it.*” We offered no simplistic answers for their anguish, but acknowledged the possibility of finding their own wisdom through extended conversation and reflection.

In Dialogue

For the educators-in-training closely involved in Project DiaCom who will take over the project fully in the coming years, observing the closeness between Jewish and German dialogue partners touched them deeply. Currently the Muslim and Serb educators, formerly colleagues, neighbors and sometimes relatives, feel quite estranged from each other. They

live in separate cities in different political entities, and carry different traumas from the same war: the trauma of victimization and profound loss and the trauma of involuntary membership in the perpetrating ethnic group. Our Muslim members yearn to receive acknowledgement of wrongdoing by Serbs whereas the Serb members continue to deny the atrocities and the extent of Serbian perpetration in this region of Bosnia. We had hoped that the great risks of honesty taken by One by One members and their commitment to dialogue and to each other would inspire the Bosnians, as indeed they did.

In a closed session with the ten Bosnian dialogue leaders-in-training, the four One by One members and the facilitation and translation team, we worked steadily at exploring relations. A One by One member from Germany, a retired Lutheran minister who had been a member of the Hitler Youth, began his presentation in tears. Gottfried Leich apologized to the Serbs for German aggression in World War II and to the Muslims for Germany's and the world's complicity in standing by and thus allowing the destruction of Bosnia. Ilona Kuphal, the other German One by One presenter, spoke of her love for her father and the utter betrayal she experienced when she learned of his Nazi past. She mentioned the shame and the silence of bystanders and offered her concern for the next generation. "*The younger generation will carry the guilt of their parents if the parents do not deal with their own guilt.*"

A Jewish member of One by One, Mary Rothschild, who came originally from Romania and felt vulnerable in this former-Communist Eastern Europe setting, brought tears to everyone's eyes with her description of her mother's inability to recover from the concentration camps and the consequent effect on her own life. At that point one of the Muslim men took an emotional risk by noting that the Serbs showed more concern for Mary whom they had just met than they did for his suffering, although he is a long-term group member. "*Our group shows more compassion for the Jews of One by One than for victims here—our stories are no less touching than theirs.*" Watching the Serbs turn away from Mohammed's pain-filled eyes, we intervened as facilitators to encourage the group to pay attention to the statement and to their own response. For the Serbs, acknowledging Mohammed's victimization meant telling themselves the truth about Prijedor as a city of war crimes. To let in that knowledge apparently stimulated anguish, shame and guilt. It is hard to bear so much reality, agonizing to be a bystander feeling powerless to stop the downward spiral of violence. Frequently in our lives, we are all bystanders.

Partiality to All Participants

We cannot successfully build a future without acknowledgement of the past. We must incorporate history into honest peacebuilding. In several years as an outsider invited by Bosnians to facilitate Project DiaCom dialogues, my greatest challenge has been "*multi-partiality.*" I must find a way to stand with the Muslims as victims in the Bosnian war in this region. Their trust rests on my communicating to them that I believe their stories and testimonies, that my eyes see their mass graves, destroyed homes and broken hearts. At the same time I must be present to the humanity and sensitivity of Serb participants and not push acknowledgement too quickly, for then they back away and I lose their trust. They need my compassion and my understanding that it is devastating to be a member of a perpetrating group, caught in the chaos of a senseless war. The Serb participants have also experienced loss of family members, homes and jobs in recent years. They have been taught by the Milosevic regime to believe what appeared in their media and to experience themselves as

historic victims. I understand they do not know what or whom to believe. I remember the silence in Germany after the war. I know that the US remains silent about Hiroshima, Vietnam, slavery and other massive violations of human rights.

One by One taught me something of the depth of perpetrator groups' suffering. I see how much anguish German members carry about the behavior of their family members and their nation. I know they long to heal these wounds and to experience themselves as good people, not through denial but through facing history. Their message to the Bosnians states that the path to forgiveness and restoration of dignity and community lies through acknowledgement and atonement. Children must learn the truth of violence committed by their elders and the truth of victimhood endured by the family. Repressed family and communal history re-enacts itself, generation after generation. Traumas are inherited. Ghosts emerge, demanding revenge. Only the truth can set us free.

A Turning Point

Could this message be realized among our ten Sanski Most and Prijedor educators-in-training five years after the Bosnian War? It required another risk by a Muslim participant, a woman whom I shall call Vera because her name must be withheld. The day after the One by One members left, we had one more day with the educators-in-training, the group with whom we have devoted the most energy in the past three years. Vera told a story she had never before uttered, a story of unbelievable trauma and fear that remains in her body, sending her into periodic episodes of despair and shock. As she poured out her anguish, a young Muslim participant held her and cried with her, for her experience and for the thirty-six members of his immediate family lost in the war. My heart reeled with the intensity of what I was hearing while my mind remained watchful of the participants. The Serbs, all five of whom were women, were avoiding eye contact. One of them buried her face by taking notes.

My co-trainer and I knew we had reached a critical moment for intervention. The ground under us seemed to shake with emotion. One by One, no longer physically present, remained with us as invisible witnesses. If the group could not respond to this outpouring of agony, if the Serb group members remained frozen in their fear and divided loyalties, we could not move forward as a group of potential facilitators. If we could not go through this pivotal incident together, we saw that the Muslim and Serb members of the group would remain separated in alienation and despair, unable to join each other at this moment in their history.

By an act of grace I found the words to help the Serb women find release from their shame and helplessness so they could reach out to Vera. Nada bravely rose and crossed the room to embrace Vera. Nada, probably the most capable of the Serb future facilitators, said to Vera as she held her: "*What my parents suffered in World War II was terrible, but not as tragic as your experience.*" In this important moment of inter-ethnic peacebuilding Nada acknowledged that Vera's story was true and also that she had been comparing this ethnic cleansing with that of her parents' experience as victims fifty years earlier. Milka, the Serb educator in the group closest to her feelings, through a burst of tears asked her Muslim colleagues for forgiveness and reconciliation. From this crescendo of emotion, the group members transitioned to a time of quiet reflection and thence to a necessary break.

In the closing circle that followed, Faik, a male math teacher from Sanski Most said: *“One by One gave me the courage to tell my story. Our listening guidelines are the core of our work; we must listen to each other.”* Nada acknowledged the shattering that must come on the path ahead in order to break through: *“I feel upset, maybe some dilemmas in myself. My head is chaotic. I thought I was really happy—a good husband, two kids, good work, everything okay. Now I feel broken and I must be with my new feelings to find out what has happened to me. I don’t know whether my happiness was a real happiness.”*

Reflections

Returning to the US and Germany, the One by One members reflected on their experience. Mary wrote eloquently:

Had I not gone to Sanski Most and Prijedor, I could have still maintained some of my innocence. But I was there and I cannot unlearn what I know and that is that genocide is still possible fifty years after Auschwitz, and the Holocaust is over only in as much as each of us has learned its lessons. There is a great risk in our ignoring what is happening and allowing the evil of genocide to seep even deeper into our souls. In a world plagued by people who are willing to set aside their humanity and slaughter their neighbor we are all being called to action.

In this experiment in multi-level dialogue infused with the history of two genocides, the members of One by One found a significant application of lessons learned for others recovering from war and betrayal. The Project DiaCom members experienced a degree of intimacy among former enemies and their descendants previously unimaginable to them, and participated in acknowledging their own tragic past as a bridge to Bosnian healing and community restoration. We as facilitators stood in awe of all the participants: Muslims, Serbs, Jews and Germans as they wove a new story from their intertwined histories, this one committed to honesty, introspection, civic responsibility and compassion. We learned the value of multi-partiality in dialogue, remembering that there is no life without suffering, especially in war, and that the journey to healing may begin with a single phrase: *Yes, this tragedy happened. I acknowledge your experience. I accept your truth.*

We do not use the language of forgiveness and reconciliation, but rather select more present-oriented words such as relationship, community building, collaboration and healing. I sense that forgiveness and reconciliation, if they develop, grow out of this larger journey of rebuilding trust and restoring relations. I believe that we cannot wait fifty years for the second generation to undertake the healing process, and indeed postponement is a sacrifice of the second generation. Wounds pile upon wounds and the cleansing becomes even more difficult. I believe we need public rituals to bind the community as well as private events like dialogue to strengthen collegial bonds and encourage collaborative development. It is difficult but not impossible to interrupt the cycle of blame, hatred and revenge, and to balance out the needs for punishment and compassion. My commitment to inter-ethnic dialogue rests in the hope that transformation will emerge through connection and caring.

2. BOSNIA

Requiem for the Vanishing Human

By Mary H. Rothschild

Mary is a Jewish member of One by One, who originally came from Romania and now resides in California. She was one of the members who traveled to Bosnia to participate in an inter-ethnic dialogue arranged and facilitated by Dr. Paula Green, Director of Karuna Center for Peacebuilding.

"the highest truth, Nietzsche prophesied, was being born within man through the self-creating power of the will. All of man's striving for knowledge and power would fulfill itself in a new being who would incarnate the living meaning of the universe. But to achieve this birth, man would have to grow beyond himself so fundamentally that his present limited self would be destroyed. "what is great in man is that he is a bridge, and not a goal... man is something that must be overcome."

On the morning of October 18, 2000 I walked into a five hundred year old cathedral in Zagreb. I had no business being there because I am a Jew, but I needed to talk with God. Other than the presence of a few women, the old cathedral was empty, and by the time I left my fear had lessened and I sensed that I was about to enter a state of prayer in action.

I was in Zagreb with Ilona, the daughter of a member of the Waffen SS, Gottfried, who was once with the Hitler Youth movement, and Susan whose father survived pogrom atrocities in the Ukraine. My mother is an Auschwitz survivor, which is a misnomer, because liberation did not bring her freedom from the horrors she suffered. The four of us represented a group who, for the past seven years, has been involved in attempts to heal Holocaust history through dialogue with the other side. Having suffered on both sides from the consequences of "ethnic cleansing" we felt a sacred obligation to extend ourselves to others.

We left Zagreb that morning to travel to Sanski Most, a small town in Bosnia ravaged by ethnic cleansing, a euphemism for mass murder. We were asked to join a dedicated group of people who worked in these regions for three years to help Bosnians overcome their war trauma. Paula Green, from the Karuna Center for Peace Building, and Ann Hoenig, from the Foundation for Community Encouragement in Detroit, asked us to come to Bosnia because they hoped that our presence would send the Bosnians several messages: that it is possible to dialogue with the "other side;" that one can maintain one's dignity and still express feelings publicly; that it is possible for a second generation German to hold himself/herself accountable; that a collective experience is better healed in a group setting; and that there is the possibility of healing in telling one's story and having it witnessed by others.

As the carriers of guilt and shame on the German side and horrendous wounds on the Jewish side we can tell Bosnians what might happen to their children if they don't deal with their own trauma.

As our van makes its way to Sanski Most, four hours from Zagreb, I remember that when I was growing up in Communist Romania, Yugoslavia was a symbol of freedom.

We are threatened with suffering from three directions: From our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally, from relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. Civilization and Its Discontents (Freud)

As we approach the region of Prijedor and Sanski Most there are bullet-ridden empty houses and desolate yards. Sanski Most is a small town dominated by a Muslim Mosque with two minarets and a graceful bridge over a river. As our van driver parks, someone in the van tells us "the man who just parked his car next to us is looking for human bones." Suddenly filled with fear, I want to run. Is this still possible fifty years after Auschwitz? Sanski Most is thirty kilometers from the former rape camps, and we learn that the town has no books, movies, colleges, cars or jobs. We check into the only hotel in town, which is in serious state of disrepair but to me familiar, communist fare. Our driver offers to take us on a tour of the neighboring villages, and on the way to Prijedor he points to a structure and tells us that people have been living in this school for five years. Again I am struck by the force of the polarities; the beauty of the countryside, which doesn't mask the horrors still, whispering their stories from the abandoned, destroyed houses. I am overcome by my old distrust of the world and a fleeting desire to escape it. But how, as a Jew, can I argue about Anti-Semitism if I am not prepared to help other minorities who are being ethnically cleansed? I look around me and feel demoralized and doubtful. Can I really matter in the face of so much pain? Can I really help? Can our tears and stories turn the Holocaust into a three dimensional reality half a century later? Ilona, Gottfried and Susan are all struck with the same doubts and sense of helplessness.

The next morning we find ourselves sitting around the room with a group of Bosnian educators from the region. The women are all well dressed and dignified, and we learn that most of them are Serbs while the men in the room are all Muslim. Are we sitting across the room from wives of perpetrators and the men who have escaped ethnic cleansing? How can I tell the guilty from the guiltless?

The two facilitators have worked with this group of educators for three years to train them in conflict resolution. I look around the room and wonder, "what happened here?" Is it too obscene or too recent to give it a voice? I am struck by the appearance of normalcy covering the aftermath of genocide. There is a feeling of woundedness in the room and I register a shock to my system. Time rolls backwards and I see my mother five years after the war. The Bosnians on the other hand are looking at their children fifty years after the war. Can we transcend time and language barriers to reach each other in our mutual grief? We are two generations of genocide facing each other, and we will all be changed by the encounter. Can my spirit survive intact from this new onslaught?

The ghosts in the room are louder than the living and I feel overwhelmed in the face of so much unexpressed anguish. They sit in silence and the room is riddled with images. Nobody sheds a tear, frozen by the brutality of their recent pain.

I feel paralyzed with doubts. How do we make amends to these people? After all, aren't we part of the world who has abandoned them, who stood by and watched their war on television? What can I say to these people...That after Auschwitz we have all become morally disabled?

After all, the day of reckoning has never come for most Germans. And oblivion has not come for my mother to offer freedom from the persecution of her memories. Time has not been the great healer for the survivors of Nazi death camps. They have written and read volumes, made movies, told the stories, yet the wounds are still there. Where is the respite?

As for us, the second generation, we are branded with our trauma just as our parents live with numbers on their arms. I felt emotionally homeless most of my adult life and it was descending into my pain rather than avoiding it that brought some measure of healing. Can Ilona and Gottfried carry the message for the Germans that the sins of the parents are visited on the children? And their children's children?

It is now accepted wisdom that for victims of trauma the way to catharsis is through telling their story. (Hoffman, 1994)

It is no small matter to be a witness to another person's life story. By listening with compassion we validate each other's lives, make suffering meaningful and help the process of forgiving and healing take place. Crossing to Avalon (Bolen, 1994)

I tell my story, starting with my mother's deportation to Auschwitz in a cattle train, losing her mother to the gas chamber minutes after they arrive in Auschwitz. I try to convey in words her futile struggle to gain freedom from her trauma and my own years lost to the task of healing. I talk about my meeting the second generation Germans and the miracle that healed my heart when I heard one German say, "I am so sorry for what our people did to your people." I talk about my gratitude for the extraordinary courage of a few Germans to carry the collective legacy of shame and guilt.

When I talk about my mother's travel to Auschwitz in a cattle train without food or water, Gottfried walks out of the room. Upon his return, he crumples into his seat and his body is wracked with sobs. "I am so ashamed, it is so difficult for me to listen to these stories," he mutters when he can finally talk. His tears and genuine pain add a new salve to my wounds. Perhaps part of this voyage is a continuation of the dialogue we started with each other.

When Gottfried tells his story, I learn that he was an enthusiastic Hitler Youth. When at the end of the war his commander announced, "Hitler is dead, you can go home now," Gottfried was only 15 years old. The youths were instructed to remove any sign that their clothes had been a Nazi uniform.

Gottfried, this courageous German, started reckoning with his own conscience in his late sixties, five decades after the war, surrounded by a nation of people who prefer their legacy of silence and suppression. And thus Gottfried, the former Hitler Youth, modeled for the Bosnians how to deal with responsibility by saying, "I was there, I was part of this, it was wrong, I am ashamed and I am sorry."

Later on, one of the women in the audience, called Nada, (I learned later that she was Serb), said, "I wish I could remove all signs from my life that there had been a war." I wonder what is it that she wants to remove?

A young Muslim girl, Yasmina, leaves in an ambulance because of a heart problem. The strain of dealing with these events is such that she becomes ill.

Before I left California I attended a slide presentation on Bosnia where the Air Force captain talked about landmines planted at random in the countryside with no maps to enable their removal. Triggered by our stories, Yasmina's reaction to her internal landmines is a metaphor for the country's landmines. And yet, the deepest wounding, and healing, only happen at personal level and the Bosnian victims and perpetrators will have to deal with their psychological landmines, lest they are passed on to future generations.

Vahidim a young Muslim, who has lost 36 relatives in the recent massacre, and who lives in a village where nobody is younger than sixty, approaches me to ask how long have I been crying for my mother. I tell him that I don't remember and he replies that he is becoming afraid for the fate of his future children.

When Ilona tells her story I find out that there was no mention of the Holocaust in her school in Germany. She learned about it in her teens and it created an abyss between her father and her. She carried a sense of guilt until she met with second-generation survivors. That is when she realized that she was not guilty for what happened in the Holocaust but that she had a responsibility to be a different kind of German than her father had been.

Susan's father was witness to pogrom atrocities, which killed his siblings before his eyes, and by the time Susan knew him "he was a sad, old man" burdened with what he has seen. Vesna, our interpreter, tells us that she had such a shock to her system from our stories that she almost couldn't go on.

That evening we tell our stories again to an audience in Sanski Most, sitting around tables in a very large restaurant. The room is so filled with smoke, it is hard to breathe. Yet, after a few minutes, I watch in astonishment as everyone stops smoking and listens to us.

One man raises his hand and asks, "At the end of World War II the German criminals were brought to justice by an International tribunal. Why are our criminals walking around free?" Why indeed? The four of us look at each other feeling helpless. I remember that the criminals of the Third Reich were not all brought to justice. Most lived comfortable lives while my mother had to bear her agonies every day of her life. How are these people supposed to heal seeing their perpetrators go about life as though nothing happened?

That night I try to sleep and my mind wanders back to the journey which brought me here, when two years earlier I traveled to Berlin to talk with descendants of those responsible for my mother's broken life.

With me in the room were six other adult children of concentration camp survivors and seven descendants of the Nazi Regime. That they showed up and willing to listen to us was

miraculous enough. But when a few people on the German side said, "I am sorry," that was the beginning of a new life for me. No longer paralyzed by my trauma, I was changing my identity as a victim and the German identity as a perpetrator. The German willingness to talk about their history, to listen to us, to promise never to do it again, to support that promise with bearing witness in public and commitment to good deeds, liberated me to find my own life.

Yet life in Sanski Most insists on intruding into my consciousness as people celebrate being alive with rock and roll blasted until two in the morning through a megaphone for the whole village to hear. When I finally fall asleep, I dream of Vahidim the young Muslim, and in my dream he is my brother. At 6AM we are awakened by the same megaphone but this time by Mufti prayers.

For the next three days, whenever we go out to eat or buy fresh fruit, the same question intrudes itself in my mind with every man I pass in the street: are you Muslim or Serb? Are you a rapist? Do you go to church on Sunday and murder your neighbor on Monday? Have we been divided into beasts, bystanders and victims? What infernal impulses are unleashed in a man when he feels justified to slaughter his neighbor and betray his humanity?

On Sunday, Sanski Most shuts off the water and electricity. Our circle widens to accommodate more men and women from the surrounding villages. One man begins to talk tentatively at first, and we learn about the doctor who said to his mother "I have no medicine for this pain." And his mother cried, "I don't want to live anymore."

One teacher talks about a little boy in her class who asked her if they will find his daddy. She is wracked with guilt because the day came when he said, " you were right, we have found my daddy in a grave."

Beautiful and stylish Senka had lost her husband 8 years ago to torture. To this day she has not seen him and refuses to believe that he is dead, even though torture and death were the fate of most Muslim men. She doesn't know how to tell her children or herself that her husband is dead.

The things that have the most powerful effect upon children do not come from the conscious state of the parents but from the unconscious background.
C.G.Jung, Introduction to The Inner World of Childhood (Wickes, 1929)

How do we tell her that everything suppressed by one generation gets passed on to the next, that she can only take care of her children by dealing with her own trauma, that her children are better off knowing the truth no matter what that truth is? How do we convey to these people the silent sound track of trauma of second generation that is the biochemical and psychological inheritance from our survivor parents, which become part of our cells and which we live with every day and which will be passed on to six generations?

Senka's being radiates tragedy and hers are the only tears in the room. I pray that her children will have an easier time than I had.

What cannot be talked about cannot also be put to rest: and if it is not, the wounds continue to fester from generation to generation. (Bettelheim)

The next evening we tell our stories to the Prijedor community. This is the former site of the worst concentration camps of the recent war, and we learn that 50,000 Muslim out of a population of 100,000 were exiled or murdered. These people were neighbors one day, even married each other, and overnight became enemies.

How can our stories of dialogue with "the other side" make a dent in the face of the enormity of this devastation? I have never been faced with the aftermath of war before. I have only see the extinguished light in my mother's eyes, fifty years later. One woman in the audience tells us that her parents were killed in their own home and she only recently returned to her community. It was only when her Serb friend said to her "I am sorry" that it was possible for her to be in the room with her fellow Serbs again. One very agitated man in the audience wanted the international community to know that the Serbs were "only defending themselves." From what? The innocent babies who were murdered and women who were raped?

A 15-year-old girl told us that she is tired of war. She envisions a dreary future and she doesn't want to hear any more war stories.

Nada, who could be the wife of a camp commander, asks our panel "how long before we can push it out?" I don't know if she means pain, or guilt and shame. I tell her that the trauma becomes so deeply lodged that one cannot push it out, but one can work to transform it inside oneself into something meaningful and less destructive. I wonder if she understands. Some of the educators, after listening to our stories, vowed to start talking to the children.

By the third day my eyes are burning and almost shut from too many tears. I cannot stop crying for the people in the room, for my mother whom nobody helped five years after Auschwitz. And because I feel sick to my soul and betrayed in my humanity.

We leave Sanski Most after three days to drive to Sarajevo. The countryside is eerily peaceful and the hills before we enter the city are littered with new graves marked by white stones. Like images from a recurring nightmare from which one cannot awaken, there are signs of the recent war everywhere.

In Sarajevo once again we have clean rooms and hot water. In the evening we tell our stories to another audience. A journalist asks us to comment on the possibility of their people speaking to each other like the Germans and Jews have done. I tell her that perhaps the fact that we were sitting in a circle with their people less than a week ago offers some hope for that possibility. My mother will never hear "I am sorry" from one of the German perpetrators, but I hold hope for the Serbs and Muslims.

When we leave there I feel despair for Bosnia, yet I am filled with hope that we sat together with survivors of genocide only five years after the war, which would not have been possible in 1950.

A woman from the Jewish Community Center tells Ilona that she was very moved by the fact that we not only work together but obviously love each other.

Sarajevo weaves its romantic web with a City Hall of Moorish architecture, the Turkish bazaar with Mosques and Minarets and Eastern European medieval buildings. Yet, only a few stones remain of a couple of graceful bridges and a medieval stairway leading up into the hills. Sarajevo reminds you at every step that people were killing each other only five years earlier. When we pass by a high school we are jarred again into the reality of Bosnia. The golden plaques outside the school's wall are a grim reminder that Muslim teachers were murdered in 1992 or 1993.

What is it that Jung said about being attuned to the soul of the city, its beauty and the ruthlessness? Only a mere blink in the eye of time, five years ago, people were forced to live like rats, scavenging for food, living in fear that they might not be alive the next day. They witnessed the slaughter of Srebrenica where 8,000 innocents were killed under the protection of United Nations. Over 10,000 individuals including children were killed in Sarajevo alone. Why did I assume that because of Auschwitz this would never happen again? What happens to the human spirit when it lapses into such brutality? What is the use of striving to be spiritual when we failed so miserably at being human?

Three days after we left Sanski Most, we learned that the group of educators was able to speak about their suffering and to acknowledge their people's part in the genocide. Project Djakom had the first major breakthrough in three years, and it seems the four of us acted as a catalyst to give the participants courage. Perhaps we were the drops in the ocean necessary to help it spill over. I pray that these people will awaken and realize that war makes us all losers so that their unhealed sins and sorrows will not be visited upon their children. I hope these people who sat around that room for three days will use their wounds not only to heal but also to become a guiding light for their community.

As Croatia Air lifts in the air and we leave Sarajevo, I remember what Gandhi said when he was asked what he thought of Western Civilization: "I think it would be a great idea." I wonder what happened to that specie, extinct before it ever begun, Civilized Man? I wonder what is it really that makes us human? Because based on five thousand years evidence, it isn't our biological status. Nor is it our intelligence, accomplishments or degrees, or affluence, titles or sophistication. What is it then? What makes us human if it isn't that we treat each other with kindness and love? And perhaps a reverence for life.

And if we know trees by their fruit, do we not judge our fellow human beings by their actions? Has World War II raised our threshold of tolerance to evil? Has Nazi Germany bequeathed us a readier acceptance of mass murder? Has the Holocaust not taught us that when we trespass against another we diminish and injure our own humanity?

I came to Bosnia partially to find answers to what happened to my mother, to look genocide in the face. I am leaving with more questions and still no answers. Being faced with the second generation Germans was difficult, but the boundaries were clear. Their parents and grandparents were perpetrators and ours were almost destroyed. As difficult as our dialogue had been, I left Germany with a sense of hope. Leaving Bosnia was different, because

Bosnia meant that history, in spite of our assumptions and hopes, repeated itself. How do I avoid annihilation by cynicism?

Perhaps the groups who desire to live in an "ethnically cleansed" world should try virtual reality? What would that look like? A universe populated by Germans? Serbs? Perhaps a nightmare where the world would have one flower, one type of dog, and all humans were blond and blue-eyed.

I remember a poem of an ancient legend according to which once in a millennium a mortal is given the power of the gods to release or keep confined the spirits of evil that live imprisoned in the darkness of the ocean's depth.

A sapient legend from the Orient
Tells us that the spirits of evil power
lie imprisoned in the ocean's night,
sealed in by the hand of an anxious god

till once in a millennium luck might grant
the decision to a single fisherman
who could set free those bounds if he did not
promptly fling back his find into the sea

That fate had been decreed for my father
It once lay within the strength of his will
to plunge the daemon back into its durance
But my father broke away the seal,
he did not see the rising breath of evil
he let the daemon soar into the world"
Moabit Sonnets (Haushofer, 1978)

If Auschwitz was the twilight, the dark night of humanity's soul, and has unleashed evil into the world, how do we return it to a place where it can lie imprisoned for eternity?

In *Playing for Time* Arthur Miller wrote "we have learned nothing new about human nature and the news is not good."

Had I not gone to Sanski Most and Prijedor, I could have still maintained some of my innocence. But I was there and I cannot unknow what I know that genocide is still possible fifty years after Auschwitz, and the Holocaust is over only if each of us has learned its lessons. There is a great risk in our ignoring what is happening and allowing the evil of genocide to seep even deeper into our souls. In a world plagued by people who are willing to set aside their humanity and slaughter their neighbor, we are all being called to action. That is our only hope to fulfill the promise survivors made to a vacationing God the day they left Auschwitz: Never again!

In his book, "The Passion of the Western Mind," Richard Tarnas suggests that the history of Western Civilization is a tragic story of a fall from unity between human, nature and a spiritual dimension and he goes on to predict: "the highest truth, Nietzsche prophesied, was

being born within man through the self-creating power of the will.... But to achieve this birth man would have to grow beyond himself so fundamentally that his present limited self would be destroyed: "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal...Man is something that must be overcome."

In a talk he gave in Kansas City in 1998, Tarnas comments: " I think that it will take a fundamental moment of remorse - and this is absolutely essential to the death-rebirth experience - a long moment of remorse, a sustained weeping and grief. It will be a grief of the masculine for the feminine; of men for women; of adults for what has happened to children; of the West for what has happened to every other part of the world; of Christianity for Jews; of whites for people of color; of the wealthy for the poor; of human beings for animals and all other forms of life. It will take a fundamental metanoia, a self-overcoming, a radical sacrifice to make this transition... And in the end it will also require grace."

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