



2018
EDUCATORS' INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
Teaching About the Holocaust & Atrocities:
Lessons from the Past for the Future
Teacher and Student Workshop
Bosnia & Herzegovina

FINAL REPORT

The Educators' Institute for Human Rights (EIHR) held a film screening and workshop in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) May 10 and 11, 2018, which included 17 educators and 19 students from the Sarajevo area to learn about the Holocaust and using USHMM materials in the classroom. In addition, we had 10 future teachers who volunteered for the event, but also took part in some of the activities. Participants learned a variety of resources and had a rich conversation not only about teaching the Holocaust, but also their own conflicts in the recent past. Partners included USHMM, Carl Wilkens, Watchers of the Sky, Forum ZFD, and the Post-Conflict Research Center (P-CRC). Some of the participants also participated in a roundtable discussion after the workshop to open dialogue about their needs in teaching such a heavy topic and possibly opening doors to future lessons on the war and conflicts in Bosnia & Herzegovina. The night before the workshop and roundtable, the partners presented a screening of Carl Wilkens' documentary I'm Not Leaving, with a Q and A following. This started the conversation for the program, as some participants were able to attend both events. The partners had a meeting on May 9 to discuss next steps, which include creating a "tool box," utilizing teachers we will identify on the ground in BiH to create materials that can and will be used in the classrooms there.

Thursday, May 10:

Film screening at Kino Meeting Point

Kim Klett (EIHR), Velma Saric (P-CRC), Tatjana Milovanovic (P-CRC and translator), Michele Parent (forum ZFD), Selma Duliman (Assistant Professor and Vice-Dean for International Cooperation and Scientific Research, Faculty of Philosophy), Carl Wilkens

P-CRC arranged for a press conference before the event, which allowed each of the partners to identify their organization and its role, and allowed Mr. Wilkens to say a few words about his documentary.

Alma Zero then welcomed the 80+ participants and introduced the film. The screening took place with a short Q and A and discussion afterwards. People were very open and honest with their feelings and connections they made to the film. Immediately afterwards, a reception was held in the café area of Meeting Point for the audience members, where people were able to mingle and talk with Mr. and Mrs. Wilkens, ask further questions, and make new acquaintances.

Friday, May 11:

Educational program at Sarajevo Faculty of Philosophy

Alma Zero, USHMM Museum Teacher Fellow (MTF) 2017

Ms. Zero welcomed participants and introduced those involved. She set the tone by explaining how important it is to her to include both students and teachers and set some goals for the workshop, including:

- To learn more about the Holocaust using innovative materials from USHMM.
- To collaborate in discussions, learning more about the history and for the teachers, thinking about how these activities and lessons can be utilized in their own classrooms.
- To consider how this might connect to past history for students and teachers in Sarajevo and BiH.

Workshop Session 1: Review USHMM Guidelines

Kim Klett, EIHR

Ms. Klett quickly reviewed the Guidelines for Teaching about the Holocaust as developed for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). She mentioned several times that she would refer back to these throughout the day, as they apply to the lessons that will be presented. She also emphasized that they are *guidelines*, not *rules*. Teachers must consider their rationale for teaching the content, as well as consider their own context, the complexity of the material, and the accuracy of the content.

The guidelines are as follows:

- Define the term “Holocaust.”
- Do not teach or imply that the Holocaust was inevitable.
- Avoid simple answers to complex questions.
- Strive for precision of language.
- Strive for balance in whose perspective informs your understanding of the Holocaust.
- Avoid comparisons of pain.
- Do not romanticize history.
- Contextualize the history.
- Translate statistics into people.
- Make responsible methodological choices.

Workshop Session 2: USHMM Timeline Activity

Kim Klett, EIHR

The Timeline Activity involved multiple stages of lesson development, from prompting participants to think critically about the significance of certain events in the rise and fall of the Nazi German state, to the impact of Nazi Germany’s campaign against the Jews and other minorities, both individually and collectively. The lesson began with participants viewing an ID card of a victim, noting the country where the person lived and the victim group the person fell under (i.e. Jewish, Jehovah’s Witness, etc.). Participants then posted the ID card under the year where they determined that person was first persecuted (a good discussion of that term ensued, leading participants back to the guideline of striving for precision of language). As the groups posted the cards, another member wrote on the board the country of origin for the

person and the victim group, which then led to a discussion of the guideline “Define the term Holocaust.” Participants understood that there were many victims– not only the Jewish–and that people were taken from all over Europe, including one card of a woman from Sarajevo, which surprised participants. Following the ID cards, groups were given a card representing a law or decree that affected victims. To connect to the victim they had learned about, Ms. Klett asked them to place the law or decree with their victim card if that law or decree would have affected their person. If it didn’t, they placed the card under the year that the law or decree was enacted. The group continued with cards representing World War II events and US and World Response, again thinking about how these would have possibly affected the person they followed. The timeline remained posted the remainder of the program and was referred to at different points of the day.

Workshop Session 3: Some Were Neighbors Photo Activity

Kim Klett, EIHR

Ms. Klett started the activity with an introduction to the ideas of collaboration and complicity, asking participants to help define those terms. Groups were formed, and each group was given a photograph without a caption. Each photo showed a person or group of people participating in an activity that involved some level of collaboration or complicity in what happened to Jewish people during the Holocaust. For example, one photo depicts an auction of household goods being sold, while another shows a truck being loaded, with several young people looking on. Each group discussed what they thought was occurring in the photo, and filled out a worksheet answering some questions about what they saw. Next, they were given the same photograph, but this time it had a caption explaining what was taking place in the photo. Using the same examples stated previously, the auction was actually taking place after a community of Jewish people had been killed in a mass shooting. The truck was being loaded with people being deported, as school children observe their neighbors being taken away. Now they were asked to fill in the second side of the worksheet, asking about culpability and how complicit these people were, forcing participants to think beyond the bystander role. This led to a discussion of standing up and doing the right thing when we see wrongdoing, and teachers agreed this is a great lesson for students on how damaging silence can be.

Workshop Session 4: Film Clips

Kim Klett, EIHR

This session started with a segue from the previous session, discussing the reactions people have when they see others being persecuted. Ms. Klett mentioned that those in the photos from *Some Were Neighbors* chose or kept jobs that directly or indirectly persecuted the Jews. Others chose to remain silent. Yet the first film clip, introduced by Tatjana Milovanovic (PCRC), highlighted “the story of Bosnian rescuer Zoran Mandlbaum, a Jewish man from the city of Mostar who had the choice to leave during the Bosnian war, but the legacy of the Holocaust motivated him to stay and initiate various humanitarian efforts to help those trapped within the city and nearby concentration camps.”

Immediately following this clip, Ms. Zero introduced Elizabeth Bohart, who joined the group via Skype to introduce her documentary, *Watchers of the Sky*. Participants watched a 10-minute clip of the film, which featured Ben Ferencz talking about the importance of becoming a “watcher,” one who tries to stop genocide and end suffering and misery. After watching the clip, participants were asked to write on Post-It notes, responding to the following questions: If you are a teacher, what can you do to help your students become “watchers”? If you are a student, what can you do on your own to become a “watcher”? Participants posted the notes on large posters and were asked to read others’ responses, and responding to those on another Post-It if they had time. This “silent discussion” enabled

participants to share ideas and discuss both films and their reflections on the positive actions others have taken in the face of genocide and mass atrocity, including considering ways they can become active in an anti-genocide movement. Participants were then asked to fill out an evaluation and to continue the discussion during lunch.

Round table discussion

Alma Zero, USHMM Museum Teacher Fellow (MTF) 2017

Each of the partners gave a short presentation on their organization's work; in addition, participants heard briefly from Elma Hasimbegovic of the Sarajevo History Museum and Paul Lowe of the London School of Arts.

Next, the discussion began with Ms. Zero posing the following questions:

- To what extent can we teach Holocaust and mass atrocities in a post-conflict society? How deeply can we go into the topic? What are some of the barriers or obstacles?
- How interdisciplinary are these topics? In which subjects have you taught about the Holocaust and/or mass atrocities?
- Have you used literature in your teaching of human rights issues? Why or why not? Would you consider it after today?
- What tools and resources and support might you need to teach this topic?

In response, teachers responded overwhelmingly that they are not equipped to teach with an English curriculum. They feel they can use literature as an aspect of teaching about the "other," and feel that the detail of the history of the Holocaust depends on individual teachers. They did say they try to teach about the Holocaust to connect to their own history, but also feel overwhelmed by the immensity of topics to cover; i.e. the victims of the Holocaust, but also the Native Americans and other mass atrocities they have studied. Why study one and not all? Yet with their own history, some teachers feel that because they may have family who fought in World War II or were involved in the Siege, that they may be too subjective, so they often stay away from those topics. One teacher-in-training feels it is important for the partner organizations to speak to the students in the schools; she felt they can shed some light on the events and then allow students to research more on their own.

As for the topics being interdisciplinary, most participants said teachers believe they are authorities in their areas, and if an English or literature teacher, for example, were to teach about the Holocaust, the history teacher would feel his or her area were being stepped on. Participants did feel, though, that using a book about the Holocaust that highlights the use of stereotypes, for example, could make connections for students to their own history in BiH. They still feel the history here is "too close to home" and most said they would not feel comfortable teaching about it directly. Clarifying this, one student participant mentioned that in primary school, he only learned numbers and statistics about the Holocaust; narratives and memoirs were not taught or shared. He read a book of poetry on his own, *I Was on This Earth*, which he said actually allowed him to learn about the Holocaust. The question was then posed if it would be better to have someone from the outside teach the subject, or to take the students to a museum to learn about it, and take it completely out of the curriculum. However, Velma (PCRC) stated that this already happens to an extent, and that there are too many different education ministries to have a common approach.

Another student had a poignant statement: "Many students study for grades only. But these topics revitalize the power and passion of the teachers. It's a conversation, not just facts."

Teachers also state that they are not given resources to teach this topic, especially when it comes to connecting the past to the Siege. One student said, "I know everything about US history, but I have no idea what happened here. . .Where are we? I'm lost in my country. I want to learn." PCRC mentioned that one component of the siege that is taught is the Dayton Agreement: "there was a war, then an agreement," but it is left at that. Another university student said, "I want to see everyone's story who died—Muslims, Croates, Serbs." She had lived in Germany for some time, and when people asked her what happened during the Siege, she couldn't explain. She feels this is part of the inadequacy in the education students are receiving.

A common need that participants felt was for more workshops like this one. They cited the need for more work with both students and teachers learning together. They also feel the need for a unified book on the war in BiH. Stories change and contradict each other, and they feel the need for "the true story," an objective review.

A student teacher felt the need for materials that are "relevant, quality, and adaptable." They would also like to see more collaboration of teachers in different subject areas. One teacher felt the need to "spark curiosity, rather than teach." Paul Lowe added the idea of a "Trojan mouse," using Holocaust education to segue into other topics. Ms. Zero reiterated the need to move beyond Sarajevo and Srebrenica with this education, and would like to see a BiH-wide movement.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

All involved agreed that this was a productive program, and see the need to continue working with teachers and students. The next steps are as follow:

- P-CRC will have a report and transcript of the program by August 15, 2018, enabling all partners to review the program, reflect on the successes, and move forward with the next needed steps.
- Partners will reach out to teachers in BiH, representing different areas, and will choose three (3) to work on curriculum for *Holocaust: Lessons on Peace*. The three teachers will receive a stipend for their work, and the team will set dates that these teachers will use in piloting the lessons in their own classrooms. Teachers will report back on successes and any problems with the lessons, and the team will continue to work on the lessons to perfect them.
- Once the lessons are perfected, the team will promote them to other teachers through a workshop/program similar to the program presented in May. This will allow many teachers to see the lessons in action and to take the materials back to their own classrooms.