

Title: Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman

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We would like to thank the women who told their personal stories for the purposes of this publication and thus contributed to its content. The opinions and attitudes expressed in women's stories represent the authentic testimonies of women and are their full responsibility. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP) - German Committee. The printing of this publication is the sole responsibility of the CURE Foundation.

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Reviews of the publication “Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman” prepared by Ajna Jusić

“Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman” brings the stories of women who speak openly, boldly and sincerely about what they have experienced and survived, about what most women are still silent because they are taught not to speak, not to open their hearts or souls. With their stories, fifteen women change the perspective of looking at the role of women in war and post-war times.

In the context of post-Dayton BiH, the content of the publication is important and useful material for encouraging the peacebuilding process, constructively dealing with the past and writing a history in which WOMAN occupies a significant place.

The publication makes a significant contribution to documenting work on dealing with the past.

The publication calls for dialogue between members of different generations and communities in the region and encourages young people to never stop asking questions and looking for answers, to listen with open hearts and minds to the personal testimonies of actors from different sides. According to the researcher Ajna Jusić, the call is to raise the issue of women’s rights and women’s freedoms to be active participants in the real movement of the state forward.

The motivation of the researcher to see the truth come out, to get out of the circle of negation and emotional pain, to make visible a struggle of women, activists, to build space for new and healthier relationships is strongly expressed.

Ranka Katalinski, mr.sc.

“Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman” is the research based on a relevant theoretical bias and 15 personal stories of women who have experienced systemic, political, social and other discrimination during their lives. The stories describe their struggle and the way to overcome all the injustices they have encountered. The personal stories of women in this publication portrait a patriarchal society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the unequal status of women and men in the public sphere. According to the testimonies of these 15 brave and persistent women, it seems that society does not really value the work and contribution of women as much as the work of men. In a different way, the researcher gave women the opportunity to be their own, to express their views and opinions by telling personal stories about their struggle that have a strong message for all those who think to deal with this topic publicly or privately. Presenting a historical overview of the situation in BiH, the researcher draws attention to the fact that there are unnoticed heroines of this country who live, work and act, but they have not been systematically provided with any kind of support, encouragement or help.

The methodology used in this paper involves a form of unstructured individual interview, which includes a total of 15 interviews with the age structure of respondents from 30 to 70 years, covering the geographical area of several municipalities: Konjic, Prijedor, Drvar, Bihać, Grahovo, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Konjević- Polje and Srebrenik (Tinja). The publication contains reference and current literature, and belongs to the domain of scientific research and therefore satisfies the elements of the publication.

This research clearly showed that the respondents have been actively working on peacebuilding for the past 25 years, but that their hard work has not been recognized in society. The research lasted six months and as a result provides hitherto undisclosed data and a diverse insight into the entire political and social system of BiH through various experiences and personal stories of women told in different ways, whose focuses and motivation are individual. Each of the stories has an activist, political, social or national background that represents the initial angle, the motivation on the basis of which the story was created. Researcher Ajna Jusić focused on the challenge of dealing with the past and peace-building, which is certainly difficult in BiH, but as she states: “It is important to decide whether we want to live in the present or the past.” Jusić emphasizes the importance of public recognition of past abuses of position and society, stating that: “Mutual denial is tantamount to the life imprisonment in which people are locked in the past, which absolutely prevents any meaningful peace-building strategy.”

Although the publication with all its data provides an excellent insight into the position of women in both public and private spheres of activity, lack of resources and lack of interest of governing structures gives room for more attention in the future to further research this topic in order to update and become indispensable in educational and academic circles, as well as in public and political discourse. The publication may be an interesting literature in terms of providing data to people engaged in the NGO sector, citizens who want to know more, but also to students and other individuals in the academic community whose interest includes the field of social sciences and knowledge of the political situation from different perspectives.

Medina Mujić, Ph.D

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DEALING WITH THE RESTLESSNESS AND PEACEBUILDING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A POST-DAYTON WOMAN

Prepared by Ajna Jusić

PREFACE

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Through the project “Women and Peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina”, we wanted to raise awareness of BH society and the international community about the need to include women in all phases of peace negotiations and peacebuilding. This publication is based on the lessons of women survivors of all forms of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and provides an opportunity to share messages about resistance to conflict, survival, hope and peace from a women’s perspective. Even 25 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina has failed to overcome the consequences of women’s lack of participation in peace negotiations.

As is well known, women were not present at the negotiating table, so the peace agreement did not take into account the needs of women and girls, which resulted in a long-term negative impact on the daily lives of citizens. Women in BH society are still on the margins, do not decide on important economic and political issues, do not participate in important decisions about the present and future of their country, do not negotiate constitutional changes or reform agenda, and do not exist in the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the publication “Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman” you will have the opportunity to read the stories of women who are true heroines, who changed themselves, their local community, the environment in which they live. Some of them are long-term activists in the fight for women’s rights, while others are activists without even being aware of it. You may have had the opportunity to see them, listen to them, meet them, but you were not even aware of what their stories really are, so this is an ideal opportunity for their voices to be heard, for stories to be told and for us to they will be the guiding stars in further work and life.

These are the life stories of women who tell about reality, about where they are today 25 years after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, what peace means to them, whether they live in peace, whether they are happy and satisfied with the opportunities they have or are still on the margins of our society. They are heroines, they change our society and environment and their voices need to be heard.

While we, the CURE Foundation activists, thought about what would be important for women and women’s history and how to mark the anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, we came to the conclusion that we need to give space to women from small local communities. To women whose stories have never been recorded, to encourage them, provide a safe space, empower them and give them the opportunity to say what they have not said publicly in years. Some are telling their stories for the first time, and each of these stories is special in its own way, just as these heroines are important for BH society. We want to pass on our lessons learned to future generations and to other women in other post-conflict zones. We want to be supportive of them, to tell them that we think of them, to convey messages of peace to them, to tell them to be strong and that all this will one day be a history as it was for us. It is inevitable that every conflict leaves consequences on the mind, body, memories, and we appreciate the courage of our heroines who shared with us their difficult but also motivating stories. We, as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the world, have a huge responsibility to provide the necessary tools and recommendations to other women activists in order not to fail to become part of the peace

negotiations in their countries. The project was created to prove that positive social changes are possible and that women from local communities make these changes! We believe that change is possible and that we share a common mission, and that is a society in which violence, inequality and discrimination are not tolerated.

Furthermore, throughout history we record the fact that in 1942 the Anti-Fascist Front of Women of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yugoslavia was founded in Bosanski Petrovac. In that period, women had equal attitudes and an identical value system, and this fact shows the importance of women's solidarity. It should be bear in mind that this was the time of the Second World War when oppression and fear reigned, but they did not overcome the decisions of women to fight for their voice and to be equally involved in the events of that time. If we draw a parallel between then and today, it would be logical to offer the same opportunity to women now, but the everyday lives of women in BiH testify to the opposite. Before beginning of the most notorious war of the modern age, this one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a patriarchal oppression that actively narrowed both space and choice for women. Women then, unfortunately, as now, could only move through socially imposed roles and traditional values. Nevertheless, it is crucial to emphasize here that even before the beginning of the last war, women's solidarity, association and struggle came to the fore. The women gathered chanting messages of peace, sending messages to the local population and the international community pointing out the importance of peace and coexistence. Unfortunately, the political patriarchy was stronger. It is these activities of women from the former Yugoslavia that testify to the fact that they implemented Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) both before it was created and before it was adopted by Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries of the former Yugoslavia. Today, women in BiH are implementing this Resolution day by day and with their activism they are improving it, even though sometimes they are not aware of it. Their struggle continues, and the governing structures do not even know about the Resolution.

Since its establishment, the CURE Foundation has been involved in promoting a feminist approach to justice through the Women's Court, and today we are active members of the regional Women's Court. It is important for us that women's voices are heard and echoed and that their stories are told.

Denija Hidić, BA in Political Science, activist, the CURE Foundation

CONTENT

PREFACE	6
1. INTRODUCTION	10
2. DEALING WITH THE PAST	11
3. PEACEBUILDING	13
3.1. The concept and characteristics of peace and the peacebuilding process	13
3.2. A feminist perspective on peacebuilding	16
4. DEALING WITH THE RESTLESSNESS AND PEACEBUILDING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A POST-DAYTON WOMAN	19
4.1. Outline of the methodology	19
4.1.1 Method and instrument	20
4.1.2 Research instruments	20
4.1.3 Research sample	21
4.2. The women's fight!	21
DRVAR	22
Hero 1: "A woman is a strength, a woman is a power." A woman is not suited for one-night stand."	23
BIHAĆ	26
Hero 2: "Willing to accept"	27
BOSANSKO GRAHOVO	31
Hero 3: "I'm not ashamed of my activism"	32
REGIJA BIRAČ	38
Hero 4: "Home by the sea"	39
Hero 5: "Jolly"	44
Hero 6: "Restless"	48
PRIJEDOR	52
Hero 7: "Clover of hope"	53
Hero 8: "The dance of peace"	58
Hero 9: "I am glad I made it"	62
TINJA (SREBRENİK)	67
Hero 10: "Now they respect us"	68
Hero 11: "I did it alone"	72
Hero 12: "I have my moments"	76
KONJIC	79
Hero 13: "My story is sad, but I am proud of it."	80
Hero 14: "My life - someone else's signature"	84
Hero 15: "Milk house"	90
5. HER STRUGGLE IS WORTH IT!	94
5.1. Interview analysis through thematic units	94

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS	97
7. RECOMMENDATIONS	99
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY	100
9. ABBREVIATIONS	101
10. ABOUTH THE RESERCHER	102

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's ethno-national BH society, separations often occur, both of different ethnic groups and of certain theoretical concepts. To begin with, given the title of the research "Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman" we can point out that we often separate the terms "dealing with the past" and "peacebuilding".

Let us look at the notion of dealing with the past, or, with the restlessness that accompanies Bosnia and Herzegovina in the post-conflict era. Dealing with the past means the processes of remembering what was experienced, remembering a negative experience or event and happening on an individual and collective level. If society is forward-looking, it means that it has the strength to rise above the past, to leave the negative experience behind and thus set its goals in the future, where it does not try to turn back time to correct the past. But is BH society moving forward? If not, why not? The answer to this question can be very simple, but it is not, because we still use the past for new (dis)agreements, new conflicts, current and future political "games". Our society, unfortunately, is still in a network of past memories that cannot be freed and it is precisely these memories that are often used to create a social atmosphere. This social atmosphere is the best bait for the "triggers" of post-traumatic stress syndrome in BH society. When we talk about peacebuilding, in addition to the issue of dealing with the past that clearly says "who", "why" and "why me", it deals with the question of "how to proceed". It is very difficult to find an answer to this question, considering that in the former Yugoslavia, the peacebuilding process is a rather asymmetric process, which means that it differs from country to country. Each state interprets history in its own way so that the interpretation of history is institutionalized which ultimately represents an obstacle to a step further. The notion of peacebuilding, although separate from the notion of dealing with the past as imposed today, implies the application of a wide range of different practices aimed at transforming society, i.e. making dealing with the past a tool for progress rather than "standing still", and trying to answer questions for which, with the institutionalization of history, the answers do not exist. Peacebuilding means increasing the capacity, skills and abilities of individuals, groups and institutions for non-violent and constructive conflict resolution. Therefore, it is a long-term, dynamic process of building community structures, strategies, methods and capacities by which problems and injustices are transformed and solved in a non-violent, creative and collaborative way.

What is neglected through both terms is the female role in these processes. The biggest problem in peace-building processes is that women are often viewed from a patriarchal perspective, automatically excluding them from the decision-making process. In addition, the fact of how much women have borne the burden of war is forgotten, and this is not appreciated today, moreover, it is discriminated against.

Before embarking on the process of dealing with stories that we as a society have neglected, let's ask ourselves do we know what the meaning of the term "the country at a standstill place" is? If you have ever heard of this term, then you have certainly thought that we are talking about Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yes, we are talking about BiH for one simple reason, and that is the fact that BiH is a country of frozen conflict, without promised progress because the past is still used as a tool of movement, while the future is hampered by various political manipulations that still do not aim to make this country ceases to enjoy the name "country in transition".

What is currently happening in BiH is a false move forward where the idea of a potential "thawing" of the conflict is constantly creeping in, and which in fact causes the greatest fear of this population because no one wants to survive what has survived so far. In all this complexity, it is of great importance to ask the question of women's rights and women's freedoms to be active participants in the real movement of the state forward. To what extent is the female word and female work really recognized in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

2. DEALING WITH THE PAST

Bosnia and Herzegovina, like other states of the former Yugoslavia, still suffers from the legacy of the war/wars of the 1990s. It is the legacy that strongly influences the present and actively threatens the future of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In general, there are many reasons for the active suffering of this society, but one of perhaps the most pronounced is the inability of society to “move on”.

Michael Lapsley, a priest who supported the fight against apartheid in South Africa, once made a remarkable observation: “I was born in New Zealand, and I came to South Africa as an adult. When I think about coming here, I think it happened then that I stopped being a human being and became a white man. Whiteness has become like leprosy, something that could not be washed away.”¹

Michael Lapsley’s words also described well the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina that remained after the war. Humans ceased to be human beings and instead became only ‘Serbs’, ‘Croats’, ‘Bosniaks’ and ‘Others’. Quite simply, in the post-war period, great Serbian, great Croatian, and great Bosniacian ideology were too difficult to “wash away”, and even harder to bear. It is a scar that was automatically borne by all surviving civilians with the sins of evil individuals who belonged to “their peoples.” Some people simply had to accept that identity over time and emphasize it as their main, and even the only identity they have because during the war, as most surviving civilians state, highlighting one of those identities was an indicator of what would happen to them. Will they be tortured, beaten, will they live or die? This caused fear, which today is significantly reflected in everyday multiethnic life in BiH, and which brought us a torrent of Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, and a shortage of human beings.

Another legacy of wars are the ethnocracies established after the dissolution of the SFRY - new states and borders that were organized on ethnopolitical grounds. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a quasi-state.² It is divided into the Republika Srpska (RS, 49% of the territory) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH, 51%). This creation was fixed by the Dayton Agreement.³

However, an additional problem for BH society is the inability to deal with the past. The past is an extremely great burden for both the present and the future, if the past is treated in the wrong way or if the so-called BH democratic government uses the past for its private purposes.

Society in BiH remembers the past, strong emotions, pain, loss, victimization, injustice, but not historical facts. Since extremely strong emotions are remembered, strong myths and narratives that “hinder” society from moving forward began to emerge. As so much pain is associated with the past, it is very difficult to deal with it in a constructive way and that is why building peace and reconciliation are not easy processes at all. If we are talking about the distant past, we can even have a case of “chosen trauma” – a trauma not as a consequence of something shocking that we have experienced, but something that has been suffered by previous generations.⁴

Almost every large group has this kind of past, and if many members of the group have not reconciled with it, if they have not renounced the desire for revenge, this past can easily be mobilized and abused for various political purposes. As Giordano describes, in most cases:

1 Alex Boraine, Janet Levy and Ronel Scheffer (eds.), *Dealing with the Past, Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, 2nd edition Cape Town: IDASA, 1997

2 Boris Burden, *Kaptolski kolodvor, Politički eseji*, Beograd: Centar za savremenu umjetnost, 2002; (Kaptol Railway Station, Political Essays, Belgrade: Center for Contemporary Art, 2002)

3 Ivana Franović, *Suočavanje s prošlošću u kontekstu etnonacionalizma*, Centar za nenasilnu akciju, Sarajevo, 2013; (*Dealing with the Past in the Context of Ethnonationalism*, Center for Nonviolent Action, Sarajevo, 2013)

4 Vamik Volkan, *Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity*, Group Analysis 34/1, 2009

“Intellectual and political elites manage the past and produce both the history and the memories of a society, and thus the opposing truths. The latter are a specific social construction of reality that results from careful re-elaboration, reinterpretation, manipulation or even re-inventing of the past into the present.”⁵

Neier cites two key reasons for dealing with the past. The first is the recognition of “the values and dignity of those who were victims”, because if we do not do that, we “perpetuate, even contribute to their victimization.” The second reason is the establishment of the rule of law. The issue of avoiding future abuses is not credible enough for him “because it involves predictions.”⁶ Yes, it may indeed involve predictions, but a violent past without proper confrontation is a time bomb. It can always be used as an ideal excuse to massacre other people.⁷

“Reconciliation with loss can last, but it can also significantly contribute to the beginning of life in the present. Finding ways to deal with the pain of the past is necessary for people to “reinterpret that past, looking at the time behind us through a different lens that allows them to reconstruct their memories in a way that reduces the intensity of feelings of hatred, bitterness and loss.”⁸ Rigby also states that dealing with the past is comparable to forgiveness, if this process is not understood as a moral obligation, but as a process of “forming a new memory (personal and collective) that frees people from the overly determining negative influence of the past.”⁹

So, none of the above necessarily means forgetting suffering, loss and abuse, but implies looking at the past and present in a new light because history and origin are not and should not be the only way we can see ourselves. It is very important to make a decision whether we want to live in the present or the past, that is, it is important to make a decision whether we want to live or just to keep ourselves alive. All this is possible if we come to the sphere of public recognition of past abuses of position and society, because mutual denial is equal to life imprisonment where people are locked in the past, which absolutely prevents any meaningful peacebuilding strategy.

5 Christian Giordano, *Dealing with the Past, Dealing with History* in Bleeker and Sisson (ed.), *Dealing with the Past*, 2002

6 Aryeh Neier in Boraine et al. (eds.), *Dealing with the Past, Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, 2nd edition, Cape Town: IDASA, 1997

7 Ivana Franović, *Suočavanje sa prošlošću u kontekstu etnonacionalizma*, Centar za nenasilnu akciju, Sarajevo, 2013; (*Dealing with the Past in the Context of Ethnonationalism*, Center for Nonviolent Action, Sarajevo, 2013)

8 Andrew Rigby, *Dealing with the Past: Forgiveness and the Reconstruction of Memory in Divided Societies*, *International Journal of Politics and Ethics* 3/1, 2003

9 Andrew Rigby, *Dealing with the Past: Forgiveness and the Reconstruction of Memory in Divided Societies*, *International Journal of Politics and Ethics* 3/1, 2003

3. PEACEBUILDING

3.1. The concept and characteristics of peace and the peacebuilding process

The wars against civilians in the former Yugoslavia began in 1991, when the first round of wars in those territories began, and lasted until 1995. From the very beginning, there have been numerous international efforts to reach a truce and a peace agreement, without much success. The war finally ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement signed on December 14, 1995. To this day, we still do not have accurate data on the number of dead, which leaves today's ethno-national "political beasts" much room for manipulation. In addition, very little attention is paid to living and surviving civilians who have inherited the suffering caused by the wars, and no society in the former Yugoslavia still knows what peace means.

Years ago, many wrote on the topic of peacebuilding, or peace in general, but a final, comprehensive definition of peacebuilding has never been made. Some of the common definitions are:

- "Peace is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice." (Spinoza)
- "Peace is the opposite of war."
- "Peace is a period of cheating between two periods of fighting." (Ambrose Bierce)
- "Peace can be defined as a process in which the international system finds itself, and its characteristics are a decline in the use of force and an increase in equitable distribution." (Ernst-Otto Czempiel)

All these definitions certainly cannot describe the peacebuilding process or the era of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. What is the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina? Is the peacebuilding process in Bosnia and Herzegovina successful?

Peacebuilding implies development that is characterized by processes such as tolerance, cooperation, mutual agreement, dialogue, ways of resolving conflicts in a peaceful and civilized way. Equality, as well as freedom of opinion and expression of individuals and communities, significantly contributes to this development.

M. Sakan in the *Studies of Piece*¹⁰ deals in more detail with the above processes and comes to the conclusion that cooperation means a process in which the actions of individuals and groups, of which this process consists, complement each other in the same direction and lead to the same results.

Mutual agreement is an important part of the definition of peace. All problems, regardless of their severity and complexity, should be resolved through mutual agreement for mutual benefit.

Furthermore, when we talk about equality, we shall clarify the concepts of relative and absolute equality. Human relations in this process cannot be absolutely equal because the general conditions and starting positions are not the same for all peacebuilding actors.

Absolute equality, therefore, does not exist, but the essence is that all actors of peace in this process should be stimulated in a certain way in accordance with the general conditions and initial positions. The need to resolve all contradictions and conflicts in a peaceful and civilized manner stems from the very importance of preserving peace. In peace everyone wins, and in war everyone loses.

¹⁰ Momčilo Sakan, *Studije mira: polemologija i irinologija*, Nezavisni univerzitet Banja Luka (NUBL), Banja Luka, 2008; (*Studies of Piece: Polemology and Irinology*, Independent University of Banja Luka (NUBL), Banja Luka, 2008)

Peace is a basic precondition for the free expression of individuals, social communities and associations, as well as for the prosperity of humanity in general. Peace is simply a puzzle without which the picture cannot be completely finished.

Peace is clearly connected with all important social values and characteristics such as economic development of society and stability of society, which implies the exercise of rights and freedoms of citizens, then the character of political and economic relations that clearly correlate with peace that actively affects the general state of public opinion and the influence of opinion on political subjects and the internal cohesion of society, etc.

Thus, in the development of a society, the state of economic, political, ideological, legal, diplomatic, traditional, cultural and other ties and relations both within a state and between states and state systems comes to the fore.

Peace is, therefore, linked to basic social, economic and other institutions operating domestically/nationally and internationally. During the peace, all these elements are strongly manifested and checked. If these elements are stable and positive, the conditions for the successful establishment and maintenance of peace are favorable and vice versa.

Peace is also characterized by a feature of concreteness in which it is clearly emphasized that peace differs from state to state. These differences arise during the very development of society and the history of society. Therefore, peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is certainly different from peace in, for example, Central African countries where there are three main triggers for unrest: changes of government, interstate disputes and violent extremist movements.

In addition to general characteristics, peace also has specific characteristics that are related to certain people and communities, certain spaces, time and other factors. That is why peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina is a phenomenon that has not and will not be defined until Bosnia and Herzegovina gets an overview of its past. Today, three different histories still live in Bosnia and Herzegovina for all generations. Living histories because BH society is still “stuck” in the past. The political structure in Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided, like history, into three parts, which significantly complicates the peacebuilding process.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia itself left various traces on the states that were part of it. The post-conflict peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina was and remains conditioned by the degree of destructiveness of the war during the 1990s. Even if we do not enter into the essential character of the war in BiH, its national and international aspect, it is very important to emphasize that the consequences of the war completely disrupted the very structure of society, internal cohesion and the degree of internal integration which is why the post-conflict process itself is much more difficult, but also much more necessary. This process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as in other countries, begins with the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and this agreement, compared to other member states of the former Yugoslavia, most affects BiH precisely because of social destruction and war that was more intense with much stronger involvement of external actors. However, looking back, we can clearly see that the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement has so far largely depended on the active involvement of the international community, which itself is still not aware of what is doing and how to act in the future.¹¹ Bosnia and Herzegovina has never taken over the “ownership” of the Dayton Agreement because BiH is ruled by three ethno-political blocs that operate by their own rules and are guided by different views on the past, present and future of this country. In the vortex of a three-ethnic manipulative political game, representatives of the three past, three present and three futures often claim the right to threaten by destabilization, perhaps even the by disintegration of the state, which would certainly lead to the consideration of “new ethnic conflicts.” It is this model of governing a country

11 Srećko Latal, *Sporazum u svom labirintu – Naslijeđe Mira*, BiH 20 godina poslije Dejtonskog mirovnog sporazuma, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Sarajevo, 2015; *Agreement in its labyrinth - The Legacy of Peace*, BiH 20 years after the Dayton Peace Agreement, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Sarajevo, 2015)

that causes individual and collective retraumatization on a daily basis. Collective retraumatization greatly influences the collective lack of interest in a “better tomorrow”, and puts BH citizens in a state of almost complete lethargy under the pretext of “as long as they are not shooting...”

This lethargy is the result of a misplaced ruling system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it also draws its roots from the past, namely, from the process of dealing with the past. Only those selected received the right to support and face the past in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were chosen from ethno-manipulative political structures and their names are often presented to new generations as heroes, which is completely incorrect because such a choice resulted in violation of many human rights, violation of freedoms, and in some cases even denial of certain categories (e.g. children born as a result of a wartime related sexual violence and abuse). The way of governing Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last 25 years has brought more monuments than the war itself, only this way of governing has brought living monuments that have become “victims” of the manipulative system, but also victims of the patriarchal structure of the state.

3.2. A feminist perspective on peacebuilding

According to the (still last) Census from 1991, out of a total of 4,377,033 inhabitants, 2,193,238 were women. The Bosnian Book of the Dead provides a statistical overview of the total number of killed and missing war victims in all municipalities in BiH, where the death or disappearance of 95,940 citizens killed in the period from 1991 to 1996 was recorded. Based on a gender structure, a total of 86,039 men and 9,901 women were killed. According to the same source, almost two-thirds of women, or 5,873, were killed in 1992, and 4,848 were killed between April and September 1992, showing that more women were killed during the four months of 1992 than during the entire armed conflict. As for the national structure of the women killed, out of a total of 9,901 women killed during the war, 7,179 were of Bosniak ethnicity, of which 4,411 were killed in 1992. 1,664 women of Serbian nationality were killed, and the largest number died in 1992, 928. 896 women of Croatian nationality were killed, and the most were killed during 1992, 446. Of the group of other nationalities, 182 women died. The date of death is not certain for 288 women. Of the 9,901 women killed, 97.48% were killed or disappeared as civilian victims of the war.¹²

The above-mentioned data can mostly be found in feminist publications for the simple reason that women in BiH rarely attach importance to both war and peace. The greatest attention was given to women who survived wartime sexual violence and rape, but that attention unfortunately went in the wrong direction. We state this for the reason that the data on surviving women are in most cases used for political separation of society by ethnicity and political manipulation during election campaigns, all for the purpose of fulfilling the equality quota largely imposed by the international community.

The war was in the light of the male gender, but peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina is largely female. After the break-up of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992, women’s NGOs appeared in all former republics. NGOs became a new feature of BH civil society after the fall of communism, and just as civil war was becoming more likely, it was women who began to gather spontaneously to resist the war.¹³

Although women were not required to go to front lines, many of them volunteered in military units or were forced to be medical workers. In her book *This Was Not Our War*, Swanee Hunt writes the story of soldier Alma, who firmly believes that the war in BiH would not have happened if

12 Arijana Aganović, Zlatan Delić, Zabilježene - Žene i javni život Bosne i Hercegovine u 20. vijeku, Sarajevski otvoreni centar (SOC), Sarajevo, 2014; (On Record - Women and Public Life in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 20th Century, Sarajevo Open Center (SOC), Sarajevo, 2014)

13 Vesna Nikolić-Ristanović, *Women, violence and war: Wartime victimization of refugees in the Balkans*, Budapest: Central European Press., 1999

women had decided.¹⁴ Only a small number of women went to war with weapons, while most of them were hit by violence, especially sexual violence and rape, which later became a major focus of feminist research. The humiliation and degradation of a certain ethnic group, an enemy, was done by using women, and it is precisely these crimes against women that are the least detected, proven and prosecuted today. A parallel is drawn here about the false heroes of Bosnia and Herzegovina, those chosen by the tripartite political bloc. Although women were significantly pushed out of stories of heroism, struggle and commitment during and after the war, this did not hinder them in their activism and joint struggle.

Women's struggle for peace is generally recognized among women's NGOs, which reflects the importance of women's association and women's solidarity, but also the shortcomings of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which with its patriarchal tools expels women from its structures. The Young Women's Peace Academy is just one example of women's activities where the role of women in peacebuilding processes is recognized. It was during this academy that a peacemaker, a feminist and CURE Foundation activist Vildana Džekman conducted an analysis of the role of women in peacebuilding processes.

Again, women wrote about women, which is one of the most common occurrences in BH society.

The results of the analysis Women, activists, peace show that most women believe that the state should take a central role in the peacebuilding process, which contradicts the fact that all respondents declare themselves as individuals in peacebuilding, concluding that women invest in building do not receive enough institutional support in their work.¹⁵

When asked about the role of women in peacebuilding processes and the importance of their involvement, 33% of respondents said that women stand out because of their character traits, and highlighted traits such as strong, brave, more emotional. As one of the reasons for the special role of women in peacebuilding, 17% of respondents, among other factors, state that women are more willing to non-violent communication and have a different approach to the problem. 14% of the respondents state the fact that women have fewer rights, and therefore the moral imperative to fight for equality and peace, and another 14% of respondents say that the reason is simply that women are more active in this matter. 8% of respondents point out that patriarchy as a social order is not peace, 6% of women believe that the reason for their special role is that women are the bearers of society, and 8% of respondents say that women are not the ones who cause war, and thus their role in building peace stands out.

According to the respondents, the most important thing is to work on peace building in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina (93%) without distinguishing between urban and rural areas while 5% of them point out that the most important thing is to work on peace building in urban areas, and 2% of them point out rural areas.¹⁶

It is very important to clarify what peace really means for the women who participated in the research. The largest percentage of women, 23%, point out that peace is in fact equality, tolerance and acceptance of the other and the different, and emphasize that such a state implies acceptance and celebration of diversity, a state without hate speech, discrimination and inequality. 16% of women emphasize freedom of movement, speech and choice as an important dimension

14 Swanee Hunt, *This was not our war, Bosnian women reclaiming the peace*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004

15 Vildana Džekman, *Žene, aktivistkinje, mir, Mirovna akademija za mlade žene BiH - Kvinna till Kvinna*, Sarajevo, 2015 – dostupno na: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (pristupljeno: 01.08.2020.) (Women, activists, peace, The Young Women's Peace Academy - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 - available at: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (accessed on 1st August 2020))

16 Vildana Džekman, *Žene, aktivistkinje, mir, Mirovna akademija za mlade žene BiH - Kvinna till Kvinna*, Sarajevo, 2015 – dostupno na: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (pristupljeno: 01.08.2020.) (Women, activists, peace, The Young Women's Peace Academy - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 - available at: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (accessed on 1st August 2020))

of peace, and 11% emphasize the absence of violence, fear and vulnerability. Furthermore, 8% of women emphasize harmony and well-being among the listed characteristics of peace, 7% see peace as a state where basic human values and rights exist, while 4% state economic security and stability of the state as an important dimension of peace. There are also individual answers where peace is defined as activism, love, a precondition for everything else and a condition of survival, as well as faith and hope for a better tomorrow, the power of living.

36% of women believe that they contribute to peace primarily through activism in the civil sector and mention women's associations, work with marginalized groups and the promotion of human rights through associations. 33% believe that they contribute the most to what peace is for them through ways of living and lifestyle and as an example they state the spread of positive energy, respect for others, cultures of coexistence and dialogue through tolerance, diverse friendships, travel (because through that "children learn to love all people"), etc. Nineteen percent of respondents contribute to peace through working with young people (education). There are then individual interesting answers where women feel they contribute to peace through civic responsibility, helping the needy, staying in nature, through work, etc.¹⁷

Regarding the question of which areas should be discussed the most when it comes to peacebuilding, the largest percentage of women who participated in the research, 26%, believe that they should primarily act within education, where they especially emphasize the education and training of young people. Furthermore, 15% of women do not give priority to any one area separately, but believe that all are equally relevant, and that it is important to build awareness of the involvement of all parts of society in peacebuilding processes. 19% of respondents believe that they should primarily act in the field of interpersonal relations through tolerance, combating discrimination and reconciliation between religions and nations. 7% of women state involvement of citizens and various stakeholders in decision-making processes, strengthening of civil society, NGO sector and cooperation with the state as an important factor in peacebuilding. Respondents also state economic stability through employment and improvement of standards, the legal system through the adoption and implementation of laws, then give priority to the culture of memory where emphasis is placed on reconciliation and dealing with the past. In some answers, the most important is the individual area, which implies the awakening of awareness of the self-responsibility of individuals.¹⁸

By far the largest percentage of women who participated in the analysis, as many as 40%, recognize the greatest problem in peacebuilding in the continuous construction of conflicts in society, and state that in this way it is easier for political leaders, parties and individuals to govern, and that peace it is simply not aimed at certain groups of people. 16% of respondents believe that the biggest problem is the socio-cultural context in which we live and emphasize that there are common stereotypes in society, and that in the society in which we live violence is normal and that a change of awareness is needed. 9% of women point to the influence of the media through propaganda and manipulation as one of the problems in building peace. Peace implies acceptance and understanding, and 7% of respondents cite prejudice and non-acceptance of the other and the different as one of the problems. Furthermore, women point out, among other factors, unemployment, legislation, the influence of patriarchy, people's stubbornness, religion, envy and jealousy, poor connections with the region and better with abroad, fear of direct

17 Vildana Džekman, *Žene, aktivistkinje, mir*, Mirovna akademija za mlade žene BiH - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 – dostupno na: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (pristupljeno: 01.08.2020.) (Women, activists, peace, The Young Women's Peace Academy - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 - available at: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (accessed on 1st August 2020))

18 Vildana Džekman, *Žene, aktivistkinje, mir*, Mirovna akademija za mlade žene BiH - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 – dostupno na: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (pristupljeno: 01.08.2020.) (Women, activists, peace, The Young Women's Peace Academy - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 - available at: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (accessed on 1st August 2020))

responsibility and the fact that “we have not buried the past.”¹⁹

According to Džekman, women have invested and still invest heavily to contribute to peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there is a lack of support for them and their work. They do their best to make this country better, but what does the state do for them? Has the state allowed them to face their past?

19 Vildana Džekman, *Žene, aktivistkinje, mir*, Mirovna akademija za mlade žene BiH - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 – dostupno na: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (pristupljeno: 01.08.2020.) (Women, activists, peace, The Young Women’s Peace Academy - Kvinna till Kvinna, Sarajevo, 2015 - available at: <http://zenskamreza.ba/zene-aktivistkinje-mir-nisam-publika-onima-koji-narusavaju-mir/> (accessed on 1st August 2020

4. DEALING WITH THE RESTLESSNESS AND PEACEBUILDING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A POST-DAYTON WOMAN

The research “Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman” is part of the “Women and Peacebuilding” project funded by the World Day of Prayer Committee (WWDP) and implemented by the CURE Foundation, the only registered feminist foundation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women write about women because women’s solidarity in the above processes must not be absent as a form of mutual support and understanding.

This research aims to point out the importance of women’s participation in peacebuilding, but great importance should be added to how much women were obstructed during the process of dealing with the past. We quote the word “obstructed” with full freedom because an example of discrimination and stigma can be cited as an argument when, for example, it is claimed that a woman is guilty because she survived some form of violence, that a woman sought violence herself, etc. By reading the previous sentence we can all come up with at least five more sentences that discriminate against women only on the basis of gender and gender-normatively imposed roles in post-Dayton, patriarchal-colored BH society.

This research will cover some of the main feminist principles such as solidarity with women survivors of wartime sexual violence and other forms of sexual abuse and various tortures, zero tolerance of violence against women, the principle that women are never guilty of violence, that violence against women must not be part of a war strategy, that women are not the territory through which “wars are won”, and the principle of equal treatment of marginalized groups. What will certainly not be missed is a strong argument about the importance of women’s activism and women’s participation in peacebuilding processes, and women’s right to adequately deal with the past without condemnation.

4.1. Outline of the methodology

The methodology of this paper is designed in accordance with ethical principles where the sensitivity of each individual story that will be interpreted and analyzed through this research is primarily respected.

A qualitative method was used in this paper. It dictates the freedom to create hypotheses during the research itself, and narrative description as the preferred form of expression. This method allows literary descriptions of procedures in which systematic factors are explained. Qualitative research is often defined in terms of its relationship to quantitative. While quantitative research measures and answers the questions “how much, how often, what is the proportion, etc.”, qualitative research leads to an understanding of the problem and answers the questions “why, how, in which case and the like.” As well as quantitative, it consists of different methodological approaches; it is eclectic with different theoretical frameworks and disciplines. The choice of approach should be based on the nature of the problem. In accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research, this research used: personal contact and insight of the researcher, qualitative data, holistic perspective, orientation towards a unique case where each interview will be considered special and unique and no interview will be changed context. What is also important to point out is that qualitative research uses a small sample, and non-random selection of participants, which means that the results lack statistical reliability, but the design of the research significantly reduces this shortcoming. One of the advantages of qualitative research is that data is available to everyone because most qualitative research uses everyday language to explain complex concepts.

4.1.1 Method and instrument

This research was conducted using a form of unstructured individual interview that will have to undergo certain changes given the COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the entire world. Regarding this type of interview, this is the best method for in-depth examination of personal attitudes, beliefs and values, and allows for a detailed analysis of the information gathered. In an individual interview, the instrument is a guide that contains only basic guidelines for conducting the interview, and a well-trained researcher directs the conversation in a direction that is not known at the very beginning and is different from respondent to respondent. During the work, the researcher has direct contact with person, with the situation and with the problem being examined. The personal experiences of the researcher and personal insight into the problem are an important part of the research and are key to understanding the examined phenomenon.

Due to the pandemic, 11 interviews were conducted live in the local communities of the respondents, while four stories were sent via e-mail based on previously prepared questions for the respondents. Respondents who wrote their stories were given the same questions that were asked during the interview. Respondents from the area of Bihać, Bosansko Grahovo, Drvar and Srebrenica submitted stories via e-mail. The attitudes expressed in the stories represent exclusively the attitudes of each respondent and their attitudes and words during the interview were not changed but were conveyed “word for word” as they uttered and felt at the time of the interview with the researcher.

4.1.2 Research instruments

The list of questions presented below was used during the research. Each of the questions was asked to all respondents.

- What have I done so far to build peace in BiH?
- How important is what I did?
- Did I have support during that process?
- Have I been discriminated against because I fight, is my fight equally valuable?
- Does this society know that my scars hurt just as much?
- Do people understand that my fight for peace in this country is in fact a fight for all of us, even when I fought for myself, I fought for everyone, does anyone think about it?
- Do you remember writing peace stories with your friends in your local communities?

Research questions that will be subject to interview analysis are:

- Do women have equal rights to face their surviving past?
- Is what women have survived equally valued compared to what men have survived?
- Does BH society really appreciate the female role and the female strength they invest in building peace and a better state?

The list of questions covers the following thematic units:

1. Family and partner support;
2. Assistance from the state and local institutions;
3. Respondent's struggle for women's rights;
4. Gender and ethnic discrimination;
5. Recognizability of women's struggle in society;
6. The importance of women's association;
7. The role of women's associations and women in peacebuilding processes.

The collected data were processed by qualitative analysis through the following steps:

- Transcribing interviews without paraphrasing;
- Processing responses in relation to thematic units;
- Answering research questions in concluding remarks;
- Recommendations.

4.1.3 Research sample

Participants in this research were adult women (15 of them). The age structure of the respondents is from 30 to 70 years.

Women come from several municipalities: Konjic, Prijedor, Drvar, Bihać, Grahovo, Srebrenica, Bratunac, Konjević-Polje and Srebrenik (Tinja).

After the municipalities that the researcher considered relevant for this type of research had been selected, women's associations were contacted. The following associations were contacted were: Aktiv žena (Active Women) Tinja Srebrenik, Glas žene (The voice of a woman) Bihać, Women's Association Jadran from Konjević-Polje, Women's Association Nera from Konjic and Association of Prijedor Women Izvor from Prijedor. The leaders of these associations sent their suggestions about women to be contacted for research purposes. In the continuation of the work, the researcher sent e-mails to all women, and according to the circumstances, she got in touch with some of them via the social network Facebook. All respondents received an invitation letter from the researcher in which the goal and manner of the research were explained in detail. After the first contact, it was agreed which women would personally write their story and send it via e-mail, and with whom the researcher would meet in one of the above local communities. Prior to the research, the researcher did not know these women personally, but she had the opportunity to see some of their activist endeavors on social media. The research process lasted a little over half a year. Interviews were conducted in the spaces chosen by the respondents to make them feel comfortable and free, which allowed the interviews to be conducted without major interruptions. In order for everything to go ethically valid, before each interview, the respondents signed a consent form for recording the interview.

4.2. The women's fight!

"The Women's Fight" is the title of the most important part of this publication. This chapter has been written by women's stories. Each story represents the personal views of the respondent, which the researcher did not change in any form. The real names of the persons mentioned by the respondents in their testimony was not necessarily used. Some of the stories contain characters for a better understanding of the story.

DRVAR – People often say that there is no life here, but that is not true. There is life and there are struggles here. Drvar is located in a mountainous area and throughout its history it has survived wars, the consequences of which it still feels today. 79 years ago, back in July 1941, Drvar was a city of uprising in the Second World War. Shortly after that, Tito's partisan movement was the target of Operation "Knight's Move" and that fight took place on the soil of Drvar. From that moment on, Drvar did not have a bright future because the ground, already soaked in blood, felt the war again when Drvar came under the control of the Republika Srpska in 1992. After that, in the summer of 1995, the Croatian army captured Drvar, and the local Serb population had to flee. Like the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Drvar was covered by the Dayton Peace Agreement, after which it became part of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We must not forget that fighting is still going on in Drvar. Revolutions take place there, and one of them will be presented below.

Hero 1:

"A woman is a power, a woman is a strength. A woman is not suited for one-night stand."

Živana Sabljčić (Drvar)

My name is Živana Sabljčić, I was born back in 1960 in the former town of Drvar (which is still called that today, but does not look like my town, my Drvar), the Republic of BiH (which is currently called the same, but except for the land and a piece of the sky, it no longer reminds me of my Republic of BiH) in the state of Yugoslavia (which no longer exists).

How to start???

What to write???

How to put my score of 60 years in a few pages or lines??? No, it won't not be possible to tell everything I would like to share with you, so let it not be my happy childhood, a beautiful memory of my youth, you will forgive me, but I do not want to share such beautiful years. Yes, I will jealously keep those years and memories for myself because of the fear that someone will steal my beautiful memories, and because I will not give that period from birth to the war to anyone.

I will begin my story with the first gatherings of OURS, YOURS AND THEIRS, at the beginning of 1992, when we heard in disbelief that some people wanted to build a barrage there, that the wedding guest was killed and that no wedding have been the same since then.

Naively thinking that our neighbors are our enemies, and all foreigners are friends, the worst period of the fratricidal war begins, some call it the patriotic war, some the liberation war, and I call it a crazy war. War can never justify anyone's ideals. There is a saying in our BH people "Only fools die for ideals" and somehow it is closest to me after all that I have survived.

I will not talk much about the war, because the graves, the wounded, the civilian victims of the war, including all the inhabitants who lived in BiH during those war years, told about it.

A war in which we are definitely all losers except the privileged who have become enormously rich in peace. Again, they are the great OURS, YOURS AND THEIRS.

After the end of the war, after several years of exile, I was among the first to return to my city. The desire to return was stronger than common sense, God let my heart to rule my head. I missed my barn, the meadow, the spring, my blue sky because I did not accept the place where they wanted to transplant me, neither the land nor the water nor the air suited me.

Upon arrival in my town, a few of us women as many as we were, met regularly under a willow tree near the new building. Shortly after our meetings, we joined the women's organization "Lasta". At that time, we did not even know what a NGO was, but we certainly knew how to fight for our rights. At the beginning of the return, when it was still burning and killing in my city, it seems to me that we have blocked fear with truth. Yes, it was not easy to be a woman, and especially a RETURNEE woman, what an ugly name RETURNNEE is. In such a divided city where there were two truths, and neither was true, we tried to take the first steps to bring the two opposites closer together by reducing differences and giving chances. At first, I thought the fight for rights would be short-lived. But ... it wasn't like that.

I had no idea that the fight for some rights of returnees, today for human rights, would last for 25 years and that the fight would not end for the rest of my life.

Each of us as an individual, as a wife, daughter, mother leads some of our own battles every day. The women who rose above milieu during that period put a burden on themselves, we are under pressure all the time.

I was and I am happy that I was not alone in many struggles, WOMEN stood by me, yes, and these were always some women unencumbered by faith and nation, but simply WOMEN. Strong women.

The struggle of women in BiH was not only a struggle for the position of women in society, it was

not a struggle for equality, somehow, I have a feeling that we who were under attack from the milieu, patriarchy, petty bourgeoisie, and different views put ourselves in an unenviable position. So instead of emancipation, I got a lawnmower. Did we want a lot and was too brave???? Every struggle has its consequences, and diversity in BiH was paid itself with the many blows I have been exposed to then and now.

I will only cite an example of an attack by high-ranking SNSD officials on me and a colleague through a local radio station, slander and misogynistic statements made on that occasion that were terrible. After this show, we started a lawsuit that lasted for five years (the lawsuit ended in our favor). The very fact that no one wanted to help us write a lawsuit speaks for itself. It is on this example that the role and importance of women's organizations, which were our only protectors, was shown.

There are many personal examples of pressure, intimidation, blackmail, economic collapse that I will not cite now.

On the other hand, when I look at the role of women parliamentarians, I do not see the role of a woman, but a political henchwoman locked in her political parties that have not found the strength to take a united stand for women. Therefore, I am not pleased at all with women politicians in BiH because the election campaigns themselves are extremely, in my opinion, dirty, so you can see the photo of a woman candidate in a pre-ballot box between toilet paper and a can of fish. That is really ridiculous.

The struggle of women for women in BiH, against anyone else but only for the benefit of women, has not reached a certain level. I have had the opportunity several times to send an open letter to a council in which women also participate, and unfortunately none of them has risen above the party dictatorship. Guided by the motto WOMAN IS A POWER, WOMAN IS A STRENGTH, WOMAN IS NOT SUITABLE FOR ONE-NIGHT STAND, I believe that we have not yet managed to reach a truly deserved role in society in our country.

In Bosnia, they say that three corners of the house stand on the ground, and the fourth on the woman, I am afraid that if we do not work on the deserved role of a woman through a joint struggle and personal example, our house will collapse. Living in a time of apparent peace and constant quarrels, the role of women must not be neglected, especially in the land of BLOOD AND HONEY. It is not easy to be a woman, especially in BiH, while at the same time being a woman should be a privilege. Just as we should fight for all privileges, so we should fight for the privilege of a worthy woman because we are not weaker in any way, on the contrary, we are very strong, but we must understand and show it.

Živana Sablić (Drvar)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
"I'm not ashamed of my activism" / Danka Zeljic
"Home by the sea" / Paša Suljic
"Jolly" / Zora Kuljanin
"Restless" / Valentina Gagic
"Clover of hope" / Refka Ališković
"The dance of peace" / Tomislavka Dodig Pavić
"I am glad I made it" / Nusreta Sivac
"Now they respect us" / Aldina Suljic
"I did it alone" / Selma Osmanović
"I have my moments" / Nevzeta Hasanović
"My story is sad, but I am proud of it." / Suvada Poturović
"My life - someone else's signature" / Ilvana Bakoš
"Milk house" / Mirjana Raguza

BIHAĆ – The city and its surroundings were the site of battles during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The siege of Bihać lasted for three years, from the summer of 1992 to August 1995.²⁰ The Research and Documentation Center in Sarajevo found that the municipalities affected by the siege and fighting - Bihać, Bosanska Krupa, Cazin and Velika Kladuša - had a total of 4,856 people killed or missing from 1991 to 1995. This city was also marked by silent fighting, unknown heroines whose names we will not allow to be forgotten.

Hero 2:
“Willing to accept”

²⁰ IDC: Pounje victim statistics – www.idc.org.ba.
(Accessed on 20 July 2020)

Enisa Raković (Bihać)

My path of peaceful action is related to my personality and my character traits. Since childhood, and as a girl, I have been active and have always strived to protect the “weaker”, to stand up against injustice, to advocate the truth and to promote the truth no matter how difficult it may be. In the company I worked for before the war, I was known to everyone as a person who told the truth, directly, and who always fought for a better position for workers and their rights. The war came, the aggression against my homeland began. It was not easy during the war, like many other women I fought to help the refugees, to give them shelter and a word of comfort. In the first few months of the war, there were about 35 refugees in my house, the relatives. We shared food, we shared uncertainty, we shared fear, and we shared home. It was difficult during the war, I provided support in every possible way to women whose husbands were killed, and those difficult fates that befell many women made me terribly ill. As a commissioner for humanitarian aid in front of the local community Ozimica, I shared all the humanitarian aid received and visited my fellow citizens. And so, day after day ... the war came to an end. I continued to fight I thought it was important to start from the lowest level, of the ordinary man ... so I was elected president of the local community Ozimica I Bihać, there I helped citizens every day to continue living regardless of religion, nation, culture, ethnicity and political affiliation ... I managed then to build a memorial in the local community for all those who died in the war, and were residents of that local community, without any distinction. It was a powerful stride in that local community to face the past, to say the name and surname of this and that person, our fellow citizens who were killed in the war. The very promotion and opening of the memorial were a powerful event towards dealing with the past and a step towards building peace. As I worked with women, I saw that we could more easily take a step towards dealing with the past. Then I organize with friends from the Association “Žene to mogu (Women can do it)” Banja Luka the arrival and visit of their members to our city, our Association. 54 women from Banja Luka came to Bihać to visit us. The women walked through Bihać, visited World War II memorials and museums and we had lunch together. It was a really brave endeavor. I heard the comments of the participants “we have never been to Bihać before”... It was obvious on the faces and reactions of the participants that they were surprised, and expected something bad, but they got support, exchange of opinions, nice company, exchange of contacts ... both sides were delighted. After that, I organized a return visit to Banja Luka, where we celebrated the birthday of their Association with our colleagues at the hotel. During that visit, participants from Banja Luka admitted that they came to Bihać for the first time after the war, that they left the RS for the first time and came to the FBiH, that they had certain fears and prejudices, but that they are now glad that they overcame their fears. After each meeting, I talked to our women about their impressions, thoughts, feelings... No matter how hard it was to work on building peace, I never gave up, I bravely continued to work because I knew it was the only right path for our future life together. I say this especially because women did not have equal rights to face the past in relation to men, there was no talk of women’s contribution in the war and later, the suffering of women in the war, everything was somehow masculine, as if the war and peace were absolutely masculine. After that, members of the Association “Izvor (Spring)” from Zagreb came to visit us and we hung out with them and talked about the war, war experiences, and how to act now in peace. This meeting was also a huge step forward for our women and our society. When one hears stories about war and war sufferings and contributions, those are mostly stories about men - killed, wounded, fought a battle and the like, but women are rarely mentioned, albeit once in context - lost a husband/son in war. By no means, not even close, in public discourse, does suffering and what women survived in the war have equal value compared to men. And that’s what hurts us... As time goes on, it gets harder and harder to talk about women’s suffering in the war ... it is noticeable that the victims find it very difficult to talk about rape and other forms of abuse. The public court also contributes a lot to this, putting such victims in a difficult position in the communities after public testimony and giving them the label “it is she who was raped in the war” ... with which they should live in the future. Victims say that the burden is heavy for them, and even when the community either condemns or has too much pity, the burden is much greater, which is why they decide to remain silent and keep their experience and share it only with themselves. After these things that I first did in my local community, I continued to work

outside the community for years we organized visits of our fellow citizens to Srebrenica and the crime scenes, then we visited the places of suffering in Prijedor and attended conferences this is a step towards dealing with the past that has been very important to our society. Going to Kozarac to the House of Peace for our women was always difficult, stressful, emotional, but also necessary. Each time, a different group of women went to the annual Conference and places of suffering - Omarska, Keraterm and other concentration camps. Listening to the confessions of raped women and hearing about the pain that women from my community sympathized with, gave those victims support to continue to work more strongly in their local community to deal with the past. This opened the possibility for us to start specifically in Bihać with stories about the suffering of women ... we started organizing workshops for women on women's participation in peacebuilding. We visited all local communities in Bihać and talked, shared experiences, opinions, feelings, cried ... I formed an informal network of women peacekeepers in Bihać. I managed that one street in Bihać get the name of Women Victims of War in BiH. Within the network, I carry out numerous activities ... workshops, street actions, conferences, exhibitions and participate in the activities of the Women's Initiative for Dealing with the Past in BiH. What is characteristic and what I managed to achieve is that we bravely take to the streets of our city and through our street actions talk about the suffering of women in the war, and about the participation of women in building peace in BiH. The citizens of Bihać reacted especially to the first peace walk in Bihać, which I organized with young people, where we sent a message that young people and women in the community are committed to peace. These were revolutionary peace-building steps in my community and the foundation for further peace-building work. I sent strong peace messages together with the participants from the City Square of Bihać. I organized a two-day seminar for women on peacebuilding at the Una-Sana Canton where women from Sanski Most, Cazin, Velika Kladuša, Bosanska Krupa and other cities spoke, empower and educate themselves, strengthen their skills and as such continued to work on peacebuilding in their local communities. In the last few years, I have also carried out activities with young people to build a culture of non-violence and peace in local communities. For young peace activists, I organized a competition in writing literary works on the topic "Peace is my choice" where the best works were awarded. I try to expand these activities as much as possible because I believe that the strength of young people and women's strength can make great results in the community. While working on peace building, I strengthened my own capacities and went through facing the past on my own. I organized the promotion of the UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in my local community through workshops, round tables and street actions. It was really interesting to listen to women's comments on this topic and to broad women's views on the possibilities of our action in building peace in the local community. What I have also done for my community is an exhibition on Women in Peacebuilding at the City Gallery and the workshop on the occasion of the grand opening. In this way, we wanted to encourage other women to continue their commitment to peacebuilding, to encourage them, and to educate and raise awareness of the importance of women's peacekeeping in our society. This exhibition was made for the first time thanks to my commitment to organize something like this in Bihać and I can say that the impressions are positive. The event was rated as very beneficial to our community. However, I must admit that society does not appreciate the female role in peacebuilding and the importance of our work and commitment is still not recognized. In my peace work, I had the support of women who thought like me, but also men who still did not want to give support publicly. My family gave me the most support. One of the significant supports is the award - Plaque of the City of Bihać for outstanding contribution to the realization and promotion of citizens' rights in various spheres of life and work in the municipality of Bihać, especially the rights of women and youth.

I have to say that this is a very difficult struggle in the community and society and that our work is not considered as valuable as men's work. Personally, I managed that Bihać as a city get the Gender Action Plan for the period from 2013 to 2016, which includes peace activities of women in the community. There were moments when I was commented badly or there was criticism "whom she brought us to tell us about peace", but I did not give up and did not pay much

attention because I always think that these comments stem from ignorance. What citizens and communities do not understand is that my struggle to build peace is not a struggle for me but for all of us, for our future, for our children, for our society.

The community and beyond recognizes me as a very open, direct and honest person, a heroine, a defender of human rights, a sincere and dedicated peacemaker who selflessly stands for life and peace in society. Finally, I would like to point out that dealing with the past is of immense importance for building peace in the future, and the past should be viewed on the basis of facts and not feelings. When we take the facts into account as they are, we must accept those facts. We cannot face the past if we do not accept the facts. If justice is not served, if the truth is not a fact then we can go no further. We must be ready to accept all this and move on.

Enisa Raković (Bihać)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
"I'm not ashamed of my activism" / Danka Zeljic
"Home by the sea" / Paša Suljic
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"My life - someone else's signature" / Ilvana Bakoš
"Milk house" / Mirjana Raguza

BOSANSKO GRAHOVO – A place mentioned back on the Roman road. The history of Bosansko Grahovo and Grahovsko polje (Grahovsko Field) dates back to the founding of the Knin diocese in 1035. Since that time, many tribes have settled in the area of Bosansko Grahovo and further to Livanjsko polje. Throughout its history, Bosansko Grahovo belonged to various empires and kingdoms, but what is perhaps most famous in the history of this area is the fact that Gavrilo Princip, the assassin of Franz Ferdinand, was originally from Obljaj near Bosansko Grahovo. Also, Drvar and Bosansko Grahovo are the only municipalities in which the 1992 Referendum on the Independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not held. Many specifics are related to this place, but what makes Bosansko Grahovo quite similar to the rest of Bosnia and Herzegovina is the lack of recognition of women and their struggles. The Grahovsko polje is soaked with the sweat of women's struggle, and we will tell the story of one of those struggles for the benefit of future generations.

Hero 3:

“I’m not ashamed of my activism”

Danka Zelić (Bosansko Grahovo)

25 years after the end of the war I am on the same path, doing the same activities, doing the same things, reconciling people, affirming women, advocating a better future for all of us and wondering what women did 25 years after World War II, what kind of time was in the 1970s, what women did? I was born in those years, 1973. What my mother thought when she gave birth to me and what she was thinking about, what kind of future she envisioned for me, whether it will be easier or harder for me than for her, I do not know and I have no answer to that question, but I know that I chose this path of my own, that it was difficult many times, and that every little success made me extremely happy and gave me the motivation to go further and further. And here I am, a peace activist in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In a country that I love, with people that I love, but which is not what I imagined to be - orderly, democratic, socially sensitive, equal for all citizens. However, I know that we can arrange it to be tailored to everyone, both women and men, to be much simpler, and also that the people may be more responsible and honest. My experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past 25 years is huge, I have worked hard and I am still working to change things for the better. Of course, I know that like other women in my local communities I built peace during the war and after the war. We were "ordinary" women belonging to different ethnic and religious identities. The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina began in the 1990s, when I, just an adult, shown the face of humanity even in the most difficult moments of my life, built peace without even being aware of it, since I was only doing what my conscience dictated.

It was only later that I learned to articulate it as peace activism. Although many women have worked to build peace in their local communities and beyond, they are still not in the negotiations where important peace decisions and strategies for implementing peace agreements are made. There are a lot of initiatives for the inclusion of women in all social processes, but these are processes that are mostly initiated by women, there is little support from men, especially related to political participation. We are deprived of a lot in this society in this country, many are committed to correcting these injustices, and I myself have initiated countless activities, from the traditional to the most innovative that have been recognized throughout the country and abroad, all for the affirmation of peace and women in smaller local communities.

My experience in the past 25 years in Bosnia and Herzegovina testifies to the fact that I built peace with women from my local community. It was very difficult in the first years after the war. I was seeking general support from family and society. I did not have logistical assistance, action plan, just a great deal of enthusiasm, motivation and a sincere desire to repair broken relationships, first in my community and beyond. After 10 years of work it started to be easier to cross barriers because I taught people to listen and know what I'm talking about and why I do it all, I got a lot of support, but it wasn't unconditional. We started acting as a small movement in one small community Bosansko Grahovo, a community with many open wounds, scars from the past, with a lot of afflicted people, who were fed up of everything - wars and refugees, return and beginnings to rebuild all. In that confusion of misery and poverty, with no visible goal and clear perspective, I started with women, I had faith that women would still be the first to speak up and want to build peace, and I was right!

The Association of Citizens (Women) Grahovo is the first non-governmental organization in this area to start dealing with human rights, peace and dialogue. I gathered about twenty women from Bosansko Grahovo, regardless of nationality, religion, education, material status, age, only women who wanted, could, and were allowed to gather freely, come to the meeting, talk about their problems, but also problems in her family and community. It was in the summer of 1999, when the war was over, when the refugees were over, and the return was very current, so I gathered women returnees, together with women who have been displaced. I did not care about their status imposed by the bureaucracy, women were important to me, their torments and problems, it was important for me to help women in their daily lives.

I did not know these women, I came to Bosansko Grahovo from Livno, I came to work in the

police, and for me that acquaintance was something new, but I somehow gained the trust of these women, and generally all the people from Bosansko Grahovo. Even today, I often wonder why and how, maybe they saw that I really wanted to help them solve the accumulated problems of return, rebuilding, property restitution, visiting their homes in remote villages, procuring medicine, food and everything they needed. We met in homes for a year, very often, with liters of homemade coffee and juice, each told her own story, it was a confession of life dramas in two acts, before and after the war, something beautiful, floral and fragrant, and something tumultuous, sad and blue. At the moment they didn't know what to do, they couldn't go back, and they couldn't go forward. Tired and exhausted from poverty, the politics of promises made on TV that it would be better, realities where everything around them was burned and destroyed, families broken and separated, they began to collect fragments of beautiful memories that were not washed away and create a new vision of their lives. In that life mission I helped them, guided them, gave them a hand, and a shoulder to cry on, and a hug, and I did everything what I could just to make them better.

In 2000, I learned that there are non-governmental organizations, citizens' associations, and I wanted something like that, just an association of citizens as an association of women. I found out that they can be registered and have greater opportunities to act. Coincidentally, through the police where I was employed at the time, I was invited to a seminar organized by a women's organization. I left out of curiosity and found out everything, came back, called the women together, and we organized all and registered as the Association of Citizens Grahovo at the level of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Ministry of Justice in Sarajevo. It was July 17, 2000. Just a few days more and it will be a full 20 years, we celebrate that date as the date of our establishment and we are very attached to that period emotionally, and I feel victorious because that registration of the association was also a struggle. Fighting with those who could not understand what an NGO is, what freedom of assembly and action is, and I often listened to words like "Why are you doing this, it is you against the government." It was because of my activities in such a small local community, which was one of the most destroyed municipalities in BiH during the war, destroyed to the ground. Some used to call us a "cabriolet city."

I read a lot and I knew what the Dayton Peace Agreement was, I knew it had to be implemented, but then I didn't know we were going to need so much time. Perhaps it would have been implemented sooner and it would have been clearer if women had been invited to the negotiating table, but they did not, like any other tables around the peace negotiations. It seemed to everyone that we were irrelevant and that our opinion did not matter. I knew that everyone would have the right to go back to their own, which many have disputed. And the men themselves, the women, when they began to visit their ruined homes did not know what to do, they often wondered to return or not, I witnessed this often by taking them to their houses, because there was no transportation to the villages. Often, UNHCR buses only took them to the city for a one-day visit, but they could not go further to their villages and houses. I gladly drove them whenever I could, and rejoiced that these people would return, that the city would be rebuilt, and that we would build a better society, without fear that the horrors of war would ever happen again. I often took a risk because of the combination of work in the police and activism, which do not go together, so I did not have support in the police, in fact it was difficult to explain to my colleagues, and especially superiors, if I help others who are not "mine."

I suffered belittling, I couldn't progress at work, my work was ridiculed, and my family suffered as well. I did not give up or give in, their tricks gave me even more encouragement, and there was no lack of will and energy, there was the support of my husband who helped me the most, he was with me when it was hard and believed in my activism. Now I know how much he loved me when he went through it all with me and has not given up in support and love even today. I often returned home all in tears after the testimonies of the women I drove, affected by their reaction to the destroyed and burned home, to memories from their youth and the period before the war. What struck me the most was when they found an item they liked, a cezve, a pot, a photograph, a

picture frame, a tapestry, a shoe or a soother for their children in the burning and soot. When they had escaped, they took almost nothing with, everything was left and everything was destroyed, they rarely found anything because everything was burned down or collapsed over time after 5-6 years, but for them it was of immense value, it was their wealth and the only proof that they had a life before this. They were faced with the fact that they have nothing and that they have to start all over again. And we started from the beginning, in the middle of patriarchal culture and gender hierarchies, very hard, but very successful. I carried the burden of men who find it difficult to understand us when it came to reconstruction, agriculture, laws, decisions and all of that, which, in their opinion, women should not interfere in. Proving and working, and the fact that I am more successful in negotiations with the authorities, donors, institutions than men, forced me to build and renovate this small town more and more every day and to bind people together. The result of my work are many successful projects, first in the municipality of Bosansko Grahovo, and then in the entire Canton 10 and other war-torn municipalities.

Both in Bosansko Grahovo and in other places where I worked, women testified to me that they actually carried the heavy burden of war and post-war reconstruction. Men were returning from the war and were preoccupied with the traumas they had survived, and women, regardless of their own traumas, were doing everything to make their families survive and build a new life. I empowered women to start some business in agriculture, manufacturing, to unite in common ideas, and my goal was just that they become economically independent. And I succeeded in that, I helped them with many projects, from a little help to buy a machine, renovate a barn, or buy cattle to start a business where they also employed a few women, such as a hair salon, egg production, cheese, vegetables, medicinal herbs. One of the more successful projects in which I gathered a large number of women was to organize the production and sale of milk. Namely, after the renovation of the barn, the purchase of cows, machinery, women did not have a place to sell milk, and they did not even know how because they did not have a tradition of selling, these jobs were done by men in their households. I started negotiations with buyers and connected women with dairies from Livno and Bihać. Furthermore, I organized training on milk production, connected women with the Ministry of Agriculture, created preconditions for receiving premiums, incentives in agriculture, equipped purchase points, procured refrigeration devices, milking machines and all that which was necessary to go with the selling, and it all went smoothly for me, I managed to find donors who helped me with that. However, the most difficult thing for me was to empower women to open their own bank accounts, to dispose of their money from the sale of milk. But I succeeded, there was a lot of trouble until I convinced the first two women and drove them to the bank to open an account in their name and not in the name of their husbands. When they got bank cards and ATM cards and started disposing of money everything started to get better, other women followed these first two and in a few months they all had their incomes and disposed of their money. I was overjoyed to see how happy and satisfied they were, in the end they were asked in the family what to buy and for which purpose money would be spent. All their torment about attending training and complaints of their men, husbands, fathers or fathers-in-law because women leaving home, and go to “meetings” disappeared because they managed to become independent and equal. Although this was an example of success in equality, I am aware that we still have a long way to go before full equality, but I do not give up because peace has no alternative.

Other projects I have created and implemented for women have been very successful and recognized in BiH and abroad, so in 2014 I was nominated by the Ecumenical Initiative of Women from Omiš (Republic of Croatia) for the World Award for Outstanding Creativity, Courage and Commitment to Improvement Quality of Life in Rural Areas. I received an award given to me by the Women’s World Summit Foundation for Women’s Creativity for 2014. I was happy and grateful to those who recognized my work and promoted me and the community I come from and in which I operate.

I achieved the reconciliation I longed for, reconciled neighbors, friends, together with all of them I laughed, celebrated, but also cried and mourned, I was mostly happy, sometimes disappointed with individuals, but over the years I became aware that one cannot awake everyone, but can block, so that's how I work today. I met a lot of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighboring countries who worked and do the same job as me, they are also activists and feminists, they have great results. I also met much younger women, girls who are so affirmative, who are aware of the situation in which we find ourselves, which have good solutions and are committed to make them happen and we must give them support. We have fighters who will continue where we left off, because this fight for peace will continue.

In 2015, I was nominated for the Peace Award of the Network for Building Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I was nominated by several organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, TPO Foundation, Mali koraci, IMIC "Zajedno" and LI-Woman, but the main idea for my nomination, as I later learned, was given by Dr. Zilka Spahić Šiljak, whom I met a few years earlier and who, I can freely say, was the first to recognize my peace activism and began to promote my work, first through her book "Shine of Humanity", and later through interviews and other publications. I am the first woman to receive this valuable award that has given a strong stamp to my work, recognition, but also a commitment to go even further and stronger in building peace in my country. Some words that I heard at the award ceremony from Dr. Zilka Spahić Šiljak and from my late friend Goran Bubalo still mean a lot to me today: "In the gray of this municipality, the only shining light are women, and among them one, unique and incomparable Mrs. Danka Zelić, a founder and president of the Association of Citizens Grahovo. The war in BiH greatly disturbed her youth and deprived her of the beauties of her young age, but it did not destroy her humanity and philanthropy, so her brave heart took her to Bosansko Grahovo to work and help build it. Danka's story is imbued with the message of bringing one person closer to another and reconciling neighbors who were violently divided and expelled and who need support and help for coexistence and survival in post-war impoverished BiH. Danka's peacekeeping began in the middle of the war in Bosansko Grahovo. Danka chose to be with these people and to stand up for their rights and a life worthy of a human being, because she took the test of her humanity and faith precisely with people who were neglected and forgotten. We nominate her because we believe that Danka is a generous person who with her selfless deeds helped hundreds of refugees in a time and place that was not at all suitable for such a feat due to the post-war clashes on a national basis. "

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the majority of the population in the Balkans, was affected by poverty and a severe economic crisis after the war, especially in smaller places far from Sarajevo and Banja Luka. The consequences are still visible at every turn. Two mentioned cities have developed into real metropolises, and smaller places like Bosansko Grahovo, Drvar, Glamoč look like places from the 18th century. Poverty is visible at every step, both in the city's infrastructure and in the economy, education, health, social welfare, and mostly affects women, because women are generally less employed, inherit very little family property, and this is especially pronounced in rural areas, so then they are not in a position to make decisions or start businesses on their own.

I have had such experiences myself working in the field on return and reconstruction programs, when I was trying, precisely on the basis of Resolution 1325, to show how important it is for women to be involved, to be awarded grants, not men. However, I faced formal-legal obstacles regarding the ownership of property which in most cases was in the name of husband, father, brother or father-in-law. In most cases, men protested why their wives were given grants, work equipment, cows, sheep and other funds to rebuild farms, and nothing was registered in their name. I explained that they should not protest because the land, fields and meadows are theirs, the barns are theirs, the women are theirs, and the cattle and machinery women get will be indirectly theirs, that women work more on farms than men and that something it must be theirs too and that it is the decision of the NGO to award everything to their wives.

Today the situation is much better than in the first years after return, women are motivated through economic empowerment programs to be more engaged and committed to themselves and, through gaining economic independence and additional education, they are ready to gain a more favorable position for themselves, but also for other women. They believe that economic independence is key to achieving equality in the family and society and continue to work in that direction.

My activism is such that I am not ashamed to knock on a door a hundred times to ask for a support for women and children victims of war and violence, for adoption of the necessary laws, and adequate policies that will enable the exercise of rights and freedoms not only for women but for all other marginalized groups in society. Stubbornness and perseverance, strong empathy, ethics and humanity can only lead us to the justice I want, but I am aware that without a fierce struggle and genuine commitment to women's rights we will never achieve true equality. I repeat day after day that we women are human being and that we must not be discriminated against anywhere, by anyone or ever. We didn't deserve it and it's not human.

Danka Zelić (Bosansko Grahovo)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
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REGIJA BIRAČ – We know everything, everything is felt, everything is clear. There is not much to write about. We don't have the right to write much about this because all of us who haven't lived and survived, we just don't have the right. We know what happened, we should close our eyes and remain silent for all those who were affected by the genocide. For all those who passed away, and did not want to. Today, there is almost no life in Srebrenica, but not because the people do not want to live, but because we all, with the help of ethno-national political manipulators, made this region important only every 11th of July ... It is our responsibility and we, all together, we need to correct that. As we think about it, let's be enough people and dare to read about the fates of those who have survived and are still surviving. They are fighting for a better tomorrow; they are fighting to live.

Hero 4:
"Home by the sea"

Paša Suljić (Bratunac)

My name is Paša Suljić. I was born in Bratunac where I finished primary and secondary school, and two years of high school in Tuzla. I was a happy child, a happy youth and I had my love in this city. After finishing high school, as my parents were health workers, I was employed in the furniture factory “9. October” in Bratunac. I worked there for almost 10 years, until my life, my youth, was interrupted by the war. On October 5, 1992 at 10 o'clock, the reserve forces of Serbia came to my house, they brought my Serb neighbors to my yard, to my property. On the same day, we were ordered to go to the Bratstvo i jedinstvo stadium in Bratunac, where we had to sign that we will be loyal to the new government and that they will let us go. But they lied. When we got to the stadium, the other story was. The machinery from Serbia set out on its campaign. They killed everyone, they killed women, children, men, everyone. We were at that same stadium until the evening, when we were separated. On the right-side women, on the left all that is masculine. My two brothers stayed there. I managed to find them in three different tombs when I returned 13 years ago. One of them was in Serbia near Loznica. Hard struggle, hard, it all lasted 10, 12 years of exile. From the age of 24, I had to take care of my father and mother, who stopped living in 1992, she lived like a plant. I searched for my brothers for years, there was no sign or voice.

In exile, I met a lot of people, I met people from the Red Cross that I could talk to, they offered me to work with them. However, having such a mother at home, who lost her three children, I could not work. The first one to go to Podrinje, to my city, I followed him. I was hoping to find my brothers. However, we could not reach Bratunac, we were beaten. At the entrance to Bratunac, near the lamellae, many Serbs were waiting for us, they beat us, and completely destroyed the bus. We came back. I kept looking for connections to get to Bratunac. The mother died in exile.

I lived in Oskova, which is 3 km away from Banovići. Mining village. We got an apartment there, a barrack. We were entitled, whoever lost three or more family members, to that some alternative accommodation, in order not to be in a campground. When I returned to my hometown of Bratunac, the first encounter was with my work colleague who was at the stadium in 1992. When I met him, he bowed his head, I didn't because I was full of pride that I had returned to my city and I never wanted to leave again. I still live in my city today. Returning to my Bratunac, various feelings awoke in me, a feeling of pain, sadness, sorrow. I struggled with invisible forces. I didn't look back for a single moment, I didn't give up, something was leading me all the time. I had my goal, my direction, and that was to find my brothers. When I returned, among the first, I was the 14th returnee. When I returned, it echoed through Bratunac, Paša returned from Selište. It seemed strange to them that they didn't kill me, that I stayed alive.

There was a man from Glamoč in the house. The house was devastated, it was uninhabitable for me. When I got back to my house, the first thing I had was the problem that he had the administrative ruling to own the house. The mayor with the Crisis Staff in which the SNS was in power gave him my property. I told him: “The one who gave you my property, go and ask him to give you his own, it's mine and you will come out.” There was an American base in Konjević - Polje. I went there and came across a wonderful woman, a translator. I turned to her and told her what the problem was. She immediately called an officer or a colonel to provide me an escort to go home right away. I lived in someone else's house, I came and toured my house. It was said that they must not harass me and that I could come here to work on my farm. It's mine and I don't want to go from there.

The next problem I encounter is that my property has been confiscated. That was in 2003. My property was confiscated by the church and the municipality of Bratunac. Two dunams and 25 m² of my meadow were confiscated and a Serbian Orthodox cemetery was built. It has not yet been paid to me, even I got court decision that it is my full ownership.

However, the problems did not stop there. My problem was the same as Fata Orlović's with the church. I was attacked by Serbs every day. They came on the pathway to my house, called me derogatory names and insulted me. I said: “I have nothing to do with you, you paid someone

for that cemetery and that someone will pay me. I want a clean field, carry all your own.” There were various problems, it was very difficult. I lived there alone; my father died six years ago. My struggle begins when I set out in search of my deceased brothers. That’s when the biggest fight started. I didn’t give up at any point. I got in touch with some Serbs who were in the working platoons of the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) in 1992. With the help of domicile Serbs, the JNA made the largest executions in Bratunac as far as the stadium was concerned, and after in the “Vuk Karadžić” primary school. I started contacting Serbs, they were afraid of their government. On one occasion one told me some things. Following his instructions, I came to the first tomb. He helped me. I reported it to the institutions, and the then mayor of Bratunac, R.B., helped me. Because of that return, we had great support and help from UNPROFOR. They were at our service 24 hours a day. In all segments, legal and protection and everything else. Little by little I started to get involved in various sections, various associations. Some did not understand the fact that a Bosniak and a Serb were in the Association. That was hard to balance. Since I have never worked in agriculture, I am a chemical technician, I started cattle breeding, sheep breeding, agriculture and later rose growing. All of this was so I could clear my mind and turn my mind of. I had a feeling that every morning, my mind has been cleared, but then one and the same thought haunts me every morning. It haunted me why I lost so much, why they beat me on the playground, they had no reason. I was a good child, I was a member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, then only the best of the best could be members.

I will return to the stadium again, when we were there, I raised my head and looked at my work colleague, he was a Serb. It was Friday, a working day at the company, he didn’t come to work, but I was surprised and scared of him with so much beard and being addressed as “Mr. voivode” From that, “Mr. voivode”, every next murder started. He was the commander, the voivode (duke) is their highest rank. From him began every abduction of young girls, every abduction of a girl, every abduction of a woman. Girls, aged 13 to 15, suffered the most. When they caught women from the surrounding places, then they did not choose, they were already drunk. According to their accent, when they had come to the stadium and said “Where are the beautiful bulas,” I knew that they were from Serbia. Ekavica (Ekavian pronunciations) is spoken only in Serbia, it is not spoken here. When a Serb from Bratunac would enter the stadium and spend a period of 5-10 minutes, someone else would come with a list and take away the female population in 70% of cases. They said that they were being taken to work in a hotel, to work in a house, but those who went to houses and hotels still do not have the strength to talk about the execution they experienced. It is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of the prosecution, the largest execution that can be carried out in war - rape.

I had the opportunity to meet two women at Gradina, they were also taken away and raped. They were taken away from Šehovići and as an item sold for 50 German marks each. I met these two women, they were expelled from Serbian captivity, they were sold like a sack of oil. They were released from captivity when their fetus was already four months old, there was no possibility of abortion. They were released naked, and our army found them in the woods near Kladanj. They begged our army to kill them. I also survived all sorts of things, I was beaten, but I always hid my head on the playground so that my work colleague, my neighbor, would not recognize me. The one from Užice came here because he was promised that he would be paid as much as he killed. But they didn’t know where my house is, they didn’t know that my brother’s name was Alija, they didn’t know that I had a creek by my house. My neighbor knew that. So, he was the intermediary in that murder.

While going around these associations, I met a lot of raped women. In Bratunac, some 10 or 12 are known, maybe. However, they do not yet have the strength to speak, they are afraid that they will be rejected by their community, and that is the most painful. Here I am, staying alive after that stadium in Bratunac is a big plus. I went through all the Golgotha of the war, a period of return that was not easy at all. It was even more dangerous and difficult taking into account surviving of 1992. You had to go into the dark, you were forced to contact a Serb who destroyed

you, because if you do not contact you will know nothing. I had such a beautiful youth, my job, my car, my house. My only concern was not to be late for work and what a shift I was. Within two hours, my whole life has been changed. I was left without a family, without everything. At the age of 24, I had a huge burden on my shoulder, parents who have lost their children. Psychologists worked with us in Banovići, at one point I only asked one of them what kind of person wet the pants, she said dead. I asked her if I could talk more. The body is dead, but you are alive. A plant, a plant that dries. The big thing is our return to Bratunac. Less than a year after our return, various organizations followed us. Like our friend Ifeta, she was there for us 24 hours a day, giving us help and channels, all the support.

It meant a lot to me. When I returned to Bratunac, R.H. also returned. Her husband was tied to a car and dragged down the street, she lost her child. She pressed his nose, the child began to cry and she unknowingly pressed his nose to stop crying, however the child suffocated then. She returned before me, she had her political activities. It was our pillar around which we revolved. We asked her, asked I.M. and so we started to connect. 99% of the female population returned, we had no men, some male children who grew into young men. We women had to be strong, to strengthen. We had to understand each other, we lived using eye contact. I want to say how united we are.

I remember the stadium again. When a woman is taken out under the stands and when she is absent for an hour and when she comes looking at the ground, she was obviously raped. There was a murder of a man, okay. The greatest evil to all women in BiH and the world, I bow deeply to whoever comes forward in public and says that she was raped. Like B.H., I know her personally. I supported her twice, my mother is from Višegrad, and during the Second World War at the age of 12 she migrated from Višegrad. The biggest horrors in the first month, were Potočari, then Prijedor, then Bratunac, then horrors in the camps, then Sušica in Vlasenica, then Višnica near Užice. And there ours perished. Those who raped are not people, I do not consider a human being someone who can rape a 13-year-old girl. You're 40, she's 13 and tell me you're in the right mind, you're not. You're a trained killing machine, pressed and you're going to work.

I feel discriminated against. My fight is bigger, stronger and more powerful than the men's fight, but it is not recognized. I fight through that fight; I have to be both male and female. And trees and electricity and fruits and meadows and everything. I am an individual, wherever you go there is a problem, the door is closed for you, you do not have the right to be heard as a man. In my opinion, women are still discriminated against today. Discriminated by people who should worship them. In this war, women endured more torture than men. There were men on the front lines, there were also women holder of the Order of the Golden Lilies. But no one raped the man, he did not give birth to a child after that. A child that no one wanted was born, no one wanted to be raped. Therefore, no one should be discriminated against. Such children need to be raised, they are children of war, unwanted children.

In my opinion, one should not look at some things, one should go further and have own goal. When I came back as someone who resonated in this city, I had my goal. My return was a targeted return, I was going to find my brothers. I will overthrow heaven and earth, which I did. My other goal was to pass through my city with my head held high, because I have no reason to bend it. Only before dear Allah did I bow my head. My third goal was to find out who killed my brothers. Go to him and tell him: "When you meet me, go to the other side because you never know what will happen." I work, take care of the sheep, get tired and sleep, and let him live in fear and not sleep. That's how I experience those rapes. Do they need to say what happened? But they are afraid of discrimination in society, the most painful thing is that a woman does not understand a woman. Women are power. Female strength is not force; female strength is the mind. I learned everything through this war and exile, return, I learned nothing by going to school. I considered myself stupid, whence my diploma and that school. I was born in 1964, it was difficult at that time to finish that school as a female. But when I came back, it was some life I didn't know. Some life

that is the biggest hole, the biggest pit. There were all the holes in my life at that time, there were a lot of missing parts. It needed to be sorted out. However, my goal and my strength helped. I am a person who only goes forward, does not go backward. I have a nice life, even I don't have a single mark of income. I acquired everything I gained with my own hands. But I had problems with Serbs, there was a trial and everything. I also went to kill him and I said I will do it sooner or later. Where I live, I am surrounded by Serbs. I will never let anyone swear at me, especially you who have been somewhere and been seen. Every Serb who is honest should say where he went wrong. But women can do anything when they come together, women are strength.

We all strive for togetherness and peace. All organizations operate according to the system of a multiethnic community. We all sit there together, Serbs and Muslims, but it doesn't work and it will never work again in Podrinje. They are people who will not be with us. They just won't come with us. They are dirty, their families are dirty. They have a big minus that you can't fix. They know that we know everything and they defend themselves that they will not come with us. We will sit at the same table, but when we go out everyone goes their own way. There is still great mistrust even after 25 years, because none of them is so honest and realistic that she gets up at one meeting and says what she knows, what she has seen. None of them will say about the condemnation of a great Chetnik from this area. Those same women I sit with sometimes, when there was support for Hanke, that writer, they went to Stockholm and gave him support. So they support someone who does not recognize genocide and they want my company. It can't go like that. They are women who lie wisely and skillfully. We are a gentle people, peaceful, ready to help a lot. It doesn't work for them. They live a wise life. We are still, I guess because of all the evil we have survived, peaceful.

Here, according to me and some others, there is no coexistence in this part as long as the two people of two faiths live together. The mass is raped. 99.8% were raped in Potočari. Now take the percentage, what a large percentage it is. What would happen to this state of BiH, whatever it is I love it, if all those women, girls and mothers and those war children came to Sarajevo in front of the Presidency building? And imagine when the mob starts, the women are unstoppable.

No woman in parliament does not want a law that suits children of war. I'm pretty much in that circle and I always say that associations have left me in normal. The difference is when one gets a psychotherapist whose mind is intact, who has not survived what I am, everything can fit in his mind.

And again, never in your life let something shake you and go back. The time will come, it must come. Maybe not ours, but someone from the side will create. I had my dreams too, a house by the sea. However, in two hours you lose everything, you lose track of life.

I am all lucky that I survived all that evil, I don't know how and when I became so strong and free to speak. I have no problem going out in front of 100 cameras and 100 media and say all about. When I returned, I knew where I came, who my neighbor was, who was in the municipality, who was in the police. I have no problem raising my head in a cafe and I will never bend it, let it be cut off. They all know that I walk through the city easily. No one should, especially a woman, go back if she encounters a barrier. Let's not avoid barrier, but break it down. In order for a woman to survive, to remain normal, to raise a family normally, she must break down every barrier, and not bypass it. I don't want to live under someone's influence, to say what pleases someone. I don't care what someone will get a plus if I mention it. Ifeta had to earn my trust to talk about her. I ruin everything in front of me, but life made me like that. Without rudeness and start there is no life. I can sit with a Serbian woman, smoke and drink coffee, but what can we talk about when we are alone? Nothing.

Paša Suljić (Bratunac)

REGIJA BIRAČ – We know everything, everything is felt, everything is clear. There is not much to write about. We don't have the right to write much about this because all of us who haven't lived and survived, we just don't have the right. We know what happened, we should close our eyes and remain silent for all those who were affected by the genocide. For all those who passed away, and did not want to. Today, there is almost no life in Srebrenica, but not because the people do not want to live, but because we all, with the help of ethno-national political manipulators, made this region important only every 11th of July ... It is our responsibility and we, all together, we need to correct that. As we think about it, let's be enough people and dare to read about the fates of those who have survived and are still surviving. They are fighting for a better tomorrow; they are fighting to live.

Hero 5:

“Jolly”

Zora Kuljanin (Bratunac)

My name is Zora Kuljanin, born in Mostar, married in Bradina in the municipality of Konjic. During the war, I moved from Bradina to Konjic, and then to Hadžići. After Dayton, I moved to Bratunac.

Question: How does socializing with women help you?

This friendship brought me back to life a lot. “Moja kravica (My cow)”, “Leptir (Butterfly)” ... I must say, they brought me back a lot. They make me forget the past and look to the future. I have two sons, daughter in law and two grandchildren. And they encouraged me a lot and helped me forget all that past.

I love socializing and I am not a nationalist. I am a Croat who is married to a Serb. I never liked to wonder if he was a Serb, a Muslim ... I was never interested in that. Socializing really brought me back to life a lot because I suffered a lot. I have some sore points, about which I can speak everywhere. I'm not ashamed because what happened, happened, the past is over. I feel sorry for the victims on all sides, Muslims, Serbs, Croats ... I am really sorry that all this happened in this war, that I left my home, that we had nothing here and nothing gained, but thank God, I say again that children are alive and well. I like hanging out in every way, because if I hadn't started hanging out with associations like this, going out with people, I believe I wouldn't have kept my cool. I often sleep at night, so I wince and think what happened, what I need this for, what to think about it. I say, “I'm going somewhere. I always go.”

Question: Is your fight worth as much as a man's fight? Do you think women have gone through a lot that society doesn't recognize today?

Women are stronger in everything than men because we have husbands at home. Also, he suffered all sorts of things. I always say, “Get out in company. You can't be locked in an apartment between four walls. You have to go out, you have to hang out!”

I do not dispute again what happened. I feel sorry for women who suffer violence, who fear what it will be like for them when their husband comes, whether it will be calm atmosphere or not, since there is a case of a woman who complained to me a thousand times.

Question: How do you live in Bratunac today?

As for today's life in Bratunac, it is not easy to live, but I am struggling. I think of myself. We came to Bratunac in 1996. We didn't know anyone. We have nothing. We fell into that environment. We didn't have a dinar, and we struggled to survive, we worked. For example, bills were coming. There was a fight. To better explain where I came from in Bratunac, my husband is from Bradina. I am from Mostar and I am married in Bradina. We came to Bratunac by Dayton. I was married in Bradina, came from Mostar in 1983. Eh, now that the war was over, we were transferred from Bradina to the municipality of Konjic to stay with one relative, since I had a 9-month-old baby. Then, on July 27, we were transferred to Hadžići. It was already like Serbian territory. That was in 1992. So, on July 12, we were evicted from our homes. We came to Konjic, and on July 27, we moved to Serbian territory in Hadžići. We were all there until 1995, and then Dayton happened meaning that companies go to Višegrad-Dobrun or Bratunac. We have to leave Hadžići. And Remontni zavod (Overhaul Institute) should go to Bratunac, and all companies were withdrawing and going to Bratunac. So, we were going to Bratunac. We did not go to Dobrun near Višegrad, but went to Bratunac. So, by Dayton, when Dayton was signed, we were transferred to Bratunac. We had to be there, there was no choice.

I wish I could go back to my place in Bradina the most. To be at my own home. But we had nowhere to go back. It was all on fire. War is war. So, we had to move here. And no, we had no choice. Although I, for example, could no matter where I went. My husband worked at Hidrogradnja. At the time, he was working in Pale, based in Sarajevo. But I realized, wherever I go I don't know anyone. However, that majority went to Bratunac, so we also went. So, Dayton brought what it brought.

I remember, it was hard at first. We found a house. They promised us this and that there. They asked us if we wanted an apartment, if we wanted a house. However, we had to accommodate ourselves. We had to look because there were masses from Zenica, Visoko, Hadžići ... There was no place where one did not come from. And now you are looking for a house for yourself, you find a house ... You have to equip it, you have to install electricity and fix everything. Luckily, we came across a man. It was a Muslim house. We built it and we were there in that house until 2013. And then the ministry offered us an apartment and now we have repaid that apartment. Something minimal, some 42 square meters that it's like ours. I mean, a lot happened. We were hungry and thirsty. It didn't work. The child wanted this, wanted that. I couldn't give it to him. There were some, let's say, sore points. But somehow, we managed. The husband started working again. Then he retired.

Memories come to me, thinking about arrival to Bratunac again. The first time we came to Bratunac we were told that we had to turn right here. We were going, and didn't know where we were going to. So, we found that Bratunac, left a truck with things. We didn't know what to do with it. We didn't know anyone.

But again, everything went fine. We had some attacks here too. For example, when we entered that house, and after about two years, a woman came and attacked me, saying, "What are you going to do in my house? Do you know what was done to me?" I told her that I am just a stranger here and that I have no idea. We came from Hadžići as if we had dropped out of the sky. Don't blame me because I'm not to blame. Just like if you were thrown into Sarajevo, and you have no idea what it is about.

We had no idea either where we came from or where we were going to settle, or how it would all go. But again, I say, thank God, we did it all slowly. We furnished the man's house and that house was ours, but we knew it wouldn't be. No chance. But we have furnished it so that we can take shelter and lead a quiet life. There were various stories and attacks. We solved it all in words. They came and asked if we knew what was happening there, what was happening in that garage? I replied that I don't not know, that I had fallen there like from the moon. I am sorry for what happened on all sides and why it had to happen. But don't blame me. It was really hard at first. In the first year, we didn't know where we were going to go out or who we were going to talk to. I didn't know how someone react when I talk and what his opinion was about me since I came here and he was a native. I say again, thank God, everything is fine. I really don't differentiate nor am I a nationalist.

Question: What does peace mean to you? Have you raised your children on the principle of community peace?

My kids, they don't differentiate people. The older son has, so to speak, Bosniak as friends. He has a friend; son sleeps at his home and friend comes to us. Kids hang out and I'm glad of that. I would never say, "Don't! What are you doing?" I'm really glad when they come on the second day of the Slava and I'm glad the kids are watching out. I always tell Draško if that child doesn't like something, for example food, he should offer him something else. I also enjoy hanging out with other women. I never paid attention and thought I wouldn't talk to her. It never bothered me. So, when I got married, my best man was a Muslim and it never bothered me. In my family, this older son often says that the Muslims were better to him than the Serbs. That's right. He does not separate and does not hate. That's how I taught them. Whatever happened, happened and let it all stay behind. These associations really helped me to be smarter. Because of everything that happened to me I used to ask myself and cry. I wondered what had happened, why and so on.

I have always taught my children in such a way that they never and nowhere make any difference. The older son asked me many times to tell him what happened and how was in the war. I told him to forget and to look ahead. In front of the younger son, we never said what

happened. The past is the past. Let's look to the future. Let's hang out and go out for coffee.

Women are a little stronger. Women can do much more than men. For example, when we women sit down for the coffee, we will never take that topic of what happened and how it was in the war, and men as soon as they sit down immediately recount where they were and what they did. I say, "Let it go and don't come back." I say a thousand times that the past is the past. Let's forget about it. Leave the past. What are we going to do next and what can we do? Where can we meet? Leave the past behind us.

Question: Is it important for you to gather and socialize with women?

Women are different. If women need to get together, that's not a problem. I know that from these workshops. But men would not be as responsible as women. I think if they called 20 men to a meeting, only 10 of them would show up. For example, there are 20 to 24 of us at Nada or Željana. Occasionally and as anyone can. And all a mixture like this. That women socialize and make friends. If someone needs something, it doesn't matter who you are or what you are. We sit in a cafe and we are together. There are women whom I really like. I'm not really a nationalist. I've never been or love that. Someone says how can you be with him or her. Why? Well, she's just like me. Her name is like that, and mine is like that. We found that some common language that we could talk to, that we can complain to each other. We have to look to the future and hang out and be together. In these workshops we are all together and we feel better. We make friends. It's really nice, we help each other and we're together. We certainly had 10-15 workshops where we laughed and sang. We don't look who is who. I'm a jovial person, by the way.

Zora Kuljanin (Bratunac)

REGIJA BIRAČ – We know everything, everything is felt, everything is clear. There is not much to write about. We don't have the right to write much about this because all of us who haven't lived and survived, we just don't have the right. We know what happened, we should close our eyes and remain silent for all those who were affected by the genocide. For all those who passed away, and did not want to. Today, there is almost no life in Srebrenica, but not because the people do not want to live, but because we all, with the help of ethno-national political manipulators, made this region important only every 11th of July ... It is our responsibility and we, all together, we need to correct that. As we think about it, let's be enough people and dare to read about the fates of those who have survived and are still surviving. They are fighting for a better tomorrow; they are fighting to live.

Hero 6:
"Restless"

Valentina Gagić (Srebrenica)

During the address at the workshop in Konjević-Polje organized by the CURE Foundation, I presented my own experiences, through personal and professional review. I spoke about the memory of the common life that was built in the former Yugoslavia, and especially in BiH. As a high school student, I grew up in a dormitory in Sarajevo, where I shared my daily life with over 300 young people from all parts of Yugoslavia, creating a family environment and a safe zone in which we protected, respected and trusted each other.

I was talking about a period when I had big teenage plans and dreams that were interrupted by parental care and one sentence that woke me up: “You have to go, but you’ll be back in a month, just until the war is over.” A month turned into a six-month stay in Slovakia, and the war was not over. It flared. I remember writing appeals to my generation ... that it didn’t concern us, that we should stop the war, because the future is ours. At the age of nineteen, I believed we could ...

I returned to Bosnia at the end of August 1992 “to die if I had to” as I told my sister, but I was determined to return. I soon started a family and created my own world in a soap bubble. Tucked away in anticipation ... I will have a baby, take care of him, watch life grow in an environment sowing death. I had my world, beyond the real. And I didn’t know any other way.

We came to Srebrenica with a one-year-old boy, compensating for the refugee legacy left by my husband and his family “on the other side”. I didn’t wonder why Srebrenica was eerily empty. It’s war. Questions are not asked; everyone should fight their own battles. For the loved ones. You don’t understand, but you grab ahead. I also gave birth to a daughter in those Srebrenica conditions. The mother’s identity dominated every heartbeat. The identity of the mother made me aware that questions should be asked out loud ...

In the late 1990s, groups of women organized the first interethnic meetings. It was a circumstance in which I heard that the mother lost their children. In Srebrenica. That they were taking out of their arms. I overcame those processes of confrontation and awareness of why there is so much devastation around us. The misfortunes of others have also become my own through endless concern for the future and desires for a safe environment in which our children will grow into people.

I said that this knowledge traced my activist paths. At the beginning of 2000, we founded the Association “Sara-Srebrenica”, in which we gave space primarily to young people and women to create a better environment. We then decided to deal with issues that no one wanted, especially not in Srebrenica. We opened up painful topics of dealing with the past. We searched for the truth and uttered it loudly, in safe zones where we made waves out of drops. It was devastating to keep silent about Srebrenica in Srebrenica. To look for the culprits in the “other” inside the four walls, justifying the crimes with a crime. It was also devastating that it was easier to talk about genocide and all the crimes committed outside Srebrenica, so it was done at various camps and meetings in which we built circles of support and understanding. I talked about the struggles that are taking place in each of us that will lead to which side we choose and whether it is good to have an imperative that has no alternative.

My experiences and the environment in which I grew up influenced my character as much as those who gave birth to and raised me. As much as my Sarajevo family of over 300 high school students with whom I shared the sky. But Srebrenica ... I believe determined me to be what I’m... That I don’t want anyone’s sleep to be interrupted by force again.

I buried my war survival deeply believing them to be irrelevant comparing to the lives of those whose traumas were caused by direct violence and the loss of the closest family members. We all shared the struggle to survive in this area, as much as the consolation when someone’s death overtakes us “just don’t let it be someone’s mine”. Life under grenades. Staying in the basements. The lack of everything and the tenacious ability to prepare a real feast with a few stale foods was a feature of almost every household. We shared recipes more than fears ...

running from what would catch up all of us years later. I remember that on one occasion a friend of mine, listening to me talking about how beautiful and cozy Srebrenica is, without seeing all the misery of the environment and the downturn we had reached, the political tensions and media tensions that never stopped, just quietly commented that these are mine deep traumas in which I change the real picture of life with my own projections to make it easier for me. I've thought about it ... and I often think of those words associated with deep trauma ... comparing them to the look through rose-colored glasses of my own being ... so let me, if it's that easy for me, let me. And to those responsible for the war, I will never forgive them for stealing the lives of generations. Never!

The restlessness in me did not allow me doing nothing. To wait. I was constantly moving. Curious. To meet. To learn. As soon as the first opportunities for improvement through non-formal education appeared, I got involved in those processes. Various courses, then socializing and exchanges, study visits, opportunities to talk and share mutual experiences additionally stimulated our aspirations to change the environment and create opportunities in our environment. At first, we were quite unaware that our activities would be aimed at building peace. However, the first interethnic meetings in Srebrenica were organized by women.

I deeply believe that at the time neither of us knew what changes we were making. Maybe at the beginning, I didn't think much about the community, but just about the change I wanted for myself. I wanted to work. To contribute. To fill my time with some content that will bring me satisfaction and because of which I will be good to myself and my closest environment. With these intentions, I applied for the training of a caregiver who will work with old and exhausted people. It was the end of the nineties and the three of us from Srebrenica, who did not know each other until then, although we lived in the same town, went to Dobož. Those seven days were woven of our ideas, aware that we would not be the same when we returned home. We were inspired by the initiatives of others who made changes. I remember endlessly thinking about starting a fitness center for women. I can only imagine how ridiculous we were in believing our ideas ... how unrealistic we were in an environment where, in addition to demolished buildings, the will to live in dignity was destroyed. Not that we chose that way because we didn't know otherwise, but that they imposed it on us that way. And we resisted.

Upon our return from Dobož, we decided to establish an organization to be a base in which we will create support and from which we will contribute to positive changes. The commitment to create a safe zone for those who need it most ... women and young people, regardless of any affiliation. And yes, for years in those beginnings of ours, we encountered troubles ... labeling, disputes, there were threats, conflict situations, but nothing ever shook us. The belief that we could be stronger than all the fears, even those when we worried that the effects of our work might affect our children. Aware that it was a struggle for their freedom as well.

I don't give much time to think about how important is what I did. Others remind me of such things. And somehow, I believe it was impulsive, at least in the beginning. That it was natural. The rebel in the fragile being wanted nothing else. Disputed countless times. And even in an environment that was supposed to be supportive, the ideas we lived in the late 1990s seemed unrealistic, impossible, and crazy. Talking about coexistence, and especially organizing the contents that contributed to it, was a lot of challenges. I can't say it's me ... but together with women who have embarked on the path of building trust in a multiethnic community, we have contributed to peace. Much more than those who were supposed to engage in these endeavors.

And there was no support. Neither in official politics, nor from other authorities such as religious officials. On the contrary, it was easier to have "one's own" and stay away.

I remember, on one occasion, in the premises of the Association while we still had a training course for practicing work on computers, a drunk man came, enraged, shouted at us, who we are, why we came here, who we gather ... he threatened and used a vulgar slang with the intention of belittling everything we do. A colleague approached him and objected. She made it

clear to him that he could talk to us, but in a different tone and in other circumstances, when he sobered up from the alcohol and poison he was possessed by.

There was a situation in which they attacked us that we were on the wrong side, that we should actually celebrate the birthdays of the greats (referring to the names of some of the convicted war criminals), and not gather those who have no place in Srebrenica. There were situations where we would not know the outcome, but we resisted. Just because we believed that what we do and live is not an idea but an impulse of the heart.

There were even political obstructions and at that time we did not have support, just the opposite, we were subject of media chases or verbal threats that we had nothing to look for in places that were reserved for the powerful.

Yet we knew how valuable our struggle was. Now all these events are in the shadow of the results by which we have reached human warmth. We openly dealt with the processes of dealing with the past. We talked about topics that others were burying. We didn't choose the side, we walked in the middle. We stuck to our position. And it was never easy, but we did our best. After a series of meetings that encouraged dialogue on interethnic relations and conflict prevention, we were stopped on the street by Hatidža Mehmedović, a mother who, in addition to her sons, lost about 60 close family members. She acknowledged our courage to open important topics that have not been discussed and to contribute to the reduction of tensions during the July days, when the suffering of Bosniaks in genocide is marked, as well as the suffering of Serbs in this area. The words of that woman ... who is not alive today, and who became great because of her suffering and her struggle, have meant a lot to us. She hugged us tightly.

This was in 2004, when, with the support of DVV International, we implemented the project "Interreligious Dialogue as Conflict Prevention", which included religious leaders, professors, media workers and other important figures involved in peacebuilding processes. The sessions gathered citizens of Srebrenica of different ethnicities who talked to each other. Spontaneously, our gatherings were extended to the joint celebration of religious holidays. Friar Petar Matanović stated that our first gathering was "an important historical moment, because it can be said that representatives of the religious communities of the three BH ethnic groups have not been sitting at the same table since World War II." There were different qualifications from courage to madness.

I realized long ago that suffering, pain and tears have no national identity. The womb of the mother whose child was killed screams with the same intensity. The rape is a crime, and a criminal is a monster that deserves punishment. That there are no "mine" because of which I will be silent ...

The mine are only the ones I gave birth to ... Well, even that affiliation does not give me the right to seal their destinies by imposing bonds. Yes, freedom is the ultimate and there are no scars because of which my choice will not be justice. And peace. Wherever I am.

Valentina Gagić (Srebrenica)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
"I'm not ashamed of my activism" / Danka Zeljic
"Home by the sea" / Paša Suljic
"Jolly" / Zora Kuljanin
"Restless" / Valentina Gagic
"Clover of hope" / Refka Ališković
"The dance of peace" / Tomislavka Dodig Pavić
"I am glad I made it" / Nusreta Sivac
"Now they respect us" / Aldina Suljic
"I did it alone" / Selma Osmanović
"I have my moments" / Nevzeta Hasanović
"My story is sad, but I am proud of it." / Suvada Poturović
"My life - someone else's signature" / Ilvana Bakoš
"Milk house" / Mirjana Raguza

PRIJEDOR – A municipality of lost children, a municipality whose pain has not been acknowledged, a municipality no one wants to talk about. People whose pain is not respected. Tears that didn't get attention, a scream that no one heard. Women whose struggles are supernaturally difficult. Women left alone. Fights that go unnoticed. A precious unity that should be a lesson to all of us and future generations.

Hero 7:
"Clover of hope"

Refika Ališković (Prijedor)

I worked at Celpak. We worked then until May 11th. I had finished the second shift and they told us not to come again. Celpak stopped. We were at home. Around June 20, we were picked up, actually, the men were picked up. They took my husband; I don't know where. Then on July 30, they drove us out of the houses. The army came, there was no work (...) Then we were at the stadium for 14 days. It is nowhere mentioned. That's where they separated us. The Red Cross thought there was no one. Me and three other women went to the Red Cross to see what will happen to us. There was a guard and everything. They sorted us out and counted us.

My 27-month-old daughter and I were then. I dressed her, wrapped her up. They transferred us by truck and tow-truck to Vlašić from Prijedor. There were six tow-trucks. All women and children. But there were also older men. First, they took them away, beat them and then brought them back. The younger ones were not returned.

We went up on Vlašić on foot to Turbe and Travnik. I stayed there. We came in the evening at some time. Through the woods, and they were shelling us.

In the end, I left Travnik for Croatia, then from Croatia for Germany. I was in Germany for five and a half years. From 1993 to April 1998, it had already calmed down. I returned to Sanski Most in 1998, where my parents were (...)

My daughter had already started going to school there and when we got back here, she didn't know Cyrillic. There she went to kindergarten first; her mother tongue was German. She went there in first and second grade. When we got back in late April, I wanted to enroll her in school. It was not allowed. The papers had to be translated. They told me it would be best to start in September. To go to second grade again. She had enrolled there a little earlier and was advanced. She loves to read and wherever I went I took her.

I was 24 then. I worked, I cleaned. I took the child with me. I had nowhere to leave her. They bought her books, picture books. While I was working, she was reading, having fun. Women came, brought her books. I didn't know how to communicate much, but they accepted me. These were older women who remembered the war. They knew the situation. They survived. They just wanted me to speak, a little in our language, a little in German. We used to cry, so I went to clean, and the tears flowed by themselves.

When I came I didn't know a word of German. I studied Russian at school. And when I talked to the women, I didn't understand them at all. They understood me when I told my story. They understood because they were refugees too. They are Germans, but they all came from somewhere, from Berlin, Poland. They understood my situation and what I was going through.

I came to Sanski Most in 1998. I managed to enroll my daughter in school in May. She started second grade. I had to go to school very often, they called me. The teacher told me that my daughter did not know what an exercise book was. I never said that word to her. For me, it was a notebook or a folder. Well, then she didn't know Cyrillic and everything. I said she will know when she starts third grade. I will do my best over the summer to teach her. I used to argue with that teacher, but we remained friends. She told me that I had not taught the child the language. I told her she didn't ask me how much time I spent with that child.

We had little time together. My parents stayed in Bosnia. I went to clean and work. I was getting help because we didn't have the money. I sent it to my parents, they had to survive too.

I often took my daughter with me. I talked to her, but she talked more with German. Afterwards, I started working in a kindergarten in the kitchen. I didn't have much time to spend with the child.

When I talked to the child, I used common words. Practical words. I did not mention for example the word relief. When we went out to the park, I would tell her about a tree, a leaf ... We didn't use so many words that she could learn our language well. In the end, I have a good relationship

with that teacher. She says that I am that mom who fought and managed to fight for a child. My daughter was an excellent student in the end. She finished the eighth grade in Sanski Most. We lived there until 2004.

I was with my parents at the time and immediately upon my return I joined the Association of Prijedor Women "Izvor (Source)" because my husband was a missing person. There were women with a similar story. We collected data on missing members. That's what we did the most. They were my support. I didn't feel alone.

They called us when they and the state needed information. When they needed DNA. I was there when they informed me that the DNA verification report came. It was a difficult period. You go to tell someone the news that someone of his has been found. It had to survive that.

Then I joined the "Familija (Family)" Association. It was in Sanski Most, but the doctor also came to Prijedor. This Association was more of a support for socially disadvantaged families. I knew Dr. Pašalić, who is a pediatrician, from Prijedor and she helped us a lot.

Then the return began. The dead arrived first. There were funerals. My father wanted to return to Prijedor. People were returning to the villages. They were waiting for humanitarian aid. I fought for that help. We founded the Association "Mostovi prijateljstva (Bridges of Friendship)." I was on the Prijedor-Sanski Most route. As that return began, we, widowed women, were meeting. Many of us only had moms, and the rest were killed. Those humanitarian organizations came and it was easier to get help through the association. Then, on 9th February, 2002 we got that official decision. We were the first Bosniak association registered in the RS. The "Mostovi prijateljstva" Association consisted of widowed women. The first donor was Šeherzada from "Mostovi prijateljstva". Some came from Germany, but help had to go through the organization (...)

Houses and schools have been renovated, all through humanitarian organizations. We, women, also renovated schools. In the end, they said we just painted the school. Like, men did it all. The Association received the material, so we renovated the stadium. We did projects. We didn't get recognition. Regional school in Rizvanovići in Prijedor.

Then, the Prijedor Foundation was founded. And they helped us. Local Democracy Agency in Prijedor ... That's how we succeeded ... "Mostovi prijateljstva" still exists, but there are no projects. We still have our friendships, but we don't have any projects. We are now working with "Izvor". We used to have more activities.

When it was 20 years since the genocide ... we then received a project from the municipality of Prijedor and funds. The municipality took away our funds because we were marked 20 years of genocide. We said, "20 years after genocide." Due to that, the municipality of Prijedor withdrew our funds.

"Most" and "Izvor" remained connected. All members are connected by the Association "Izvor". We are all families with the missing. We all stayed in the community. The situation is the same with our children. When I returned to Sanski Most, since my husband was in the reserve police force, I could not get anything because he was not on duty. I received a decision on the status of a civilian victim of war and received 52 KM. It was late and I picked up support for only one month.

The return to Prijedor was already starting and it was not possible to apply for the renovation and construction of the house if you did not have an ID card from Prijedor. I had to get an ID card in Prijedor even though I lived in Sanski Most. They did not make donations if you did not have an ID card in Prijedor. They wanted to see that I wanted to come back, but I had nowhere to go.

(...) My daughter applied for some scholarships in Sarajevo, because the state scholarships from Prijedor was never possible to get. And when she went to high school, I applied in the municipality,

but I never got one. We as associations have fought to change the law on civilian victims of war. Laws are unequal between entities. When we came back, we had no rights. We fought to change the law on the missing persons... some realized the rights in the end. That has changed something. Here we applied for civilian casualties. The president of the assembly in Banja Luka fought for all this, for a change to come. They gave us six months to apply. We took out all the certificates. Then I received a decision from Prijedor that I have no right, because according to another decision, I exercised my right in the Federation. They could check all this in Sanski Most. They made fools of us. They had cooperation; they didn't want to. Then I complained again and received a decision that when I turn 55, I will be entitled to assistance for civilian victims.

The daughter, when enrolling in college, the points for martyr children brought extra points. She wanted to enroll in medical school. They admitted 90, and she was 92nd on the list. She cried because she was a great student. A cousin told her to stop crying and if there were no ones with certificates, she would be 50th. She didn't even get points for the language because she was learning English and German. She had good points in other subjects, but did not have a certificate that she was a martyr's child. Other children with a certificate had fewer points from those subjects and passed (...) many of them did not finish the school even today. Finally, she was admitted to some other school, related to medicine but more connected with the work in laboratory.

So, they say that only the martyrs from Srebrenica are martyrs ... That hurts (...) It was difficult to identify the missing. We passed and searched the tombs. At least for these martyrs it is known where they are, and we have lived for years in uncertainty. When I signed, it was only then that I felt the burden I was wearing. It is difficult to give that signature, as if you were signing the death penalty, but you only feel that burden. To reconcile oneself to it.

They made movies about it. Those from Hayat TV came home, filmed. I watched that video, it's called "Clover of Hope". Then I searched and I could always find a lot of clover of hope. I never said that and I put clover of hope in the book of the missing. I would love to have that video (...)

When we returned, many of our mothers did not have health insurance, so we worked with the municipality and social services to give them some insurance. Afterwards, we had an education through an organization from Austria and Italy. The five of us were educated. If someone needed medication, they paid into the pharmacy so we picked up while there was money. We had a lot of elderly people. We asked them to educate us to take care of them. We went to a retirement home for training. We also had projects with the "Svjetionik (Lighthouse)" from Prijedor. The youth was there. The children were supposed to go to school during that return. We had integration projects, to connect those kids. We collected garbage with those kids, to make the children connect with each other. We connected the children with the old ones as well. We had parents here who needed to be nurtured and served. Like my mom, whom I nurtured. She was good so I knew I was taking good care of her. So, we planned for the municipality to hire us after that training. That is, the municipality should have taken over the project and paid us. They told us that they would support it, but that they do not have the funds. That is how we worked and paid for ourselves through the Association.

We fought through those some projects in addition to having our missing persons. They asked us where we got the idea for the elderly, for the nurses. I used to say that we can't open a kindergarten when we don't have children. They were all elderly. The kids stayed abroad somewhere. We had to take care of the old ones.

The Bosniaks are the member of our Association "Mostovi prijateljstva". There was a woman of Serbian nationality, she translated for us all the time and always told us that she was our member. Others were mostly Bosniaks. We then founded an association with the help of Italians. When they came for a tour, they wanted to sleep in our houses. Conditions were not good. They could have paid for the hotel, but they wanted to connect with us. They gave us the idea

of rural tourism, so we founded an association in Prijedor for all nations. There were 10 women of different nationalities. They gave the idea, and we kept it. They even took us to Italy several times. So, many people came from different countries, so we cooked. We were as specific as Bosnia, we wore 3 different folk costumes. We introduced ourselves with pies, cakes and other dishes. Three different folk costumes. It was important for me to be a part of these associations, women's support was important to me.

Refika Ališković (Prijedor)

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Hero 8:

“The dance of peace”

Tomislavka Dodig Pavić
(Prijeđor)

I am originally from Prijedor. I was not there during the war. When I returned, I had no inconvenience, on the contrary. I met a cop here. I can't remember his name. I asked him where there was a school, and he told me that there was no school but that the children are in the local community building and that classes were held there. I went there there and met Osman, Emsuda's husband. I told him I ran a dance school.

Emsuda Mujagić is the president of "Srca mira (Heart of the Peace)" in Kozarac. There they reluctantly accepted me. That's when I came to run a dance and folklore school with those children in Kozarac. First, we worked in the local community building where there were no conditions, and then we even had lessons for a while at a school that was without a roof. Even the birds hatched there. I was greeted with open arms, regardless of the fact that I was the first Serbian woman to enter Kozarac to work with these returnee children. The children and Emsuda accepted me. I had support there. These children are already adults today, they are now almost 30 and when they see me, they greet me.

By the way, I graduated in Sarajevo as a professional choreographer and then it was recognized by them. As for Kozarac, I am always welcome here.

Long after my return I was not part of the workshops for women. I was just doing dance class, specifically. I did my class and went home. I think they were doing something else but I don't know (...) I wasn't with the women because I didn't have time. It was impossible, but there were workshops. I know that. There was sewing, on Wednesdays there were gatherings as these days at Emsuda. I went now in September and October every Wednesday to hang out with them. There we sit, hangs out, drink coffee, eat cake ... We talk. As for those gatherings, I feel comfortable and that's why I'm going. If I didn't feel good, I wouldn't go.

For example, I ran a dance school in Kozarac with those children, as I did in other places around Prijedor. The Prijedor region is in question. The Peace Conference is held there on May 25 in Kozarac. It is held every year. In 2003, 2004 or 2005, I managed to bring children from Oštra Luka, Koprivna, Prijedor and Kozarac to the Peace Center and organized a folk dance "kolo." I put together a "kolo" where there were maybe 30-40 kids. The Serbian and Muslim child danced side by side mixed. I made a "kolo" and the people were delighted. It took courage then. It was never done or recognized. I also had problems when I put those kids together. From parents and the community. Before that, I had a parents' meeting and I asked if they were letting the children from Kozarac to come, to which they said that of course they would let them go and that they would bring them. When it was all over, I got criticism later. They talked about why our children were connected, etc. So, I had no understanding there. I still worked like that in schools for a few years and then I stopped. I haven't done that in ten years. I was disappointed.

As for that joint dance, the kids had no problem with that. They, the parents, made me a problem. I have never worked on these topics. There was no space and no time. I usually came and booked a school premises after all classes were over. That was when the cleaners were there cleaning. There was no time, I showed children the steps and as soon as we finished, I left the premises.

After that period, they called me at Culture and Art Society "Osman Džafić" in Prijedor. It used to be considered an elite society before the war. They called me to come work with their children. I came here and started it all. The returnees also returned there, but there were also Serb children. And here I combined to be one Bosniak and one Serb child. At the beginning there were 20-30 children. I did that dance once a week for 45 minutes with elements of folklore. Even today, when you come to that society, there are my pictures, as well as in the Peace Center in Kozarac. I went for that variant, just that merger. The war stopped. Then you had to have the courage to put it that way. Because now everyone works in Kozarac and everywhere. Now it's all over, everyone hanging together, but then there's no one.

It was that conference in Kozarac, that fatal dance that I am proud of. When that conference

ended after about an hour ... everyone had their own performance. At the end of the conference, everyone was in the same “kolo”, all the children, both Serbs and Muslims, were dancing together. Some people then called me outside and asked what I was doing and why. It was an attack on me. It was over, but I'm proud because I succeeded then. Now you can (...) Although, it's up to the parents how to raise their child. I can be neither Serbian nor Croatian oriented. I was born in the ethnically pure town of Drvar. I finished primary and secondary school. I went to Sarajevo to study and my friends there were Muslims.

I am now 50 years old and for the last 30 years I cannot comprehend that someone could have done any harm to the first neighbor. And it happened. So, I tell people take it slowly. What happened, happened. Nobody disputes that. I didn't speak either because I wasn't here in the war.

My son was born in 1991. He was born in October 1991, and in 1992 the war started here in Prijedor. On the first of April, I took the last bus to Belgrade because I have a brother there. I was there during the war. Neither I nor my son have anything to do with what was going on here. I returned to visit my mother at the end of 1995. By then, the war had stopped a bit. So, my son has no idea about it. He came here to school and heard various names, *balija* (Translator's Note: a derogatory term for Bosnian Muslim), *chetnik* and the child was shocked. I told to him to take it easy, there are Croats, Serbs, Bosniaks ... The masses, that is, the crowd, when they catch you in something ... You approach it My son left for Germany a few years ago and he tells me how everyone hangs out there together which is not the case here. There are pronunciations here, and there are none. There are all people brothers and sisters, and we have been poisoned here.

I didn't have those moments of discrimination. Not in Prijedor. As for Prijedor, I love this city. I'm 50 years old. I live in the rented house. I don't have my own house or apartment. Indeed, for the last 10 years I have been running a women's gym in the city center, the first and only gym for women in the former Yugoslavia with all the equipment needed to work. But for three months now, I haven't been working because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's a privately owned gym. It is not a permanent job. As for this city of Prijedor and discrimination, it is not felt here. Which is interesting because Prijedor has been through a lot. That's the way it is. I love this city and it loves me. When I walk down the street, people greet me. Nobody, really, talks about it here and argues.

For example, Nerma, Anka, little Jasmina, who used to be a student from Kozarac when I held classes for returnee children, go to my gym. I have 30 women and they work out. It doesn't matter who Nerma is. Everyone knows it's Nerma. It doesn't work that way for us and it doesn't matter. But there is someone, exactly someone from the side, who places it somewhere that has something to do with it, and in fact it doesn't. In Prijedor, everyone lives normally ...

I was in Sarajevo for the first time on November 25. I went on purpose to see the Talgo train. We got on the train here because it is coming from Bihać. In Tuzla, two women boarded. We were chatting, and I concluded that the women were very friendly. We immediately exchanged contact information. They said they would come to Prijedor in 15 days to visit. So, we met these women on the Talgo train to Sarajevo. We drank coffee. They said that they were from the vicinity of Tuzla. And now they will come to visit us in Prijedor, and then we will go to them.

I am the first person of the Orthodox faith to return to Kozarac to work with returnees where houses were still demolished. I still remember the first children who returned. Even today, I go to Kozarac with those children and drink coffee. They already have their own children. Whenever that Peace Conference is in May, Emsuda organizes the program. Different items. She invites me and I participate with children and choreographies. I last did this 10 years ago. That's when I stopped working with the kids and devoted myself to that gym.

I never got any help from the city of Prijedor. That role of mine has never been recognized. I was overshadowed again. I worked for myself. Indeed, I did not address anyone or anywhere. Maybe someone would have recognized something if I had spoken, but there was no need. I did it for my own soul. My goal was to hang out. I did that for both my own and their souls. People tell me, "Your tongue will be cut off." It's not a problem, let it be cut. But don't convince me that what's black is white and vice versa. Don't convince me. I'm old enough that you can't patronize. If something was black, it was. Don't tell me it's white. It can always get better, just like that. That's why I say I don't like it when someone convinces me of something that isn't.

I know I can live with myself. I know that today, tomorrow when I pass through Kozarac or sit in a cafe, whoever passes will greet me. I want to tell you that I was not asking for anything. My heart is full. When the first children came back, it was the hardest for them. They were alone. There was a teacher, a local community and some curtains. That's where the homework was written. It was leaking. There weren't many of them, about 30 children. Everyone danced and participated with enthusiasm. They played and choreograph the dance routine themselves. It was a success to work then. Then we move on to school as the group began to expand to 50 children. I have those pictures too. I brought them gift packs from an organization called "Hleb života - Bread of Life." They have been handing out Christmas packages to children for years.

So, my kids got those gift packs that I shared. As in all schools, so in Kozarac. I never separated those children from other children. There was no heating in the school. It was a ruin, but they were dancing. I tell parents at the meeting: "Oh, my dears, they are inviting us to the swimming pool in Kozarac and we are performing that evening." T-shirts were being made. My dance school was called "Globus (The Globe)". Parents and children wore those T-shirts. And those kids grew up like that ... It's something amazing. Those groups of kids were willing to do it.

They were the first to come. That construction has just begun. There was nothing. It was still being cleaned. That's why I brought the packages, they were happy. Those children went with me to Dubica to perform. I'm telling if I die now, I'm not sorry. I'm glad. It's not that hard to work now, but it was hard then.

Tomislavka Dodig Pavić (Prijedor)

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Hero 9:

“I am glad I made it”

Nusreta Sivac (Prijedor)

After everything I went through in Prijedor in 1992 and when I managed to find myself freed in at great expense, I could not go anywhere for a while, I spent time in the apartment. I just had a need to be with myself. It lasted for a while, however it bothered me. Some inner turmoil was telling me that it couldn't last that long and that I needed to do something. Some restlessness and that condition was killing me more. Silence. Four walls. Reflections. Pictures ... I followed all events regardless of the fact that I was in another country, that is, in Croatia, more precisely in Zagreb. I was very interested in what was happening in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Zagreb was somehow a contact point and a city in the Republic of Croatia where most people came from the northwestern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and even from my city of Prijedor. So, I always tried to get out of my walls, to contact people and to hear about what was happening, about the continuation of these crimes in Prijedor. I also had information about what was happening in other parts of BiH. People who succeeded to escape with great difficulty came, as I succeeded and came. Naturally, it did not go very easily, that transfer to the Republic of Croatia from the camp I went through in Prijedor. So, I waited, of course, for the rest of my family to be released. I was afraid to talk, say anything in a public space. There were cases when people were reckless, they didn't think about it, they talked in Croatia where the media besieged people, both foreign media and those from the region. This had dire consequences for their family members. Some were even killed and liquidated. Then I went the way I wanted to. In fact, I couldn't even imagine it would go that way. From these mighty encounters, I was able to get in touch with some women who wanted to organize and form some women's organizations. We did not know exactly that in this area. I did my job as a lawyer. In one system. It was not the involvement of a non-governmental sector. I was starting to get a little more familiar with it there for the first time and somehow, I liked it.

I started with that engagement. To see what it looks like and how it all goes because I did not know anything about it. That's how I met Emsuda Mujagić from Kozarac, who is from the area of my municipality but we didn't know each other. Everyone had a life of their own and we didn't have the opportunity to meet through work or family and friends. I also met Šerifa Halilović from Sarajevo and many other women. I started simply coming into that organization. At that time, it was called the Women's Association of BiH. That's the name we started with. So, we started and at first it was just meetings, conversations, socializing. It helped me a lot, a lot. Especially when I look at it from this temporal distance now. With all that torment, all my personal traumas, somehow it seems that I went through that period comfortably and casually. We were constantly in some engagement and in some struggle.

I fondly remember that period when I go back in time like this, and I come back very often. That somehow brightens that period for me and I laugh. I look at some photos. A lot of the members of the organization have returned to their homes, but we are in constant contact. We meet at the Peace Conference, which is held every year in Kozarac on May 25. We exchange opinions and there are a lot of women who also say it was their most beautiful period. Somehow comfortably and easily I put up with it all and went through it. It was like home to me and I came there every day. So, we started meeting in that organization and with media representatives, foreign organizations that wanted to help through various projects. At that time, it was not very pleasant to be in Croatia in 1993, when the conflicts between the Army of BiH and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) began.

All of that was reflected in Croatia, but there were many members of Croatian nationality in our Association and they were not loaded by it. I spent the period from 1992-1996 there. That's four years. I went with other members to Vienna for the International Conference on Human Rights, which is held every 25 years. I also had the opportunity to speak at a panel and so on. I wanted, in fact, to talk after some time about what was going on in my hometown and about the concentration camps hoping that a mechanism would be set in motion and reach people. In a refugee camp in Zagreb, I made my first contact with representatives of the Hague Tribunal, investigators who spoke to people who had been in the camps and experienced the

crime firsthand. So, I had even more motivation and strength to talk. I was also involved in other activities.

Nothing was difficult for me. It was new and very interesting to me. After all that and my work that was stressful, it was something completely different that somehow filled me and gave me positive energy. I seem to have stabilized and slept better. We knew how to laugh, and survive all together, share those ugly and joyful moments that we created for ourselves. So, I am very fond to go back to that period. It somehow highlights of my day. While staying there, I had the opportunity, like many, to go through the procedure and go to any European country. Especially since I was a prisoner, but it never occurred to me to go to any country. There were various offers from the organizations dealing with that. I didn't think about it thinking maybe a wish would come up later. Somehow, I stayed in Croatia hoping that the war would stop, and I was closer to Bosnia and Herzegovina. I also had refugee status there and then I thought if I left it would be harder to come back. I was there in Zagreb and when the war stopped, a lot was done. We continued to work similarly and adapted to the situation and needs. This experience from Zagreb helped us a lot in BiH. We already had some vision and we had learned a lot. In Zagreb, we passed on any help that was offered to us, both psychological and psychosocial. It was also interesting to me because we didn't know either. We first encountered working in an NGO. We didn't know what it was at all because I was in a system that didn't recognize it. In Yugoslavia, where I grew up, it was something completely different. All those experiences, all those various educations, workshops that we went through, we used to the maximum when they were offered. It helped and as soon as the opportunity arose, I returned to Sanski Most. It was not possible to go to Prijedor. It was still illusory to expect that you would be able to go to your city immediately while all these processes were going on. Return. I always emphasize the importance of the international community no matter how critical one looks at these things. But somewhere they helped. We encountered terrible problems on the way back. When I returned to Sanski Most, I lived there from the end of 1996 to 2002. I encountered many obstacles, but I managed to get my apartment back and come to Prijedor. And in Sanski Most we got involved together with Emsuda. She really has those organizational skills and is very stable and optimistic which is very good. There were still women there and we started working. Some other organizations started working there and they focused mostly on humanitarian aid. But we worked very well together and those organizations did something afterwards because they liked it. They did not have the opportunity, that is, they were not outside BiH. They were in Travnik. Then we launched various initiatives there. We organized the first Peace Conference in Sanski Most in 1997. There were attempts and it was difficult with Prijedor at that time. We helped people and I tried to involve my profession to be useful around the paperwork related to people's return. I tried something from a professional engagement around law or referring people. That period somehow passed quickly and most of the energy, it seems to me, was spent in that desire to return home. These were some organized returns.

I went on tour. I went to America for the first time from Zagreb. That was from October to December 1996. The tour lasted two months. I went with my colleague Jadranka Cigelj. They made the movie "Calling the Ghosts." That film was shown on that tour and she contributed a lot. We had about 28 flights. The tour sought to exert pressure because at that time international law did not yet recognize all forms of crimes against women.

We had the opportunity, after the promotion of the film there, to talk to very important people who come to watch. It was a big deal. I thought it was a political phrase. The USA also gave the most money to the Tribunal. People were listening and I was fascinated by how Americans want to listen. Our people came too, but there were always more Americans listening and asking questions. I was just surprised how some young people know a lot.

After the tour, the American Miss Magazine, active in the field of human rights, named me and Jadranka as Women of the Year in 1996. And it was even interesting, but none of our media

reported it. No media. And I'm not that kind of person by nature to impose myself. So, I didn't call the media to tell them at least that the news ... In the end, it went unnoticed and unrecorded.

After that tour we got tired, but I'm not sorry because of that fatigue, I was younger. All those trips. The film producers were involved, especially Carmen Jelincic, born in Brač but raised in America. She was very intrigued by the war in BiH. We always contact. We stayed in friendly relation. I went to her house in Brač and she says that I remained in her fondest memory.

In Bosnia, no one recognized the work. When I was in Sanski Most, I had the desire to return to the judiciary to show that I am the same in terms of profession. That I have no problems. Maybe I wanted to hear what happened to other women in BiH before.

I wanted to go back to the judiciary so that I could see that I could work in the profession. It didn't work. These were political games. Unfortunately, the judiciary was, and still is, politically colored. So, they were not interested in the court.

Somehow, I came to terms with that when I see how all this is in BiH. That horror on the political and social scene. Then it's really not surprising that I couldn't get that job in the profession at Sanski Most. Afterwards, of course, I applied through the High Judicial Council. When it was established, when the judges were elected, I was very happy to think that it was a totally independent body. At the beginning.

Only women were supportive. I had no support from the system, from the state. I never even had a chance to speak in parliament.

I never got a job in the judiciary. I am active in the law profession, but not in the judiciary. That's my love. I spent my time in the judiciary. That somehow interested me the most and I think I did it honorably, honestly and successfully. No one recognized that I took care of system and the state of BiH and the local community in which I lived. The local community could give support. I had the support from the NGOs, individuals and friends. They strongly supported me and gave me the motive that what I was doing was good, useful and great and to keep going. They were my driving force. So, I have never ever been recognized by the system, nor did I have the opportunity to speak in the state parliament.

When I returned to Prijedor, the situation was shaky. I also had a problem to return. When I came to live here, at first, I thought I would fail. Then I stepped away a little, thinking that it was really too much and that I had no right to torture myself either. I was not welcome in the building where I live. They ignored me. The neighbors did not want to greet me. I had various inscriptions by the door. One had to endure it all. When I started moving around the city more, meeting people ... All those refugees from the camp, the guards. I wasn't comfortable at all. Then all these various administrative services when you claim the rights and try to do something. It wasn't very pleasant. You feel it, those looks and attitudes that you are despised.

Today the situation is much different. I have a correct relationship in the building. Who greets me I greet him too. Somehow, they got used to me too. I also act from here, especially when such events as today occur, etc. E.g. a traditional visit to the concentration camp. Some even approached me and told me to continue like that and to be realistic in my story. One woman pleasantly surprised me, whom I only know a little. This is the woman of Serbian nationality from Prijedor who follows me and supports me. So, it went slowly and shyly here as far as those people were concerned. I have not had, I have to say, more serious problems other than some threats I have reported. There were very serious threats over the phone.

I reclaimed my property with great difficulty. My apartment. Everyone restituted their property, and I in 2002. If the international community had not gotten involved, who knows how long I would have waited for that. It was a deliberate and planned obstruction to make it as difficult as possible. However, only after pressure, they really had to give it back to me.

So, I also felt discriminated against through that property restitution process.

I have been retired for four years, but I am active. I am not that classic Bosnian pensioner waiting for retirement and sitting at home. I am as active as I can and as much energy as I have. Mostly I have it, thank God, and I hope my health don't go to failing me. It is my mission for the rest of my life.

We can all hang out together. It's not a problem here anymore. Terribly, media creates toxic atmosphere. Media and politics. They say that it is unbearable for non-Serbs here, and for Serbs in the FBiH. That's what they place. I'm not saying people don't have problems individually. There have been problems and there will be. There are fools on all sides. You come and see for yourself. One can come and see personally.

Mass returns lasted. That was earlier, in 1998. Our politicians ... from the ranks of the Bosniak people were full of enthusiasm. They came here to work and were the first to return. These were not those who live in Tuzla or Sanski Most without operating here. Not. They came back too, among the first and were here in the local parliament. So, to say, it was one circuit. It was a multi-factor engagement. People wanted and had the will, they organized. They pitched the tents in the parts where the buildings were demolished. Ten thousand facilities were demolished. They themselves lived there. It took a long time to start the projects of building demolished houses, but they were persistent. I am not sure, but those from eastern Bosnia ... They like Sarajevo and Vogošća more. It's nicer there. There are projects in the Federation. They were pushed there to talk. It is so. I hate it. Material benefit leads to nothing, it only harms these people.

Well, when we talk about the recognizability of my struggle ... I'm glad. I always say that one thinks that could have done more and that could have done better. I am glad that I succeeded and that some trace may remain. I am glad that people recognized and cared about, also the people from abroad. Particularly important people who mean something in the world have recognized that what I have done is valuable. One thing is always on my mind, and that is when I was in the camp and then it was only in the realm of fantasizing that I might even survive and talk one day on behalf of all those who are unable to speak. It came true.

I am glad that I had to travel to America on March 20 to receive an award from a university. However, Thank God I didn't, because of this what had happened with COVID-19 I would have stayed there.

Nusreta Sivac (Prijedor)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
"I'm not ashamed of my activism" / Danka Zeljic
"Home by the sea" / Paša Suljic
"Jolly" / Zora Kuljanin
"Restless" / Valentina Gagic
"Clover of hope" / Refka Ališković
"The dance of peace" / Tomislavka Dodig Pavić
"I am glad I made it" / Nusreta Sivac
"Now they respect us" / Aldina Suljic
"I did it alone" / Selma Osmanović
"I have my moments" / Nevzeta Hasanović
"My story is sad, but I am proud of it." / Suvada Poturović
"My life - someone else's signature" / Ilvana Bakoš
"Milk house" / Mirjana Raguza

TINJA (SREBRENİK) – A place where the locals say they were sure the war would not come to them. In this local community, everyone was left in shock in the moment they had to move out of their homes because the army was coming. Tinja is a local community named after the river Tinja, which is a right tributary of the river Sava. The struggle for women's rights in the former Yugoslavia has existed since the 19th century and will continue to exist, bravely and persistently. Women's efforts will flow into the history of this country, just as Tinja bravely flows into the Sava in the place of Gorica near Brčko. It flows as hope for a better and more equal future for women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Hero 10:

“Now they respect us”

Aldina Suljić (Tinja)

My name is Aldina, maiden name Selimović. I come from Srebrenica and I was born in 1989. I grew up in the village for two years. My father was educated - a mechanical technician, and the mother was a housewife with primary school. I have a sister born in 1987 and a brother in 1992. Our village is 40 km away from Srebrenica. (...) When the village was shelled for the first time, we had to escape to our maternal grandmother's place. My father grew up without a mother. At the age of 12, he lost his mother. He had two brothers and they died when Srebrenica fell. When we escaped at the grandmother's house, it was already a state of emergency. A few miles from us. My father brought our mother to Srebrenica in March 1993, when our village fell, when the first column left for Tuzla. The mother was healthy until she gave birth to a sister. Coincidentally, no one knew how or what. The mother fell ill and developed epilepsy. We took her everywhere and tried everything, but there was no cure.

As early as 1993, our father brought us to Srebrenica, and we were then deported to Banovići. We spent three nights there. A sick mother, with a 4-5-year-old sister and a one-year old brother. Mother was young, 30 years old. We get there and they put us in a shelter and after three nights informed us that we had to get out. We had to look for accommodation. They drive us from Banovići to Tuzla. In the then Maidan. We were there for maybe a few weeks and again the same. We had to leave because new people were coming. These are all my mother's stories. From Mejdan we then come to Podorašje. There was a police station where there was a good man among those officers. He found accommodation for my mother and provided food. He helped us because he saw a young sick mother with three children. We stayed there for 12 years in Podorašje. We lived and grew up there.

It was hard every time when someone came and brought a list of survived persons. My father was not there. There was no uncle either. We brought grandfather. He came in 1993, three months after us. My father sent him. Then my grandfather died in 1994 and we bury him there in the cemetery in Podorašje. We had no one of our family. My mother was ill, and I, as a five-year-old child, don't know anything that much. My mother dug all day ... If something sad happened she would get sick. If something nice happened, she would get sick again. She could stand neither grieve nor rejoice. She was born in 1968, and father in 1965. After a few years, more precisely in 1995, my maternal grandmother came with her son and daughter to look for us because they knew that mother is ill. They found us and stayed with us until the uncle got married. My aunt got married too. We were again left to take care of ourselves. My sister and I, as children, so small, had to wash and clean. Both of us. We couldn't dedicate ourselves to school because we had to run out of school to find our mother alive. She was often burned because she used to fall on the stove. She used to slip on the ice too. We have already heard that my father came to Kladanj. But he heard that his brother was wounded and he returned. It was calm in Kladanj. That was in 1995. He returned for his brother, but no one came. Neither brother nor two brothers' sons came. I now have only a brother who is the only holder of the family name and the only male we have of three brothers.

The father had no sisters. His brothers' wives dedicated themselves to their lives and children. My father graduated from mechanical engineering school and as a chemical technician worked in a battery factory where, some say, he was killed. In 2012, we buried him. We were looking for ... While our mother was alive, her only wish was to find him, to know where his grave is. However, life became such that we had to move. Serbian houses, where we were housed, began to be sold. People began to return to their homes. In Podorašje. The mother had an income, that working pension from the father. She later received a disability allowance. The father was missing, he has gone. We had to declare him dead, she got that modest help to save and buy us a house. From Jesenice we settled in the neighboring village. Here we were alone again, the three of us with our mother and grandmother.

(...) We moved in 2004. Ten years after Srebrenica. We lived in Jasenica, the local community of Podorašje, for twelve years. My grandmother then decided to return to her village. My

grandmother took care of us, but she had a desire to get back in her own village. She remained a widow early, in 1991. Her husband died in Zvornik. She expressed a desire to return. We were again left alone with no one anywhere. She returned to her village, and the mother suffered a stroke the following year and fell into a well. That was the last one. She died in 2005. Since then, life has stopped. It goes, but there is no progress. When she was alive and sick, we took care of her. My sister was 18, I was 16, and my brother was 12, it was too heavy, too much pain and again July was fatal for us ... It was too hard for us, my grandmother returned from Podrinje, she did not want to leave us alone, she stayed, took over custody and all the care even though she was no longer the same person, she lost a child, her nerves have weakened, someone needed to take care of her as well.

Everyone was there for us, both uncle and aunt, but everyone had their own life, we were destined like this. It is difficult in someone else's world, it is difficult for a child without parents when needs them most - to whom to tell teenage secrets, with whom to share dreams and wishes, there is no mother, you don't know how she smells, how father hugs tightly, what he likes, what he doesn't like, what he would change with us, who will be a role model for my brother when we don't even know how does father look like, we only have one photograph from the military booklet. My mother used to say that my brother and I look like him. The months went by so fast, but time was standing still for us. And school started, September. How to tell the friends that I don't have parents. They all came with their father and mother, and my sister took me, she was older and was already going to school in Tuzla. I was a good student, not absent. My aunt used to come to the parents' meeting, she was always satisfied. I was returning home with her after the meetings. We were sitting on the bus together. I was glad, someone might think she was my mother. I felt safe at least one day a year. I finished two years of high school and left ...

On May 31, 2006, I married my husband and have been married to him for 14 years. We have two children, a 13-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son. My husband is a wonderful person, full of understanding, a great father, he fills my emptiness sometimes. He gives me a full support in everything. With him, I somehow complete some of my dreams. He has a large family, 2 siblings and parents. Fortunately, his father survived, so everyone is together ... the brothers got married, the sister got married. We are really a happy family, we all have our children, so during the holidays, there are a lot of us around a table... But in the depths of my soul, I am missing something. Eid is not the same to everyone. Mine are each flooded with tears. It's hard when you have no one to go to, to mother's Eid lunch with brother and sister gathered there...but we survive.

I don't want my kids to see me cry, to ruin their day. I shed a few tears while making the pie, and told them that is because of the onion even there is no onion. ... They haven't noticed yet ... I have a wonderful brother who fully supports me and my sister. The sister got married a few years ago, has a great marriage. Somehow, we all take care of each other. Mostly because I became the first to become independent, I became a parent, so I take care of them for years. The sister has her life, but we are here for the brother 24 hours a day. I hope that he will soon find his companion, because he has already grown up. He is our only little child, me and my sister often called him like that.

All three of us are bound to each other, and they mostly to me because of the children, so they are bound to them as well. My brother and sister are finishing high school, and so am I, but part-time ... Now we are all employed, we deal with the realities of life surrounding us, everyone fights their own battles, because at the age of 18 we lost all rights to our father's pension and health insurance, even though we were a martyr's family, without parents, left alone. Still, we are not complaining about life, we have managed on this track. And we are happy when we are together. As for the Association, I have been here from the very beginning. The daughter has been in the Cultural and Art Society for two years, so a parents' meeting was convened. They have the desire for parents to join, to be their support, which we are.

We gather and we are still here, we are fine, there are both older and younger of us. We have a good time, we travel, we work, we have various actions like excursions, sittings with music for women, fairs, actions of cleaning of our local community and mosques and even traditional iftars. We have a good time together, we used to laugh and cry over coffee. In essence, only a woman can understand a woman, let's recharge our batteries for the future.

Aldina Suljić (Tinja)

TINJA (SREBRENİK) – A place where the locals say they were sure the war would not come to them. In this local community, everyone was left in shock in the moment they had to move out of their homes because the army was coming. Tinja is a local community named after the river Tinja, which is a right tributary of the river Sava. The struggle for women's rights in the former Yugoslavia has existed since the 19th century and will continue to exist, bravely and persistently. Women's efforts will flow into the history of this country, just as Tinja bravely flows into the Sava in the place of Gorica near Brčko. It flows as hope for a better and more equal future for women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Hero 11:

“I did it alone”

Selma Osmanović (Tinja)

My name is Selma Osmanović. I am 44 years old. I am a single mother. My husband is from Srebrenica and he survived all those years. He had moved from Srebrenica and we met in 1996. After six months we got married, with neither his nor mine family being in favor. He had no one but his mother and two brothers who had survived. He lost his father, uncles and cousins. They settled here in Jasenica. Two years after the wedding I had a son with him. A month later, his brother was killed and since then our hell has begun. We had nothing, no one worked yet, and we got a son. In addition, he became seriously ill with diabetes, and various types of diseases added to that. He was very ill and went to hospitals. He needed insulin injections. He fought these diseases for ten years until the death. We all were suffering. I tried to work, to clean women's houses and work in the food market, feed bulls at home and in agriculture sector. In addition, I had a small child at home. He was ill and could do nothing. For the last six months, when he was doing all the tests and screenings, the doctor said that the diabetes had damaged all his organs and that he would not live long. That's what I was told. And it was like that.

In 2009, he died in his sleep. It was a shock. It is very difficult for me to speak about that. I remained alone at 33 with a nine-year-old child. I haven't had support since. Not one of his family. I was left alone and rejected by everyone in society. If you were left alone, it doesn't mean that you ... My recovery lasted maybe a year after his death. I struggled with various difficulties. I had no support, especially from his family. They were not happy even when we were together. They said, "She is a local, you are a refugee. She will never adjust to that life in which you have nothing. You came from Srebrenica and you have nothing." However, they saw how I was progressing and adapted to the situation. If you live and are in love with someone, you adapt. In fact, he had nothing and like I will not be able to adjust to that life. I loved him and went with him. And they didn't allow. Then I fought alone. I worked to achieve and to have. I started building a house. My father gave me land there and I started building that house. It was just a small room and a bathroom so that we had at least a roof over our heads. Before that we rented an apartment in Srebrenik, but it was not an option. After a while, my father gave me the plot that was supposed to pass to me, not to my two brothers. That's where I started to build the room and the bathroom. We moved there and we lived there ... During the construction, we returned to Srebrenica and we lived there for two years. We had to be in tents in order to get some donation for the house. That was in 2002. We had to, supposedly, that when the donation came, it didn't matter that we didn't have a house, be under a tent if we wanted someone to build us a house.

We were at his uncle's house, which was demolished, and we had to set up a tent there because it was leaking. So, we were coming here for two years. We didn't live there but just came whenever that donor should come to find us there to do something for us. We had to be there. They came twice a month. It was known when they would come, so I had to be there all the time to get that house in Srebrenica. My husband was so sick. A nine-year-old child ... It was September and he was supposed to go to school. Once he went alone, once with the mother, because we could not leave him alone. The child started school in September, and on October 6, it was our wedding anniversary and we had a little party. For the first time, he found the strength to surprise me because I never received a gift. Both my brothers and their wives came to celebrate a little. Then, on the 6th, he left for Srebrenica, because on the 7th, a donor should come to turn on the electricity there. I couldn't go because I had to take the child to school. Going there, he took his mother with him. However, he did not return, he died in his sleep. I called him in the morning. By the way, I used to call him every morning. I called him and the phone rang, no one answered. It was very strange to me. After an hour his uncle called me and said that he had died. Mother went upstairs and found him dead. And so, I had packed up and went there.

I brought him and buried him here. It's been a fight ever since. I was left with the child. Alone, in the house under construction, no bathroom properly. I was not allowed to return to Srebrenica. His family wasn't up for it. I did not exercise any rights. All belonged to the father-in-law. Like I have a right to come, but it's not mine. Then, for a year, I was treated. I had been mentally ill. It was most difficult for me to exercise any right to a pension even I had a child. It took a lot of

paperwork. I used to go to Srebrenik, instead of going to Tuzla, I was completely lost. It was all up to me. Wherever I went to get the document, I was told that this person, my husband, did not exist. That name did not exist. I was facing a new problem. It seems that my child had no father and I was not married to that person. My husband was born in Srebrenica, and enrolled in Užice, where they made a mistake in one letter. When a person dies, he should be deleted from the records and the death certificate taken out. This must be done right in the place where he was born. All the documentation he took out and owned was with that one letter. I guess in Serbia it goes like that without that letter. Wherever I came to get the document it looked like my child has no father, I have no husband and so everything in a circle. I struggled for a long time because it had to be resolved in court to be corrected. After that, I started collecting the documentation for exercising the right to a survivor's pension. It all lasted, and I was without money, without anything, and I had to do all that, I had a son and he had to eat. I used to be hungry, but I had to manage to find food for him. In those moments of pain, despair and loneliness, problems with support, I got no help. The hardest time for me was when I sent my son to school, and I didn't have money to give to him. And thank Allah, he was reasonable and did not even ask, although I hid all this Golgotha from him. And when he asked, aware of everything as a child, I would not say anything, but I cried alone, hidden. I did two or three jobs, cleaning the houses, one by noon, the other in the afternoon and all that. Later, I went occasionally to my aunt's in Switzerland, to help in the kitchen, because she worked with people celebrating birthdays, coming of age, and so on. I would leave my son with my mother and as soon as I did that there, I would return immediately, no matter what I might have to go again in a week. Later, the relations worked better. I also worked with food, delivering around the houses, because everyone needed it. I got to have a normal life. My son is now 21 years old and is a student at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation. I can freely say that I am a proud mother who raised the model son without anyone's help or support.

Society rejected me, people always condemned me and did not give me support. After I succeeded, my husband's relatives and everyone else started admiring me. Well done, you fought alone, you have everything, and above all a well-behaved son. I am a really good person and I never judge anyone in my life while they have been judging me. I worked a lot. I was not ashamed to feed either bulls or chickens to earn money.

I wanted to take time for myself and I heard about the association that was founded so I decided to try hanging out with women. Even then, I didn't want to work much, as I never had time for myself. I have my own pension, which I inherited, but I have never ever in my life gone to restaurant with live music or party. I got the biggest support from my son who lives with me, and this makes me very happy. Working too much, I was eager to get some sleep and dedicate my free time to my son. Today, thank God, I have everything a normal family has. I go to the Association, and we also dealt with folklore. I loved it and I was supportive of the kids and traveled with them to various festivals. They elected me vice-president of the Culture and Art Society and I travel with them to various festivals. Our children are the only ones who represented BiH in Turkey last year. At the same time, with my women's association, we organize various gatherings, celebrations, fairs and thus bring money to Society and our children. I was most afraid of how they would accept me without condemnation and criticism. I would like to thank to my woman for listening to me, loving me, trusting me and giving me support.

We are stronger together, we laugh, we work, sometimes we cry. We work together - handicrafts, fairs, excursions, trips, and we share jobs and responsibilities. I feel real mental rest with them, I forget that I have to do a housework and have obligations. Every month we make sittings for couples and so we earn for our Society, that is for folklorists. The four of us have been elected to the board and together with them and our minister we write projects for the Tuzla Foundation and arranging our space. Our space and our children now have heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and we are simply working for the betterment of our local area. That suites to me because all of this makes me feel happy - children, women, society, community. A WOMAN in society is

usually a ghost, but a woman is the strongest army, the most powerful, and then she may enjoy having the approval and acceptance of others. Now I am not ashamed to say that I have been working day and night, I was skin and bones, sometimes hungry but today I have a house, a car and other things that every normal family has. Regardless of the fact that someone who has not experienced it may not believe me, but it is my life and my life story, how someone will understand it, it is not up to me...

Selma Osmanović (Tinja)

TINJA (SREBRENİK) – A place where the locals say they were sure the war would not come to them. In this local community, everyone was left in shock in the moment they had to move out of their homes because the army was coming. Tinja is a local community named after the river Tinja, which is a right tributary of the river Sava. The struggle for women's rights in the former Yugoslavia has existed since the 19th century and will continue to exist, bravely and persistently. Women's efforts will flow into the history of this country, just as Tinja bravely flows into the Sava in the place of Gorica near Brčko. It flows as hope for a better and more equal future for women in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Hero 12:

“I have my moments”

Nevezeta Hasanović (Tinja)

My name is Nevzeta Hasanović, better known as Fata, I live in Tinja. I am a wife, mother of two sons, mother-in-law of two daughters-in-law, I have four grandchildren. During the war I only had my children, after the war I got daughters-in-law. It was difficult during the war. I was at home until June 16, in Tinja. My husband was on the front line. I had one minor and one adult son. We thought that there would never be armed conflicts in Tinja. There was never a war in Tinja, not even during the world wars. However, shots were fired. Before that we went to Srebrenik, we found places in three houses in Tinja and slept. The whole neighborhood in three houses, during the war.

We haven't got expelled from our home, but a truck had come to pick us up so we had to go to Dobrnja. I was with J. E. and Š, and the minor son was with B.A and S., so we were separated. We were there for 10 days, they fed us and took care of us. We couldn't go home because there was shooting.

It was June 16, there was already a war in Tinja, they were shooting. Our people made a path above the main road through the fields so that the population from Tinja could move out. They separated me from my son because they could not accommodate us together, there were a lot of us. And the older son stayed at home, they didn't let him go out. My husband was on the front line, my son was on the front line. They were guarding. The older son had to, no one asked him. So, we were there, and after a few days they told us that our place has been liberated and we could go home. And we came back, the army slept in my house, but ok, let the people be saved. We, in Tinja, have always been good neighbors.

When my children went to school, there were more Serb children than Muslims. There was no division at the time. We have always been in good relation and on good terms. At that time, some Serbs stayed with us trying to survive just like us. They stayed and didn't go anywhere; it wasn't easy for them either. We continued to live together and cooperate no matter what was going on around us. After all, they were our neighbors. The others who came and where they came from, we don't even know them. Most of them were from Brčko, Gradačac, and also from other places where battles were fought.

Nothing was taken out of my house. The houses were set on fire, they were burning. It is not known who set them on fire. Later, the people from Srebrenica came. Fall of Srebrenica was a horror. People came with bandages, we had to accept them, to give them whatever. I accepted a wounded woman who brought her granddaughter in her arms. Her mother and father were killed, the little girl remained. I had a cow and gave milk to that girl, so in fact I fed that girl. So, we helped each other as much as we could. Nothing was demolished or set on fire at my home. In several houses grenades blew up doors, smashed windows. As it whom was destined.

After the war, I've been fighting. I had a cow, one, then two, then two calves, so I used to sell one by one calf, then I sow grain. I had food for myself, grain, beans. Thanks to that I could pay education to my children. I used to sell a milk, after the war there were no salaries, no jobs or pensions. I was coping as best as I can.

By the way, I had little time for myself while raising the children and while they were going to school. I wanted to have more time for myself, but I couldn't. In the best years of my life, I bought a plot of land, built a house, raised the children. My years, the best in my life, I spent there. I raised the kids, they started working. My older son married a woman from Srebrenica. That daughter-in-law of mine came from Srebrenica by truck. I was lucky, I have a golden daughter-in-law. At that moment, to tell you the truth, some were talking about why to marry the refugee, where does she came from, etc. It was important that me and my family loved her, and I was not interested in what others would say.

No one here carries the refugee label anymore. My daughter-in-law, she was born in 1980 and married my son in 1997. She accepted our customs more than she brought her own from

Srebrenica and everyone says as if she is not from Srebrenica. In fact, I raised her to be mine. And I don't know anyone could replace her. No one can replace her, she gave birth to my first grandson, some people used to call him Podrinjac (t/n: a person from Podrinje region) because he looks like his mother. That child means to me so much, I don't know, I would lean over him if someone tried to tell him anything. She later gave birth to a daughter. That grandson of mine is 22 years old, the granddaughter is 19 years old, and the daughter-in-law was born in 1980. They have their own house, my son has his own business, he does construction work. They live fine. The younger son lives with us. He is married and has a daughter and a son. He works in Živinice in Mercedes, he was chosen as the manager of the year in BiH for 2019. The younger daughter-in-law works at Gradina on surgery in the operating room. I raise her children, take care of them and that's it.

If we talk about me again, I live for associations. I am the oldest in the Association. When we go somewhere, the husbands make fun of me telling to take care of their wives because they only trust me. I say that nothing bad should ever happen to their wives when they are with me. All women are honest and fine. When we go somewhere, it is beautiful for all of us. We go to the sea coast, there is much more fun for me than when I go with my husband or family. It's nice with my husband too, but when we women go, it's so nice. I could have taken my husband last year, but he says: "... I won't, you go with the women so that I don't disturb you." My husband is golden, we have a great marriage. Since I married him, we have been living for 48 years and have no problems.

If something hurts me, I can say to the women in the Association, although there are some things I don't want to say. I don't like what many women talk about, especially about daughters-in-law. They are not happy to live with them. I would never say anything ugly about daughters-in-law, just nice. I only have the two of them, no one has helped me in my life except the two of them. I still have a good time with them today. May God let everyone get along so nicely. With support, we live on retirement, my husband and I, but we have our children to help us. They are now with us to help us go where we wish to go to. They are here for us to help us to spend the rest of our lives, we are quite old.

If we compare some previous time, today it is completely different. There is no such harmony as before. Before there was a pie made and eaten together, I made a meal, called the neighbors, or they called me and we ate together. There is no such thing now. Some hatred, something came upon the people. What it is, I don't know. Why we wouldn't still share everything?

I tell my daughters-in-law that I am more on their side than on the side of my sons. I know their phone numbers better than my sons because I spend more time with them. I will call them on the phone and ask them something, until I don't call my sons so often. I have two granddaughters and they are in the Culture and Art Society. My younger son is on the Society board. My husband is a hunter and he is on the board in the hunting society. We like to walk, we like to go out. My sons like to go out with their wives too. They invite me too, but I say: "Come on, I like you to enjoy, and I'll go somewhere else with my husband, with my woman to enjoy." There are all kinds of generations here that suit me, look like me and are my match. And let the younger ones find themselves and go.

Nevzeta Hasanović (Tinja)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
"I'm not ashamed of my activism" / Danka Zeljic
"Home by the sea" / Paša Suljic
"Jolly" / Zora Kuljanin
"Restless" / Valentina Gagic
"Clover of hope" / Refka Ališković
"The dance of peace" / Tomislavka Dodig Pavić
"I am glad I made it" / Nusreta Sivic
"Now they respect us" / Aldina Suljic
"I did it alone" / Selma Osmanović
"I have my moments" / Nevzeta Hasanović
"My story is sad, but I am proud of it." / Suvada Poturović
"My life - someone else's signature" / Ilvana Bakoš
"Milk house" / Mirjana Raguza

KONJIC – A city whose truth has not even begun to be revealed yet, and when that process will end and when it will face the past, it is still unknown. The stories of women from the city and hidden truths become part of history, but those of positive one. Positive, because they talk about their struggles that followed the war and these struggles can give a brighter view of the past because they have turned every tear and pain of theirs into a smile and an equal approach to every person. Their struggles can and should be an important lesson for future generations because these women survived the war in BiH, but they do not hate. They fight for peace.

Hero 13:

“My story is sad, but I am proud of it. ”

Suvada Poturović (Konjic)

Four years ago, in 2016 to be exact, I wrote a book called “My Son”. It is a book of poetry, and in 2017 I published another book called “Memories”, it is prose that is my autobiographical story.

My story is sad, but I am proud of my story. Everyone who has a heart and a soul is sad about this story and sad about the war. We are all people of flesh and blood and no matter how sad something is we should always look on the bright side.

I was born in 1983, I turned 38 in April. Although, I often feel like I’m 90 years old when listening to other people’s stories and feeling my own experience, what I’ve been through, which taught me a lot. Aged 16, I was as mature as someone aged 45.

I was born in the village of Kruščica, Municipality of Konjic. I have one brother and two sisters. Our family was very happy, full of love and we lived in dignity as one hardworking family. Mostly, that foundation of love, dignity, honesty was built both in the house and outside. Housemanners are always seen, all which makes a person human is learned at home.

My mom, may God rest her soul, passed away some 12 years ago, remained immobile for 16 years. At age 40, she became ill and could no longer move anything but her arms. My father took care of her for 16 years. He worked, he was a good craftsman, we were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding. The older sister got married, the brother served in the army at the time of the war and we did not know about him for five years because he was captured in Velika Kladuša. It was a happy accident that his girlfriend managed to transfer him to Germany where I had an uncle and aunt so they took care of him. Until then, during those five years, we received various misinformation, sometimes that he was alive, and sometimes that he was dead, which made it even harder for my mother, but, thank God, he survived. There he married and started a family. My sister and I stayed. We invested a lot of money and effort in my mother’s treatment and we visited the whole of BiH and Croatia and Montenegro. All that fighting fell on me and my sister. At the age of 10-11, I milked cows and settled them, we helped my father, my sister ran the household.

I kind of remember, when I was supposed to enroll in the first grade of elementary school that my mother took my hand, but after that she could no longer walk. We never asked anyone for help, we just fought and managed everything on our own. When my sister and I took my mother to Fojnica in Reumal (t/n: treatment center), something terrible happened to our family. Somehow during that period, unfortunately, my sister also got sick, so my father and I fought to help our mother and sister.

Despite all the unfortunate events, there was again some faith and hope that it would be better, we never lost heart or felt sorry for each other. Thank God, we found a cure for my sister, she takes one pill a day for the rest of her life, she finished elementary school only, but married a civil engineer. They built a house in Mostar and have children. She has two sons who are currently in education, primary and secondary school.

My father’s struggle is something amazing, how hard he worked and fought, how many times he walked over the hill to the hospital, leaving us with relatives. I remained longing for my mother, she was always in the hospital, I rarely and briefly saw her.

Before the war, we built a big house in Jablanica, my father worked in Ploče, and my mother saved money. We set everything up in that house for a nice and comfortable life, but that war started. We were forced to go into exile so everything in that house was stolen and taken away, even the cables were pulled out so we had to renovate our own house. I enrolled in high school in Jablanica, I wanted to enroll in high school in Konjic because I was a good student, but there was no proper transportation. Since in Jablanica there was not a large selection of high schools as there is no today also, I enrolled in Catering and Tourism School where I proved to be very good.

At high school graduation, I was a Beauty Quinn, declared the most beautiful girl, I wasn’t wearing

hijab then. My sister was always naughty and dressed a lot more provocatively, and I was more serious and mature. With men and guys, I always had a limit, I was okay with everyone, but as much as it suited me. My husband and I have been dating for a year and a half, we got married in 2001, and we had a son in 2002, and here we have 18 years of marriage behind us, which I can be proud of. Ever since we met until now, the two of us have never fallen asleep angry, not to talk to each other. My husband finished traffic school, and he was a soldier, he also had a difficult life story and he was wounded what I mentioned in my book. Since I was a good student, the school principal immediately hired me in a restaurant located at the exit from Jablanica, where I worked for 3 months. I had a great desire to continue my education, but, unfortunately, my financial situation did not allow it. My brother got married and started his own family. He helped us. We were a very close-knit family.

I was 19 and I told my father and brother one day after lunch that I would get married if I couldn't continue my education. They joked about that, and I told them, "Your son-in-law will come here for Eid." I always told them everything, I have never hidden anything and they had great confidence in me. I am also a very direct person, for example my husband could not believe it when I sat down with him and asked him: "Man, will you marry me or not?" And today he tells it to everyone and laughs. I am very attached to people, but also people to me because it is the way I am. I'm funny to myself sometimes, I just love that positive. For me, a year, a year and a half of the relationship is the maximum, or we will get married or break up.

If we can't have a job to earn, we can grab a hoe, we will plant, dig, but we will have our money and we will succeed. My husband had an old house, we lived there for 12 years, I didn't mind. He built the bathroom when he needed to get married. Nothing material ever mattered to me, only love and respect. At first, when we got married, I thought I was pregnant, but it turned out that I had a huge cyst. Shortly after it was cured, I became pregnant with my son Irhad, to whom I dedicated the book "My Son". My husband has three sisters who got married so I lived with my father-in-law and mother-in-law. My husband was in the army, on guard duty for seven days while I ran the household, we had cows and land again, I worked hard as I did with my father and mother.

My husband may not be as religious as I am, but still enough, he is a good man and he would give anything to help someone, which is why the people love him. We like to hang out, me with my company, he with his or all together. Thank God, I gave birth to another son Ibrahim in 2007 who is completely healthy and we experienced that Ibrahim and Irhad can stay alone in the house. My husband and I saved a lot and we bought an apartment here in Konjic, so everything is much easier for us.

I have been registered at the employment bureau a long time ago, but I never received an invitation from the state to work, I did everything myself, even these books, without anyone's help. The principal of my son's school criticized me for giving away too many songs and not doing something for myself. She told me to collect a few of my works that she would give to a published writer to see if they were good. He said that they are very good and that something can be made out of it. Medina told me that if there is no book, there will be at least some documentary because my story is interesting.

Also, it is important for me to emphasize how much I love the Association "Nera" from Konjic. We help each other, if one of us produces something we buy her products. Each of us is as talented and gifted as all the people in the world. There are about ten of us who are very active, whatever we are told to do, we do it, there is no one who will say that she cannot or does not want to. We celebrate and marked all the holidays together, Christmas and Eid, it is that human virtue that we should all carry from our upbringing. If my neighbor, a Croat or a Serb, is hungry, I will always offer the food, we are all like that and we share everything equally.

I have a lot of friends of all nationalities, I carry my faith within me, nobody should lecture me about it. My friends accepted me as I am, and I accepted them too.

The chapter of my life that I call discrimination against mothers of children with development disabilities ran as follows:

For the treatment of my son in Frankfurt, the municipality helped me with 200 marks to pay for the flight. I experienced discrimination in my struggle. On one occasion I was waiting in the hospital, my son was in the car, I couldn't explain to him that he has to stay where he is. I waited too long and finally opened the door to enter, pushing myself with the nurse. Usually, the doctor respects and receives me in some way, but the nurse tells a story on you in advance. According to all regulations and rules, children with special needs should have priority. The younger son can wait when he knows everything that is happening, but the older one cannot. Afterwards, the story is getting out, so they let me go over the line.

When I took my son to school I passed by the building where we now have an apartment and thought how I would like to have an apartment there because everything would be close to me, the hospital and the school. Through acquaintance, I met the owner of that building, who at that time needed funds to pay the workers, and I managed to buy a 70-square-meter apartment for 35,000 KM within 24 hours. Within a year, I fixed it up and moved in. My husband always tells me, "This is your apartment and you paid for it with your fight." We all live in that apartment together with my mother-in-law who is an older woman. She returned to the village during the Covid-19 pandemic because she belongs to the risk group. My husband visits her regularly, and we often go because we plant and work there.

I have noticed that society does not value my struggle enough as much as one man's struggle. It happened once that I was noticed and that I passed the competition in the municipality without any bid-rigging. I've never been affiliated to any party though I've been getting calls all the time. I just don't want to be a part of it all.

Suvada Poturović (Konjic)

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Hero 14:

“My life - someone
else’s signature”

Ilvana Bakoš (Konjic)

I started high school during the war and finished it after the war in 1997.

At the age of 11 I lost my father, my mother fought alone for my brother and me from the age of 37. I am now finishing college because I got married in my first year of studying economics. I was 21 when I gave birth to a daughter who is now 21 and a student in Sarajevo, the third year of architecture. The son is 15 years old and is in the first grade of high school. My husband is 17 years older than me. He has a degree in electronics engineering and works in our hospital in Konjic, he runs the IT sector because now we have everything electronically, booklets, findings and everything else. My husband also has an interesting story, his father is a Slovak who came to Konjic from Vojvodina in 1957 when the factory "Igman" was opened and where he got a job as a mechanical technician. There he met his wife, my late mother-in-law, who was from Konjic. He got married and stayed here, and my husband was born and raised and spent his whole life in Konjic, except for the period he spent in Zagreb studying, after which he returned here. Due to his father's origin, he is a member of the Slovak national minority and is currently in the Council of National Minorities at the federal level. His name is Emil Bakoš. He personally did not suffer discrimination, but we had an interesting situation. My mother-in-law was very religious and she always insisted that her grave site must be to her daughter's who died when she was 16 years old. We fought for a year to get that plot and just because my mother-in-law was married to a man of another faith, they did not allow it and the whole fight was covered by the media. It was a bad experience. That happened in 2000-2001. These were not post-war tensions, but bad politics at the time. The father-in-law was buried in an atheist cemetery, while the mother-in-law was buried next to her daughter. Because of that unpleasant situation, we did not want to ask or request to bury him there with them. My husband, since he has relatives from Vojvodina, wanted to get the papers and bury his father there with dignity if might be any problems here. It is sad that they have spent their entire lives together and now are separated that way. As for my husband, he was here all the time during the war, but it all leaves some consequences, maybe the one didn't feel them at the time, but later did.

My daughter's name is Mia, and we were never overwhelmed with those things, but there were questions like "What is your nationality?", "Are you going to Eid to your grand-mother?" Our children were confused even though they only knew they were going to the grand-mother on Eid because that's how it should be, because it's a tradition. My father-in-law was very good at that, he accepted and respected the local tradition as well as his own. When I got married, they embraced me as their own child. My children, Mia and Danis, could not even understand all that, only when they reached a certain school age and when religious education was introduced at school, they asked with fear whether they would attend those classes or not. My husband and I decided they would because they can't learn anything bad there. And there are a lot of mixed marriages in my family, we were never burdened by it nor did the children experience it that way. The children did not know why they were asked about it and how they were different from the others. Why are children from mixed marriages different from children of parents of the same ethnicity? I have never been condemned by anyone because my father-in-law was such a wonderful man, a great humanist, they all had the best to say about him. His name was Jan. He was even proposed in front of the municipality as a humanist of the city of Konjic. Along the Neretva in the settlement of Kolonija, there is a birch alley that he planted together with the workers of the utility company, but he nurtured them and thanks to him they survived and are now huge trees. Konjic really saw it all and that's why he was appreciated and respected, so we didn't have any tensions because of him, while I can't say that for the children. Children are now growing up in a kind of upside-down time, so there are some questions.

When my daughter was in the fifth grade of the elementary school, she told me that she no longer wants to go to religious education because her best friend O.D. can't go. She finished elementary and high school, graduation and excursions with him and they are still the best friends. I am glad that this is so and I tell the children that we should be citizens of the world, not citizens of ethnicities. This is more prominent in small communities because when she went

to Sarajevo it was not like that. In the second grade of high school, she applied to enroll in the United World College in Mostar, where she did not pass the entrance exam. Then she went to their summer school where there were children from all over Bosnia and Herzegovina and many European countries. She came home from there excited; her childlike joy and happiness was visible because she had a friend in Međugorje, a friend from Brčko, from Zvornik. Now, as a more mature person, she knows that Zorica, Kanita or Fata are just her friends or not regardless of their names. Ever since I got married, I've been employed in a way, I've never been a housewife. First, I worked in a private travel agency, then I worked in the microcredit sector for a long time as a loan officer. Also, I worked in a private company in finance sector, and now I work as a payroll clerk at "Igman" in the military industry. So, I worked in companies in jobs related to economics, even though my life dream was to finish architecture, but I didn't have the conditions then. I was a really good student, and my professors used to tell me recently to finish something until graduation anniversary, "Don't have only high school finished, it's a sin." So, I decided to take that step and now I'm graduating from college. Children with diplomas come and become bosses while I work very hard, which is attributed to them as a merit, and they boss me, while I just work. In order for that not to happen to me, I enrolled at the private University of Belgrade, Faculty of Economics, which has a branch office in Mostar, where lectures were held. Yes, it took three years, but the marathon has to be run, 42 kilometers and that's it. Nostrification can be done quite regularly in Sarajevo at the University, where my education is recognized.

Then, back in 2005, I started noticing some changes in myself, my fingers and eyelids started to swell, I saw that my physiognomy had changed, I didn't feel anything, but I saw that something was happening. I went to my gynecologist and she told me that gynecologically everything was okay, but she suggested to check pituitary hormones which turned out to be in a very bad condition.

After that, the fight for health started. I had a one-year-old baby and a 6-year-old child. It first took half a year for the doctors to establish the diagnosis, I had a tumor on the pituitary gland, a tumor that was 10 times bigger than the pituitary gland and was hormonally active, it activated growth hormone and since you can no longer grow in height, the bones, actually the tissue, started to expand. Then visiting all those laboratories all over BiH, which was tedious, finding, recording magnets, waiting in line. I found a doctor who does treat this type of illness at neurosurgery in Sarajevo and he said it could be done and that it was no problem. I remember, at the end of February 2006, I was admitted to the hospital, and an operation was scheduled for March 1. Operation went well and I felt great.

After two months I went for a check-up, when the situation there was the same. That's when I found out that only the part for pathology was removed, so I wondered what now? I received a recommendation to go to a clinic in Zagreb with a well-known neurosurgeon who only does that, but, unfortunately, at that time we did not have the money for treatment abroad. In the meantime, I was looking for an alternative therapy, and in Tuzla I met people who suffer from the same disease. They were approved to take the drug on a trial basis at the expense of the canton, but if it helps them then they continue treatment that costs about 40,000 marks a year.

One sells an apartment for one-year treatment, and what's next?

It is about to heal the consequences, and the cause remains. Only four out of a million people get the disease. I saw that the doctors were confused because no one even suspected it. The second operation took place in Zagreb, because we decided that health was the most important thing, and that we would somehow manage for the money. At the hospital in Zagreb, everyone was very fair to me, I have never experienced such a good treatment as I did there. Due to a combination of circumstances, I met a woman who works at that clinic and who came out to meet me and helped me get pro bono treatment at that clinic because there was the opportunity to do so. I paid a portion of the price which was 10,000 marks, i.e. only for what they did in the

operating room because there were no additional costs after the surgery. I was not able to get any support for that treatment through the Health Institute of the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, while the woman who was in that clinic with me, a Croat from Mostar, received a referral and approval for the treatment where the Health Institute covered the costs. I, as a Bosniak from Konjic, could not get it, because I might go to Sarajevo, where doctors could operate it without any problems. In the clinic in Zagreb, everything was on such a professional level that even the cook from the hospital informed me that they were preparing hospital food based on pork and that I should declare myself if I did not consume it in order to get special food without pork. The director of the Health Insurance Institute of our canton was the one who held all the strings in his hands regarding the approvals and permits for treatment for which my husband fought so hard and worked hard. His signature was crucial to treatment outside, at the expense of the Institute. My life, my health and everything depended on him, and it was known that he could approve it and allow it to whomever he wanted. He is of Croatian nationality and came to the position as a party member. From the beginning, the Health Institute belonged to the Croats, who somehow took it over because there was such a division in Mostar. Since they all have dual citizenships, it all went smoothly for them, while it was difficult for us. My husband tried so hard in every way to get to that director, but with no success. He didn't want to hear for us until we found someone who could reach out to him and take advantage of the connections. I couldn't believe that it was solved like that with a coffee where he would say, "If it's because of you, then I will." It puts person in a situation where always feels indebted to that man. Two men over coffee decide my fate, it's scary and it leaves consequences on the person. Konjic is a small town, but one has to wait for a month, for example, to get an ultrasound appointment. I just don't understand that. I have a feeling that these are all fake waiting lists because we all know how everything works, how much is used and how much more time can be foreseen for all that than what is foreseen at any given moment. People wait to do an MRI for three months, sick people who don't have time to wait, so they have to do everything privately and pay huge sums of money that they simply don't have, but they have to manage however they can.

We had to ask our friends and acquaintances from Mostar to use their credibility and their acquaintance to achieve what we needed and it was so pathetic and sad. All tests were approved and performed on time where it turned out that the tumor was removed and I only had to do this finding annually and as long as they are ok nothing extra was needed. So, I am fine 12-13 years after that, thanks God.

After my maternity leave, I got fired from the microcredit organization where I had been employed at the time, because they thought I couldn't be there alone or that I needed someone else. I saw that they had promised someone that job, so they just expected me to say that I would leave instead of them firing me. I withdrew though because I didn't want to let anyone trample and humiliate me yet. We lived on one salary in a small apartment, the situation was not great, but somehow it makes us even stronger. I've never been a quitter and coward. After all that, my husband got thrombosis in one leg and then in the other, I honestly worried about what would happen to me and my two children if something happened to him, it was a very turbulent period. Fortunately, the children did not have any problems, everything went smoothly and they persevered to succeed in life. The daughter always wanted to finish college on time, she is very persistent and will finish the first cycle this year. To continue her education, she planned to apply for a scholarship from the Slovak government to study in Brno or Bratislava, but this situation with the pandemic has disrupted everything so that none of that has happened so far.

Regarding the "Nera" Association I have been there since the very beginning, it is true that we have different ethnicities, which has never been a problem at all. Within the Association, the atmosphere has been based from the beginning on a fair and correct, friendly basis. I mean not in line with the maxim "woman is a wolf to another woman" but "a woman is a friend to another woman". We have always been a great support to each other, if one falls a little or experiences something bad, we are here to lift her up and help. We collected aid for people affected by the

floods in 2014, mostly for Maglaj. Then we had decoupage workshops where we learned how to do it and there was a lot of fun. Dina did it the most and made it a very positive story where she does something she loves and at the same time has some material benefit from it. Now she also holds workshops and teaches other women how to do decoupage which is very nice because my knowledge means nothing to me if I don't pass it on to others.

I just feel good if I have ever brightened even one hour of the someone's day. I think that life is actually made up of little things. I think that "Nera" is as it is because of Dina, if Dina was different, I think the situation would not be as beautiful as it is now. It has always been far more important for her that others are fine, her satisfaction will come latter, and people feel it. Wherever she comes, she attracts attention, but not with nonsense, but with her work, engagement and positive energy. I am here for "Nera" 100%, whatever is needed for paperwork, documents and contracts, I am always very happy to solve all that.

Besides her, Suvada is another wonderful woman in the Association who fights like a lion for her children and runs her household very nicely. Unfortunately, through her story it can be understood that she was always there when someone needed something, but she was not appreciated. She is a woman fighter and hero.

Everything I've been through in my life from my twenties to my forties someone might not have gone through in three lives. I am not real somebody, I am an ordinary woman with an unusual life story, but I have always fought and like each of us, we all have that kind of struggle in life and we have a story that makes us special.

Some 2005, we discovered that my brother was addicted to heroin. We didn't notice anything on him because it didn't go that far, so we reacted in time. Somehow because of some of his fears and life he ran away from everything to that wrong side, he just ran away from reality, unlike me who struggled and faced problems. Then the fight for his healing began, but if he himself did not want it, all our efforts would be in vain because we could not help him. He just needed that moment where he would admit he had a problem. We found out about the commune "Majčino selo (Mother's Village)" in Međugorje, run by the Catholic Church.

Through friar who was in the service in Konjic, we managed to reach that commune and place my brother for treatment. Friar name is Petar and he was born in Tomislavgrad. My brother was in a commune in rehabilitation where there was no medication, everything was on a spiritual basis and occupational therapy. He was there for half a year where he worked on farms. They told that it would be good for him to engage in any kind of physical activity but this was not obligatory. Thank God, he came back after 6 months, now he is married, he has two children, he managed to win with their help. Since they had workshops in the commune where everyone who was willing to share his story with others, he came up with the idea to bring these guys from the commune to Konjic to tell their stories and thus convey a message to the youth about the dangers of drugs. Unfortunately, he did not have the support of the local government, and the people were simply not interested in that. Currently, thank God, he lives and works in Konjic and has no problems or condemnation from society. He was lucky that he had great support from his family, and his healthy and positive company which did not turn back on him.

The Coronavirus has crept quietly into our lives, unfortunately. It is the only cluster that was in Konjic from "Igman". The man had come to the celebration and infected the other guests. I was not at the celebration, but at work I was in contact with the people who had been present at the celebration and there I "picked up" the virus. Of course, our health care system failed once again, I was in isolation, infected, me and my whole family and we went through the whole process until we got the results that we were all tested negative. After that, Dina was the first to visit us. We were in isolation for a total of 45 days. I survived a great deal of fear and panic attack because it's not easy to go through all of this. The panic attack was very terrible where I could not calm down even with sedatives. A colleague from high school was the doctor on duty that day and

did an ECG and a lung scan just to convince me that I was fine and that I was healthy. If they had done all those tests at least on time, I would not have gone through all those fears because I would have known I was fine. But being enclosed in four walls in those 45 days was not at all easy. From a person who has never taken a tranquilizer pill I have become a person who is on tranquilizer and anxiety therapy.

I was not discriminated against by society because of the COVID-19, I went back to work where it all started. Whoever I turned to for help, everyone was there for us. For 45 days they carried my garbage, brought firewood and left lunch and everything we needed in front of the door. I can say that this experience also brought me something positive, strengthened my faith in people. The health care system aside, we know how it works, but all the people who have been there for me all my life have not failed. A true friendship proves itself in the times of crisis.

Ilvana Bakoš (Konjic)

KONJIC – A city whose truth has not even begun to be revealed yet, and when that process will end and when it will face the past, it is still unknown. The stories of women from the city and hidden truths become part of history, but those of positive one. Positive, because they talk about their struggles that followed the war and these struggles can give a brighter view of the past because they have turned every tear and pain of theirs into a smile and an equal approach to every person. Their struggles can and should be an important lesson for future generations because these women survived the war in BiH, but they do not hate. They fight for peace.

Hero 15:

“Milk house”

Mirjana Raguza (Konjic)

I was born in Mostar in 1959. I finished primary school there and then we moved to Konjic in 1974. Then I went to secondary economic school and there I got a job and got married. During the war, I went to Makarska and stayed for two years. After the war, I returned to Mostar and was there for six years. Since my husband stayed here in Konjic, I returned. I always longed for Mostar, but my husband was in Konjic. That was sometime around 2000. I had no business. I wrote and applied for a loan. Repayment loan. I paid back the loan.

It was through Vakufska banka and the municipality. For two cows and then we sold milk. That was while I lived in the city, and I walked up one village of Turija to the cows. I went every morning. Later we got that one summer kitchen.

I was selling milk to the buying station and thus repaying the loan. We did not have a job. We had a house full of milk.

Before the war, I worked in the bookkeeping service since I graduated from economics school. That service was shut down after the war. It is the bookkeeping kept by all companies at the level of the entire state. Nothing could be done outside the law. Now the banks are doing something similar, but we were not allowed to work in the banks. Basically, I worked there and after the war I did the same thing in Mostar for six years. It was later called the Payment Bureau. It had the same function until it was shut down after the war. So, I spent 20 years in my profession.

I learned from books how to milk cows and went to several seminars and courses. I only knew what a cow looked like and that it gave milk. I used to be with my grandmother doing so, but I never worked something like that. I came to visit my grandmother for about ten days, and I never milked. I mostly learned. It's hard. I learned and did all this with my bare hands.

In the meantime, I applied for that loan and waited eight months for the cows to arrive. I get a grandchild the same day. And yes, I have three children. Two sons and a daughter. My daughter is married and has two children. My grandson is 17 and the other 13 years old. One of my sons is in Canada, also married, has a 13-year-old son and a 7-year-old daughter. The youngest son is 31 years old and works down in Istria. He would like to live in Konjic, but he has no job. He longs. My husband is here with me. He was also working that time when I just got back and when we had those cows he was there. I came back for love, for marriage and family. There were eight of us in the apartment. Me, mother-in-law, husband, my three children and son-in-law. Then we got a grandson. None of us worked. Only the mother-in-law had a pension that was only for utilities.

The husband then worked if someone needed to chop wood or something. We used to have to decide whether to buy a bag of flour or a bag of bran. That's how we lived for almost a year and a half. Up in the village was that barn that some people gave us on a contract so we could use it. Also, that summer kitchen. One day we plowed the garden that used to be there. It was overgrown, but we cleaned up. That evening the owner called and asked why we were plowing. I said, "Isn't it nicer that it's weeded?", and he said he didn't care. I told my husband: "Then sell the cows because it doesn't make sense if all of this can't be expanded and prosperous, and if I don't have even small garden." It was 20 minutes away from the apartment. We sold it and I then went to the sea coast to work when it was the season. And it was hard because a few times I thought my heart would break. I was homesick asking myself when I will be able to go home. I don't go out that much here either. I'm emotionally attached to the house. I want to be at home.

This Association is good for me because otherwise I would not know how to leave the house. We do something all the time. All the women here are beautiful. We do some workshops. I got involved recently, half a year ago. We did something all the time. Helping others. The donations that came to us, we gave to those who do not have, to women who are alone and without children. Just the ones who needed it. One of our members also sewed masks. Mostly we were active all this time. Some less, some more. Dina is our real organizer and mover. She is always active. We called someone constantly and organized something. Everyone can hardly wait to do

something and help.

We are here to work and help each other.

Nobody helped me. I went to the municipality. I went directly to the mayor to ask about the job. I applied everywhere. I wanted to work. It didn't work. Once my husband asked to work in "Standard". He went to the director and he told my husband that one had to be a charity case to be employed there. So, we never applied again. We tried to be self-employed. We struggled.

The children never got anything. No employment. It's sad. These are all connections and some people have managed something by constantly going and begging for. I never did. I just needed a job. My son went to Canada 13.5 years ago. He left in 2007, and I went once in 2008 when he got a son. He got some tax refund so he bought me a ticket. I went without a penny. I went to see the children. I haven't seen him since. He can't come. There's always something stopping him. He's fine, healthy.

The daughter is in Mostar. She lives there in a family, in a joint household. When they got married, they were with me for a year or two. I bought two cows on credit, and my son-in-law was a demobilized soldier at the time, and he also asked to get two cows from the army so that we could do it all together. When they left, I had to sell everything. The daughter went with her husband to live to the house of her father-in-law and mother-in-law. There were her husband's two sisters and five brothers. She is still there today. Those sisters got married and left. His two brothers stayed.

Today I work in high school. I work as a cleaner. Even for that job, I needed a connection. I say you can't even dig canals without a connection. The Employment bureau never called me. The Bureau does not do that. There are companies in Konjic, but it all goes through acquaintances and parties. Relatives got the job, I didn't.

I get angry for a second and then look the other way because it's not worth it. What you can't change, you don't need to get upset about it. What you can do yourself, you do. There is injustice all over the world.

My husband worked privately and hasn't worked in a long time. He worked for a company, but fell ill. Thyroid gland, arrhythmia and water in the lungs. So, he couldn't work anymore. He took pills. But one should not be in vain annoyed and worried – if think hard about something and worry, but can't change. You just have to think about something you can act on and change.

Men's fights are more visible, more appreciated, and it is normal that it is not fair that my fight is not seen. I felt it myself, just when we had those cows. My son and my son-in-law, when we picked up the hay, were digging a hole for the haystack and they were supposed to stuck that haystack into the ground. I see that it was crooked and I told them that, but they did not pay attention. That's when I immediately felt it was because I am a woman. If my husband had said that, it would have been different. After half an hour he came s and told them that it doesn't go like that and that it needs to be corrected. They obeyed him immediately. I felt it in my family, and everywhere, that the word and deed of a woman were less respected. Although we are both more diligent and braver.

Of course, I feel trust in the "Nera" Association. We, members, respect, help and appreciate each other. Somehow these women are all fine and hardworking.

For example, Dina, the organizer, does so much. If she wasn't, we wouldn't be here either. There would be no gatherings or workshops. There would be no socializing and we couldn't help someone. Whenever they ask for something, we can hardly wait to be able to help and socialize.

Just to add. Today is eight years since I got a job in high school as a cleaner. Until I got that

job, I dreamed. I dreamed of a state job because I worked in a state company for 20 years. For several years I worked in a private company where I did not have free time. I could not stand or be blackmailed and oppressed by anyone. I dreamed on my free weekend. So, I got that job and I have weekends and holidays. I'm satisfied. I have peace and my job. I know what to do. It's wonderful with the kids at school. They are nice if you are nice to them too. For example, if they scribble on a wall I say, " Do you know how hard it is to erase. It's easy to write. We had scrapbooks." They then just withdraw ashamed. I didn't yell at them. I give advice whenever I can, as to my children.

Mirjana Raguza (Konjic)

The women's fight!

"A woman is a strength, a woman is a power.
A woman is not suited for one-night stand." / Živana Sabljic
"Willing to accept" / Enisa Rakovic
"I'm not ashamed of my activism" / Danka Zeljic
"Home by the sea" / Paša Suljic
"Jolly" / Zora Kuljanin
"Restless" / Valentina Gagic
"Clover of hope" / Refka Ališković
"The dance of peace" / Tomislavka Dodig Pavić
"I am glad I made it" / Nusreta Sivac
"Now they respect us" / Aldina Suljic
"I did it alone" / Selma Osmanović
"I have my moments" / Nevzeta Hasanović
"My story is sad, but I am proud of it." / Suvada Poturović
"My life - someone else's signature" / Ilvana Bakoš
"Milk house" / Mirjana Raguza

5. HER STRUGGLE IS WORTH IT!

The results of the interviews presented in this paper are part of the project “Women and Peacebuilding” implemented by the CURE Foundation thanks to the support of the World Day by Prayer. The process of preparing the material for analysis consisted of rewriting the interview without paraphrasing and with minimal language editing. The statements were divided into the following thematic units:

1. Family and partner support;
2. Assistance from the state and local institutions;
3. Women’s struggle for women’s rights;
4. Recognizability of women’s struggle in society;
5. Gender and ethnic discrimination;
6. The importance of women’s association;
7. The role of women’s associations and women in peacebuilding processes.

5.1. Interview analysis through thematic units

For all respondents in the research, as well as for the majority of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the events that took place during the armed conflict left consequences on current life. The interview shows a clear correlation between what happened and how they live today. There is a pronounced attention to the past, it really exists, but what most respondents emphasize is what happened after the war and how exactly that period of their struggle remained completely unrecognized by both society and state structures.

Peacebuilding and the role of respondents in these processes is reflected in the joint activities of women gathered in an association. A large number of respondents state that within their associations, ethnicity is not important, nor is the religion of women. The concept of socializing is often mentioned as the most important item regarding the association. Socializing together for women is a way out of the daily routine where they can express their emotions and worries without fear of being condemned. This fear of condemnation among all women was born on the basis of gender discrimination suffered by society in their local communities.

Thematic unit 1: Family and partner support

This thematic unit is a bright spot in this research. Most respondents stated that they had the support of family and partners. There is certainly a case in which the respondent states that she achieved everything on her own and that she did not have support during her struggle.

Thematic unit 2: Assistance from the state and local institutions

Based on the conducted interviews, all respondents convincingly and unanimously stated that they did not have adequate support from the state and local institutions. They state that, even when they received the aid, it was not the aid they were supposed to receive in a logical sequence but that the aid was obtained on the basis of their efforts and energy investment. During their struggles, the respondents, regardless of their local community, in most cases received help from the international community and women’s NGOs. Even these respondents were the initiators of the establishment of an association to help themselves and other women with similar fates and struggles.

Thematic unit 3: Women's struggle for women's rights

The struggle for women's rights is certainly a struggle that has been fought and will have to be fought in the future in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In each of the local communities where the research was conducted, the fight for women's rights is needed and the respondents lead that fight. The activism and activist endeavors they engage in their local communities, although sometimes unaware of it, contribute significantly to a more adequate and better position of women in society. Also, what makes specific women's associations in the mapped local communities is humanitarian aid. In each local community, the respondents organized different activities with their colleagues in order to help vulnerable residents or to improve the quality of life within their communities.

Thematic unit 4: Recognizability of women's struggle in society

Women's struggle has not been adequately recognized in any local community. In this case, we cannot generalize the results, but we can point out the courage of these 15 women who spoke about everything they went through and are going through today. In their opinion, society in local communities does not appreciate their effort and work enough. What they especially pointed out is that in the society (in some cases in the family) their opinion is not respected, and only because they are women.

Thematic unit 5: Gender and ethnic discrimination

Gender discrimination, i.e. discrimination against women, is any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.²¹ Ethnic discrimination means discrimination based on a person's national and ethnic origin.

Regarding this thematic unit, the women did not cite direct examples of gender discrimination, but they indirectly felt it during their struggle. In most cases, this type of discrimination was felt on the basis of inability to find employment, and gaining a role within the political, economic, social and civic spheres of the local community. Ethnic discrimination in this research, according to women, is overcome in many cases. When we say overcome, we mean the fact that most of the respondents stated that ethnicity is not the most important thing for them personally and that within their associations they do not discriminate against members on that basis.

Some of the respondents very much felt ethnic discrimination as individuals in certain situations. Perhaps the most prominent example is the story of Ilvana Bakoš from Konjic who, although seriously ill, experienced ethnic discrimination by the Mostar Health Institute. This pattern of ethnic discrimination has gone unpunished while at the same time making it clear that employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina is often conditioned by ethnicity as well as belonging to the ruling party in a particular area.

To a certain extent, based on the expressed attitudes of the respondents, the Birač region stands out within the framework of ethnic discrimination. Given its entire history and the inability to deal with the past, the emergence of ethnic discrimination was expected. However, in this region there is a positive side in this segment, and it is reflected in the efforts of respondents to correct this issue. Respondents clearly state that their struggles continue and that in the future they are ready to socialize with all women who want to, and that their ethnicity will not prevent them from doing so.

21 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 1- CEDAW

Thematic unit 6: The importance of women's association;

The positive image of women's association was unanimously expressed. All respondents made it clear how important it is for them to be part of the association. Each of the respondents states that this is almost the only opportunity for them to be what they are and that socializing is the only way out of everyday life. In their statements, the respondents point out that they feel solidarity and trust towards other women members of the association, which further motivates them to continue working on joint activities. Respondents from the area of Srebrenik, from the local community of Tinja, state that the local community also recognized their capacities and that they began to appreciate and recognize them more since being members of the association and persistent in their intentions and goals.

Thematic unit 7: The role of women's associations and women in peacebuilding processes.

Thematic units 6 and 7 correlate with thematic unit 5, according to which women, through their associations, actively defy the ethnic separation of society in BiH and thus actively participate in peacebuilding processes.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results of the research can be interpreted from different angles depending on the local community and the life story of each respondent. A common characteristic of all respondents is that they are all motivated, that they have their own views, goals and opinions that they are ready to express. Throughout the process, several strong messages were highlighted making clear that the lives of the respondents today are impressed by the past that has befallen Bosnia and Herzegovina. From the process of research and conversations with the respondents, and by reading their stories, it is evident that they feel the strongest distrust towards the state and local institutions, from which they certainly expected more after the war. They could not even think that after the war they would be left totally on their own, that they alone or their family would get another “knife in the back” from the state. In their testimonies, respondents stressed the importance of peacebuilding and a better future for their children, while in one story a respondent from the Bratunac area stated that in that part of Bosnia and Herzegovina there will be no complete peace as long as two ethnic groups, two religions live there because mistrust between these groups is very pronounced.

What is especially important to point out is their perception of female strength and struggle. Each respondent emphasized that women are unique, that women are drivers of change and that they are sometimes unaware of it. They made clear their position that their struggle was not sufficiently recognized or appreciated. An interesting answer to the question “This what women have survived, is it valued equally in relation to what men have survived?”, where the unanimous answer is “No”. Respondents believe that what they survived during and after the war simply does not have the same social value compared to what men survived. Most of them claim that their struggles were much harder than men’s struggles, but that the patriarchal key and way of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina does not allow their struggle to be sufficiently recognized and appreciated.

Regarding the research question “Do women have equal rights to face their surviving past?”, the answer of the respondents is also “No.” Respondents state that they leave a lot behind because they simply did not get the opportunity to face it. The state institutions and the judicial system did not allow some of the respondents to have the opportunity to accept the past psychologically sound as well as to accept the lost.

Based on this research, it was clearly shown that the respondents (but also other women from their environment) have been actively working to build peace in the last 25 years, but that their efforts and work are not recognized in society. None of the interviewed women had the need to promote their activism, but found their self-satisfaction in small steps that they took for the benefit of their country and society. The stories of these women show that it is possible to overcome hatred. They show the strength of humanity which, in their opinion, may overcome all divisions, imposed fears and political agendas that separate them.

When it comes to Resolution 1325 (Resolution “Women, Peace and Security”), then we can clearly say that some of the respondents worked on peacebuilding even before this Resolution came for consideration and adoption. Many of the respondents are not even aware that what they are doing has been adopted in the form of this Resolution in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that their efforts, although not sufficiently valued or visible, greatly improve the overall situation in BiH when it comes to peace and coexistence.

Respondents state that the women suffered the most during and after the war. The female body was used as a battlefield, women’s body was used to win the war. Only because they were women, in many cases they have been used as territory for revenge. However, after the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, none has prevented them from boldly and strongly stepping forward in the direction of fulfilling their goals, but also doing the social good.

In general, the position of women in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not equal. All Balkan countries have ratified Resolution 1325 and CEDAW, and laws guaranteeing equality have been adopted, however, it is clear that the implementation of these documents is not moving in a positive direction. Women in BiH, but also the respondents in the research, are not sufficiently represented in any segment of the governance structure, both in local communities and in state structures. Most of the respondents point out that the selection according to the national key is very current, and that the selection of women for any management position has not yet reached a positive level.

The ethno-national climate is very present within Bosnia and Herzegovina, but within women's associations, ethno-national identity is almost irrelevant. Women believe that if they are united, they are so strong and that only together they may improve their position in the local community and society.

Women are strength, Women are power, Women are unique, Women are brave, A woman supports a woman, A woman gives a boost to a woman, A woman understands a woman, were just some of the messages that have permeated the last few months of the research process. The courage, strength and perseverance of these women is and really should be a lesson to all future generations of young women to come. Each respondent stated that her struggle continues and that she is not ashamed of her struggle and that she is ready to be a part of the women's association now and always because there they have the necessary support systematically denied by the society and the state.

The struggle for women's rights continues. The struggle of women must not be forgotten. Women's stories are heroic stories that should be heard, respected and appreciated.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research “Dealing with the Restlessness and Peacebuilding from the Perspective of a Post-Dayton Woman”, the researcher together with representatives of the CURE Foundation made recommendations for continuing work in the field of peace building and women’s empowerment.

When interviewing respondents, the first and most important thing we noticed was the fact that many women do not know how to talk about themselves. Respondents did not adequately recognize their values and capacities, and in certain situations they are not even aware of the importance of their activism. Covered by the overall mentality of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the respondents, together with their colleagues from women’s associations, perceive their activism as free time and socializing. However, from the perspective of activism and the values of the activist movement, it is clear that the respondents and members of the association are activists who change the local communities in which they live through their engagement. The recommendation to the organizations dealing with women’s rights and women’s empowerment is to work actively with women on self-perception and perceiving the value of activism. An empowered woman is an independent woman, and in order to move in the direction of equality and equity, the first step we must take is a strong and independent woman.

In addition to more active empowerment of women, a recommendation that we consider important is the need to look at the situation on the ground before creating any activities in the field of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is still considered a difficult topic in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but one of the basic mistakes is to create a process without analyzing the situation on the ground. This analysis primarily implies direct communication with society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the relationship of the state and governing structures to society. BH society is generally very distrustful precisely because of governing structures, and if we are to work on the subject of peace building, we must gain the trust of the society.

Ajna Jusić

Denija Hidić

Jadranka Miličević

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9. ABBREVIATIONS

BiH - Bosnia and Herzegovina

BH - Bosnian and Herzegovinian

SFRY - Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

FBiH – Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

RS – Republika Srpska

BD – the Brčko District

10. ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

Ajna Jusić graduated in psychology at the University of Sarajevo. She attended the Academy for Young Leaders in Civil Society, and successfully completed the School of Political Studies.

She is currently an activist and project coordinator at the CURE Foundation. Jusić is the president of the Association “Forgotten Children of War”. This Association is the only one in the whole world that fights for the legal and social visibility of children born of war. Through her work, she fights for women who survived rape during the war and children born of war, the rights of the LGBT community, minorities, children with special needs. The most focus of her work is on human rights. She is a young activist who fights for gender equality, against sexism and sexual violence.

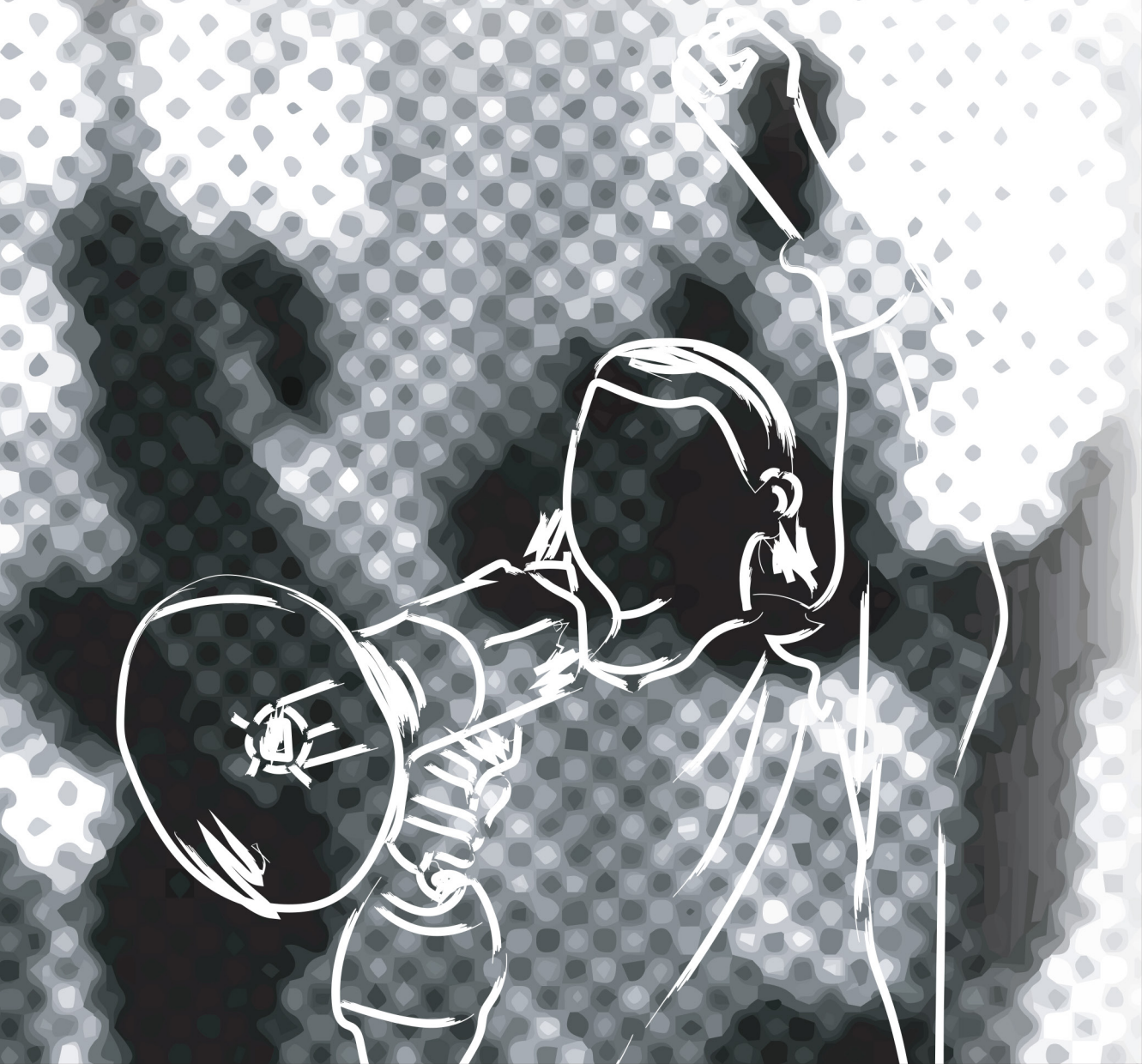
As part of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, the Conference “How to Fight Sexual Violence in Conflict?” was held. At this conference, Ajna had the honor of talking to survivors from Congo, Iraq and Colombia. In December 2018, Ajna received the “Person of the Year” award in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, she was the keynote speaker on the topic “Inclusion of children born of war” at the Stand Speak Rise Up Conference organized by Maria Teresa, Grand Duchess of Luxembourg. In addition to the above events, she had the honor to speak in New York, USA during the Women International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls. Immediately after the speech, she participated in the panel together with the director of the Netflix series Unbelievable, Susannah Grant (a series that very well portrays the problem of women who survived rape). In addition to the two of them, Jonathan Torgovnik, an award-winning photographer who worked with surviving women and children born of wartime rape in Rwanda, Chinyere Eyoh, the SOAR representative from Nigeria, and others spoke at the panel.

Currently, the Association “Forgotten Children of War” is the only association in the world that deals with the social and legal visibility of children born of the war and its activities have raised this issue internationally, thus writing the first pages of history. Thanks to this Association, Bosnia and Herzegovina is the first country in the world to make systematic and social steps in the social and legal acceptance of this category.

Through her engagement and struggle for the rights of children born of war, Jusić also became the author of the first world exhibition on children born of war and women survivors from Bosnia and Herzegovina. The exhibition was called “Breaking Free” and has become internationally recognized.

Ajna is trying to make Bosnia and Herzegovina the first country in the world to have a law on children born of wartime rape and children whose fathers are members of foreign peace and humanitarian organizations. Thanks to her efforts during 2020, the School of Political Studies of the Council of Europe in BiH nominated Jusić for the Václav Havel Human Rights Award established in 2013 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Václav Havel Library and the Charta 77 Foundation. The award is given in memory of Václav Havel.

Ajna was born in 1993. She believes that only with solidarity, empathy, humanity and dialogue we may build a better and healthier society for future generations.



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