

11-1999

## The Lived Experience of Bosnian Refugees Who Have Suffered as a Result of Genocide

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BOSNIAN REFUGEES  
WHO HAVE SUFFERED AS A RESULT  
OF GENOCIDE

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A thesis

Presented to

The Graduate School of  
Kirkhof School of Nursing

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

In Nursing

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by

Gazelle Raven Animalia

November 1999

## ABSTRACT

In 1992, Bosnian Serbian and Serbian forces launched a campaign of genocide against Muslim and Croatian civilians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This nightmarish odyssey ended for many non-Serbians when they escaped to other countries. Many of these families chose to come to the United States.

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of Bosnian refugees who suffered as a result of genocide. The research method used for this study was a phenomenological method based on Husserlian philosophy. Four Bosnian refugees, who escaped to a midwestern state during and after the war, were asked to answer the following research question: "describe your lived experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide. The verbal descriptions of their personal lived experiences were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. These descriptions were analyzed using the Giorgi's method. Three themes were identified: forced exile, adjustment, and homesickness.

The findings from this study will:

1. provide insight and understanding regarding the Bosnian refugee population
2. help develop strategies for care for the Bosnian refugee population
3. provide information for teaching nurses and other health care professionals about the Bosnian refugee population

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my daughter, Forrest Rayne Animalia, who has been patient, understanding, and has made me laugh throughout my graduate education and my life. I love you. Oh, Asia and Igey, too!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Jerry Johnson and Dr. Phyllis Gendler, for their help and guidance. Thank you, Jerry, for providing insights and your valuable time. I acknowledge appreciation to Dr. Lorraine Rodrigues-Fisher for her participation in this academic endeavor and for her knowledge of qualitative research. Thank you, Lori, for being my thesis chairperson. I also wish to thank the Bosnian refugees who so willingly shared their personal experiences with me. Your testimonies will provide nurses and other health professionals with an opportunity to better understand your lived experiences.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
ONE: THE PROBLEM	1
Introduction	1
Information to Bracket	1
Impact on Nursing	3
Research Question	3
TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Introduction	4
Procedure	5
Data Gathering	5
Data Analysis	5
Qualitative Research	6
Phenomenological Research	6
The Researcher's Involvement	7
Intentionality	7
Essences	8
Bracketing	8
THREE: METHODOLOGY	10
Design	10
Sample	10
Setting	11
Procedures	11
Data Analysis	12
Validity	13
Reliability	14

FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	15
Theme One: Forced Exile	15
Theme Two: Adjustment	16
Theme Three: Homesickness	17
FIVE: DISCUSSION	19
Findings	19
Review of Literature	20
Forced Exile	20
Adjustment	22
Homesickness	23
SIX: CONCLUSIONS	25
Implications and Recommendations	25
Summary	28
MY VOICE	29
APPENDICES	
A. Telephone Script	31
B. Consent Form	33
C. Human Research Approval	35
REFERENCES	36
TRANSCRIPTS	

# The Lived Experience of Bosnian Refugees Whom Have Suffered as a Result of Genocide

## Chapter One

### THE PROBLEM

#### Introduction

In 1992, Bosnian Serb and Serbian forces launched a campaign of genocide against Muslim and Croat civilians in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The ultimate goals of the Serbians were to seize total property of the Bosnians and to strip them of their basic human rights. Military units attacked non-Serbians in their homes throughout villages and cities across Bosnia. All non-Serbians were selected for physical and psychological destruction, including torture and death (Weine & Laub, 1995). Non-Serbians were apprehended and sent to concentration camps or were forced to flee their homeland.

This nightmarish odyssey ended for many non-Serbians when they escaped to other countries, such as Croatia. Some non-Serbians were reunited with their remaining family members in refugee camps in Croatia in the early 1990s (Weine & Laub, 1995). Eventually, some families were offered the opportunity to emigrate. Many of these families chose to come to the United States.

There are approximately 4,300 Bosnian refugees who resettled in Kent County, Michigan (Lutheran Social Services, personal communication, July 28, 1999) and approximately 80% of the Bosnian refugees are Muslim (Weine & Laub, 1995). These refugees have primarily come from small cities and rural areas of Bosnia. The majority of Bosnian refugees in the United States are female (Lutheran Social Services).

#### Information to Bracket

To better understand the experiences of Bosnian refugees who escaped the genocide that took place during the war, a phenomenological study using a Husserlian approach was the research method used for this study. The research question asked was,



"describe your lived experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide". Suffering may result from a sudden occurrence of massive psychic traumas such as genocide (Weine & Laub, 1995). The traumas associated with genocide are extensive, extreme, and prolonged, as opposed to other types of traumas that are more isolated and circumscribed (Weine & Laub).

When using a Husserlian phenomenological approach, it is important for the researcher to bracket information pertaining to the study so as not to influence in any way, each person's description of his or her experience. Bracketing is a methodological device of phenomenological inquiry that requires deliberate identification and suspension of all judgements or ideas about the phenomenon under investigation (Carpenter & Streubert, 1995). Bracketing is essential for what the researcher already knows and feels about the phenomenon prior to and throughout the phenomenological investigation. Therefore, the following knowledge pertaining to the research question was identified by the researcher and bracketed.

Genocide was not accomplished in a calculated manner, but rather it was a chaotic execution of atrocities and terror (Weine & Laub, 1995). The aim of this genocide was to destroy every communal fabric of non-Serbian life in Bosnia. Non-Serbians have suffered severe psychological, environmental, and physical stress from torture, witnessing the death and brutalization of family members, and being forced to flee from their homeland (Weine & Laub).

Many Bosnian refugees suffered from feelings of guilt, humiliation, and demoralization due to the shattering of their accustomed human environments and their inability to help friends and neighbors in crisis. Many of the symptoms that Bosnian refugees experienced included reexperiencing, avoidance, and hyperarousal (Weine & Laub, 1995). Reexperiencing often manifested itself with intrusive memories, nightmares, and flashbacks. Symptoms of avoidance included blocking thoughts about

the war, decreased interest in previously enjoyed activities, and amnesia pertaining to what occurred during the war. Other symptoms that many Bosnian refugees experienced included internal numbness, feeling the future is unclear, and feeling cut off from others. Additionally, some Bosnian refugees experience symptoms of hyperarousal that included sleep disturbance, irritability, and decreased concentration. Finally, there are those Bosnian refugees that may be hypervigilant, have an increased startle response, and be reactive to war reminders (Weine & Laub).

### Impact on Nursing

It is important for health care providers to understand the history of genocide and the nature of the traumas experienced by Bosnian refugees. This study will contribute to the body of nursing knowledge by 1) providing insight and understanding of the Bosnian refugee population; 2) this information will help in the development of strategies for caring for the Bosnian refugee population; and 3) providing information for teaching nurses and other health care professionals how to provide optimal health care to Bosnian refugees. This study helped explain the experiences of Bosnian refugees who have suffered as a result of genocide. In addition, nurses and other health care professionals will be better able to develop individualized treatment plans for individuals suffering due to genocide. Finally, this study provided Bosnian refugees an avenue to have their experiences told.

### Research Question

This study answered the question: What is the lived experience of the Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide?

## Chapter Two

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The research method used for this study was a phenomenological method based on Husserlian philosophy. This design was chosen because it strives to explain human experiences as described by individuals who have lived the experiences under investigation.

When using a Husserlian approach to phenomenological research, it is important that the researcher brackets all knowledge and preconceived ideas or thoughts about the experience under investigation. Therefore, literature related to the phenomenon in question, is completed only after data are analyzed. Once themes and focal meanings are identified and verified as the lived experiences by the individuals participating in the study, the literature review is conducted. The researcher reviews the literature at this time in order to place the findings within the context of what is already known about the topic. A cursory review of the literature may be done to verify the need for the investigation.

Phenomenological research provided an opportunity to explore, examine, and describe the lived experience of Bosnian refugees who suffered as a result of genocide. The phenomenological method allowed the researcher to explore the everyday world as it was lived and perceived by the target population. Phenomenological research required suspension of previous assumptions about the phenomenon in question (Drew, 1993). In addition, reflection upon the phenomenon allowed the researcher an intuitive insight into the experience being studied.

## Procedure

The study sample in phenomenological research is drawn from a population who is living or who have lived the experience of the phenomenon to be studied (Parse, Coyne, & Smith, 1985). The criteria for sample selection of co-participants require that they lived the experience, and that they are willing to describe their experience (Burns & Grove, 1987). In phenomenological research, the sample size is usually small and adequacy of the sample is achieved when the researcher experiences redundancy in descriptions of the lived experiences (Hunger & Polit, 1995). This redundancy is often labeled saturation. Saturation refers to the repetition of discovered information and confirmation of previously collected data (Carpenter & Streubert, 1995).

## Data Gathering

In phenomenological research, individuals are asked to describe their experience completely. Descriptions are taped. When individuals feel they have completely described their experiences, the interview is considered complete. The researcher recognizes that the individual sharing of experiences will vary. Therefore, the length of each interview will vary to allow co-participants to completely describe their unique experience.

## Data Analysis

After data are collected and analyzed, the findings are compared with the research literature. The concepts and common themes described during the analysis are then related to practice, education, and future research. Comparison of the literature to the findings of this study will be presented in Chapter Five. A review of the literature related to qualitative research follows. This information is presented to give the reader an overview of qualitative methodologies.

### Qualitative Research

The nature of knowledge and the means of accessing it have been of concern to scientists and philosophers from the beginning of time. Nurse researchers have also questioned the use of different methodologies to answer scientific questions. For nursing, it is essential that nurse scientists examine the premises and assumptions inherent in the beliefs of those who are cared for and for their caregivers. Qualitative methods, for example, provide researchers with an alternative means of collecting data in which co-participants can describe in their own words what they have experienced. Without clear statements from individuals of what constitutes the reality of their experience, research remains an academic enterprise in which quantification of data provides only an insight into the experience of individuals (Carpenter & Streubert, 1995). Research must be based on a philosophical commitment to discover knowledge using the means that most appropriately explain the phenomenon of interest.

Qualitative research in nursing is a relatively newly accepted form of creating nursing knowledge. Qualitative research is a paradigm reflecting the value of subjectivity, individualism, holism, relativism, and interpretation (Carpenter & Streubert, 1995). It also addresses the importance of context in creating meaning, the dynamic fluid nature of reality, and the interrelatedness of all phenomena. Qualitative research provides an opportunity to create new ways of deriving meaning in nursing.

### Phenomenological Research

Phenomenology, as a research method, offers nursing an opportunity to describe and clarify phenomena important to practice, education, and research. Phenomenology is a field of inquiry integral to nursing, as well as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and social work. As a research method, phenomenology is a rigorous science whose purpose is to bring to language the human experience (Carpenter & Streubert, 1995).

Husserl is designated as the founder of the modern phenomenological movement (Koch, 1995). Husserl believed that philosophy, and in particular phenomenology, should be concerned with essence, which is a fact or entity that is universal, eternally unchanging over time, and absolute (Koch). Husserlian phenomenology is concerned with the clear understanding of the fundamental nature of reality.

Husserl developed a phenomenological method which involved two attitudes, the natural attitude and the philosophical attitude (Walters, 1995). The philosophical attitude is concerned with basic philosophical questions. Husserl considered that philosophy would survive so long as people questioned the basis of world experience. This meant that the natural attitude needed to be questioned in the attempt to uncover the rational foundations of the world that is the philosophical attitude. Husserl called the change from the natural to the philosophical attitude phenomenological reduction, which he argued involved a questioning of one's presuppositions about the world (Walters).

#### The Researcher's Involvement

In relation to Husserlian phenomenology, it is suggested that when researchers use the appropriate research methods, they are also defining the validity and objectivity of analyses by excluding, or bracketing, the experiences, biases or prejudices of researchers. Bracketing is an important component of the Husserlian phenomenological method. In Husserlian phenomenology, interpretation of lived experiences is an analytical process that attempts to explain the meaning of the co-participant's experience without the interference of the researcher's perspective.

#### Intentionality

Husserl's idea was that the mind is directed toward objects and this directedness is called intentionality (Koch, 1995). This idea was based on the assumption that our own conscious awareness was one thing of which we could be certain. The building of the knowledge of reality should therefore start with this conscious awareness. He held that

there must be some kind of context in the mind that accounted for this aboutness or directedness (Koch).

### Essences

One of Husserl's directives to phenomenology was that it should be a descriptive psychology which would return things to themselves and to the essences that constitute the consciousness and perception of the human world (Koch, 1995). Thereby, he hoped to come face to face with the ultimate structures (essences) of consciousness. Phenomenological research means presenting a systematic view of mental content and assumes that this is possible if symbols representing the world are manipulated in the mind, as these manipulations permit the external world to be brought into internal consciousness by cognitive processes (Koch). Essences can therefore be isolated and studied.

### Bracketing

The research question is answered by means of a process of phenomenological reduction. The first step in Husserl's method is the elimination of all preconceived notions (Koch, 1995). Koch writes that Husserl added the ultimate level of transcendental phenomenology by bracketing not only the outer world, but also the individual consciousness.

To bracket things in this way is not so much a matter of doubting their existence, but of disconnecting from them. The bracketing of belief in the reality of the natural world was the lever for Husserl's phenomenological methodology (Koch, 1995). Husserlian phenomenology, through the process of bracketing, defends the validity or objectivity of interpretation against the self-interest of the research.

In summary, intentionality represents the conscious decision by the researcher to study the phenomenon of interest. Essences are the meanings and perceptions of one's

lived experiences. Finally, bracketing is the disconnecting from that which the researcher knows, feels, and believes about the phenomenon being studied.



## Chapter Three

### METHODOLOGY

#### Design

A qualitative study using the Husserlian phenomenological methodology was used for this research. An unstructured interview, with one open-ended question, was asked of each co-participant.

#### Sample

A list of potential co-participants was obtained through the Kent County Health Department, Bethany Christian Services, Word Bridge, Luther Social Services, Programs Assisting Refugee Assimilation (PARA), and Catholic Office of Human Development. A sample of four co-participants were selected for the study based on the following criteria:

1. Co-participants were Bosnian refugees who have lived in the United States for 1-5 years.
2. Co-participants could articulate their lived experience in the English language.
3. Co-participants were over 18 years of age.
4. Co-participants suffered as a result of genocide.

Each agency was asked to identify Bosnian refugees who met the specified sample criteria. The agency then contacted the Bosnian refugees to obtain permission to release their names and telephone numbers to the researcher. When permission was given, the researcher contacted each identified Bosnian refugee by telephone and briefly explained the research study. A prepared telephone script was used to assist the researcher to maintain consistency in the conversation (See Appendix A). After each potential co-participant agreed to participate in the study, an interview appointment was made.

## Setting

The study was conducted in a metropolitan area in a midwestern state in the United States. All data were collected in a location that was convenient for each co-participant. Each setting was quiet, free from extraneous noise or distractions, and comfortable for the co-participant. Attention to lived experiences requires that the researcher approach the research question holistically by going to people in their circumstances where they are involved in the world (Oiler, 1982).

## Human Subject Approval

Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee. In addition, verbal approval was obtained from the district managers of each of the participating referral agencies. This approval was communicated to the co-participants of this study.

To maintain anonymity, each co-participant was identified as follows:

1. 01 first subject  
02 second subject  
03 third subject  
04 fourth subject
2. 1 female  
2 male
3. co-participant's age
4. years in the United States

Using this method of identification, a potential co-participant may be identified as 011455. All interviews were tape-recorded. Each tape was then transcribed verbatim. All transcribed tapes were checked for accuracy by the researcher. During the transcription of the tapes, any information that could possibly identify a co-participant was left blank on the transcript. All transcripts were read, reread, and analyzed.

The research question and the purpose of the study were discussed with each co-participant. The nature of the study, the time commitment, and the involvement of the co-participant were explained. Possible detrimental effects and benefits of the study were discussed. Beneficial effects to each co-participant included the opportunity to tell his/her story, to have his/her story recorded, and to help healthcare workers understand potential health problems as a result of the experience. Potential detrimental effects included stress from remembering, fear, and intrusive memories. If a co-participant had demonstrated any potential detrimental effect the researcher had identified, the following interventions would have been implemented to reduce the problem: (1) stop the interview at any time and allow the co-participant to regain composure and (2) allow for the co-participant to terminate the study at any time. Additional interventions that could have been implemented were to phone a healthcare practitioner or spiritual advisor such as a priest or minister, to stop taping the interview, or to refer a co-participant to Bethany Christian Services or another appropriate service. All participants completed the interview without evidence of any detrimental effects. Confidentiality was assured. Co-participants were informed that if their descriptions were published, no names or identifying characteristics would be associated with the data. The option to withdraw from the study at any time was explained. A written consent form was given to each potential co-participant to read, discuss, and sign if the individual agreed to participate (See Appendix B). The co-participants were given a copy of the signed consent form. Co-participants were also reassured that withdrawing from the study would in no way affect the co-participant's relationship with the referring agency or Grand Valley State University. All participants remained in the study.

### Procedures

Data were collected at a site selected by each co-participant. All data were collected in the co-participant's home. The co-participants were asked to describe the

meaning of their personal lived experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide. The following instructions were given to each co-participant:

"Describe your experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide. Share all the thoughts and feelings you can recall until you have no more to say about the experience."

When the co-participants felt they had completely described their feelings about the experience, the interview was considered complete. The researcher recognized that individual co-participant's sharing of the experience could vary. Therefore, the length of the interview varied to allow each co-participant time to completely describe his/her experiences.

### Data Analysis

The Giorgi (1975) method was used for data analysis. The Giorgi method began with a description of the experience under study as it exists for each co-participant. Clarifications by the researcher were minimized so that the resulting description was truly the co-participant's experience. The researcher recognized that the quality of each description might vary among co-participants. Qualitative data are in the form of words. The intent of the analysis was to organize the data into a meaningful, individualized interpretation or framework that would describe the phenomenon studied (Burns & Grove, 1987).

The tape-recorded interview of each co-participant was reviewed immediately following the interview and then again at a later time. The interview tapes were then transcribed verbatim. Following the transcription of the interview, the tape recordings were replayed to ensure that the tapes were transcribed accurately.

The data analysis procedure described by Giorgi has five steps. This method incorporates the rigorous process of intuiting. Intuiting means dwelling with the data, analyzing, and describing the unfolding of the meaning while staying true to the things

themselves in an all-at-once process of emerging meaning (Parse, Coyne, & Smith, 1985). A description of the method that was used in this study is as follows:

1. The researcher read the entire description of the experience to get a sense of the whole.
2. The researcher read the description again more slowly to identify natural meaning units in the experience.
3. The researcher related the natural meaning units to each other and to the whole. Themes were identified.
4. The researcher reflected on these themes and transformed the meaning from concrete language into concepts.
5. The researcher integrated and synthesized the themes into a structural description of the meaning of the lived experience.

#### Validity

The qualitative researcher tends to concentrate on valid data that are representative of a true and full picture of what the researcher is attempting to investigate (Duffy, 1987). Phenomenology accepts as valuable the description of the experience that the co-participant provides. The experience is accepted as it exists in the consciousness of the co-participant and duplicate behavior from duplicate data is not expected. Generalizations may be made because of similar meanings, but exact duplication from another co-participant is not required. However, duplications may occur when the meanings of the lived experiences are similar (Omery, 1983).

#### Reliability

After the data were analyzed, the researcher provided each co-participant with a copy of the themes that were identified. At this time, the researcher made another contact and asked the co-participant if the essences of the meanings were achieved. The researcher did not find disagreement in the findings.

## Chapter Four

### DATA ANALYSIS

As the data were analyzed, three themes emerged from the co-participant's description of the lived experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide. Identified themes are described by samples of the co-participant's actual descriptions.

#### Theme One: Forced Exile

- Usually the refugee life is just trying to find some safe place where you are allowed to stay and build up a life from again.
- We lost many friends and many families because many of those went to different countries, we try to find our friends and find our family, but we couldn't find them because nobody knows where they are.
- You used to have a great life, you used to have everything in your life: the next day you woke up and you don't have nothing.
- After four years we leave the town abruptly. After midnight we have big semi trucks going through town, and since the police pick up the people, no things, no personal things, no any paper I. D. or nothing.
- You don't have any rights because you are Bosnian. Everybody can kill you like a smoke on a cigarette. Life is cheap in that time.
- Somebody just came over night and just kick you out and take your keys, take your furniture and everything. You lost everything just over night.
- A lot of people don't have nothing to eat because no money, no nothing, and if you have some money then have nothing to buy because nobody is going to sell you nothing. It's a horrible experience.

- Serb military police pick me up in \_\_\_\_\_ from the street. I had tennis shoes on me and a T-shirt. I ended up 45 miles from my town in the mountains. I stay about four and a half months just working like free labor.
- All your property you got if nobody takes it, it's a part of the Serb Republic, how those guys call it.
- You have land in your name and those guys try to clear out...all those papers were cleared out, with all the computers and they put different names in.
- We have no rights at all. No basic human rights.

### Theme Two: Adjustment

- You will find a lot of Bosnians who are skilled people, but do not have English, and as a result of that they cannot really do their job that they used to back home.
- For a lot of them it is a culture shock the way Americans live, the way Americans behave.
- This country is a big shock to most of the people that have never been so far away from their country.
- They tell me this is not America because we back home have a perception America was strongly built through movies primarily and music. Back home we would always see you know Dynasty for example or one of these old soap operas, it was really popular back home. I still remember it was Monday night 8:00 p.m. through 8:45 p.m. every Monday. You could not see a live soul out on the street, everybody was at home staring at the TV because America was always some big, different, luxury, and frankly in these stories they are portraying the elite of this society where they're just driving Cadillacs and Lincolns. So for most of them when they landed here, they say this is not as fun as Vegas, this is not as busy as New York City, what's up with that?
- This country is still the only country that accepts refugees under terms that are still available for refugees; this is still a great place to be.

- It was hard to start because the other people were learning, and myself and other ones how they were going to deal with it and how were they going to deal with a diverse culture.
- They have a family to support, so it's very hard to work in like entry jobs and you don't know the language.
- Sometimes if you speak their language too, they cannot understand what you have been through all these years, so I think it's very, very hard for every refugee to explain how it is to be a refugee.
- Language is the first step you need to know in every country, and also, if you know many different languages that is best for you, so as never losing time such as watching TV, better to study languages. Because probably you will get the better job if you know just a little bit more than the beginner, and to continue to study later and never to lose the hope.
- Big differences between other countries and the United States because we are allowed to stay in the United States. We are refugees, but I can live in the United States as long as I want.

### Theme Three: Homesickness

- Just three or maybe four families went back home to return for good. I know one that returned back to the States again because they did not find what they were looking for when they went back. They had problems with a lot of emotions, and it disappeared pretty soon because reality is quite different back home than it used to be before the war.
- For me, if I were to go back home now except my parents, I would not know many people.
- I am pretty sure if these refugees could go back most of them might think about it.



- The houses are either destroyed or the property they had is either government repossessed or physically destroyed or the houses do not exist due to war bombs shooting left-to-right, and most people just lost everything.
- We all think about back home and you know, how it used to be, but the point is it's not any more, so people need to start living new lives, and try to make the best because life is not long.
- Another forty years is gonna be another war so I do not want to be there.
- You still think of your own country, so no matter where you are you think of this country, where are you from and you used to live in this country with your neighbors, your city and schools, the professors, teachers, and the town you used to when you go to school.
- Sometimes I use the Internet to get closer to my country or perhaps find some of my friends again.
- Some people want to go back, but you cannot go back because the Serbs don't want you. Some people try to go back and you know try to fix the property, houses burned down, and people go to try and fix, and what you fix during the day overnight is burned down again.
- I'm going to stay, I don't want to go back. Maybe one day just to visit, but to go back to live, I don't know. I haven't...I have my life here.

## Chapter Five

### DISCUSSION

#### Findings

For the co-participants in this study, the lived experience of being a Bosnian refugees who has suffered as a result of genocide emerges as a phenomenon hallmarked by forced exile, adjustment, and homesickness. Bosnian refugees suffered as a result of forced exile from their homeland. Their exile is characterized by the many losses that they endured. Their personal belongings and homes became the property of the Serbian government. Families were torn apart and scattered to various corners of the world. In many instances, questions concerning the location of friends and family remain unanswered and leave refugees wondering if their loved ones are still alive.

Many refugees reported being satisfied with coming to the United States. Over the past five years, refugees immigrated to the United States from Bosnian, Croatia, Germany, Sweden, and other European countries (personal communication, Kent County Health Department, July 15, 1999). Bosnians were forced to leave Western Europe because they were only given temporary exile. Therefore, immigration to the United States provided permanent residency and a place to settle.

Secondly, many Bosnian refugees experienced adjustment problems from the culture shock of coming to the United States. Language barriers were found to be the most detrimental issues encompassing the Bosnian refugee's ability to adjust. The inability to speak or understand the English language adversely affected how this population could find meaningful employment and ultimately support their families financially. Most refugees were unable to find employment similar to the positions they held in Bosnia. Many of the refugees were forced to retool. Only after learning the English language could Bosnian refugees begin the process of acculturation.

The acculturation process proved to be a difficult time for most Bosnian refugees. American culture and behavior shocked many Bosnian refugees. Some of these shocking behaviors included: (1) the lack of community; (2) the dependence on automobiles and technology; and (3) the disrespect that the Bosnian refugees felt the younger United States generation displayed towards their elders. In addition, many Bosnians felt it was impossible for their new American neighbors to truly empathize and understand the experiences of war and genocide. Many of the refugees felt that the atrocities that they faced could not be understood by anyone who did not live the same or similar experience.

Thirdly, many of the Bosnian refugees described experiences of homesickness. Most of them longed for and remembered the past. The older refugees tended to remember the “good times” and the way their lives used to be. Those refugees who had established careers and homes longed for what they had in the past. Many of the Bosnian refugees continue to reminisce of going back home, but knowing all too well it will never be the same as it was.

### Review of Literature

The literature review in phenomenological research is conducted after the data are collected and analyzed. The purpose of the literature review is to compare the findings from the present study with research findings in the literature. A literature review was conducted that related to the themes that emerged from this study.

The review of the research literature revealed that there were no published studies regarding the lived experience of Bosnian refugees who suffered as a result of genocide. However, research studies related to forced exile, adjustment, and homesickness were identified. The following is a presentation of the research reviewed regarding the themes identified in this study as they apply to the experience of the Bosnian refugees.

### Forced Exile

Weine and Laub (1995) assessed twelve Bosnian adolescents about their experiences of the trauma of “ethnic cleansing” during their first year after resettlement

in the United States. The sample was randomly selected through the Project on Genocide, Psychiatry, and Witnessing. The methodology used by the researcher was the testimonial method. These testimonies yielded narrative constructions of the experience of forced exile. Like the current study, Weine and Laub found that forced exile was a reoccurring theme in the lives of Bosnian refugees. The researcher recommended that health care professionals modify the health care delivered to Bosnian refugees in order to provide optimal health care services.

Lavik, Hauff, Skrondal, and Solberg (1996) examined a consecutive sample of 231 refugees with a semi-structured interview guide. The purpose of the research was to characterize the risk for mental disorders in outpatient refugee populations. The researchers analyzed: (1) the relationship between psychiatric symptoms and dysfunction; (2) the sociodemographic background of the refugees; and (3) stressors that were specific to this refugee sample. They concluded that refugees were at risk for mental health disorders due to past traumatic stressors and their current existence in forced exile. Similarly, the current study found that forced exile was a traumatic experience in the Bosnian refugee population.

Weine, Vojvoda, Hartman, and Hyman (1997) presented a case study of a family that survived genocide. This qualitative study described the massive psychic traumas experienced by each family member. The family included four members and was selected to participate in this study based on previous involvement with the Project on Genocide, Psychiatry, and Witnessing. Like the current study, the researchers found that the family studied was driven from their home by Serbian forces. This forced exile eventually led to their resettlement in the United States. This study describes atrocities of war and torture committed against Bosnians and the resulting experience of forced exile. The findings of this study were similar to the finding of the current research study in that the Bosnian refugees in this study also experienced forced exile.

Silove (1999), in a meta-analysis, studied the effects of trauma and forced exile in the Bosnian refugee population. The researcher examined recent research on human rights violations. The researcher found that torture and forced exile challenged the adaptation systems of refugees. Similarly to the current study, the researcher discovered that forced exile was an important experience for the Bosnian refugee.

### Adjustment

Guarnaccia and Lopez (1998) examined mental health and adjustment of immigrant and refugee children. They reviewed the literature for the purpose of highlighting what is known about the mental health of these children. The researchers identified factors that predict distress and resilience in refugee children. They found that refugee children are more vulnerable to the adjustment process. Like the current study, the researcher found that the adjustment process was difficult for Bosnian refugees.

Lovell, Tran, and Nguyen (1987) examined the experience of refugee women from Southeast Asia as they settle into the United States. The study population was a random sample selected from The Women's Project in Seattle, Washington. Thirty-six women participated in this qualitative study, which used interviews to gather data. The researchers found that the attempt to adjust to western norms of nuclear family life and to an equalitarian role added to the stress of adjustment. Similarly, as in the current study, the researchers found that the use of technology and the disrespect that the younger generation in the United States displays towards their elders, added to the stress of adjustment for Bosnian refugees.

Jenkins (1997) utilized a case study method to present a commentary of a family that survived genocide. The family was randomly selected through a local agency in New York City. The purpose of the study was to examine the difficulties of the adjustment process. Like the current study, the adjustment issues that the researcher identified included language barriers, being in an unfamiliar culture, and financial stressors.

Behnia (1997) examined the experience of adjustment that refugees face when resettling to the United States. The researcher used the method of qualitative study. The researcher interviewed eight women who were selected by random sample. She concluded that refugees go through a drastic process of adjustment and resocialization as a result of the experiences of war, torture, and exile. Like the current study, the researcher found that the adjustment process was a time of hardship for refugees.

### Homesickness

Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, and Van Heck (1996) reviewed the literature for the purpose of defining and examining the types, prevalence, and symptomology of homesickness. Overviews of the theories that account for the psychological distress associated with homesickness were presented. The authors found that homesickness has not received adequate attention from psychological researchers. Homesickness is linked with separation-anxiety and loss, the interruption of lifestyle, and role change. Similarly to the current study, the researchers found that homesickness can occur as a result of the experience that the Bosnian refugees lived. These conditions affect the experience of homesickness in the refugee population.

Aroian (1990) assessed the importance of attachment in the development of homesickness. The researcher randomly selected 34 immigrants and refugees. An unstructured interview was used in the study. The researcher found that homesickness is a cause of psychological and physical problems such as in immigrants and refugees. Like the current study, the researcher found that there is a relationship between homesickness and the disruption of life that refugees experience.

Baier and Welch (1992) examined the difference between how children and adults respond to feelings of homesickness. The researcher selected a random sample of 62 (28 children and 32 adults). Unstructured interviews were conducted in the study. The researchers found that children and adults were equally susceptible to homesickness.

Similarly to the current study, the researcher found that the experience of homesickness could be detrimental to the well being of the individual.

## Chapter Six

### CONCLUSIONS

For the co-participants in this study, analysis of the lived experience of these Bosnian refugees who have suffered as a result of genocide resulted in the identification of three themes: forced exile, adjustment, and homesickness. The experience of forced exile caused many people to lose their homes, property, and loved ones. Once safe in a new place, language barriers and culture shock affected a smooth adjustment to their new environment. Remembering and longing for the past, especially remembering the good times, contributed to the experience of being homesick for what they once had. These three themes, when woven together, created the lived experience of Bosnian refugees who reside in a midwestern city in the United States.

#### Implications and Recommendations

As Weine and Laub (1995) stated in their study of Bosnian refugees, health professionals need to attend to the dimensions of the Bosnian's historical realities, which are seldom encountered in health care. Nurses and other health care professionals need to familiarize themselves with the lived experience of Bosnian refugees in order to provide optimal health care for Bosnian refugees. It is through community resources, research studies, and education within the health care setting that health care providers can better understand this patient population group. This can help providers serve these individuals in a holistic manner.

Nurses and other health care providers who are educated about the history of the Bosnian war can gain an appreciation of the experience of forced exile and resettling into another country. Such knowledge provides nurses and other health care professionals insights into the suffering and post-traumatic stress experienced by Bosnian refugees. As recommended by Weine and Laub (1996), health care professionals must attend to the



experience of forced exile. In addition, Silove (1999) found that Bosnian refugees need more traumatic services because of the experience of forced exile.

Nurses and other health care providers must be sensitive to the experience of adjustment. Language presents itself as the major obstacle in this process. It is important to become familiar with English as a Second Language (ESL) programs within the community. Also, utilizing reputable interpretation services for individuals who do not speak adequate English is a necessity. It is valuable for the health provider to determine the specific individual's needs.

As recommended by Guarnaccia and Lopez (1998), health care institutions need to reexamine their health care policies in order to facilitate the adjustment process of Bosnian refugees. This will help the transitions of the adjustment period to go more smoothly. The needs of Bosnian refugees may include providing or arranging interpreter services and transportation. Also, addressing psychological issues, health care, and financial difficulties are imperative. Lovell, Tran, and Nguyen (1987) found that the adjustment process could be facilitated through an understanding of the experiences of refugees.

Nurses and other health professionals should watch for and acknowledge the experience of homesickness in the Bosnian refugee population because it is an experience that is not often identified in the health care setting. The experience of homesickness can affect the refugee's health and mental health. Identification of this experience will facilitate the health care provider in assessing the individual. As recommended by Baier and Welch (1992), health care providers must provide service for refugees that deal with homesickness and create an environment that encourages acceptance of this experience. Actively listening and allowing the individual to speak about the past can validate the experience for the refugee. This will facilitate the process of providing care in a holistic manner.

Nurses and other health professionals should also be alert for signs and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety among Bosnian refugees. Complaints of sleep disturbances, reoccurring nightmares, and panic attacks need to be further investigated and treated through appropriate referrals. Intrusive memories also hallmark many of the mental disorders manifested in the Bosnian refugee. Appropriate referrals are necessary for the optimal management of these disorders.

Nurses and other health professionals must be familiar with the resources available within their community. The issue of the language barrier can be helped through local ESL programs. These programs teach both children and adults the English language and are of no cost to the individual. The local county health departments are also excellent resources for refugees. They provide physical examinations and referrals for interventions. Within the community where this study took place, there are organizations such as Bethany Christian Services and Catholic Office of Human Development. Bethany Christian Services deals primarily with mental disorders and adoption procedures, while Catholic Office of Human Development sponsors individuals and families who are newly resettled in the United States. It is imperative to become knowledgeable about the resources within the community to best serve these individuals and to help the adjustment process.

Nursing subscribes to the philosophy of holistic care. The focus of the present day health care system is primarily on the individual. Though refugees need to be considered as individuals, they must also be looked at within the context of both their families and their communities. Holistic care should extend to the individual, their family, and the community.

Nursing is a human science. Ongoing research is needed to develop more humane and compassionate nursing strategies for caring for the Bosnian refugee population. By examining and understanding the lived experience of the Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide, nurses and other health professionals can provide the

optimal level of holistic health care. Qualitative research methods should be advocated to aid in the understanding of the lived experiences of this population.

### Summary

This study has described and analyzed the lived experience of Bosnia refugees who have suffered as a result of genocide. The reality of the experiences of these individuals is beyond the understanding of those who have not experienced forced exile, adjustment, and homesickness. Nurses and health professionals need to educate themselves about these experiences. Strategies must be developed that will support nurses and health care professionals in their endeavors to provide the best care possible to Bosnian refugees.

## My Voice

This section is offered as a means for the reader to understand how I, as the researcher, chose this phenomenon and how this decision may have affected the outcomes of this study.

I chose this population because of my experience as an undergraduate-nursing student at the Kirkhof School of Nursing. During my final year working towards my Bachelor of Science in Nursing, I did a community nursing rotation at the Kent County Health Department. The opportunity to work with refugees was presented to me and I accepted it gladly, as I have a strong interest in transcultural nursing. I performed my community and my leadership roles within this capacity. I worked not only with Bosnian refugees, but also with Somalian, Vietnamese, and Russian refugees as well.

I specifically chose the Bosnian refugee population for my thesis work because it has been a recent phenomenon. In addition, the fact that there are over four thousand Bosnian refugees within my own community caused me to decide that this was a worthwhile research endeavor.

The interview technique used in this research study could benefit clinicians in eliciting information about their clients in various health care settings. By asking one open-ended question, it is possible to gather personalized data that can in turn enable health care workers to provide individualized care. Further research should be conducted about this phenomenon.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Telephone Script

My name is Gazelle Raven Animalia

I am a registered nurse and a graduate student at Grand Valley State University. I received a message that it was okay to contact you about participating in a research study I am conducting.

The purpose of this study is to look at the lived experience of Bosnian refugees who have suffered as a result of genocide. I hope this study will enable nurses to better understand the needs of Bosnian refugees and assist in meeting those needs.

What I will do:

1. Interview you at a mutually agreeable location.
2. Ask you to sign an informed consent, which is a document stating the risks and benefits of this research as well as assuring your identity will remain confidential.
3. Ask you to describe your experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide.
4. I will tape-record the interview so I can be accurate about what you have said.
5. Your identity will be protected and not revealed in any way.
6. I will call you within two days of the interview. At that time, you may clarify any statements made during the interview.

This is voluntary. Do you have any questions?

Would you be willing to participate?

When is a good time for you?

Directions

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

I understand that this is a study of my life as a Bosnian refugee. The knowledge gained is expected to help nurses to understand and help Bosnian refugees.

I also understand that:

1. Participation in this study will involve in-depth interviews regarding my experiences as a Bosnian refugee.
2. That I have been selected for participation because I am a Bosnian refugee.
3. It is not anticipated that this study will lead to physical or emotional risk to myself or my family and it may be helpful to talk to someone about my experiences as a Bosnian refugee. I understand that help will be made available to me if I need it.
4. A summary of the results will be made available upon my request.

I acknowledge that:

“I have been given an opportunity to ask questions regarding this research study, and that these questions have been answered to my satisfaction.”

“In giving my consent, I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time.”

“I hereby authorize the Gazelle Raven Animalia to release information obtained in the study to scientific literature. I understand that I will not be identified by name.



I have been given the phone numbers of Gazelle Raven Animalia to contact with general questions about the study. I have also been given the name and telephone number of the chairperson of the Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee to contact with questions about my rights as a participant in this study. I may contact them at any time if I have questions.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information, and that I agree to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in receiving a summary of the study results.

Appendix C  
The Human Research Review Committee of  
Grand Valley State University



GRAND VALLEY  
STATE UNIVERSITY

1 CAMPUS DRIVE • ALLENDALE, MICHIGAN 49401-9403 • 616/895-6611

June 22, 1999

Gazelle Raven Animalia  
4103 Jenison Street  
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear Gazelle Raven:

The Human Research Review Committee of Grand Valley State University is charged to examine proposals with respect to protection of human subjects. The Committee has considered your proposal, *The Lived Experience of Bosnian Refugees*, and is satisfied that you have complied with the intent of the regulations published in the Federal Register 46 (16) 8386-8392, January 26, 1981.

However, one of the reviewers, Professor Robert Hendersen, shared the following concerns:


*"The first is that the unstructured nature of the interview does not constrain the interviewer from asking inappropriate questions. It should be clear that the investigators have a responsibility not to take the interview in inappropriate directions.*

*Second, I am puzzled that the transcripts will be shredded. These are the raw data for the analysis, and raw data should be preserved (though with identifications removed), if the analysis is to be published.*

*Third, I assume (hopefully) that when the investigator says "a referral to Bethany Christian services or another appropriate service", that this implies great care will be taken to respect the religious beliefs of the participants.*

If you wish to respond to these concerns, please send me a memo or email.

Sincerely,

  
Paul Huizenga, Chair  
Human Research Review Committee

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## INTERVIEW #1

**Q.** Describe your experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as the result of genocide. Share the thoughts and feelings you can recall until you have no more to say about the experience?

**A.** So, first things first. I came to the states \_\_ years ago, and came here as a student. I went to school for about three years and finished my under-grad program at the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_. While in school I worked for \_\_\_\_\_ here in town as officially an interpreter and coordinator. I added the refugee department or refugee re-settlement department there. Throughout those almost two and a half years we had probably re-settled in just that short period of time probably I would say more than 1500 people. Back in those years most of the refugees were coming from Bosnia because a lot of these regions back home were struck by war, and all these different nationalities back home were fighting each other, so technically after three years of war, everybody was in a war with the other side. As a result of that there were a lot of refugees that were actually threatened while they were living in their home towns to leave because they were not . . . . . unfortunately most of them did not live based on ethnic cleansing maps that were proposed. In other words if you were a Croate or Muslim in Serb/Lav part of the country, there was no place for you to live. Of course the majority of the people that you will find here are Muslim because most of them were expelled from Bosnia due to Serbian aggression and policy of expansion in nationalism. In my case I lived in the capitol of Bosnia, Sarajevo. Grew up there, born there, had great childhood, finished my high school and enrolled in the School of Engineering and withdrew my third semester when the war started actually. It was the Spring of \_\_\_\_\_ when the war officially started \_\_\_\_\_, that was the official day. After the war started I was in a war for about two and a half years and then came here as a student. My experience in the states was really great and still is I would say. For me the states represent a free country and a place where you can pretty much achieve any dream and really find the American dream so to speak. Now my experience may be a little bit different compared to other people here that you had a chance to talk to because I knew English. When I came, I knew what I wanted and did not have a problem communicating with people here

## INTERVIEW #1

in town and any other town in the states. You will find a lot of Bosnians who are skilled people, but do not have English, and as a result of that they cannot really do their job they used to do back home. For example, my professor from the \_\_\_\_\_, he was a soccer coach and he taught like regular physical ed. back home. The last time I spoke to him he works in a packaging assembly line sort of deal, packaging cereal and chips. You will find that a number of people are qualified, but they still cannot practice. . . . . they were lawyers or doctors. It takes a while to pick up the language and then get all of your diplomas officially accepted here. On the other hand you will find a lot of blue collar people that came here, some of them worked jobs or the type of jobs they used to do back home, and there are a number of them that are really successful. There is a number of people that really don't know how to get to a point where they will do the job they used to do back home. In my experience as I said as an interpreter, I have met probably more than 1500 people here in town, and what's really interesting in Grand Rapids you will find that all these people here originate from two or three families that came here in probably I would say late \_\_\_\_\_. These families have really expanded their family tree and brought everybody here, and the simple process was say if I come here with my wife, my wife would start inviting her side of the family if they were refugees somewhere in the world, not only Bosnia, they could be in Germany or Scandinavian countries, Italy, Croatia, who cares, everywhere. They would come here and then I would start inviting my side of the family, so technically 4500 people they all originate from three families, and they are somehow related to each other more at less, or at least you could find a root of their relationship to those initial three families. What is real interesting is the fact that these people do not speak much English, just three or maybe four families went back home to return for good. Of these four that I know of I am only talking of things I know. I know one that returned back to the states again because they did not find what they were looking for when they went back. They had problems with a lot of emotions, and it disappeared pretty soon because reality is quite different back home than it used to be before the war. The demographic picture or structure of most towns back home have changed, different people came to towns and from the country, and people live in



## INTERVIEW #1

cities or went somewhere else, so for me if I were to go back home now except for my parents, I would not know many people.

Back to my story as I said, I graduated here in \_\_ years and have pretty much worked full-time hours. I graduated and then started working full-time here in the computer industry first, now I am in the financial planning industry. And for me I have really say it works out pretty good. The good thing in this country is that people generally speaking do not care if one is of a certain background, as long as you are a hard working person, honest, law abiding citizen. That is for me one great advantage of being in this country compared to most of European societies where the first thing that matters is your origin. For example in Germany one is always an immigrant and can never be even naturalized even if you get those papers, people still do not accept you as an equal member of the society. The process here I would say goes back to the history of this country is really simple because this is a country of foreigners, and any of us have had somebody in the family that came from Europe or I don't know, any part of this world at some point or time. So from that perspective I would say this is really a great country. People are not really oppressed by any nationalistic or racist feelings that they don't feel here as a part of this community. Now again for people that are refugees that do not speak English, it is quite a different world because . . . . . imagine yourself in Beijing, China or in Japan where you cannot read anything, no numbers, those are just symbols, you don't know what's going on around you, that's exactly the way most of these people feel. They can't read the papers. On TV they can watch the news but they can pick up from pictures here and there, because the vast majority of them simply do not have time to learn English. Some of them have made really great progress. I know a person who was an instructor of Russian back home, and when he came here he started learning English because he said English is nothing else than another language and I can pick it up, and it will be just another language for me to get to know, and now he is doing really good. There is again I would say a minority of people that have managed to get their language to the level where they can communicate at a job which is

## INTERVIEW #1

really important. In my case I would say I was lucky that I had a chance to live with Americans from day one when I came here, and assimilated to a culture and this micro-culture of West Michigan, whereas most of these people that you will see here, they still have their old life that's just relocated by a thousand miles away from home, and for a lot of them it is a cultural shock the way Americans live, the way Americans behave. For most of them it's really strange and they sometimes don't fit in that picture, they don't know what's going on; why Americans say something or do something, it's different from what we're used to back home, and for a lot of them it's a problem. They don't know how to react to this world, so a lot of them get in a lot of trouble just because of a misunderstanding with what somebody said. Back home we're more personal in a way, people are more touchy, people need more human-to-human interaction, whereas here American culture is focused on an individual. We are a family, community, neighborhood oriented society, where for people, money and a job is important but what's after that job is more important. Hanging out with friends, relatives, children, that's what they value the most. That's what most of them are missing here because they work a lot and don't have time to satisfy their social needs. For most of them especially the elderly, they miss that part because the elderly come here and they're lonely. If they have grandchildren the kids go to school in the morning, their children work long hours, most of these old people are just desperate here. They don't like it. They cannot drive, it means here, sit at home all day. Winter is long, Summers. . . . . we're all busy and most of the elderly don't like it here. Also what I found with the refugees, no matter where they come from depending on the gender what I found is that the female are more likely to be under stress and slight kind of a . . . . . I wouldn't say mental problem, but they cope much harder with new environment and big change than men. Men tend to handle the situation, go to work and don't cry about it. That's what I found really, and I was amazed really. If you see a family and there is a mother, she is going to be crying old country and how it was back home. It takes a longer period of time to assimilate to a new world and new way of life, and it is really. This country is unique, it's totally different. When you go to Canada, you'll see a different world, as

## INTERVIEW #1

this country. . . . . I mean Canada looks more like back home, the way people live, its a little bit slower. This country is a big shock to most of the people that have never been so far away from their country, and most of them have even went to a different foreign country back home. So this is you know sort of a snap shot for you and I. If you have any questions or something you know you might. . . . . because I mean I can go on and on you know. but if you have something that would be more kind of helpful or focused down for you.

You will find that most of these people shop in the same shops whether it be groceries or anything else. There is a couple of Mediterranean food places in town where you can go and buy some of the products that are imported from back home. Just a slight minority of them have seen other cities. Chicago is one of the popular destinations and Detroit sometimes, but the vast majority of them have not been up north or went down to Florida, or elsewhere. So for them when they tell me this is not America because why. . . . why because we back home have a perception America was strongly built through movies primarily and music. Back home we would always see you know Dynasty for example or one of these old soap operas \_\_\_\_\_, it was really popular back home. I still remember it was Monday night 8:00 p.m. through 8:45 p.m. every Monday. You could not see a live soul out on the street, everybody was at home staring at the TV because America was always some big, different, luxury, and frankly in these stories they are portraying the elite of this society where they're just driving Cadillac's and Lincolns. So for most of them when they landed in Grand Rapids, they say this is not as fun as Vegas, this is not as busy as New York City, what's up with that. I had the same impression when I first came to the states. The first thing I had a problem with was no pedestrians. You cannot find anybody walking. Back home that's the way people live, not that we didn't have cars, but that was the lifestyle. You walked where ever you go, everything was close and then you meet people as you go left and right. Here I was. . . . I bought a car just after I came to the states, and I would drive around, and I would be like, there must be a stretch where people walk around, and back then Grand Rapids downtown was really still dead, there was no arena, no

## INTERVIEW #1

bars or stuff like that. I would drive around, drive around and nobody. So in my head was there must be a big crime rate here, people are scared to go out, or people don't live here the way we do or did back home, and that's what . . . . . you know a lot of people go outside here in any of these apartment complexes where Bosnians live, you will find them walking around, talking to you know, relatives and people they know or may not know. For Americans it may sound or look strange you know, but that's the way we used to do back home. For me it took me a while to figure out how come I walk down the street and there is nobody there, where are these people, where do they live, where do they go in the car. Where ever you go you go in a car, you go to the bank, you can drop off your stuff at the cleaners from a car, you can get food at a drive through, everything's on the wheels. They can get married in Vegas in a drive through if you want to. Back home it was not such a life, and especially as I said, the elderly have trouble understanding that, why and how it works. So it's not easy. For Americans that go back to Europe (fortunately none of you guys have to live there), you go there either for business or tourist, so you always have a place to go back. So for most Americans its fun to go there, but you like to come back to your ordinary life here. I'm pretty sure if these refugees could go back most of them might think about it. But as I said earlier, the majority of them have established their residency here, purchased houses and lived here - sort of an American life, and really they don't have to go back. The houses are either destroyed or the property they had is either government repossessed or physically destroyed or the houses do not exist due to war with bombs shooting left-to-right, and most people just lost everything. So as I said, a number of people are really happy here. Would they be happier elsewhere, I don't know. Probably all of them would have been much happier had the war never started so we all stayed back home, that would have probably been the perfect set up, but having in mind that this country is still the only country that accepts refugees under terms that are still available for refugees, this is still a great place to be. German government or Scandinavian countries would say okay we'll accept you for a year or two or three, but you

## INTERVIEW #1

cannot remain here forever, and for little kids it must be or maybe easier, but if you're an adult forty years old and you started something, it's tough to start from zero up, and that's what happened to a lot of these people that recently came to the states. They came to Germany and stayed there for approximately a year or two or three. After that they didn't know what's going to happen to them, because out there you get just a little note from the local police station or immigration office that you have to leave the following day. If you don't show up at a bus station, they will make sure you know, they'll escort you the day after that, or they'll give you a week or two week notice. Since its not a nice life when you're a refugee somewhere where you don't know what's going to happen to you the morning after, or even still live where you are, or if somebody is going to come and kick you out of the country, send you somewhere, and you don't have a place to go. Most of my family (I'm the only one in the states), but the rest of my relatives are scattered from as far as Australia on the west side to Israel on the east side. Its really bizarre but after the cease fire and peace \_\_\_\_\_ I would say was the end of \_\_\_\_\_. the big countries sat together and decided to draw the borders, and how they were going to divide these you know, Bosnia the country based on ethnic majorities. So they have actually drawn out a bunch of enclaves where you would have Croatian or Bosnian or Serbian majority. As a result of that for example, my aunt's apartment has been cut in half. The border is going through her kitchen. She does not have a place to stay there because. . . . . and she will need to walk with a passport all day long, so she left for Australia. She did not have a place to go. She could not stay in her own apartment and live where she used to live just because things have changed. For a great number of people it has been really unfortunate that a lot of people have lost everything they had. A lot of people have lost relatives, friends. A lot of people were killed. . . . . I don't know in the capitol of Bosnia, Sarajevo roughly 20,000 people where killed, 3,000 of them were kids of any age you know, babies up to the age of four years of age. So pretty much in this war, everybody has lost somebody in either immediate or not as immediate family, but there isn't a single family that you can talk to

## INTERVIEW #1

around here that does not have a tragedy in their family, and it's . . . . .that's a big pity because it's tough to lose somebody just you know because. . . . . we all lived together before the war started, people started shooting each other just like south and north here a couple hundred years ago, so a lot of people have a bitter experience about that war including myself. So you know, in my case I say I am happy here because there are a lot of opportunities here, this is a big country, I enjoy every moment being here, and I hope that the rest of my you know people from my country could approach their living here from that perspective. To take the best what you can get out of every day. Yeah, we all think about back home and you know, how it used to be, but the point is its not any more, so people need to start living new lives, and try to make the best because life is not long. Then again I say to these people that came here are really fortunate, but there is a great number of people that would like to come to this country one way or another that cannot come. So, that's why I say I feel really grateful about the fact that I'm here and I can remain here as long as I want. Because I know a lot of my friends back home don't have jobs, do not go to school, live here and there, from today until tomorrow, no long term plans, no security, and no idea what's going to be two days down the road. Are they gonna have enough food, are they gonna have a job, what're they gonna do with their lives. So for a great number of people that have come here, I would say they should understand what they have because its really a great place.

## INTERVIEW #2

**Q.** Describe your experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as the result of genocide. Share the thoughts and feelings you can recall until you have no more to say about the experience?

**A.** Okay, do we start already? Okay, my experience as a refugee you can start with almost how long (we can say that?). \_\_ or \_\_ years ago from the first start of the war back in Bosnia. . . . . I'm just thinking, I'm trying to get it started in my head. Oh, you already started -- you see, that's not fair. Okay, from the first. From the start of the war in Bosnia it happened that I was in one of the concentration camps, and a lot of people after that said -- some are sick, some are not in the mind, but usually the refugee does not have time to think all those illnesses or other things because they have to look for their lives forward, so they have to move somewhere. After I went out of the concentration camp where I spent twelve months in the \_\_\_\_\_ zone in my home town, then I moved into Croatia where I was thinking I was going to be free, but at that time Croatia was starting fighting the Bosnians so actually I spent another five months hiding in Croatia until I get ahold of this paper to move in whatever would be a safe place. So usually the refugee life is just trying to find some safe place where you are allowed to stay and build up a life from again, from just zero. So for I came here to find a sponsor, they people were helping me and trying to find a job, see my first \_\_\_\_\_ from a dictionary, so all that is fun, but its really hard for you coming in for some others to a country that do not have English or do not speak some other language. It does not matter if you go to Germany or some other \_\_\_\_\_.

Most of where if you were talking about the trauma of the concentration camps, they are usually coming up to a year or two years after you find a job, find an apartment, buy a car and all that, and you life starts being relaxed. When you start relaxing, you know then is when the memories are coming back, and be giving you some problems. It all depends -- it all depends on the people if somebody is strong enough to dealing with that they can deal, if not, they are probably looking for some medical help.

## INTERVIEW #2

So as my experience as a refugee is because I was one of the first families who came into this town, and it was a hard start because the other people were learning, and myself and other ones how they were going to deal with it and how were they going to deal with a diverse culture. I know that sort of was. . . . . after they started coming and our families were trying to help them out to find a job or at least so they would not make the same mistakes where I had done. A lot of times I seeing that some sponsors in that they playing with some refugee for their coming and I would warn them for they are not doing that, playing with them as a toy or they're coming to live there, they're finding out because I called the TV so everybody is talking about this. They start sharing the stories with them but they have to learn so fast from American life or something like that where they are not ready yet or something, and sometimes you can feel just some toys or just like some kids -- "oh, that's my toy," or be jealous of somebody else is going to help them, or that . . . . . So the best way for all those sponsors is if they have a contact with those people just to talk to them as human beings and that they don't know how to speak English. . . . . because then you can have more than they even can imagine because the people just start thinking, okay I was in my country and then started a war, and I become a refugee or whatever, all those traumas, all that stupid stuff in the war, and then come to another country, and they are not dependents and all they really need is some help, but stop playing with their lives. They didn't even realize they were playing with their lives, but that is hurting them a lot.

About the bad stuff in the war I usually doesn't talk about that so, because that's not fun at all, and some people talk about they're trying to put it somebody's guilty or that the Serb's are guilty or the Croatians, and the Muslims and that. In my opinion the whole politics is guilty and it just politicians playing these people, and just making it something. . . . . Its unbelievable because some people are doing some stuff, but I guess its a life, so we just . . . . . the small \_\_\_\_\_ moving slow, so we wasn't in a . . . . . I don't know how I can say, just the small mind of the people or knowledge was just so low for the people to do this stuff like that, but that's really what actually happened. Now right now that's happening in Kosovo because attacking some refugee who was coming from Kosovo it happening, the same stuff, and we can say



## INTERVIEW #2

that these people doing that or that people doing that, but that's just the same for all the war that happening right now, and I'm glad that that's kind of stopping, just kind of, I hope so.

I will try and explain a little bit more about my view or vision of how the war started in Bosnia before it was Yugoslavia become ex-Yugoslavia . So the Slovenia was the actually the first country that was actually looking for a separation and the war just effected all the towns. We started moving towards Croatia into Bosnia which happened with a lot of tanks and all this stuff to come more into Bosnia like a big \_\_\_\_\_. So Slovenia is actually getting really easily out of Yugoslavia. Then the second part comes when they started fighting between Serbia and Croatia, because although some concern, \_\_\_\_\_ base, they want to move them out, they did not let them, they wanted to keep all those guns so they would start fighting and actually the Serbs and Croatians went into war. Meantime the Bosnians. . . . . we were just looking like "humph, we're happy the war is somewhere close, but it is still not into Bosnia. Because the Croatians and the Serb's start losing a lot of stuff, so the easiest way for the both sides getting away from a war and getting all those interests of what they want, there was a deal for a move of all those wars into Bosnia. So in Bosnia they starting setting up and made the Serb side they are keeping helping the Serb side, the Muslim immigration, they helping the Croatians. They start making small armies and all that so they started some small fighting, but because Bosnia was already full with the guns and all that, and the Serbs was having control on those guns, and the other two sides they was having no guns at all, so they all started fighting the zones because even for \_\_\_\_\_, they don't want the Bosnia to exist, and Croatia doesn't want Bosnia to exist, and also they started keeping more and more land, and Serbia was . . . . . Serbia was strong so they were just pushing us. That's how that happened, so I went into a concentration camp because there for one day they take the whole town and all this so, we went all into the concentration camp and then they started killing. They killed around 20,000 people for two months in those camps which was seen on the TV a lot here. We were kept waiting two and a half months for somebody to publish that, so. . . . .

## INTERVIEW #2

Well what else can I say. . . . . well then, because in the war we were still at that time in a good relationship with Croatia. They would send some guns to the Bosnian army trying to make them grow on up, and that Croatia was the only exit to go out to be free. But after some time they does not like that the Serbians, so they went and closed up the whole thing, so all the people in Bosnia was surrounded like the enemy. Then started the fighting. My way was just to go into Croatia at that time, but there was thought to be enemy to the Bosnians. The Bosnians started growing as the armies started growing and growing, which wasn't good for all the rest, I don't know. . . . . To the Bosnians its all the country, its all even the Croatians and Serbs because it is 13 some hundred years old, and they just don't want the Bosnians to exist because its the only place, its in the middle of Yugoslavia that a lot of different stuff, but they were really interesting for. And the people in Bosnia are really different from the people in Croatia and Serbia. So that's the story.

I don't know, we can talk for hours and hours about how things wasn't right, and it was not right. The only one pursuit I know that for people in Bosnia the it was not just a little war, nobody was fighting because it just clear politics and also even today they're gonna say it was a religion war, but that never happened. There was killings, the senseless killing of a lot of Muslims or whatever, and you can relate that to the religion. Some peoples in small groups was doing that as a religion thing or something like that, but basically its just the playing games of the big politics because Yugoslavia getting to be ex and then getting to separate, so who's going to get the more power in some certain area to be more powerful and all this stuff, so those are the most things that are happening right now. Right now I'm not happy with what's happening in Bosnia, because they still keeping some part of the - how they can say, the federation where as its part of the Serbian continent or however they can call it, or Croatian part of Bosnia and Bosnian Bosnia so that perhaps my home town is still in the part where the Serbs still controlling it, and I just don't like that because I cannot go back to my home, so that is not to answer,

## INTERVIEW #2

so maybe its going to be answered after five years, but not for now.

What else I can say. . . . . as a message. As a refugee I am happy, for I came into America because its only free country where . . . . . okay, whatever, have a nice democracy. You can be free to say what I think, what I want or whatever, what I'm gonna be, nobody can bother you for that, or say hey, you know, you have a different opinion or something like that. And I always think I hope there is never gonna be war here, and I want my s on growing up not seeing the war, which does not happen in Bosnia, before the years are coming another war, another forty years is gonna be another war so I do not want that he be there.

Another incident in the war how it got started because its an old country with old problems, that all Europe like that, so its really old problems and they try to take care of them, and they never gonna be happen to be take care of that.

### INTERVIEW #3

**Q.** Describe your experiences as a Bosnia refugee who has suffered as a result of genocide. Use your own assumptions, feelings you can recall until you have no more to say about the experience.

**A.** My life as a refugee begin in \_\_\_\_\_. At the end of \_\_\_\_\_ beginning of \_\_\_\_\_ I went to Germany on my vacation as a student, and during my vacation I called my friend to check for me at the University when can I come back or when school started again, and my friend tells me to never come back because the Croats, Muslims and the city where there are students were not together, and the Croats would not let them go to the city. I was thinking should I go back or what I should do, of my family, my parents. The war started first in Slovenia, and so I was in Germany and my parents would let me go through because I have to go through if I want to go to Bosnia and back. They were very worried. So I decided to stay in Germany a little longer because it was too dangerous to go to Bosnia, and it went worse in Bosnia. The war started in Croatia next. I thought "oh no, I can't go through this." I wanted to go, I really wanted to go. I was crying as I was looking for my passport to go back home, but my parents put it away so that I could not find it to go to Bosnia so I had to stay. As a student, I had student visa so I found work in Germany, and I started to work like teller in some post office. I worked days and in the evening I went to the school because I did not know the German language. Through this time I always hoped that I could go back to Bosnia, and Bosnia will not happen, and I never think that I am a refugee that I will be there for a long time. I worked and did not think of school, so I had problems because the German government did not give us permission to stay through this war but three months. So we had permission to stay for three months. After those three months, it was continued another three months again. So you could not do anything with your life, you could not start school because you don't know will you finish the school, what can you do for three months. So I wanted to go back to Bosnia and I was thinking should I do that. I continued to work and I didn't look for better work or nothing because I was just thinking of my studies and going back to Bosnia. That was all seven years, so I spent seven years - and I used to work different

### INTERVIEW #3

kind of job, so every kind of job I was not happy and I could not be happy because the time was gone, every year you lost, and every year was the same. You don't have any hope that you can do something in Germany because you don't have permission to stay there, and you cannot go back to Bosnia either. Bosnia began to have the hardest time since \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. So many families who have family there, parents, sisters, brothers, it was very hard, because the people suffer there with no food and no medication. The hardest part was for us to live without this. We had food and we had medication and everything, but we could afford because we found no jobs. It was not good job, it was not what we used to study. We used to think that we may have lots of work, but we had something and they didn't have nothing, so and their lives were in danger every day. You used to think will you hear from them next day or what would you hear or would they live the next day. It was hard, it was very, very hard and very sad. So when were sitting at the table we couldn't eat because we were thinking of them and that they don't have nothing for eating. We were thinking of the children and our families, and not just our family but all children, how are they supposed to live in this situation, and for young people who didn't not think that the war started, but they have to suffer due to the war. We didn't know how to help them, if you find a way to help them it was very expensive, so we had to pay like monthly. What you got per month you had to pay for them to get this package that you send them some of medication that you can get, because in Germany you cannot buy medication. You have to go to doctor and that was hard to find.

We lost many friends and many families because many of those went to different countries, to Sweden, to the United States, Italy, so sometimes we try to find our friends and find our family, but we couldn't find them because nobody knows where they are. It was very hard to think of them. You didn't know are they dead, or they living somewhere. The connection was very broken and its really hard to think of those people and to live with that you don't know. If you know they are dead you are like. . . . . you feel quiet and you know what

### INTERVIEW #3

happened to them, but if you don't know where they are, or are they living, its hard to think of them every day. Its like if you lost something and you trying to help again and again, and you cannot find. After many years the life continues, and you had to either go to work and you think of Bosnia and Bosnian people every day, and you try to help them, but you have your family so the life for your family is hard to work. First to work to have a job you don't like and you are not supposed to work this job, you didn't study for this job, but you are working because you cannot get your job. You lost your country. For older people it was harder because they lost like their life. They lost everything that they lived for. So for the doctors, I met many doctors and professors, engineers. Its hard for the people who were all like fifty or forty, and they come to a new country and they don't have nothing, they have to start from the beginning. They have a family to support, so its very hard to work in like entry jobs and you don't know the language. The worse time is because nobody was prepared to be a refugee so nobody didn't ever think that we had to leave our country not in this situation for trouble. For travel yes it was nice, but not to live forever and why. Every night, every day when you are finished or when you have like a small break to think why did this happen, why to me. So for some kind of people the war was great because they used to live their lives difficult, and when the war began they start like \_\_\_\_\_ and they became rich through the war, so they sold like derringers and they became rich, so their lives went for them to be better than it was, but I think for many other it was worse than it ever was. There was this problem for many our families the language like I said, because if you are refugee you live in other country, and its kind of like the other people cannot understand you. Sometimes if you speak their language too, they cannot understand what have you been through all these years, so I think its very, very hard for ever refugee to explain how it is to be a refugee. Because you used to have a a great life, you used to have everything in your life, your life was organized and you planned where you go and what you want to be; the next day you woke up and you don't have nothing. I would say for all people in every country it is the best way to study

### INTERVIEW #3

languages, because no matter where you go and when you go, you don't know never what will it be, so that you know the language because the language is the first step you need to know in every country, and also if you know many different languages that is best for you, so as never losing time such as watching TV. better to study languages. Because probably you will get the better job if you know just a little bit more than the beginner, and to continue to study later and never to lost the hope. However, the life changes in some times may be worse and sometimes may be getting better, but you still think of your own country, so no matter where are you, you think of this country, where are you from and you used to live in this country with your neighbors, your city and schools, the professors, teachers, and the town you used to when you go to school. You have many people from Bosnia you meet, but they are from other city and you don't know them and they don't know you. so every time you have like to introduce yourself again, what are you, where are you, what did you used to do. If you lived in the old city you are never used to these things. you never used to introduce yourself. Just if you say your father's name or your mother's sometimes your grandma's or your grandpa's name, the people already knew your family, so they knew you if you weren't like great people, \_\_\_\_\_ people all the time, and that you used to do and who are you. They knew it when they saw you, you didn't need to introduce again and again, but now you have . . . . . its a great opportunity to meet somebody from your country for you to meet again. Sometimes I use the Internet to get closer to my country or perhaps find some of my friends again. When you get, you know from them our life is different because it take about seven, eight to ten years. So you used to think of all the old time, how was it and what we went through and how we live now. We used to forgot the worst things that happen to us and to find a new way in our life to make it better, but everybody of us think of Bosnia again sometimes and get back.

## INTERVIEW #4

**Q.** Describe your experience as a Bosnian refugee who has suffered as the result of genocide. Share all the thoughts and feelings you can recall until you have no more to say about the experience.

**A.** Okay, I don't know how to start. . . . . I will start with the war it started in \_\_\_\_\_, and we don't know reason why the Serbs doing that to us. Actually nobody knows the reason why we suffer all that, but . . . . . especially in my town, the Serbs take over the town on \_\_\_\_\_. It start with mass ethnic cleansing with the concentration camp. Right now I have information that like at least 6,000 people are missing from concentration camps. We cannot say that those people are dead because we don't know. Nobody see it. a lot of people survived those camps, but nobody see at the dead, that's just a . . . . . you know at night somebody comes in a big howl and calls a couple of names, people go out and never come back. My experience is I tried to leave the town for four years. spent all my money trying to go out because you need to pay for everything. If you want to visit a doctor you're gonna pay the good money just because you're Bosnian. You're not a Serb you're Bosnian, and even if you pay you do not have special treatment just because you are a Bosnian. After four years we leave the town abruptly. After midnight we have big semi trucks going through town, and since the police pick up the people, no things, no personal things, no any paper I.D. or nothing, just put them in a semi-truck. You can imagine 300 people in a semi-trailer, and just drive us down the road about 60 miles to the Bosnian territory and just get out in the middle of the night about 3:00 in the morning. We past the wooden creek and go across the river in October, and we go in to Bosnian territory.

I try to tell you experience of four years living like a Bosnian in a Serb town. First, you don't have any rights just because you are Bosnian, nothing else. You can finish in a concentration camp, you can finish like dead meat on the streets. Everybody can kill you like a smoke on a cigarette. Life is cheap in that time. If you want, somebody. . . . . I personally have a three bedroom apartment basically



## INTERVIEW #4

in the downtown, somebody just came over night and just kick you out and take your keys, take your furniture and everything. You lost everything just over night. If you try to call the police or try to look for somebody to help, you can just get beaten because you are Bosnian. People you know until yesterday turn over night, and the people that now don't know you on the street. If you try to ask for help or try to ask the former friend something, he just turn head around because you are Bosnian and he is Serb, and he doesn't want to talk to you anymore. You lost your job because you're Bosnian and not allowed to work anymore in the factories. Actually the factories do not work because it is war time, and some of them is work, but Bosnians are not allowed to work. You don't have any rights, you don't have any insurance. Basically you don't have nothing. A lot of people don't have nothing to eat because no money, no nothing, and if you have some money then have nothing to buy because nobody is going to sell you nothing. Its a horrible experience. Personally I know, I looked at the people that go away. Like a couple of my neighbors I watch one day in the middle of the day the Serb police come with a pick up truck and just put them in the back and those guys never came back, and still don't have no signs of them for five years. After maybe two years the Serbs come up with idea that they can use Bosnians like free labor force and just like I told you before a concentration camp. Just pick up the people from the street, put them in a railroad wagon, and just bring you down to the first front line, and when you were not digging dirt just making rows and, just basically cheap help, actually not cheap its free yet. They are going to keep you out in the middle of nowhere for three months. Nobody no where are you or when you're gonna come back. Actually everything bad you can call bad, bad is good what happened to us in those four years. One time we have in our town the Serbs lost four soldiers on the front, and we have terrible experience after thirty-two Bosnians were killed over night just because the Serbs lost four people. Nobody never try to put any investigation or nothing because everybody know who do it, but nobody cannot tell it. You see somebody today on the street and tomorrow you just heard that he is dead, he is

## INTERVIEW #4

choked to death or somebody cut his throat or whatever, blow his head away or just . . . . . on reason. After some time some people from outside from the country next to us from Croatia have a lot of Bosnians that try to ask for help from Croatians and stay in refugee camps in Croatia, and try to put like some food through the Serb lines to the Bosnian people or some money, and if you got some money, if some body of the Serbs heard it, you wouldn't have that money over night because somebody come to your door and ask for money. If you don't give that money, we're gonna beat you up, and in the end you're gonna give up the money if you got it. Maybe just gonna kill you or leave you like that. For sure you're gonna be beaten up. I have experience with the Serb military police pick me up in \_\_\_\_\_ from the street. I had tennis shoes on me and a T-shirt. I ended up 45 miles from my town in the mountains. I stay about four and a half months just working like a free labor, bringing the boots to the Serb soldiers, delivery the food to the Serb soldiers, or whatever they needed you to do; free labor. I stayed for I tell you four and a half months. My parents try to put me through some things and I get some things. I kind of get the boots and some kind of jacket, but it is really hard to stay in the mountains about four and a half months if you have the snow almost six or seven foot high and you sleep outside; you don't have nothing, you don't have roof above your head, you just sleep outside. I come back after four and a half months in my town and spent like five to six days in the home. The Serbs tried to reach me again, and after that I tried to hide. I spent the night in different places and just go around and around for the next thirteen to fourteen months, and after that I finally left the town.

Our town in Bosnian is basically a town that have about 44,000 people like downtown, but right now if you look in the United States at the type of county, the county have like 144,000 people. Basically the . . . . . on the west side of the town is the villages, its country that the Bosnians village is about thirteen to fourteen villages, in that villages used to live about like 25 to 30,000 people. Those villages are burned down

## INTERVIEW #4

to the ground for three nights. All the men between, I don't know six months old to eighty years old is killed, just brutally killed because they are men. They cannot go into the Bosnian army, that's an excuse. Some of them are still alive, some of them try to go through the lines, but those people don't have nothing right now. Nobody don't have nothing but . . . . . those places are big farms, those villages are just basically the farm work, but everything is burnt to the ground. Somebody built something for forty years you know, and somebody just come over night and pour a little bit of gas on it and just burn it down to the ground, and take the people away. So basically ethnic cleansing when you have to move 30,000 people from one place to another just because somebody don't like you, and you have difference opinion about. . . . . The problem is Bosnia is that we have an ex-country that is called, actually that is called Yugoslavia before, and its a state from six small countries, but three countries in one town just . . . . . because we have forty years of communism and pressure from Russia, and after forty years the people don't want to live in the communism anymore. The Slovenian and Croatians go out first and Bosnia after that. We have people go out and vote and vote out the democracy, and we have a president, and we have democracy in our country, but the Serbs don't like that because Serbia and the ex-government. . . . . I don't know, ex-Yugoslavia or Belgrade, all the money from the industries, all the money from tourism from everything goes down to Belgrade. The Serbs always have control over everything, over the army, over all the industry and stuff. Bosnia it is really, really big potential of wood industry, of steel/iron industry, and that's a problem because the Serbs don't want to go out from Serbia, because they're gonna lose everything, and they're gonna lose industry and everything, and that's basically what the war started. Some people in some countries tried to present the war between the Serbs and Muslims in like a religion war. Its not a religion war because Bosnia is not just Muslims, Bosnia its Croatian, its Catholic Croatians. We have a lot of Serbs that still live in Bosnia, and that people fight the Serbs, and we have the Serbs in the Bosnian army because people want freedom from communism, maybe not a lot of Serbs, but still we have some

## INTERVIEW #4

percent that want a different life, and that is basically a reason it is not a religion war, it is not a Muslim war against the orthodox, its just that war for freedom after forty years of communism. We want to change something. . . . . Our country started to grow, but the Serbs don't allow that. After five years of war we actually go out like we got the victory, be we still don't have our country. Bosnia have control of maybe 57% of the country right now, the rest the Serbs still control. My town the Serbs still control. I don't know, I had really bad experience and I personally don't loss nobody close from my family, but that doesn't matter if you loss a first neighbor, it seems like you lost somebody in your family. Before war for my class I have like seventeen guys that I used to know from my school class, now I know that five of us are alive. Twelve of them is dead or I don't know where. Personally when the war started I was kind of young and I suffer same thing, but you know, basically I don't loss nothing. The country and I lost part of my life down there, but why you think about people who live down there forty or fifty years and now need to go around the world to make a new life and . . . . . I personally am feeling really good right now. I live in Michigan in the United States, I have a job, I have a place to stay. Actually I have everything I need, and I had that before in Bosnia, but right now I don't have because me and my friends lost everything just because we are different people in different town, and different time.

I can give you the lot of examples of brutality of Serbs and . . . . . The Serbs used to have the concentration camps they called the \_\_\_\_\_. Through that camp it go through like 6,000 people at a time for ninety-nine days. A lot of them never come out, a lot of them are still alive around the world. People telling you that the terrible things what happened in that camp, you have that, that the people stay outside for about ninety days or three months, stay outside, and then have one meal a day, and so its actually not a meal, its a potato, plain water and a piece of seven or ten days old bread that somebody don't want and you eat it. People constantly is beaten up. If you ask to go in the bathroom, you're going to be beaten up. If you try to ask anything. . . . . You need to ask to move. If you sit down, if you want to stand up you need to ask. You're

## INTERVIEW #4

gonna be beaten up and after that they're gonna tell you that you need to stay up because you asked before that. And all those things, they do it to you . . . . the people that you know until yesterday, the people who overnight turn into animals because you cannot realize that maybe we look that different than somebody that you once know, but its not really a big town. You're actually from down town . . . . . each neighborhood know everybody from house-to-house, and you live with that people before, you're working with that people before, and now overnight we just wake up one morning and see that everybody have the camouflage uniforms or that everybody have guns, and the Serbs is all over town. Personally my dad go out the first day of the Serb occupation and try to ask first neighbor because we have an apartment or big building. We have the camouflage, neighbor in the front of the building and try to ask what's wrong, and he just turned his head from my dad. We live twelve years in this building, and twelve years with that neighbor, and he never says a word, he just walk away. That's a terrible thing. My dad tried to go into his company, he worked for one company for about thirty-seven years. He tried to go in, but just to take personal things, and he is not allowed to go in because you don't have things inside that are yours. You are third class. If you want to go from one side to the other, you need to wear a white ribbon around your arm like the Jews in the World War-II. You wear the white ribbon on your shoulder and around your arm so that everybody know you are Bosnian. If you want to go from the town from one side to another side to visit the family or ride a bicycle, you need to go into the police and ask for special permission in writing that you can walk in the town, that you can go buy something, and stuff like that. People die from really small things. You have the people die from the flu because some of them try to go to ask for help in the hospital or Med-Center, and don't get the help. Some of them are really scared to go out and try to ask for help. Just the basic flu. I don't want to talk to you about the hard diseases or stuff like that that people don't have medication, people have nothing. My dad had a stroke, a light stroke in the war in the town, and he never go to see the doctor because he is scared to death to go, and a lot of different things. You know everybody have a car, you need to move around, and if you had a good car before the war, just basically somebody come in and

## INTERVIEW #4

just ask you for keys and take your car that it, you're never gonna see it again. All your property you got if nobody takes it, its a part of the Serb Republic how those guys call it.

When we left that night (I forgot to tell you that). That night when we left, those guys don't give us the time to pick up the personal things, but when load us in the trucks we need to sign paper and put the name in the front of paper, and then sign down all your stuff, everything that you own you're leaving to the Serb Republic. All the personal things, all the property, whatever you got, business, house, land, anything, its now the possession of the Serb Republic. We used to have people try to go and escape before, and somebody leave and leave the house, and the police just come in and move somebody in, and says that's you're house now and sign them a paper. You know that the township office have like a paper from one hundred years ago back about ownership and everything, and you have land in your name, and those guys try to clear out . . . . . all those papers were cleared out, its all computers and put different names in. Now its started a process that you can apply, and the Serb Republic will bring your things back. A lot of people don't believe or are still scared to even try and put a letter through the mail to ask about things. A lot of people are happy right now where it is. You have Bosnians all over the place, all over, world wide from Germany to Australia, the Middle East, and I don't know. . . . . the United States. The whole United States have like 180,000 Bosnians right now. Big difference between other countries and the United States because we are allowed to stay in the United States. We are refugees but I can live in the United States as long as I want. Other countries just give you the five or six year visa that you can stay, and you need to move out whenever you want to go, but you cannot stay, and you cannot go back. Some people want to go back, but you cannot go back because the Serbs don't want you. Some people try to go back and you know try to fix the property, houses burned down, and people go to try and fix, and what you fix during the day overnight is burned down again. Its different story. We have

## INTERVIEW #4

the whole world watch all that for four years, we go to help. Bosnia got the help that it needed during that period, but some things its too late. Right now you have people missing, you have a family in Michigan that the mother with three kids live over here and don't know anything about the husband, the kids don't know anything about dad because he is a Bosnian and somebody took him away and he never come back home, just because he is Bosnian. Its a terrible experience, terrible experience. Really hard. I still wake up at night and sometimes just sit down and think about things. I don't want to think about it, I don't want to talk about it. Some people talk about that, some people don't want to, especially the people who survived the concentration camps, and stuff they don't want to talk about that. You got the people that right now after five years of concentration camp go nuts because they have different mental disease or people just suffer from the injuries, loss of a kidney or whatever. because you were beaten up. Actually you live in that town and you need to know rules how you're going to do it, everything. If you don't follow the Serb rules, you're gonna die. Its a really primitive system in that time, and that's what Serbia wants. And what's hurting bad right now is to have a . . . . . I personally live in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and right now in Grand Rapids you have four or five Serbs from my town that live right now over here that are my close neighbors. people who until yesterday killing the Bosnians down there, he's right there. Some people ask me, why you guys don't do something, why don't you call the International Tribunal head in Holland. I says, I can call but I'm not really eye witness for something. Some people see something, some people don't want to be witness because they are scared. You can say that he lived in that town that he is a Serb, that he has a camouflage uniform. May he do it some minor things that I see, but I don't see really anything. Some people did but I don't. Personally the thing that hurts pretty much right now I think more than all those things I survive in Bosnia, right now when I think about what's happened to my kids and go out and have a Serb neighbor live close to me. How those people come into the United States is basically just a lie, its a lie in the interview with the INS officer, and the INS officer probably decided that I

## INTERVIEW #4

believe the story, and somebody says yes that's a true story, and those people come in. Right now an environment states one guy have a process that probably the United States will get him out because he lie in that interview, and now INS have another proof that he lie, and he gonna go out. I wish that that will happen. I don't hate anybody. its really, really. . . . . the word hate for somebody its really hard that you can . . . . . you can tell when you don't like somebody, but if you hate somebody its really hard, but I really hate a couple of people that live close to me, because I don't like them close to me. I don't feel good, and I personally don't contact with those people. Some Bosnians that have contact with those people for some reason I cannot understand why its a reason why you can have contact with somebody like that that until yesterday watched over you and gonna kill you, and which corner I'm gonna find for you. Right now you have a mass grave near my town right now with one hundred ninety-one persons inside that grave. Its actually a big, big hole in the ground and just to put one hundred to two hundred people inside, put in a little gas and burn them down and close that hole. That my neighbor live over here in Michigan with me maybe he is one of the people who do that, but I don't know, I don't want to tell you.

A lot of bad experiences, a lot of bad memories. I wished I have one good memory from that, where I can say something good happened to me. The only good thing that happened to me was that maybe I got lucky the Serbs got me in the truck and that I lived to live in that town and go in free territory in Bosnia and spend some time. But still if you go into another town, its a new town, its Bosnian and nobody is going to kill you, you still don't have a place to stay. There is like one hundred to two hundred people in a big garage or big warehouses and spend some time. After that I just decided to leave the country. I got the chance to go to the United States, I had just signed up and was released in \_\_\_\_\_. I'm here and I have lived for \_\_\_\_\_ in Michigan now and I like it. I'm going to stay, I don't want to go back. Maybe one day just to visit, but to go back to live, I don't know, I haven't. . . . . I'm too young and I don't have . . . . . I have my life here. I lost half my life here and I



## INTERVIEW #4

probably will end it up here, because its too much bad things has happened that I want to go back there. Because when you go back, just the memories go out. Nothing nice in the period of four years has happened in that town. You have the people, the young couple have a baby, and that's a bad thing to happen in your life that you got the baby, but you need to hide the baby, and you need to think about what you're going to give that baby to eat because you don't have food, you don't have . . . . . Whatever you can make from the food, if you have small garden behind the house, if someone is still living in your house and a small garden, you live like sometimes two weeks with just onion soup and corn bread, or just a baked potato with a little bit of cheese on it, or sour cream or whatever, that's the basic food. Some people have cows and just kill the cows and spread the meat with the neighbors just to try to help people, because if you don't eat your own cow, the Serbs are going to come and are going to get it. So you have a lot of people who got the small business and successful life. They have a small business that runs good, and some people have the restaurants and everything. Everything is turned out over night.

What Serbs do from those concentration camps. First the Serbs pick up the all the intelligence of the town, all the teachers, the lawyers, the yesterday lawyers, the teachers, the high school teachers, the college professors, all intelligence of that town, because those is part of the people that can maybe get some kind or revenge or organize the people to fight the Serbs. I don't mean that to make a difference between just the regular people who work in the factory and the lawyer, that's intelligence in the town that can make something. That's the first class that is killed, those guys never go into concentration camps. They maybe go for a day or two and then all those guys are killed. After that the second row is all the owners of small businesses or big businesses, restaurants, people with the money, the mechanics, private mechanics or basically some people for the highest amount of money. The Serbs take the money out and just kill those people, and after that just start like a class after class after class. That man can do that, he work like a mechanic before war or an electronic engineer before the war, he can

## INTERVIEW #4

make explosive device, we need to kill him or move him from the face of the earth because he can do something after us. That's actually the Serbs thinking. Serbs is big cowards. They do all those things because they have power and have an army at that time. All the arms all the guns, the Serbs had at that time just to move those people from the face of the earth just because they are going to do something against us, that's the basic scenario. After that a thousand different scenarios, first starting with burning the villages down and moving the mass of people; the ethnic cleansing of mass population. You move 30,000 to 40,000 people from one part of the country to the next of the country where it is the free Bosnian territory, and you have that part of your town its clean. Its just the Serbs orthodox is right there and nobody else, and you don't have nothing to be scared of because just you are there. Another thing you got a lot of gangs, the private police, the gangs - some kind of organization, but everybody come and have different rules. The police at that time the Serbs know you got the town, and you can see it on TV. We have a lot of countries around the world that go to war, but the police stay the police, and the army stays the army. At that time the police have the Serbs police and were call the Serbs police. Those guys painted the car silver and put the Serbs police on it. If somebody rob you over night or beat you up and you go in the morning, then you're gonna be beaten up by the police, because you try to tell something against the Serbs. The Serbs is perfect, the Serbs is innocent, Serbs is good people and somebody else do that, and stuff like that. The Serbs would just laugh at you, and you got lucky if somebody just laugh at you because you don't get beat up.

I don't know what else to tell you. Whatever you want to do, you cannot do it. You have the Muslim mosques, the religious objects, the Catholic churches. My town have like sixty mosques and about thirteen Catholic churches. All the churches and mosques are burnt down, definitely burned down. In our town we have a Catholic church that's old like six hundred years from the 18th or 17th century I think that is at zero level of international piece of art, that is protected by UNESCO, by the United Nations or other organizations care about art and about old things. In the war that church is burned to the

## INTERVIEW #4

ground. The dirt is hauled away, and the Serbs make a parking lot of that place and things like that. Everything what give you association that the Bosnia is burned down. We got doctors, a lot of doctors at different levels. Some of them Serbs some of the Bosnians. None of the Bosnian doctors is working at that time - the period of four years because as Bosnians, if the doctor is Bosnian and you need to do your practice on the Serbs, on no you're gonna kill them, you gonna do something to them, you cannot do it in your practice. Somewhere we get lucky at that point because some of those doctors kind of have faith in them and went to private practice at home, hiding. If your stomach hurts, you're gonna go to your neighbor doctor. If you have a doctor in the neighborhood you're gonna go in the basement and he tries to give you some tea or maybe some pills left over or what ever, or try to make some or if you need it, you're gonna buy on the black market from the Serbs. A basic pill like an Aspirin that used to cost like, I don't know, \$2 a pack, you're gonna pay \$100 for a pack just to make you not have pain. I don't think about pain killers if you have big pains. Basically you cannot buy it. If you find the good Serbs, and I tell you good Serb, because that good Serb is gonna buy for you, but he gonna charge you some money because he spent his time to buy you some things. Again I tell you that all those people, all those Serbs, its a people that lived you until yesterday. Its not people from the outside. Maybe scenario and everything come from Serbia, but the players (I talk players because everything is like a big stupid game), all the players is your neighbors, your friends, your working colleagues or whatever you people you go to school with until yesterday. I got a buddy who spent practically his whole life we spent together. We drove in the same parts of town, same neighborhoods, we go in the same school, we go in the same high school, we start the same college, and after a couple of days after the war starts, he just turns his head from me. He never stopped to visit me, never stopped underneath my window, and try to ask me not did I need help, but just ask me how I feel about everything. You have a couple of examples, the Serb lawyers or a couple of Serb doctors tried to make difference, but try to make the Bosnian people live easier, trying to explain one of the doctors on the local region and tried to call the Serb people on peace.

## INTERVIEW #4

He says whatever you want, if Serbs want the power, if Serbs want the towns, want the police and control the city that's okay at that moment, but don't destroy the Bosnian people, don't do that to the Bosnian people. Its the same thing like you watch a movie from the wild, wild west or watch the movie from World War-II with the Jews, Gypsies and . . . . .

Before the war you watched those movies, that's the terrible things that happened at that time, and nobody think about that's gonna happen in our town and happen to us because Bosnians are kind of quiet people. Whatever you ask in Bosnia or a country around Bosnia is that if you stop in any Bosnian town, ask for a party, you're going to get a party. If you travel around and you're a stranger, and you go in Bosnia village and say I'm hungry, and I need to spend the night somewhere, somebody will bring you into the house, give you the food, give you the free place to stay over night for two or three days, and nobody gonna charge you for nothing. Its a friendly people. Basically what we do, we work in the factories, or people work the land on the big farms, and enjoy the life, nothing else. Somebody had a lot of money and somebody didn't have money at all, but everybody is happy. Nobody talk of war, no body talks of killing, nobody count on anything to do with the war, but Serbs is count, because the Serbs know before the war in Bosnia two years before its gonna start. All the scenario is already made up its just those guys need a date when its going to start, and start going from town-to-town like Sarajevo on \_\_\_\_\_, and after that all the major towns I tell you like in my town started \_\_\_\_\_ twenty days after starting Sarajevo (its a government city of Bosnia). After that Bosnia needs six or eight months to try to form the army to fight the Serbs and everything, and big difference in that fighting and killing each other. Yesterday neighbors neither killed each other because Bosnians never go to take nothing from Serbs, we just protect. The Bosnians, that part of the country that the Bosnian government control right now, its just the Bosnian army protecting them. We didn't want to go into fight with Serbia, we wanted just our country. We don't want nothing from Serbia. When democracy comes out in Bosnia, it is one thing that

## INTERVIEW #4

nobody make a difference in Serbs, Muslims, Catholics  
..... I don't know, Polish, Gypsies or what ever.  
Everybody is Bosnians because Bosnia is one country.  
Bosnia, Herzegovina and Bosnians is Bosnians.  
Whatever you want you can be that ..... I don't  
know, the Protestants, Catholic, you can be Muslim, you  
can be whatever you want, but you are Bosnian, you were  
born in that country, and you are Bosnian. .... that's the  
idea of that country that we wanted to be like United  
States, we want to go be like Germany, like the countries  
outside of Europe and West right now, to have a normal  
thing that you can make good money and live good;  
whatever you working. If you want to work like a machine  
operator or you gonna be successful lawyer, it doesn't  
matter. Somebody is happy with making money like  
wood work that's okay, you're happy with that. I'm  
right now working like a mechanic in a company over  
here now. I'm happy, that's a job I do it in Bosnia, a  
job I spent the whole of my life trying to learn and I like  
it. Some people like the jobs and some people don't, but  
basic things of idea in Bosnia is just everybody live  
together and have a better country and better life, because  
you don't have a life before in communism. Some people  
now say "oh yeah, we have everything." I tried to explain  
a little bit, that that everything is nothing. You have free  
medical insurance, you go see the doctor and you don't need  
nothing, you don't pay nothing, but the government is taking  
like 45% of your paycheck every month, every week or  
every month to take for the health insurance, always take  
some kind of forms; government forms, state forms, city  
forms. Those things are not taxes like the United States  
have. Its some kind of different forms to go in the state and  
state spending or ex-state. Yugoslavia spent those monies  
I don't know where. At that time you needed to work like  
four months so that you can afford the quality that we ....  
and before war that period before war when we had  
about six months at the most. People started making money,  
people started building houses. Some people built houses,  
somebody fix their house, somebody go buy the TV, buy  
the dishwasher from one paycheck. People started living,  
but the Serbs don't like it and the Serbs lose the money,  
lose the power, lose the industry. Now Bosnia going  
to grow and Serbia is still behind because Serbia and  
Montenegro at that time is still part of Yugoslavia, its  
called kind of socialism or communism, I don't know

## INTERVIEW #4

what's the government right now, but we don't want that after we got out of that, and that's the only reason why this started to happen.

A couple of bad experiences that we watch or see and it really hurt when you think about that. You have different religions, you have different stuff that people do. Personally I am a Muslim and we have different tradition how we do the funeral and how we put the deaths. Actually the Serbs is like a service that dead body go wrapping in a white sheet with just a piece of wood, thick piece of wood and go under the ground, and you kind of cannot put the wood diagonally across the hole and just put the dirt back on. Like all the services you're gonna have a priest, you're gonna have somebody that is going to say something about that person; usually friends coming and you have like 30 to 40 hundred people at a funeral before. We are not allowed anymore that to bury the dead in a decent way. Only two or four to five people allowed to go, and in the cemetery just dig the hole, put the dead body down and maybe wrap them in some kind of sheet or wrap them in a blanket, and just put the dirt back on. Some people take like furniture, take a table and kind of put the table down and just put the dirt back on. Not real long, just the two people who are going to dig the hole and maybe a priest if he is not scared enough, and if he's alive because all the priests, all of the religion people who do it those kind of services is dead by that time. We used to have the cemetery called the city cemetery, and you have a part that's a Catholic part, there is a Protestant part, Orthodox, Muslim, I don't know, Jews, whatever. . . . Its a pretty cemetery, the city make that. We are not allowed anymore to go to those cemeteries. We have an old cemetery maybe one hundred years ago, and you need to put your dead bodies of Bosnians there. Those kind of things, those kind of things I think that nobody remember from 3000 years ago. I think that the people 3000 years ago have a better way to fight and a better way to keeping war you know, a decent way to do it or something, but we don't have that. We have no rights at all. No basic human rights. You need to go in special stores to buy something. After two years we have the International Red Cross and the United States Red Cross go through the

## INTERVIEW #4

Serbs line and try to put some kind of humanitarian aid like food or drugs or the baby supplies and stuff like that through the Serbian borders, and try to help the Bosnian people, and we never see much of that because the Serbs is gonna find one or two Bosnians who are going to go up front and take over that. Because the International Red Cross (IRC) exactly asked from a couple of people or ten to fifteen people from the Bosnian side to take over the stuff and help, and Serbs are gonna call somebody and says you're gonna take that stuff. . . . . and when everything is done, the IRC leaves the town, all the help, all the stuff goes into Serb warehouses. You maybe get 10%. A little bit of food or a couple of beef cans or chili cans or something like that, but you never see very much. After some people have strength and one time the IRC came into town to assess what's happening, and after that the IRC opened a small office in the town, the United Nations Human Refugee Center opened the office, but those guys suffered enough. Nobody steals from those guys. The IRC have like two or three pick up trucks and a couple of sport utility vehicles, cruising around to help the people. The vehicle some of the time is broke down or stolen. The offices all torn down or burned down. People coming and people have ways of doing it. Each person have a lap top, each office desk have a computer. You can have that for one night and the next night its gone. Those guys suffer a lot. You got a lot of people that try to help, a lot of good people from . . . . . I meet some people from the United States that just leave the jobs and leave the family in the United States to come into Bosnia and try to help the people. Those people actually suffer with us, not maybe 100%, but they suffer with us because its not big difference because Americans in Bosnia at that time, the whole world is against the Serbs. Everybody wants to help to help Bosnia and the Bosnian people. The United States, all of Europe, all the Middle East, all the . . . . . only Russia and China on the side of the Serbs because both of those countries are the only countries with the Serbia; its communism in a whole still. We have all the help from the world. If you got somebody that tries to help you that's from the United States, Germany, Switzerland or

## INTERVIEW #4

whatever, you're gonna have the same or close treatment like you got, because it is not allowed. Those guys. . . . you know that's IRC and the NATO organization don't go on nobody's side. Those guys tried to help Serbs and Bosnians, sick Serbs, sick Bosnians, trying to put the drugs in them in the Serbs hospital and trying to make some kind of ambulance or Med-Center for Bosnians, tried to spread the help, nope but cannot go working in that way. Those guys need to ask for permission to leave the town, for the permission to go into the town, for permission to visit some of Bosnia, and you know. . . . those guys cannot think about it. The guy told me from IRC that he spent like I think two years he spent down in Africa somewhere, whereas the country - I don't want to be rude and say this, but different parts of civilization when you have people in Africa who don't still live in tents, and you have people in Bosnia that have apartments, big houses and really good huge towns with a lot of industry, and really good looking town, that's the thing I was telling you about, that the IRC needs to ask for permission for everything. And after some time, those guys stopped doing the help, trying to do the basic help to keep the people alive. At one point we tried to re-ask, the Bosnians asked the IRC to move all the Bosnians from the one place to another to save the people, because people were going to be killed. We tried that, but the Serbs did not allow this because they needed us at that point, I don't know the reason. And after maybe a year and a half we got stuff like I was telling you, like just after midnight the semi-trucks would go in different neighborhoods, put us in the trucks and bring us 60 to 70 miles from our towns to the next town to the free Bosnian territory. At that moment, I think that I am born again because you pass all that to have bad memories, but you kind of born again because you are in free territory. You don't have nothing, you don't have a place to stay, but you have your people and you have that nobody gonna hurt you, nobody gonna tell you nothing rude. And the big difference is that you got the Serbs in those towns, in the Bosnian towns and Bosnian territory that live normal life, working and in normal place if the factory working because its a war, and the Bosnian side too they



## INTERVIEW #4

have nothing to make and nothing to sell, but if you have the cities working and you have the same thing. The Serbs that used to work in the city, Serbs work in the city. You have a Serb city commissioner, he's still city commissioner and that's the part Bosnia wants. Bosnia wants everybody to have the same rights and have a democracy, whatever, whether you're - Bosnian, Serb, black, white, yellow, red skin or whatever, you have a right to live like all the countries, and have a right a basic human right to live, work, enjoy on your property and enjoy your life, and try to be friends with everybody. Those things the Serbs don't want. The Serbs used to call themselves the sky people, just God people, that God just make the Serbs to live on one piece of earth and nobody else. That's the kind of mind experience about that. Maybe I forgot some things, maybe I remember some things, but that's a part of my bad, really huge bad experience, but I survive in Bosnia for four years.