

## **Building Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Some reflections about memories, memorials and identities**

**By Anka Izetbegović**

**We need to know more in order to forget.** Our society is full of the unspoken. We can't keep carrying it. It's too heavy.

**Which values?** We mentioned identity crisis. There is no justice, only lies. Past values, but no new values. Corruption is all around. How to cope? Some strategies must be found. We have to find them, not the international community.

**Reconciliation?** Reconciliation must not be imposed. Dayton Peace Accords suggested that we had to act like nothing happened. *How do you live next door to the ones who did these things?*

From this point of view, it is interesting to look at **memorials**. My parents were very proud of being partisans in WWII. *We won, we said*. But in this war there were no heroes and no winners. We can't point out winners. Fascism lost in WWII, but after this war we said all sides were the same. From my point of view, citizens of Bosnia are losers. I lost everything I had. Nothing has been offered since.

**Memorials:** Three ethnic groups are trying to remember and building their own memorial.

*Sarajevo memorial* -- devoted to all defenders of a free Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Croat memorials say Croat soldiers fell in defending their own people.

Only one memorial relates to the citizens alone in Sarajevo, so called "Sarajevo Roses"- filling shell holes with red paint. One can see them all through the city. They are now filled with red concrete.

**So the question is how do we identify ourselves?** Memorials identify and glorify the victims of attack. I like the roses because I don't need to go to a special place. They are everywhere. There is no special message given. They speak for themselves. They speak about citizens waiting for bread, and killed while in line there. But we don't know if they were Serbs, Muslims, Croats or others. During the war, these in the city were all in solidarity.

We should find messages like this that everyone can identify with. That can allow us to continue.

We hope that others can help us to find out how to do this.

### **Questions:**

What happens when suffering has no meaning?

When one feels he has been left out of civilization

What about 'them' and 'us'? And what about the distinction?

Winners and losers, and feelings of disappointment and confusion

What if one of your friends has left without saying goodbye at a moment that means life or death for you? This hurt more than the shells -- friends left without saying goodbye -- how is it possible that someone could do this to a friend?

Lies and the failure to obtain justice: Justice summarizes all of this.

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The difficulty to rebuild the society is that we are questioning many things in its bases:

Today in Bosnia, the identities are: refugee, veteran, demobilized soldier, etc. Who are the others? The poor, the ones who are supposed to bring this society up. So I am the one among the others who are supposed to reconstruct the society. My position in this culture is now that I am invisible, that I am not a victim, and that I am not seen. We give people alternative between being human and being refugee, inhuman – The paradox today in Bosnia, is that you have some identity if you died or suffered extremely, but not if you are in intermediary levels. Then, you don't know how to say that you are still alive and with an identity.

**Matter of identity** is also different for those who leave the country.

The difficulty is when people take away your identity through violence.