The Bosnia Memory Project at Fontbonne University

Dedicated to establishing an enduring record of the experiences of Bosnian genocide survivors.

A Preservation Project
The Bosnia Memory Project at Fontbonne University is a historical and cultural preservation initiative to establish an enduring record of the experiences of Bosnian genocide survivors, especially those living in St. Louis. The local St. Louis community of more than 60,000 Bosnians is the largest outside of Bosnia, with most immigrating due to the war and genocide in the early 1990s.

Recording their stories offers transformative experiences for Fontbonne students and faculty — and a chance to make a lasting contribution to public consciousness and the historical record.

"We are committed to strengthening our multi-ethnic community by preserving memory that would otherwise be lost. What we continue to learn by engaging our Bosnian neighbors will be with us for the rest of our lives. It's critical to keep this project alive and vibrant."

— Dr. Ben Moore, Fontbonne University faculty member and Director of the Bosnia Memory Project

"The Bosnia Memory Project is not an attempt to synthesize information into a few abstract ideas but rather a commitment to record detailed experiences of affected individuals, young and old, male and female, dead or alive. It is a collection of personal stories to be carried into posterity, an essential piece in the process of healing and reconciliation for an entire community, and an historical record of one of the most tragic events in the twentieth century. In its entirety, it will serve as yet another reminder of the worldwide commitment humanity made to itself when it pledged 'never again.'"

— Dijana Mujkanović, former resident of Prijedor, Bosnia-Herzegovina
The Seed is Planted
In 2006, Fontbonne faculty members Dr. Jack Luzkow and Dr. Ben Moore conceived of a joint teaching effort for an honors course about the Bosnian war and genocide. Their vision involved a different teaching method: students would learn about the global tragedy firsthand — from survivors.

With the help of leaders in the local Bosnian community, Fontbonne’s honor students and faculty researched the war and genocide. They collected letters and photographs, obtained copies of official documents and conducted video-recorded interviews of survivors.

This collaborative work became part of the compelling multimedia exhibit “Prijedor: Lives from the Bosnian Genocide.” It also laid the foundation for Fontbonne’s Bosnia Memory Project.

The Project Takes Root
The Prijedor exhibit was funded and supported by several non-profit institutions, private donors and talented individuals. Its journey began at the St. Louis Holocaust Museum in late 2007, where it was seen by nearly 11,000 people. Subsequently, the exhibit traveled to a number of additional locations — from Fontbonne University to Capitol Hill — garnering substantial local, national and international media attention.

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As the exhibit toured, Fontbonne’s contributions evolved into the Bosnia Memory Project, led by Dr. Moore. Expanding far beyond expectations, the project has raised awareness about the culture and experiences of Bosnians through guest lectures, film screenings, musical performances, history and language courses, as well as the collection of artifacts, documents and oral histories.

Ensuring Lasting Value
At the heart of this ongoing research and education effort is the establishment of a public archive, which will be of lasting value to students, scholars and the general public, including the grandchildren and great grandchildren of St. Louis’ Bosnians.

Future plans include a research center, additional academic and co-curricular programming and a permanent exhibit focused on all of Bosnia-Herzegovina and related South Slavic cultures.

Learn more about the Bosnia Memory Project.

Visit www.fontbonne.edu/bosnia.

““In the Bosnia Memory Project, learning occurs not only through reading texts and writing papers, but through hands-on, heart-to-heart interactions with Saint Louis’ vibrant Bosnian community. After the class, I was left with not only a much deeper understanding of the immense destruction caused by the war, but utmost respect for the courage and strength of its survivors.”
— Elizabeth Brennan ’14,
Fontbonne University student

“In St. Louis, we have a unique opportunity — and special obligation — to understand why so many Bosnians came here as refugees during the 1990s. Fontbonne University’s Bosnia Memory Project allows us to see up close — first hand and on a personal level — the lives impacted by the worst atrocities in Europe since the end of World War II. Bosnians have more than simply survived. By their endurance, resilience, and sense of hope, they have redeemed one of the darkest chapters in human history. Their story has become our story. We are invited to listen, to learn and to remember.”
— Patrick McCarthy, author of After the Fall: Srebrenica Survivors in St. Louis.