

A Community Evening Program

Survival in Sarajevo: Jews, Muslims, Croats and Serbs Working Together During the Bosnian War, 1993-1995

The Bosnian-Serb siege of Sarajevo, from spring 1993 until winter 1996, was the longest in modern history. With electricity, water and food supplies cut off and only sporadically supplied, with 11,541 citizens shot by snipers or killed by mortars, Sarajevans had to depend on each other.

In a faded, turn-of-the-century synagogue, a group of Holocaust survivors and their offspring created La Benevolencija, the Jewish humanitarian aid agency. Who worked there? Jews and Muslims, Serbian Orthodox and Catholic Croats--all those who never believed one ethnic group was superior to another.

After all, Jews had lived alongside *all* their neighbors since they were welcomed in Sarajevo in the 16th century.

This story of how they paid their neighbors back provides an opportunity for your community to discuss the nature of community and Jewish values exemplified in the holiness code in Leviticus 19, "Do not stand idly by while your neighbor bleeds."

Middle or high school students will study the story, explore issues surrounding community, as well as Jewish values found in the story, and with this background become exhibit docents for a community evening at the exhibit for your school or religious community. Part of their preparation will include creating QR codes that their parents and siblings will scan as they walk through the exhibit – connecting them to Ladino songs or short definitions that will enhance their understanding of the story.

These pages describe the project leading up to and including the community evening. The lessons are designed for 60 minute classes, but they are adaptable for shorter classes. Any part of this project can be adjusted to fit the needs of your school so feel free to contact Centropa's US Education Director, Lauren Granite, for suggestions of how to adapt it: granite@centropa.org.

For more information about the exhibit, the 12 minute multimedia film of the story Survival in Sarajevo, extra photographs from this period and links to resources about this story, please visit the [Survival in Sarajevo exhibit web site](#).

This exhibit is based on the book by Edward Serotta, *Survival in Sarajevo: Jews, Bosnia, and the Lessons of the Past*, published in 1994 and now out of print [but available through abebooks.com](#). The exhibition from this project has been created by [Centropa](#), and has been underwritten by [JDC](#) (the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and The Milton and Roslyn Wolf Foundation.

Survival in Sarajevo Exhibit Community Evening Project

Enduring Understandings:

- The Jews' historical experience of being accepted into Ottoman and Balkan societies made it possible for them to work with and help their neighbors survive the devastating Bosnian war in the 1990s.
- Identifying with a religious, ethnic or national group does not mean that you need to reject others because of their religious, ethnic or national affiliation.

Essential Questions:

- How did the Jews get to the Balkans?
- How did Jews' experience of being accepted into the Ottoman empire and Balkan societies make it possible for them to decide to help their neighbors during the Bosnian war?
- What ethics and values did the people of La Benevolencija exhibit and what can we learn from them?

Lesson 1: Defining Community

Goal: This class will introduce students to three core elements of the exhibit:

- An opportunity to reflect on the questions: what makes a community? What are our community's values?
- Jewish values reflected in the Survival in Sarajevo story, such as "do not stand idly by while your neighbor bleeds" (Lev 19).
- The historical context for understanding the story.

I. Set Induction (10 mins)

Think/Pair/Share: Basing your definition on your own life experiences, how do you define community? As you think of your answer, consider:

- How do you determine who is part of your community? People from the same background? Same religion? Same interests? People who live near you or go to school with you?
- Is there anyone you would exclude from your community? Explain.
- What external forces or realities shape your community?

Students discuss the question with the person next to them, then the class discusses them together. Below are follow-up questions for the teacher to pose to the entire class during the open discussion:

- What responsibility do you have towards your community? Explain.
- What responsibility do you have towards those you don't consider part of your community? Explain.

II. “Let All Who are Hungry Come and Eat” (20 mins)

- a. Watch the film, *Survival in Sarajevo*, which can be found at <http://centropastudent.org/?typ=sprache&fLang=ENG&movID=44&nID=78&q=m>. We recommend teachers download the film to a computer or disk to avoid technical problems in class.

Students do not need to take notes – just watch – but we recommend the teacher tell students to think about what Jewish values they see as they watch the story. Then, as a class discuss:

- i. What Jewish values do you see here?
- ii. Teacher makes a list on board as students point out values. Then, teacher provides a list of quotes from the Jewish tradition (attached).
- iii. Students choose two quotes out of the list that they think most illustrate the themes in the film. Two assignment options:
 1. They post their quotes on [Collaborize Classroom](#) or [Facebook](#) and write a short paragraph explaining why, responding to at least one other’s posting.
 2. Each student reads the quote they chose to the class and explains why they think that quote best illustrates the themes in the film.

III. View the Exhibit in PDF (25-30 mins)

- a. Teacher introduces the exhibit and provides background on the below items (see Teacher Fact Sheet for answers; more background information and sources can be found on the web site for the exhibit: http://upload.centropa.org/upload/centropa-sarajevo/Centropa.org_Sarajevo/Sarajevo_home.html)
 - i. What was the Ottoman Empire?
 - ii. Where are the Balkans?
 - iii. Who are the Sephardim? Ashkenazim?
 - iv. What is Iberia?
 - v. What was Yugoslavia? When was it formed? (mentioned on panel 3 of the history panels)

Homework Assignment: On Collaborize Classroom, the class online discussion board, or on paper, students write their favorite quote from today’s class and answer the following questions about it:

- Would the value in your quote help create, maintain or save a community, as you defined it in the beginning of class? Explain.
- If someone were to live according to the quote, how would they behave? Explain.

Note: This assignment may also be done in class.

End of lesson one.

Lesson 2: Survival in Sarajevo

Goal: Students will learn about the history and story in the exhibit in preparation for writing the docent script.

Step 1: Divide up the docent tasks (10 mins)

While typically docents might be tour guides for an entire exhibit, your school may decide to assign one to two students per panel (or per two panels) so that each student (or pair) stands at his or her assigned panels as docents for specific panels/parts of the story. You may want to assign more students to the history panels since they require knowing slightly more information than the others.

Step 2: Getting to know the story (20 mins)

Each group or pair will answer a few questions (below) by reading PDF files¹ of the panels for which they will be docents. Zoom in to read the text. They will use the information they learn from reading the panels to develop their docent narrative. Teachers will find answers on Teacher's Fact Sheet (attached).

Step 3: Seeing the whole picture (30 mins)

Once each group/pair has answered the questions related to their panel(s), the class comes together and the students share what they have learned. This must be done in chronological order because the goal is for each student to understand the entire story so they have a better understanding of his/her part of the story. Encourage students to take notes on what they want to keep in mind when they are docents.

Note: In the next class, students will put together a timeline of the entire story and this will be the core of their docent presentation. So, **students must save the answers to their questions and/or any notes they have from today's lesson. If they will not be in the next class, make sure they hand in their answers and notes so the rest of the class can use them for the timeline.**

Questions:

History Panels

- When did Jews first arrive in Sarajevo? (1500s)
- What skills did they bring with them? (tinsmiths, leather tanning, pharmacology, medicine).
- Who were the rulers of Sarajevo at this time? (Ottomans)
- In what ways did Sephardic Jews keep their traditions? (dress, music, language)
- What made the Jewish experience in the Ottomans different than those of Jews in the north? (never forced into ghettos, no pogroms)

¹ Please contact Lauren Granite for the PDF files, granite@centropa.org.

- What is the importance of the key in the photo and what do they tell you about the Sephardic Jewish attachment to their original homeland, Spain?
- What happened in 1908 that would compel Sarajevo Jews to dress up in their traditional costume to welcome the emperor of the Austro-Hungarian empire? (see photo)
- What percentage of Yugoslavia's Jews were murdered during the Holocaust? (75-80%)
- How did Muslim women help Hana Gasic's family survive the Holocaust?

Post- to Pre-War Jewish Community

- How did the Jews of Sarajevo define who was a Jew?
- If Jews could not be religious under communism what did they do to express their Jewish identity?

Sarajevo: City Under Siege

- Look at the photographs, read the panel and captions. What would it feel like to live in Sarajevo during this time?
- Would you trust people more or less?
- Who would you turn to for help?

A Community Goes to Work

- What services did La Benevolencija provide for people?

Those Who Helped

- What is "nationalist identity?"
- Why have "Jews in Central Europe always felt more comfortable in larger, multi-ethnic empires?"
- What does it mean to "leave your politics at the door?" Why is that sometimes an important strategy among people of different backgrounds?

Exodus

- How did some people escape Sarajevo?
- Who left Sarajevo?
- Where did they go?

Muslims and Jews

- How do the stories of the two Muslims and their involvement with Jews challenge your understanding of relationships between Muslims and Jews?

End of Lesson Two

Lesson 3: Creating the Docent Presentation

Goal: Students write the scripts they will use as docents.

Step 1: Create a timeline (15 minutes)

Using their answers to the questions from last class, the teacher leads the class in creating a basic timeline and outline of the story. This is something each student should have when they are docents at the community event. Each student will specialize in one part of the story so understanding the whole story will put their part in context and make them more confident as presenters.

Step 2: Write the script for teaching the story (45 mins)

With the timeline as the core, students use the history, ethics and values that they learned to write a script to use as docents for the exhibit. Each panel should have a script or outline that includes:

- A summary of the part of story on the panel they are teaching;
- Any necessary background information needed to understand that part of the story;
- A reflection question about community and/or Jewish values that they pose to their visitors, related to the part of the story they are telling.
- (optional) A QR code that will link the visitors listening to their presentation to a learning opportunity. See below for suggestions.

Step 3: QR Codes (optional)

To give the learning experience another dimension, part of the docent presentation might include QR codes that visitors can scan with smart phones. Students will decide what they want to link to during their presentations. An explanation of QR codes is below, as well as suggestions for using them effectively in this project. If you decide to use QR codes and would like help finding the appropriate apps, Centropa's US Education Director, Lauren Granite, is available to work with you and provide that information: granite@centropa.org.

- 1) Looking at their docent scripts, ask students to think about what might enhance their presentations. Some questions they might consider include:
 - a. What Jewish values do they want to highlight as they convey their part of the Survival in Sarajevo story?
 - b. Is there a visual or audio element to their part of the story that a link will help them explain by having visitors see or listen to it? Examples: a map, some music, a short definition or explanation of a person, place or event.
- 2) Once they decide what visuals, audio, questions or quotes they might want to add to their presentations through QR codes, students need to

either find them on the web (e.g., Ladino music) or create a Googledoc that visitors can link to via a QR Code.

- 3) What is a QR Code? QR Codes are codes that link to an Internet site with audio, video or written text by scanning a smart phone or tablet. The codes themselves are extremely easy to generate and cost nothing. [Click here](#) for an explanation of QR Codes. All you need to generate a QR code is a computer with an Internet connection. Visitors will need to download a QR scanner app (free) to their smartphones or tablets (camera embedded). We recommend that you send out an email to the parents with instructions before the exhibit. Not everyone will need a cell phone or tablet while viewing the exhibit because people can share.
- 4) Here is an example of how a QR code might work as part of the docent presentation: After providing visitors with some information about the panel he or she is presenting, the docent says, "Now, please turn to QR code #4 in your program and scan the code. Read the quote – or someone can read it to the group - and we will discuss the question." And then the docent poses the prepared discussion question and leads a short discussion. The question might be one of the ethics questions the students discussed in the first class, or ask about a historical event.

Another example: to highlight the fact that Sephardic Jews had specific traditions and speak Ladino (a combination of Spanish and Hebrew), students would make a QR code for the panel that discusses Ladino and when the visitors scan the code they would hear a Ladino song, a definition of Ladino and perhaps even something comparing it to Yiddish.

Any QR code links should be relevant to the topics in the panels the QR code is associated with.

- 5) What do we do with the QR codes? Each QR code must be easily scannable. The easiest way to make them available to all visitors would be to create a program for the evening that includes the QR codes for each panel. Suggestions for what to include in the evening program:
 - a. A paragraph about the background of the Survival in Sarajevo story and Centropa.
 - b. A list of which students are docents for which parts of the exhibit.
 - c. The QR codes and the panels they are related to.
 - d. Instructions for visitors, e.g., to begin at the first panel and go through the exhibit chronologically.
 - e. Perhaps a couple of quotes that the students feel reflect the story and Jewish values they have discussed.
 - f. Anything else you would like to convey to the community members for the evening program.

Lesson 4: Finalize plans for the Community Evening

If you have time for a fourth class, this would allow you to finalize docent scripts and any preparations necessary to make the evening run smoothly.

The Community Event

In addition to viewing the exhibit and learning from the student docents, your school may want to culminate the evening as a community. From an educational perspective, people learn more when they reflect on what they've read, heard and seen, so we offer you these options for engaging the entire community.

Option 1: Written Reflections

After visitors have seen the exhibit, give them an opportunity to write their responses to what they learned. Some options include:

- Bring a huge piece of butcher paper and some markers, set it up at the end of the exhibit and ask visitors to respond to what they learned by answering a prompt. Examples of prompt questions:
 - What is the most important lesson for us to learn from this story?
 - How did this story challenge your understanding of the relations between Jews and Muslims?
 - What values did you see in this story that you would like to see in our community?
 - What was the most moving part of the story for you?

Hang the butcher paper with answers in the synagogue for people to see, read and discuss in the coming weeks.

- If a huge piece of paper is not an option logistically, offer visitors a “guest book” in which to write their responses. You can post these responses on the school or community web site or Facebook pages as a way to report on the community event. This activity can also be done with large post-it notes.
- Ask people to post their answers about what they learned on their FB pages – or Tweet them! Make sure these are also posted on the your school or community’s Facebook page so even those not able to make it to the event can see be part of the conversation.

Option 2: Follow-up Group Discussion

It may be that instead of written reflections (or in addition to them), you would like to bring everyone together for a group reflective experience. In this case, there are also several options.

- Supplement the Survival in Sarajevo story by showing a short Nightline piece about the famous Sarajevo Haggadah² – saved from the hands of Nazis by

² “The Sarajevo Haggadah” is a 1996 Nightline piece written and narrated by Edward Serotta, Director of Centropa. Note: we provide you with this link so you may view it to see if you want to use

Muslims and an important symbol of Sarajevo's multiethnic and multicultural society. This activity will enhance everyone's understanding of the unique relationship Jews had with their Muslim, Serb and Croat neighbors, and concludes with a reference to the Survival in Sarajevo story.

What this film will add: This activity raises a discussion of how one's particular ethnic, religious, or national affiliation can motivate people to behave ethically towards one another, to embrace "the other" for their differences.

After watching the story about the Sarajevo Haggadah and discuss the following questions as a group:

- * How did the Sarajevo Haggadah symbolize culture in Sarajevo? Why is this Jewish sacred text so important to Muslims and other Bosnians?
 - * At the end of the film they say that ultimately the message of the Sarajevo Haggadah was in how people in the synagogue treated each other. What do they mean?
 - * Have you ever had to make an ethical choice? What resources (ideas; teachings from parents, friends or school; personal convictions) did you use to make that choice? Where do you turn for guidance when you have to make tough choices?
 - * What might it take to get people to respect the sacred texts of other religions the way the Sarajevans revered and valued this Haggadah?
 - * Concluding question: How have the exhibit and the Sarajevo Haggadah film made us think about:
 - o The definition of community?
 - o Our Jewish identities?
 - o The most important Jewish values?
 - o How our specific religious and ethnic identities shape how we get along in a multiethnic environment?
- Group Discussion. Use one of the below excerpts, each from the book *Survival in Sarajevo*, and the questions that follow for a group discussion with all visitors.

Excerpt 1: "Only Deny doesn't call me names."

This excerpt is from the book, *Survival in Sarajevo*, challenges us to reflect on how we think about people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds:

"When war broke out, walks in the surrounding hills were impossible, and with no electricity the computer and television set stood idle. Haris Karalich found himself busier than ever with jobs from various aid agencies, and Denis [his 10 year old son], with his school now closed, often drifted through

it: http://upload.centropa.org/upload/centropadocs/Centropa_Docs/The_Sarajevo_Haggadah.html . However, **in order to legally show the Nightline to a group of people you must purchase it from amazon.com:** http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dmovies-tv&field-keywords=ABC+News+Sarajevo+Haggadah&x=0&y=0 .

the ruined city alone. Radoslav [his friend] too felt the isolation and alienation war brings. "All my old friends left Sarajevo, and the other children started calling me names, dirty Serb, dirty Chetnik, all because my mother's Serb and my dad half-Serb. Even a real good friend of mine, a Muslim boy, won't speak to me anymore. Only Deny doesn't call me names," he said.

"Well, I don't care who's a Muslim, a Serb, a Croat," Denis muttered. "People who care about such things are sick." The boys grew closer together than ever." (p.99)

- What made Rasha's friends start calling him names or stop talking to him?
- Do you think you would be able to stay with friends with someone if your parents were telling you bad things about the religion or ethnic group they belonged to? Explain.

Excerpt 2: "I'm nothing. I'm human."

Also from the book *Survival in Sarajevo*, this poignant excerpt raises the question of whether we need to give up our religious and ethnic identities as Jews in order to be part of humanity.

For this excerpt, teachers will have to explain to students the Law of Return for Jews in Israel, allowing any Jewish person to immigrate and be accepted. This is only true for Jews, not any other ethnic or religious group.

Background to the excerpt: Denis (featured at the end of the film) traveled by bus from Sarajevo to Croatia, with his friend Radoslav Bozovich (called Rasha) and Radoslav's family. Rasha's family were planning to adopt Denis and live with him in Israel, their final destination. Croatia was a stop on the way to Israel.

As a Muslim, Denis could not make aliyah as Jews can - and the following is a description of what happened, according Edward Serotta, author of the book *Survival in Sarajevo*. Read it and answer the question that follows.

"Just after 10:30 on Sunday morning the doors of the bus opened in front of the Biokovko Hotel in Makarska.

Radoslav, Natalia, and Denis dragged their bags up to the Jewish Agency desk. An Israeli representative listened to their story, rolled his eyes and took them to Tuvia Raviv, the tireless traveler who was helping everyone he could come to Israel.

Raviv scanned the papers and said to me [Edward Serotta], "Am I to understand that this boy has no adoption papers from Mrs. Bozovich? And

she wants to bring him to Israel unattended by his parents?” He scratched his head and shook it from side to side. “And Denis, you’re Muslim, right?”

‘I’m nothing,’ Denis said. ‘I’m a human.’

Questions for the group to answer in response to the exhibit and this excerpt:

- Why do you think Denis said this?
- Do you agree with the implication of his statement? Is it better to be an unlabeled “human,” (sometimes called “citizen of the world,”) rather than identifying as Muslim or Jewish or Israeli or American or Christian or French or Serbian or whatever? Explain your answer.
- Is there a way to identify with a specific group – i.e., as a Muslim, Jew, Christian, American, Iranian, etc - and still create a world where people are not always fighting each other? Explain and support your answer.

Conclusion

The goal of this project is to give students an active role in creating a learning experience for their community and, by extension, provide the entire community with an opportunity to explore shared values.

All of the above lesson and activity options can be adapted and we are available to work with administrators or teacher to develop activities or lessons that fit into your educational goals. Please contact our US Education Director Lauren Granite at granite@centropa.org.