

# Divided by Faith, United by War: Teaching the citizens of the future using the lessons of the past: The Bosnian War (1992-1995) as a tool in History, Civic Education & Social Studies Lessons

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**What do I teach:** History, Civic Education & Social Sciences (Sociology & Psychology).

**Teaching Method:** Discussion in class after watching the film 'Survival in Sarajevo – Friendship in a time of a War' on Centropa website.

**Personal background:** While I've studied my B.A, I've made an internship in the Israeli Ministry of International Affairs. My final project (that received the highest grade in class) was the Conflict in Kosovo and its implications on Israel. If the conflict at the Balkans can be seen as a big book which part of its' pages were written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, The Bosnian War is an introduction to what would happen in the following years.

**Preview:** The Centropa Website allows many good sources that can be used by teachers such as documents, photos and films. **I have chosen the last one, not only because it has translation to Hebrew and would be easier for the more disadvantaged pupils, but because my experience shows this method of study has more impact on students.** Nevertheless, other methods would be used as well such as maps, reading and analyzing documents, worksheets etc.

**Introduction:** Every good lesson should start with a small introduction that would explain the pupils what they are going to see. It is important first of all to hang a big map on the wall of the region or give each student a map such as this one on the right.



Second, several minutes should be dedicated in order to explain to them why The Bosnian War was one of the most destructive of the late 20th century. The reason may be seem a little foolish to us as adults, but we should remember that this generation of students was born after this war and in sees it as far history at the best case and never heard of it at the worst case scenario.

Most of the Israeli students are familiar with Second World War and consider it as the most important one. The Bosnian war was not maybe a world conflict, but it's important to emphasize before the pupils, that of a population of around four million people in 1992, two million were made refugees. In the three and a half years of conflict, more than 100,000 were killed. Sarajevo suffered the longest siege of any city in modern times, spanning the duration of the war. Ten thousand of its citizens were killed. In addition, The war had been characterized by acts of unspeakable cruelty – rape, torture, mutilation and indiscriminate murder. On April 6, 1992, the Bosnian Serbs began their siege of Sarajevo. Muslim, Croat, and Serb residents opposed to a Greater Serbia were cut off from food, utilities, and communication. For three years, food was scarce and the average weight loss per person was more than 30 pounds. More than 12,000 residents of Sarajevo were killed during the 43 months of siege.

In the following pages, I would try to offer some of the issues that are shown in the film, which can be discussed in different classes. These issues could of course be mixed but I believe it would miss the point. The introduction, however, would be the same one.

## Social Sciences Class

Personal Perspective

**Approaches to Multicultural Education  
in Preservice Teacher Education**  
Philosophical Frameworks and Models for Teaching

Earl Bradford Smith

**Introduction**

Today's starting classrooms diversity reflects a major United States demographic shift. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, by the year 2040, White non-Hispanics will make up less than half of the school-aged population. By the year 2010, Hispanics are projected to account for 43% of United States population growth. The Hispanic school-aged population is predicted to increase by 84% over the next 20 years. The proportion of school-aged population that is Asian non-Hispanic was estimated at 4% in 2000 and is projected to rise to 6.7% by 2025. On the other hand, the percentage of the school-aged population that is African-American or Native American is predicted to remain stable (2000).

Nieto (2004) wrote that this increase in ethnic diversity has caused many educators to recognize the need to expand their knowledge of multicultural education in the public schools. The success or failure of multicultural education depends upon the effective preparation of teachers and administrators. These teachers must be competent in the classroom, coach their students to be academically successful (Ogline, 1992). Further, teachers must be unbiased and have an understanding and sensitivity toward the various cultures reflected in the student population. Administrators should recognize and reinforce throughout the curriculum the increasing diversity in society as it relates to race and ethnicity (Boak & Swanson, 2001).

The greatest wave of immigration since the turn of the century, combined with escalating birth rates, is creating a society with no distinct majority—one characterized by multicultural enclaves, enormously mixed, encompassing an array of races, cultures, and languages never before seen in schools.

Teachers face multiple and complex issues that challenge many of their traditional educational practices and assumptions. For example, majority-minority relations, long a focus of concern in urban classrooms, are at the very least reconfigured and may, in fact, be moot. In many schools, there is no longer a majority group; in others, the traditional White dominant, Black minority nature of the racial composition may instead be Latino-Black or Chinese-Latino.

**Focusing on Teachers**

Teachers must understand students' home lives, too. The hardships faced by youngsters in urban housing projects, for example, or the struggles between generations in otherwise strong immigrant families profoundly influence a student's motivation and ability to succeed in school. Moreover, the cultural norms students bring from home add new subtleties to such issues as those stemming from socioeconomic class and gender. Regardless of the reform initiative invoked to focus the country's attention on how poorly some of our nation's schools are educating our children, teacher preparedness has consistently emerged as a central issue in educational reform initiatives that began ostensibly with *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and continues with *No Child Left Behind* (United States Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2002).

The preparation of America's teachers has remained the driving force behind the most recent educational reforms that began in the early 1980s. These changes have emphasized the need for all teachers to have the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to work effectively with racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse students (Banks, 2000).

Few cases have come before the nation's Supreme Court that so directly affected the minds, hearts, and daily lives of so many Americans as the 1954 landmark Civil Rights case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (Edridge, 1979). The case's outcome heralded the segregation of students by race in public schools. This decisive opinion is so important to the education reform movement for two reasons: (a) Constitutionally sanctioned racially diverse classes exist as a result of integration, and (b) The preparation of teachers to effectively and respectfully teach all students is an absolute necessity.

We are still searching for what works in school classrooms and for effective programs to prepare teachers for working with diverse learners. Over the years our school systems have struggled to be successful at educating the large numbers of students who are not from the dominant culture. As the percentage of diverse students grows, it becomes increasingly important to sensitize teachers to the importance of culture and how it impacts the teaching and learning process.

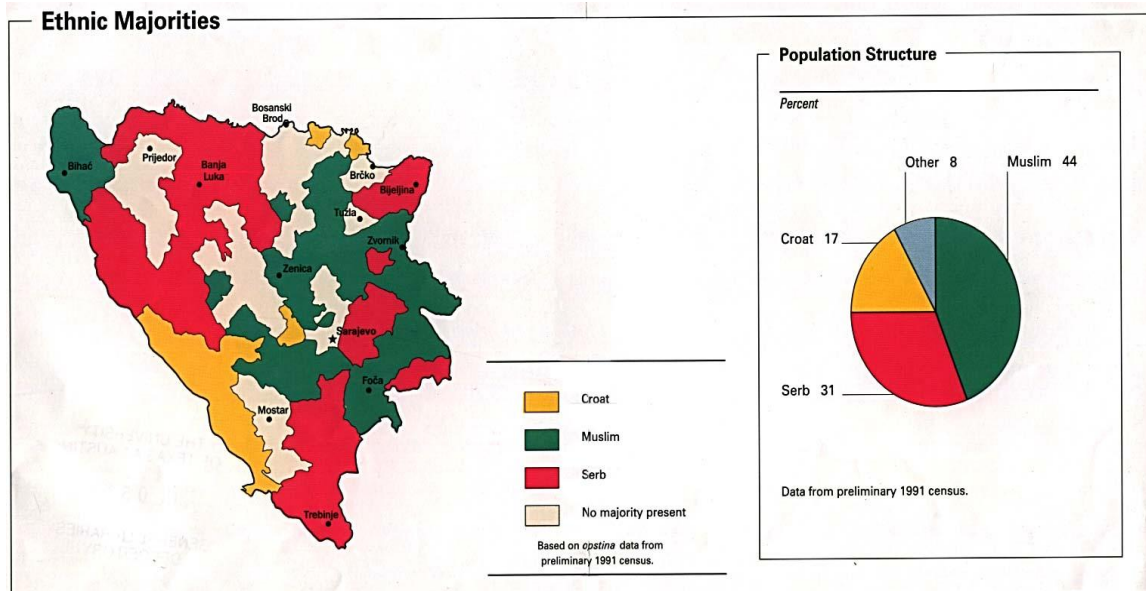
**A Cautionary Note**

However, I must add a precautionary note: Even though we are talking about culture, it is important to remember that children are individuals and cannot be made to fit into any preconceived mold of how they are "supposed" to act. The question is not necessarily how to create the perfect "culturally matched" learning situation for each ethnic group, but rather how to recognize when there is a problem for a particular child and how to seek the cause in the most broadly conceived fashion. Knowledge about culture is but one tool that educators may make use of when devising solutions for a school's difficulty in educating diverse children. Effective teachers in a diverse world need an edu-

One of the major issues discussed in the movie is the life in Multi-Cultural society. In **Sociology** class, the students learn that 'Multiculturalism' is a term related to communities containing multiple cultures. The Israeli society has also many diversities and the main purpose is to make students understand that should respect each religion, opinion or ideology.

Multiculturalism is seen by its supporters as a fairer system that allows people to truly express who they are within a society, that is more tolerant and that adapts better to social issues. The culture is not one definable thing based on one race or religion, but rather the result of multiple factors that change as the

world changes. The students would receive a map which would show them the main ethnic majorities in Bosnia before the war. In addition, they would receive a small ‘pie chart’ that would show them how the census describes population structure in its reports.



Ethnic Majorities in Bosnia by area (Yellow: Croat; Green: Muslim; Red: Serb).

The Film can be used as a good example of how normal people had done what the politicians couldn't or did not believe was possible. The Jewish community of Sarajevo refused to take sides, opened their own humanitarian aid agency inside the city's synagogue, and was soon joined by their Muslim, Croat and Serbian friends. While the community and those who helped it can emphasize the advantages of the ‘Salad Bowl Theory’ (another name for Multiculturalism), the Serbian policy can show the disadvantages of the racism and ethnic cleansing.

In **Psychology class**, I can use the film to raise other important questions – what makes people help each other? Why some people volunteered to help while others didn't? This can be connected to a case that students learn about the murder of Catherine Genovese. This murder is



mostly remembered by many because two weeks after the murder, a newspaper article reported the circumstances of her murder and the lack of reaction from numerous neighbors. For more than half an hour thirty-eight respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a how killer stalk and stab a woman while on one

had interfered. The public view of the story crystallized around a quote from the article by an

unidentified neighbor who saw part of the attack but deliberated before finally getting another neighbor to call the police, saying, "I didn't want to get involved". My point in this lesson would be first of all to see the students' reaction – what would they have done during a siege? Would they help or stay apathetic? My hope is that this movie would make them more emphatic people towards all parts of the Israeli society and not only law abiding citizens.

### **Civic Education Class**

The Issue of 'The Bosnian War' can serve me as teacher in several ways in this class. First, it touches the basics of this field study. The state is an independent organization of land and people. It has a territory, which may be as small as Andorra or as large as China. Second, it has a population, which may vary greatly in size and in degree of homogeneity. In addition, this population located within a territory is organized: it possesses specialized governing officials who operate in the name of the land and its people. Another important term is 'Sovereignty'. This is the quality of having an independent authority over a geographic area, such as a territory.

The students can learn from this case several lessons. **First**, it can serve a good lesson about population. As it was shown before, there were many ethnic groups in Bosnia. It shows that when we speak about a population of the country, it does not necessary means that the people may be of the same race, religion, ancestry and may not even speak the same language.

**Second**, in this war Serbia had violated Bosnia's sovereignty, as the definition of this term means

'lack of other authority over state than the domestic authority'. Examples of such other authorities could be a non-domestic church, a non-domestic political organization, or any other external agent. At my opinion, one who teaches civic education should always show cases that are



close to the students' world. That means to things that happen here and now and not something that happened in the past (That's the main difference between it and History though there is a strong connection between them). Therefore, I would like to use this film in order lead to



discussion about current topical issues as ‘The Crimean Crisis’ in which one country (Russia) is involved in the internal affairs of another country (Ukraine).

**Third**, during the war and in its’ later conflicts Serbia had violated human rights. The human rights issue is an important part of the curriculum in this field of study and the case can show them why they considered to be universal – not only other countries had interfered in order to stop the ethnic cleansing that happened through the war and those who followed it, but many of the Serbian officials were judged by the International Court of Justice. That can emphasize the students that human rights are not optional but fundamental and the one who violates them would be eventually brought to justice as in the case of the late Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic.



Another good lesson that can be taught by this movie is by teaching not only human rights but also human morals and human obligatory during a time of a military conflict. Many students ask (some naively and some cynically) what can they already do as teenagers in order to protect the human rights. **The film shows that in a time of a crisis, it is important not only to look for help, but also to look how to help.** While discrimination splits the humanity and causes horrible things (as ethnic cleansing in this war or the holocaust in the Second World War), it is important to understand and internalize that what unites us as humans is bigger than what differs between us. It was not matter if those who served help or those who received it were Jews, Muslims or Christians. Everyone deserved the same treatment and everyone made their part in order to help. This is truly “An inspiring story of friendship and commitment”.

### **History Class**

From all the classes, I think this film would be most relevant to the history class. Not only because it describes an historic issue but since it deals with many themes taught in the history lessons, while the film can be connected to them either directly or indirectly.

**First**, the film has a part which describes how the Jewish community paid its debt to **Zejneba Hardaga**. This is would be a very interesting case to tell the Israeli students because it is a story

of Muslim woman who had saved Jews during the Second World War and received the title of 'Righteous Among the Nations'. This title of honor is used by the State of Israel to describe non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis. Most of the examples in the history text books refer to Christians who helped the Jews and as a unique case the students are revealed to the story of **Chiune Sugihara**, a Japanese diplomat who served as Vice-Consul for the Empire of Japan in Lithuania, that helped several thousand Jews to leave the country by issuing transit visas to Jewish refugees so that they could travel to Japan. In a reality in which most of the Jewish students believe the biggest majority of Muslims want to kill them, it is important to remember another periods in history in which the Muslim majority helped the Jewish minority. This can be also an important lesson in teaching the students that they should do more efforts to help the not Jewish minority in the Israeli population to feel more comfortable and reduce the racism towards it.

It should be emphasized to the students that Zejneba paid a personal price for helping the Jews as her father was executed by the Nazis after they revealed about his aid. But the Jews they've saved



did not forget them and as the late Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, says in the film – “You didn’t left the Jews so the Jews would not abandon you”. The Joint (The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee), that offers aid to Jewish communities around the world through a network of social and community assistance programs, had helped her – as well as other not Jewish people – to get out of the Sarajevo, that was under siege, and rescued her life. This would be a good answer to all those students who wonder what does the State of Israel and the Jewish people do in order to help those who helped them today. Another topic that can be associated to it is

about the criteria one must to fulfill in order to receive the title mentioned above.

Second, the students can be exposed to the biography of Zejneba by reading a book that was written on her or watching another movie that was made by two Israeli producers about her. It can be seen that after she and her family were saved by Israel, due to the interference of the family which her family helped to save, she moved to Israel. Her daughter and her granddaughter converted their religion to Judaism. The students study many chapters about the Israeli-Arab Conflict so it’s most important at my point of view to make this subject balanced. The fact that

Zejneba's granddaughter even served as an officer in the Israeli Army, can show the students the uniqueness of the IDF, or connect their willingness to serve in the army even more since if people who are not an "official" part of the Jewish nation did it, so should they, while it can also serve the goal of showing them that not Muslims are bad – as some of these serve in the Israeli army as well, even in the combat units, and most of them are loyal citizens. Furthermore, this lesson can be taught only in History class but also in Civic Education class.

**Second**, in most of the themes learned by the students it can be seen that the main issue that keeps repeating is that the Jews were almost always the victim. This may serve the goal the Jewish state is there to defend the Jews and make sure that catastrophes like the pogroms, the blood libels or the holocaust would not happen again but it also shows only one side of the Jewish life in the exile. The curriculum describes the part in which the Jews helped to the evolvement of the world economy and culture but the story about those Jews who had served in the armies of their countries and helped them is not told maybe with an exception of Alfred Dreyfus, French artillery officer of Jewish background whose trial and conviction in 1894 on charges of treason became one of the most tense political dramas in modern French history. Known today as the Dreyfus Affair, the incident eventually ended with Dreyfus' complete exoneration. **This movie, however, helps to challenge the victim point of view at is show that "in this European war, Jews were not the victims. In this war, Jews were saving Muslims and Christians".**

**Fourth**, but not last as many can see in this film many other wonderful ideas, is the fact that this film can show the aftermath of the bloody conflict in the Balkans that its roots go back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This conflict between the different minorities has eventually led to the First World War, which than led to the Second World War and the later conflicts in this region that some of them last until today, even if we cannot see them on the surface. The film can also be used by let the students deal with the question of have changed and what have remained the same in this region? Another historical and political question that can be raised is how different countries through history (and in today) face the minorities' issue? Once again, the same questions can be asked in Civic Education class in comparison to the Israeli Policy.

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As I wrote at my application form, I really hope that by participating in this project and by seeing the city of Sarajevo, in which Franz Ferdinand - the Archduke and Royal Prince of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (that back than ruled that territory), I would be able to understand better what had happened there and this valuable knowledge to my students and make my classes more interesting...

