

Recollecting Our Past: St. Louis Bosnians a Generation after the War

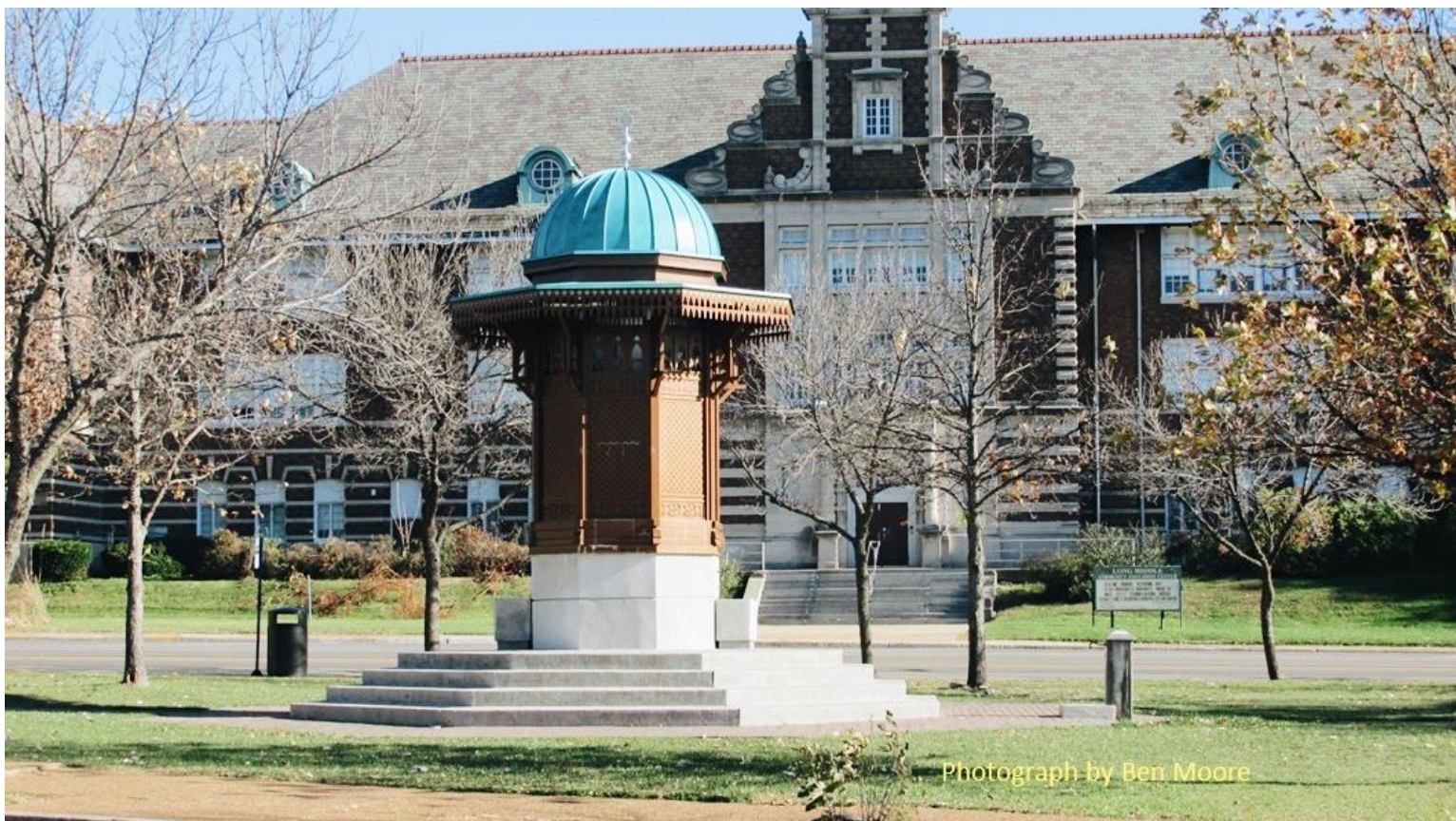
Fontbonne University, St. Louis, Missouri

Our Project

We are using archival materials to study how the Bosnian diaspora community in St. Louis, MO is changing a generation after the war and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key Archival Materials

- ~ 200 hundred **original oral histories** of Bosnian genocide survivors and their families
- **Ephemera** e.g., Superman comic books distributed by State Department to warn children about unexploded ordnance
- **The Book of Belongings**, published by the International Committee on Missing Persons, consisting of photographs of clothing and personal effects found in mass graves



Student Projects

Five students participated in an internship with the Center in the spring of 2022.

Student Projects

- Exploring the experience of younger Bosnian Americans through the Center’s oral history collection and interviewing a member of the local community
- Digitizing a collection of photos taken during the Siege of Sarajevo
- Designing open-access course materials on the war and genocide for high school instructors
- Developing a visual timeline of the history using items from the CBS archives
- Creating an original drawing inspired by the course and the Center’s collections

Methodology

- **COURSE** to improve students’ knowledge of Bosnian war, genocide & immigration to St. Louis over the last 3 decades
- **STUDENT INTERNSHIPS** to develop hands-on experience with the collections and knowledge of archival practices
- **ONLINE EXHIBIT** using the collections, going live in May!
- **COMMUNITY ARCHIVING** workshop in autumn w/ County library branch



Why Does This Project Matter?

St. Louis is home to the largest Bosnian refugee community in the world, with new generations in the process of understanding their past and legacy of displacement. The Bosnian experience can inform how new refugee communities to St. Louis – most recently Syrians and Afghans - can be helped to overcome challenges.

“The class has impacted the way I understand the members of my community [...] how important it is to form bonds with those who are different.” - *student feedback from Fall 2021*