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Interview with Mujo Music (FA 1137)

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[00:00:00]

VS: Actually, could you just talk into it so I can make sure the sound is picking up?

MM: Just say anything or?

VS: Yeah, it's picking up. Okay, that's all you need. [both laugh] Alright, so this is Virginia Siegel and I'm here with Mujo Music, did I say that? Music?

MM: Yes.

VS: It's Friday, January 29th, and we're in the Pioneer Log Cabin on WKU's campus. Um so, just to begin, tell me about yourself, um when and where you were born.

MM: Uh I was born in uh Bosnia and Herzegovina in the year of 1996, uh one year after the war. Um, I refuged to the United States with my family when I was six years old in 2001, and I have lived her in Bowling Green, um, up until this time and continue to live her in Bowling Green. Uh I started wh- here at Western Kentucky University two years ago, um I'm currently a sophomore with a major in Nursing.

VS: Okay. Um where were you, where were you born in Bosnia?

MM: I was actually born in the city of Tuzla, um one of the larger areas of, of Bosnia, it's more urbanized, central Bosnia, my parents are from eastern Bosnia. Um, my mom is from the town of Srebrenica where the genocide occurred, but um once we refuged and fled from eastern Bosnia after it was occupied by the Serb forces, we resettled um in a local town called [town name unclear] and Tuzla was the city closest, the major city that had a hospital, and that's where, that's where I was born.

VS: Yeah. What are your early memories of living in Bosnia?

MM: Um, I was six years old when I moved here, so um, I don't have a lot that I remember, but I vaguely remember. We actually lived in a basement in Bosnia, the first six years of my life. Um, it was a very poor environment, poverty, no water supply, our water supply was a well, and outside about fifty to a hundred feet from the house. No heating, no air conditioning, um very moldy inside the house. I do remember vaguely um the pictures still in my mind of a white gate that surrounded the house. It was a two-story house, um the basement and then the first floor. There was actually another refugee family that lived upstairs and we had the basement. Um, I do remember the white gate and, and the road, um, there was no asphalt, it was kind of just uh rock and dirt as the parking. Of course when I went to visit uh this, this year we went to visit and that gate is not what I had in mind, it's not as big and I feel like that's because I was so small that gate was, you know, about maybe five or six feet for me, but now it's like up to my knees, and no one lives there, the house is abandoned. Um, I do remember that there were bullet holes in one of the doors, that was just um a detail that I picked up and that's always stayed with me. The glass wasn't shattered but it was cracked and that's the opening to the door there was bullet holes. Uh the gate today is very changed, it's very much changed. it's um, like the white paint has peeled, it's very dirty looking, uh of course it's abandoned, but that's a few memories that I have.

VS: What do you remember about your move? Did you come straight-away to the United States or did you go anywhere else between coming here?

MM: We came here straight to the United States. My uncle, my dad's older brother, refuged to the United States in 1998, my um aunt, my father's sister, refuged in 2000, and we refuged in 2001. Uh we applied about a year and a half before we actually left Bosnia, and it's like a process you go through uh many, many interviews. The interviews were in Croatia, so we were, were um misplaced through Croatia, to um, that's where the refugee center, center was to apply to come to the United States. And uh, we came straight here on July thirty-first, 2001, uh straight to Bowling Green because that's where we had happy, my uncle and my aunt were here.

VS: What do you remember about- do you have memories of, of arriving, in Kentucky for the first time? Your first impressions or? You were young.

MM: Very, very vague, um the only thing I remember about my trip was on the trans-Atlantic flight I just remember laying down um on my stomach, we were sitting in the middle and I was laying across my mother, father, and my grandmother, just on my stomach. Um, I'm sure I was supposed to be in my seat fastened, but um that's, that's the only thing I really remember um aside from landing in Nashville. I remember that my uncle gave me some sunglasses to wear on the trip to, to Bowling Green, that, that's about it, about my arrival. I don't remember much.

VS: How- so you were six, right? So what, what grade were you in? Did you enter school straight-away?

MM: I was six, I started in Kindergarten, not first grade. Um, I did enter school about two months after arriving here in the United States. Of course we, me and my family and other refugee families that arrived from Bosnia at the time, there was um a huge population of us coming to the States. We, we had to attend the refugee office for um basic English classes, um stuff like visiting the Health Department, getting our vaccinations, getting tested for um, for very many communicable diseases. Um, signing up at a cable company, start getting the phones, um because most of us did not speak any English so we were given caseworkers, that's what the Bosnian language that came here probably in the early or mid nineties and knew English very well. But yes, I started Kindergarten probably about September, so right when the school year started. Um, I did not know any English, um it was very hard for me. Um, I do remember vaguely I did not know how to ask to use the restroom, um I did have a friend who was also from Bosnia, she came here when she was two years old and we went to the same Kindergarten class. So I kind of spent most of my time around her um because she could speak my language, so to me it was comforting. But um there was many times I cried, I would come home and cry, and I told my mom I didn't want to go to school anymore because I didn't know what they were telling me. I felt like, I mean I had separation anxiety from my parents, of course starting school anyway. I didn't attend school in Bosnia but starting school in an environment that's, that I'm not comfortable in, especially the language I don't speak and I've never heard um English spoken to me. I was out of my comfort zone.

VS: Yeah. And, so you, when you learned English at a young age so you've grown up speaking both languages, but do your family still, do they still speak primarily Bosni- I mean what do you speak at home?

MM: Um, at home I ninety-five percent of the time speak Bosnian. Um, I grew up speaking Bosnian, my family, over the years, have learned some English but not very fluently. Of course, um as soon as I was enrolled in school, I was the only child at that time, my mother and my father got factory jobs, and at that time your, your first priority was to begin earning income, some kind of income to be able to pay your pa- your house payments, the apartment, um the utility bills and stuff like that. Over the years, um they've learned the basics of English but at home we've always spoken Bosnian, and we continue to speak Bosnian. Um, I think it's a privilege for me, I'm very fluent in English of course, but also in Bosnian, including speaking, and writing, and listening, And uh, over the years I've kind of been the translator in the family so I've been kind of um, I guess a guide in the family. Um, taking my parents to doctors appointments, to the justice center, anywhere, since seventh grade, and uh I didn't know the best English or the best Bosnian but I've learned, over the years, and now I'm very fluent in both. I still continue to help my parents a lot, um in place they- there- they don't feel comfortable speaking. But yes, and i honestly feel like I want to keep speaking Bosnian at home because I speak so much English and it's required, you know, to be able to live in, in a country in the Western world, especially where English is the language, you have to know that language, but I feel like if my parents did not speak that Bosnian language I would start forgetting that, and it's very important for me to live the best of both worlds, kind of live in both cultures.

VS: Yeah, yeah. I remember you had told me previously about accompanying um was it friends and family to the doctor's office even, to translate for them.

MM: Yes, um my elderly grandmother, she is very illiterate, she does not drive of course. I accompany her at her doctor's offices or anywhere else in town that she needs to go where English is spoken. Also my family, my father, my mother. [00:10:00] Um, I've had other family members, I take them sometimes as well. Um, friends that I know, people that are from other parts of Bosnia than my parents met, just as a way to help them um, um not, not for money or anything but just as a, as a kindness, and I still continue to do that today.

VS: I remember you said something about there being cultural differences in the way you let people know about illness too, or their, their diagnosis too.

MM: Yes, I think of we've spoke about um probably in detail about certain topics, but um for example, um like you said about cultural differences, and a personal story. When my grandmother was sick many, uh three, four years ago, they told her she had a neoplasm, which uh cancer, and they wanted to tell, tell her um straight to her face that she had a neoplasm or what stage it was or how much time they predicted she had, and not because she's only my grandmother but also, you know, from the culture we come from, it's kind of hard to tell. You're supposed to notify the family, which the doctors were very supportive

with me. Um, she ended up actually being well, thank God she's um well, and doing well currently, but things like that um I feel like are a privilege for people like me who speak both languages and are able to connect with both cultures. Also, um going back to living like the best of both worlds, being part of both cultures you learn so much about one culture but also the um, another culture.

VS: Yeah, yeah. Um, I was going to ask if, if you went back, if you've been back to Bosnia but you just answered that. Do you go back regularly?

MM: Uh, yes, I, um, like I've said a few minutes ago, I've been this past year, um I've been three times since 2001, since we refuged here. Um, we were able to get our citizenship about five to ten years ago, I don't know exactly what year, I think it was 2007. Um, my parents were, obtained their citizenship and I was a minor at that time so i was granted citizenship on behalf of my parents. So we're US citizens, and um I've been back in 2007, 2013 we went back, my uh mother's brother's bones were found in a mass grave from the genocide and that was closure for us. Um, we attended the burial, the funeral services that year on July 11th, that was the main reason we visited in 2013. And I've been back this past summer, 2015 of July, I had a family member get married. They live in Switzerland, they refuged to Switzerland, but they were having their wedding in Bosnia and we attended and visited family and my grandmother who lives there. Um, we visit mostly because we have family there. Um, my closest family member is my grandmother, my mother's mother, but um also distant cousins, my father's um cousins, my grandmother's nephews and nieces. Um, distant family but still very important. I like to visit, I wish I could go every year regularly but um sometimes the expenses and stuff-

VS: Yeah.

MM: -are quite a lot.

VS: So...you were too young to experience war, but of course you grew up with an awareness of this, you know, this is an important part of your family's history. Uh, how was, how was that shared with you? Did you just always grow up knowing about it or was there a point at which you started to ask questions? Or?

MM: Well, I, my mother was pregnant with me during the Srebrenica genocide, in July of 1995, um she was pregnant with me. So by the time I was born in March of '96, I, I, of course the war was over, um the beginning of my life um, you know, still not aware or um mentally developed as a child, you know? Um, I wasn't aware but as I remember, you know when we first moved to the United States, actually um back that up, back to Bosnia. When I was four or five years old I started going to the mosque, um to Saturday and Sunday school and

learning the basics of the religion, and I moved to the United States um there was a, not an actual mosque here but a rented facility to serve as a prayer house and I started attending that. My parents, you know, told me um not to eat pork at school because it's against my religion, and um, I think it was just conversational. As time went on, as I got older, seven, eight, nine, ten, you know? Um I knew, I was aware the war happened in Bosnia and um I asked my parents why we moved to the United States and they would say, "because of the war." [00:15:28] Um, as I became a teenager and um I was more curious and my parents, you know, told me stories as there was a religious issue, a religious tension between which nationality you were, and, you know, I start- it started to make more sense, the different, the Muslims or the Serb-Orthodox, what had happened. And today, still today, um I know I'm very aware of what happened and um, you know, I've researched this stuff, but to me I still find stories very interesting today, um and I think I'll never get tired of the stories because that's all I have. But I feel like I've always lived in this family of course, my parents, I haven't experienced a different family, but I feel like it's different than an ordinary family. Um, something my parents went through, and my grandmother, and, and other um Bosnian families, I feel like anybody that's ever been through a war, no matter where in the world you're from, it changes you. The way that we cook, how much we cook, um we don't believe in throwing away any food, you eat leftovers three, four, five days, as long, as long as they're not um spoiled. You don't throw bread away, um and it's mainly because we have that mindset, we were hungry before, you know? My, my parents would quote, or my grandmother, "we were hungry," or "we didn't have food during the war, you never know what could happen." It's just, just the awareness you have about what's going on in the world and what can happen again, um makes you thankful for what you have and makes me realize the seriousness of the situation. Like it's changed them as people-

VS: Yeah.

MM: -and made me very aware. Um, of course it's not the same as if I was in the war, um I like to use the phrase like today parts of the world that are at war will hear about it on the news, and um like people would say, you would watch and say, "I'm sorry," and turn off the T.V. and continue eating dinner. Like you're not there, but ma- having a connection with those people because that's something my family went through, and going back to Bosnia and visiting the mass graves and seeing the reality of this is, is very chilling.

VS: Yeah, I imagine. So you um, your mother was in Srebrenica, is that where your father was as well, or?

MM: At times, yes. Um, I don't know exactly the, the times, the periods, um I know my father is, both of my parents and uh many other people here in the community are from surrounding areas. Um, Bosnia is not very big as a country but the villages pretty much where they

lived, my father lives in a nearby village to Srebrenica, maybe twenty, thirty kilometers out. Um, now this, this seems very far- very much further for them since they did not have cars, so twenty, thirty kilometers would take them hours to reach Srebrenica or, or a place like that. My father is actually from a different village than my mother, but during the war men had to escape through forests, many, many days. Um, I know a, a guy here in the community that was um, that traveled through the woods for I think eighty something days, just to flee to safety because during that time men and women were separated, women and children were separated. Now this is towards the end of the war, when Srebrenica had fallen apart, of course that was the, that was kind of like the end of the war toward the end, and that's when um action was taken. But [clears throat] many of the villages were destroyed before the war, and many people died, like my, my father's father, my grandfather, he died in 1994 I want to say, or '93, one of those two years, and my father's brother, my uncle also was um killed, and he died in battle, um, way- a year or two before Srebrenica occurred. So people were dying, um then my father he did not lose family member in the Srebrenica genocide but my dad went through Srebrenica to be able to flee over to um western Bosnia, where it was safe. [00:20:09] My mother was in Srebrenica on July 11th, she arrived with my grandmother, her mother-in-law, um with a bus and they were stationed in one of the warehouses there and they spent the night there, in Srebrenica and then they left on July the 12th. However, the men and boys weren't with them, they were separated, um they, they started walking the next day my- um to a nearby place, um another village or so, that's where the buses were available to take to Tuzla, which is the city I was born in, um it's the second largest city in Bosnia, after the capital of Sarajevo. Um, my father, his way out to Tuzla was only through walking through the forests, and that took um I think he said he- Srebrenica fell July 11th and that's when the big massacre occurred, that's when they bombarded and attacked the whole town, everybody had to flee. Um, he came to Tuzla the twenty-first day, so twenty-one days after Srebrenica had fallen he was, he um came to the line of freedom, or the territory that was considered safe. So for twenty-one days he was through the fo- he um traveled through the forest, of course not by himself, um many other men and boys that um some he knew, some he didn't, but they weren't all together, there were probably hundreds of little groups, to eight, ten, twelve men. Some were uh captured and assassinated, some where um, those that were captured um were, of course, assassinated, um because that's when the Srebrenica genocide, those that were captured were killed, the eight, eight thousand three hundred and seventy two that's recorded, but I'm sure there's more than that. Um th- those that did not make it to the genocide were either killed like in battle or before the genocide they were held in concentrations camps and either starved to death, beat to death, blindfolded and killed.

VS: So um, are there, are there stories that stand out from- that they, your parents would tell you? Or that your family would tell you about, things that stuck with you?

MM: Yes, um-

VS: I'm sure it all did, but-

MM: Right. My father, he doesn't like to talk much, um he has, he doesn't like speaking of, speaking about the war, um it's traumatizing of course, I don't blame him, but a, a phrase that he's mentioned, he's shared with us before that really stood out, a part of a story was when he left, when Srebrenica had fallen and uh he would flee through the forests, um of course there was not much food or other, other things to eat, he said he left with a watch on his hand that would, that fit on his wrist. By the time he crossed um into the safe territory on the twenty-first day, um when he would raise his hand that watch would uh slide up all the way to his shoulder. Um, I, you can only imagine um how anorexic he must've been those twenty-one days, to starve. Um, ate anything and everything, molded bread that they could find, with mold uh on it, just, just to survive, probably dehydrated. Uh that really stood out, that, that's a powerful image for me. Um, also of the stories my grandmother has told me, my grandmother actually, before the Srebrenica genocide in uh 1992, in October, I don't know which exact date, but October of 1992, a grenade fell in front of her house and she was on the porch. Um, the fragment blew her arm, her hand off and uh killed her niece instantly. She was carried to the hospital, three hours on um some sticks, a rope, and a, like a mattress top-like padding, uh to the, to Srebrenica, that, that was the closest hospital in Srebrenica. Um arriving in the evening time, it was already dark with no electricity, only lanterns, and her arm was cut off, um, and they did not operate on her till the next morning. So, and also when they did operate on her there was no anesthesia available. Uh that's uh very chilling to me, um that's a very powerful story that will always stay with me. I, I just, I'm speechless when she tells me that because I can't um imagine what, what that would be like. [00:25:01] Um, not being able to operate that night, with an amputated arm that, that was infected by the next morning, and she said she just spent um all night screaming for, for them to come and, and just kill her, and stop the suffering. And also the story of my grandmother, she's, she's the one that um survived most of the traumas in the family that's still living with us today. She was also shot out of a rifle in the stomach, um in May of two- um sorry, not 2003, May of 1993, in a corn field. Um, she was laying down because she heard shot, um shots that she heard them shooting from the front, from the front lines, wherever the um lot territory was. And she laid down but [clears throat] it targeted her in the stomach and it left a big opening with her um insides, her intestines spilling out onto her upper legs. Again, she was carried to the hospital. I also can't imagine that. Luckily, um God saved her in the way that the doctor that operated on her arrived at the hospital thirty minutes right before they brought her, and she was the first one on the operating table. [clears throat] That was a very, very um long recovery, um she had the, I think, Red Cross and uh what do they call them? The Doctors without Borders would um come visit her in the village um for several months during the war, to give her aid. She had uh [clear throat]

kind of had her bowel movement on her stomach and the hospital could not do nothing for her, but it took um a lot of months for her to get better. And during that time her husband was killed, after uh he was killed I think in '94, I know he was alive uh through both traumas that she went through, he was alive. Her son also died, uh was killed, not died, but um he was killed along with my grandfather. Those stories like that, like my grandmother's um are very, very chilling to me and very powerful. But I feel like they, they send, send a message and make you realize of, of the serious of an event.

VS: Yeah, absolutely. She is a strong woman.

MM: Yeah, I, I like to say um, I guess when they say "whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger," um I guess that that's very true. [slight laugh]

VS: She'd be the strongest woman alive. Yeah, so that, that's your father's mother?

MM: Yes, my, my father's mother. She, she lives with us, um here in Bowling Green. She's always lived with my father. Um, of course after, after my grandfather was killed in the war, um she lived, she stayed with my, with my father and lives in our family. [clears throat]

VS: Um...I guess um part of what we hope to accomplish with this exhibit is to share um the Bosnian community's experience and what brought them here, but then also just to celebrate the vibrant culture that the Bosnian community has. So do you um, like what kind of arts forms do you think you would want to most share with, you know, the region, people outside of the Bosnian community?

MM: Um, as far as art forms, can you explain a little?

VS: Sure, um, so Sevdah singing, let's start there. Um, tell me about Sevdah singing.

MM: Uh Sevdah singing is um known to the region. It's um, of course it's been passed down from generation to generation, um it's probably not something you would hear, you know if you were to go to a concert to Bosnia. There are but um, of course, as every culture has new music and, and it, the time changes throughout centuries, but yes, that's uh very popular in Bosnia. And [clears throat] that's not something I listen to personally, I'm aware of the music, it doesn't bother me, but it's not my favorite or it's not something I would listen to in my car. But it's, it's known in Bosnia, like my grandmother, that's like the music she loves to listen to, versus me, where I don't mind it but it's not something I would listen to. [00:30:04] It's um soothing music, it's very slow, kind of um relaxes you...yeah.

VS: Is that- so what music do you like to listen to? I'm just curious because you were talking, you talk about having a foot in both worlds and-

MM: Right, um I enjoy listening to Bosnian music um, I love Bosnian music, more of um the recent singers, like from the '90s and the 2000's, um I'm more of a techno person. I also listen to American music, I listen to rap, R&B, hip-hop, um stuff like that. I got back and forth, but a majority of the music I listen to is Bosnian.

VS: Um, who are some artists? Um we talked, I think it was Denis and Amed and I were talking about Dino, I don't want to say his last name wrong, Merlin?

MM: Dino Merlin?

VS: Yeah.

MM: Yes, he's also a popular singer um known in Bosnia. His songs are um, how do I want to say this, not like techno but um not a Sevdah, somewhere kind, somewhere in between. He's popular, a lot of young people from Bosnia like to listen to him, like I said, more, more so than like a sixty of seventy year old would listen to. I like, I like him, um I also like other Bosnian singers. Um, English, back here in America, um, rap artists I listen to, and, and, um R&B, hip-hop, more so than, than country or jazz. Um, that's not really my thing, not that it bothers me, I'm, I'm more of a uh go with the flow, I don't mind the music, um whatever is on it, it doesn't bother me.

VS: So I guess that made me think of a question. Um, when you moved here from Bosnia, were there special objects that your- were there objects or um pictures, um like what were the key things you brought with you?

MM: Well, honestly um, there wasn't much that we brought. Um, we, maybe I think we brought two luggage, two luggage bags, um with just the very, very basics, like our clothes, um pictures, stuff like that. Um, we didn't- our furniture that we had we sold, of course we can't take that. We uh, we just gave stuff, some stuff away to the neighbors that weren't leaving to the States. Um, of course it's very different than if you move from one town to another, you're flying, you know, half way across the world. Um, honestly it's sad to say but we didn't have much. Um, the pictures really um, there was a few pictures we brought of course, um stuff like we brought I think a holy book, stuff like that, that we've, that we uh kept in the house, everything else pretty much stayed. The dishes we distributed out to the neighbors and, and we lived a very, very basic life.

VS: Yeah. When you go, when you go back to Bosnia, do you, do you go to lots of areas or do, do you, did you visit your home, your family's home before Tuzla? Or?

MM: [clear throat] My grandmother lives in the suburbs of Tuzla, about um ten kilometers outside of Tuzla, that's where we primarily go. Um, she has a house there, that's my mother's mother. Um, and we stay there, our whole stay is at her, her house. Uh, we have family kind of distributed um in a couple of regions of Bosnia, like um my father's aunts and uncles lives in the Republika Srpska, which is um part of Bosnia but it's not the Federation of Bosnia. Um, Republika Srpska is um, Srebrenica is part of them Republika Srpska, which is uh the part of Bosnia where is now mostly occupied by Serbs, and um people went back and build houses on where the war took place, and uh destroyed things, people went back to their villages and built. And we have some family members that, that live in Sarajevo, the capital city, so we uh commute um [clear throat] between these, those three places. [00:35:06] Mostly, since um, uh we go to visit family, that's the main reason we go, um more than like sightseeing. Of course we, we go back and visit and like to spend time in the capital and sightsee, but um family is like the main reason we go back. So we, depending on where they are that's where we usually will go.

VS: Yeah, the, yeah ask- uh the way I asked the object question was little aw- is- was too broad. [slight laugh] Sorry. Um, I guess what I meant to ask was if you were, you know, gonna-like what traditions do you think are important? Like if you were to talk about your Bosnian culture, like what, what are the traditions that um come to mind?

MM: Traditions that come to mind? I feel like um, maybe it's more, what I'm about to say is more religious than cultural, but um that's the traditions of our culture because we are from, um we practice the religion of Islam. Um, we're Muslim so when it comes to traditions I would think um, like to Eid, Ramadan, stuff like that. Um, a lot of our culture and traditions are based on our religion. So like the Eid holidays that happen twice a year, once after Ramadan and then once um later down the road in the year, and then Ramadan, would be some traditions that, that I um think about, what- that, that would come to mind when asked.

VS: Yeah, absolutely. I'd say, I'd say um religion is definitely a hu- I mean I think that is culture, that's-

MM: Yes, um, especially in this religion, um it's, I feel like if people from Bosnia or, or the Bosnian community here in Bowling Green and throughout the world, a huge part of the culture is also based on the religion. And also, um if like I would talk about culture or, or if I could picture someone I'd picture my grandmother and her dimija or and a headscarf. Or um, a small house somewhere out in the village, um maybe, maybe it's not so much

cultural, maybe it uh more detailed to my family, because not everybody lived in a village, but um I think a lot of the Bosnian community here is from um the rural areas of Bosnia, rather than the urban areas.

VS: Yeah. What is the landscape like in Bosnia? I've nev- I mean I've never been there.

MM: The landscape uh, it's uh I, I would describe it not mountainous, there's not really mountains but there are hills and valleys, um a lot of hills and valleys. Of course uh eastern, northern Bosnia, even central Bosnia, is um very green, grassy, um with a lot of hills. Um, fresh air, it's more of uh what you would see in the United States probably in like the state of Washington, or uh somewhere up north, like in Minnesota, not um with a lot of forests. Southern Bosnia is not much different, but like uh take um an example of the city of Mostar in uh southwest Bosnia, like on the edge of the Adriatic Sea, um it's of course not um very green or, or of course there's still are hills and valleys but it's, it's not as green um almost like a, kind of like a sandy, rocky area. But the rest, the majority of Bosnia, is um with hills, valleys, forests, very, very green, um, green country. And uh, winters are harsh, uh winters you can see um my parents would um talk to me how they would go to school in knee or thigh-deep snow, uh where they are from. In, in Bosnia, you know, winters are harsh. Um also, I've experienced mostly summers because I've visited only in the summertime. Um, of course, when I lived there I don't really remember, but since the times I've visited we've only visited in the summertime. [00:39:59] And to me the summers were harsh too, because it can be very hot, you know? The temperatures can go up to about one hundred, 104 Fahrenheit um in some summer months, July usually, and the thing is no one ha- there's no air conditioning in the country, so, to me, summers are really hot, sometimes rainy. But um I think it's, again, I feel like the country is in the best of both worlds, they have a lot of snow in the winter time and then summertimes can be very, very hot.

VS: Extreme to extreme.

MM: Mediterranean climate during the summer, very, very Mediterranean, and then during the winter um, kind of like northern European climate.

VS: [laughing] Kind of like the snow we had a couple weeks ago-

MM: Right.

VS: -but we don't get that every year. [laughing]

MM: Right.

VS: Wow. Yeah I just picture, so because when you said a lot of people are from rural areas I wasn't- my family is from a rural area but it's like flat, flat as the eye can see, so.

MM: Right, Bosnia is not very flat. Um, there is of course, I'm sure certain areas of Bosnia that are flatter than others. Like the capital city, it's uh almost like it's in a valley, um because all around it you see is uh hills and stuff like that.

VS: Sounds pretty. [laughs]

MM: It, it's very pretty, it's a beautiful country.

VS: Yeah. Well, um, I guess I just want to end by asking if, um, if there's anything you'd like to say that we haven't covered so, so far, that you think is important.

MM: I think that um, I enjoyed doing this interview and I think that um this is important. Um, I just want to say that I'm thankful for being here in the United States, and I mean it's a great country for um allowing us to be here and I guess live what people like to say "the American dream," and start a new life, a opportunity for a new life and a better life, but I also think for me it's important um not only to learn about Bosnia, but every country in the world, and uh this happens to be Bosnia this year, but I feel like what we are doing here at Western Kentucky University should be done on every campus, um and every country or at least every, every nationality that we have living here in the, in our community or in any other community. Um, because so, so many cultural differences, so many backgrounds people come from, um those people that are refugee- refuging here to Bowling Green, or, or anywhere in the United States, or they might not be refugees, for, for whatever reason they might be coming for, political reasons or um natural disasters, you know? It does- it doesn't matter, but um they can learn so much um from people living here in the United States, however, um with that being said, I feel like the United States can learn about different cultures and areas of the world where these people come from, and I feel like that would really help out community um bond with these people. It would also be an easier transition, I feel like. Um, it's very hard um, um it's a very, very hard moving from one country to another across the world, especially where the culture, the language, the people, um the climate, the landscape, *everything* is very, very different. Um, it's very stressful, it's not easy, but um I think we all need to stick together in our community and throughout the world as a whole, um to famil- familiarize ourselves with one another. And I think what we're doing with um this project, with Bosnia, um is a start, and um hopefully it'll be very successful. Um, but also not just Bosnia, being able to do other countries like this and learn out their people and their cultures. Um primarily the people that move, moved here uh to the United States are exp- are adapting to the U.S. culture, but um the U.S. can learn so much from um other people's' culture too, so I think it, it would be great for um all of us to

bond. Even me, um even though I live both cultures, I would still like to learn about another culture, um from Asia, from Africa, and um bond with, with uh other students here at Western Kentucky University that aren't from, from here or that aren't from Bosnia, that are from other parts of the world.

VS: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. Um, because we have a lot, we have a large Burmese population here, um a lot of students from Saudi Arabia, right? Yeah we have-

MM: Yeah, like uh Western Kentucky University is a worldwide leading university with international reach, and that's so right. Um we have so many students here as international students, as uh students that have relocated to live here in Bowling, and like me, um I'm not here as an international student, I'm a U.S. citizen, but um I'm, I'm originally from Bosnia, um have settled here in the States and attend uh Western Kentucky University. And there's, there's refugees coming from, currently from Syria, from parts of Africa, from uh Asia, from everywhere around the world, Latin America, South America, and um I think this is great.

VS: Thank you.

MM: Thank you.

VS: All right. Um, so that concludes our interview, um.

[00:46:07 End Track]