



Storytelling in Film and Youth Activism in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Written by [Tina Ellen Lee \(Opera Circus\)](#)



Photo by Robert Golden.

Opera Circus UK, Kings College London and Sarajevo School of Science and Technology, in collaboration with international filmmaker and photographer Robert Golden, are launching a series of film making workshops on 2-6 July 2019 as part of the Changing the Story project. The aim is to encourage the development of film making and youth activism through the sharing of young people's stories in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bosnia has the highest number of young graduates in Europe leaving the country to live and work elsewhere. There is a general sense of apathy and passivity amongst young people brought on by the endless corruption, nepotism, the divided schools' system, the religious gulf encouraged by priests and imams and the donor-driven imposition of international decision making with little consultation of the people themselves.

This is a small project that looks to start a step by step process, the aim of which is to begin to share the stories and ideas of young Bosnian's through film and disseminate them as widely as possible. Even the EU is now recognizing that communities need to be part of any decision making about their lives and in this time of deep political uncertainty and the degradation of our climate, this must include the voices of young people.

In 2010 the then young director of the Youth Centre in Srebrenica said,

“After the war when we were all ready to rebuild our country, we had so much energy, but they rebuilt the mosques and churches, the roads and bridges but they never rebuilt the people.”

The project will recruit 6 young aspiring Bosnian filmmakers, aged between 18 and 26, who are already activists or would like to be, to take part in a series of film making workshops. They will receive two months of mentoring around the creation of their short film including film and editing skills, storytelling and the wider dissemination through film festivals and social media.

The communications and dissemination team for this project is made up of an international group of youth leaders who have been part of different projects led by Opera Circus UK and Humanity in Action, BiH. They include graduates from the Sarajevo Film Academy, part of the SSST and The Complete Freedom of Truth, Opera Circus' long term international youth arts programme.

<http://thecompletefreedomoftruth.com>

<https://www.humanityinaction.org/Bosnia%20and%20Herzegovina>

Changing the Story, is a project that works with young people, the arts, civil society, and post-conflict countries. This project, in particular, is ensuring that young people are co-creating the process from the outset and that the team that is delivering the work includes skilled young professionals and graduates working peer to peer with the participants.

The young team includes a web and graphic designer, Bosnian and Romanian, Marko Stankovic and Irina Maria Ganescu, a graduate in communications from Florence and Toulouse University Francesco Pipparelli, and the Digital Lead from TCFT, who was part of the student team working with Paul Cooke at Leeds University on the creation of the Changing the Story project itself, Rory Newbery.

The Project Manager is Melisa Mehmedovic a graduate from International Burch University who works with Humanity in Action and Lamia Sabic, a young filmmaker and editor and a graduate from the Film Academy, both Sarajevo based.

The whole team involved either comes from or has travelled and/or worked in BiH both over the last couple of years and in the long term. Opera Circus has worked in the Balkan region since 2004, in particular in Srebrenica with young artists and activists since 2008.

The idea for this project is based on conversations held with a number of young people in Bosnia who refused to participate in any international led programmes or calls for funding which centered on peace and reconciliation processes. They felt these were imposed from outside the country and donor driven and had nothing to do with their futures or the future of the country in which they wanted to live.

The project aims to distribute the films produced to a wider youth audience across Europe and beyond, as well as share with relevant policymakers and others who need to be more aware of young people's priorities and concerns, to engage and learn from them. In doing so it aims to not only build the skills of young people in BiH, but also partner and build solidarity with other young change-makers across Europe.

As part of the research and learning, we aim to add to the growing evidence of the importance of the use of arts in a wide range of projects and processes including the cohering of communities, encouraging inclusion, the use as part of therapeutic healing and as a powerful tool for communication.



Photo by Robert Golden.

Project Partners

Tina Ellen Lee, Artistic Director of Opera Circus was invited as artist in residence to take part in the first workshops in Prishtina in September 2018. This was followed by a successful bid to develop the practical part of a youth arts research project in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Opera Circus will work with this group of young filmmakers with the generous support of Mersiha Muranović, Director of the Film Academy of Sarajevo School of Science and Technology through Dr. Jasmin Hasic alongside Dr. Tiffany Fairey and Dr. Henry Redwood of Kings College, London. Humanity in Action BiH, is also participating through Dr. Hasic, and is an international educational NGO working on human rights. We are delighted that the OSCE, BiH and the British Ambassador, Matt Field have offered support.



Robert Golden will be leading the practical training through the understanding of storytelling in film, as well as contributing to some of the learning around activism. Robert is not only an international photographer and filmmaker but has worked throughout his life against racism and injustice. Robert's work will be seen at the Black Cultural Archives Gallery in Brixton, London from June 21st as part of the Commemoration of the Windrush Generation and their important contribution to the development of the UK after the Second World War.



Notting Hill riots 1976. Photo: Robert Golden

