

# FAITH AND COMMUNITY: A DIALOGUE

## FINAL CONFERENCE REPORT

Sarajevo, 8-10 May 2009

This report documents highlights of the Final Conference of **Faith and Community: A Dialogue**, a project funded by the US Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and implemented by IREX (International Research and Exchanges Board). The conference brought together 24 program participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, 12 of their colleagues, and 7 US experts selected by the program participants, as well as staff from IREX and its two partners – International Visitors Council of Philadelphia (IVC) and the International Multireligious Intercultural Center in Sarajevo (IMIC). The conference took place from 8-10 May 2009 at Hotel Europa and other locations in Sarajevo.



IMIC Director Marko Orsolić opened the conference by noting that just a few minutes walk from the conference location is the Latin Bridge, the scene of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination 95 years ago in June 1914. So much history has passed since then; so many upheavals have taken place in the region. Orsolić spoke of the political abuse of religion in the region, when religion should be between god and man. He noted that ***"whether we are believers, agnostics or atheists, we all need to struggle for the dignity of man."***

## RELIGION AND EDUCATION

Nedim Muhedinović of IMIC facilitated this panel discussion, which included:

- **Zorica Kuburić.** Professor of Sociology and Religion in Novi Sad, Serbia
- **Davor Marko.** Expert on religion in media and education
- **Amra Pandžo.** Director of the NGO Mali Koraci (Small Steps)
- **Marko Antonio Brkić.** Director of the Interreligious Institute MRI

**Zorica Kuburić** described a survey that had been carried out throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina to assess how people with Orthodox, Catholic and Islamic identities perceived their own and the other religions. The findings revealed that representatives of all three religions invariably viewed their own religion positively, and the other two religions somewhat negatively.

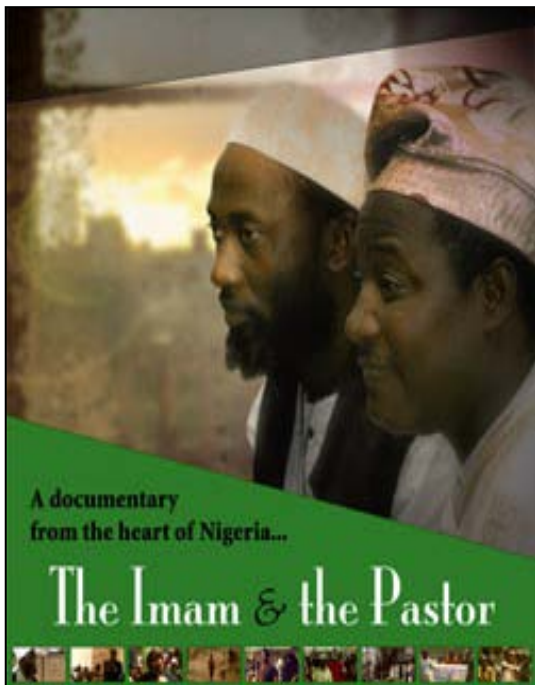
The religion of the majority group is the one included in the school curriculum. In divided communities, children may share the same school building but may attend classes in different shifts using different curricula – one for Catholics, one for Muslims, and one for Orthodox Serbs. Thus the children are in effect totally isolated from each other. While the constitution affirms that religion and state are separate, Zorica commented that this is not the case in reality. One of the most interesting aspects of participant visits to the USA was to see how not only public but even private faith-based schools, such as the Quaker school Friends Select and a Roman Catholic school, accepted pupils of all faiths as well as agnostics and atheists.

**Davor Marko** talked about how the media exacerbates religious divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, consolidating *“parallel public opinions which do not communicate with each other.”* His survey revealed that religion as such is not featured widely in the media, with the exception of religious holidays. Further, the main religions are only presented in the media through their chief representatives – for example the Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Mustafa Cerić, and Patriarch Pavle of the Serbian Orthodox Church. As for small sects, such as Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses, they are completely marginalized by the media.

**Amra Pandžo** presented two projects currently being administered by the NGO Mali Koraci. The first is a manual for teachers of religious education entitled “The Peaceful Dimension of Islam.” The publication is gender sensitive, presenting positive images of Muslim women in public life. By 2010, all teachers of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina will have received the publication and will have attended workshops on how to use it. Mali Koraci’s second project “TRAG-om Vjere I Mira” (Towards Faith and Peace) focuses on interfaith education for people under 21 years of age.

Over the summer of 2009, Christians and Muslims will attend separate workshops, culminating in a joint inter-religious seminar.

**Marko Antonio Brkić** described his research for an MA thesis entitled “Social Responsibility, Violence, and Religious Education.” He observed that before the war there was no religious education and no violence, while paradoxically the opposite is true now. He believes that schools have lost their authority and system of values. Traditional religious education is “passive” in the sense that it does not engage in society. Political power mechanisms are more important than social welfare. ***“It is as if we are blinded after 45 years in a dark basement”*** Brkić noted in his presentation. ***“As a result we don’t have clear religious goals in education.”***



## THE IMAM AND THE PASTOR

Program participant Igor Lukenda from Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina presented a captivating documentary film called **The Imam and the Pastor**. It tells the remarkable tale of religious peacemaking and reconciliation in Nigeria. The film is based on the work of Imam Mohammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye and tells the stories of their transformation from leaders of militant Christian and Muslim youth into grassroots peacebuilders. In the film Imam Ashafa and Pastor James sum up their relationship thus: ***“We are like a married couple who cannot divorce for the sake of our children.”***

## PUBLICATIONS REFERRED TO

**Religion and Tolerance:** *Journal of the Center for Empirical Researches of Religion*. Edited by Zorica Kuburic. Vol VII, No. 11. Novi Sad. January – June 2009.

**Religion and Pluralism in Education: Comparative approaches in the Western Balkans.** Edited by Zorica Kuburić and Christian Moe. CEIR in cooperation with the Kotor Network. Novi Sad 2006.

**Images of Religious Others: Discourse and distance in the Western Balkans.** Edited by Christian Moe. CEIR in cooperation with the Kotor Network. Novi Sad 2008.

**A Gender Perspective in Multi-religious Dialogue in the 21st Century.** Svenka Savić and Rebeka Jadranka Anić. Futura publication & Female studies research. Novi Sad 2009

Davor Marko. **So in the West there is Some Other God: Stereotypes and prejudice in the media towards Islam.** Published by Mediaplan Institute in Sarajevo with support from Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. March 2009.

Svenka Savić. **Feminist Theology.** Futura publikacija. Novi Sad. 2002.

## US EXPERTS PRESENTATIONS

Ann Stauffer of IVC Philadelphia facilitated two sessions of US Experts Presentations, involving:

- **Marwan Kreidie.** Arab-American Development Corporation, Philadelphia
- **Maurice Scott.** Police Athletic League, Philadelphia
- **Ralph Blanks.** African American Interdenominational Ministries, Philadelphia
- **Amy Johnston.** City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, Philadelphia.
- **Jeremy Brochin.** Penn Hillel. University of Pennsylvania.
- **Amanda Grant.** UNICEF\_Georgetown, Georgetown University, Washington DC.
- **Carolyn Shank.** Friends Select School, Philadelphia.

All US expert participants described how they had been enchanted by the beauty of the land of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its people. They described how they had been moved and uplifted during their visit around the country prior to the conference.

**Marwan Kreidie** noted parallels between the divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and his father's country, Lebanon. He showed a Public Service Announcement (PSA) produced by a youth group in Lebanon that shows youth from other countries referring to themselves as citizens of that country (for example "I am American" or "I am Spanish"), while Lebanese youth identify themselves as members of a particular group such as Sunnis, Shia, or Druze. The text at the end of the PSA reads: ***"We say we are Sunni, or Shia, or Druze. When will we begin to call ourselves Lebanese?"*** Marwan went on to describe the experiences of the Arab community in the United States following the events of 9/11, when ***"suddenly we were the enemy."*** He noted that in Philadelphia, unlike in other major US cities, there was not one violent incident between Christians and Muslims. Marwan explained that, ***"Instead we talked. We made ourselves known as an immigrant group. We talked to the police, officials and the media..."*** While the federal government was not sympathetic, the local government in Philadelphia was. Marwan urged participants to take the initiative in reaching out to the media:

***“Media may be your greatest enemy but it can also be your greatest ally.***

***Give them stories. Make it easy for them.***

***Keep bugging them! Don’t stay silent. Tell your story!”***

**Ralph Blanks** affirmed Philadelphia's tradition of tolerance amid diversity, reminding participants that ***“Philadelphia is the place of brotherly love and sisterly affection.”*** He spoke of the role the black American church has played in the evolution of America, reminding us of the words of the black American social reformer, activist, poet, philosopher, and educator W.E.B. Du Bois, who spoke of the three gifts African Americans brought to their country: song, sweat and brawn, and spirit. ***“African Americans are the people of the song, transcending every day struggles,”*** said Ralph, adding that other racial and religious groups have benefited from the struggles and achievements of the African Americans.

***“Your country? How came it yours? Before the Pilgrims landed we were here. Here we brought our three gifts and mingled them with yours: a gift of story and of song - soft, stirring melody in an ill-harmonized and unmelodious land; the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil, and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years before your weak hands could have done it; the third a gift of the Spirit....Are not these gifts worth the giving? Is not this work and striving? Would America have been America without her Negro people?”***

**From W.E.B. Du Bois' THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK (Chapter IV: THE SORROW SONGS)**

**Maurice Scott** shared the reason why he does what he does: ***“I am a police officer, a deacon, a father. But first and foremost I am with my God – our God.”*** He told us a story of a 10-year-old boy whose father walked him to school one morning in 2004. As they approached the school, multiple shots rang out. When the smoke cleared, the school guard had been shot in the ankle and the boy was dead, shot in the temple. This is why Maurice teaches kids how to deal with anger and conflict.

**Amy Johnston** showed participants a slide show of photos taken during the visit around Bosnia and Herzegovina in the days leading up to the conference. She was most impressed with the spirit and initiative of the Ministry of Education in Tuzla Canton, and with the Youth Center in Srebrenica. Amy described the ***“heartbreaking pervasive sense of loss,”*** adding that she was ***“humbled by the efforts of people here despite the frustrations.”***

**Jeremy Brochin** expressed his discomfort about his feeling of *chutzpah* – a Yiddish term, widely used in English, meaning “audacity” – to be speaking to people who are dealing with challenges so much greater than he and fellow Americans have to cope with. He went on to describe how in the University of Pennsylvania each community has its own organization, and that in recent years there has been increased dialogue between the Islamic and Jewish student groups – Hillel and the Muslim Student Association (MSA). The two clubs have initiated several joint projects:

- A joint Islamic-Jewish student trip to New Orleans to help clean up after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Jeremy emphasized that it was the process of planning the trip that helped the members of the two communities become closer. The lesson learned from this initiative is that working on a joint project which tackles an issue that transcends identity questions can help to emphasize communalities.
- The two clubs have also brought Muslim and Jewish students together to discuss differences and communalities in issues such as diet, sexuality and modesty, and prayer.
- The two clubs have also confronted the most difficult issue, that of the conflict between Israel and Palestine, through a project for the economic development of the West Bank involving both Jews and Palestinians. This project is described on the website [www.lendforpeace.org](http://www.lendforpeace.org).

**Amanda Gant** talked about her work with the organization UNICEF at Georgetown University, and how she learned how volunteers can contribute meaningfully to child survival issues through education, advocacy and fundraising. She also learned about the value of strong organizational development, including a common vision, structure, leadership development, planning, ensuring activities relate to mission, and outreach.

**Carolyn Shank** described the tradition of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the USA and their contribution to social justice and peace-building. There are various branches – liberal, pastoral, conservative, evangelical – but what all have in common are strong pacifist values. Friends Select, the Quaker school where Carolyn works in Philadelphia, accepts children of all races and faiths. The curriculum includes conflict resolution and seeks to develop in children the values of simplicity, integrity, community, equality and respect, and stewardship.

Carolyn also initiated a 30-minute Quaker meeting of communal silence, encouraging participants to stand up to speak briefly if they were spiritually moved to do so. Several participants did just that, speaking of their most moving experiences from the project.



## RELIGION AND ART

Aida Abadžić Hodžić presented an issue of the Journal *Vizure* dedicated to religion in art. Eli Tauber of the Sarajevo Jewish Community presented a slide show of the works of post-World War One Jewish artists. He also spoke about the Sarajevo Haggadah, one of the oldest Sephardic Haggadahs in the world, which originated in Spain. Illuminated in copper and gold, it opens with illustrations of biblical scenes. Historians believe it was brought out of Spain by Jews expelled by the Alhambra Decree of 1492. It was



sold to the National Museum in Sarajevo in 1894. During the Second World War, the manuscript was saved from the Nazis by the Museum's curator, Derviš Korkut, who gave it to a Muslim cleric to hide. During the Bosnian War the manuscript survived in an underground bank vault. He pointed out that the story of the survival of the Sarajevo Haggadah through the upheavals of the twentieth century symbolizes the tradition of cross-cultural cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## MURAL PAINTING ACTIVITY



While participants were discussing art, local artists **Jasmina Suljlić Spahić** and **Selma Kapić Kantardžić** were busy in another room preparing a mural template and palettes of vibrant colors. When the participants arrived, they enthusiastically got to work painting the mural and adding their own images and text.

## AN EVENING OF MUSIC

On the first evening of the conference, participants and guests were treated to two performances at the Hall of Interreligious Service. The audience was greeted by representatives of the US Embassy in Sarajevo. The first performance was the result of a joint follow-on project implemented by program participants **Emanuela Borić** of Sarajevo and **Jasmina Mehmedović** of Tuzla. Emanuela teaches at the Catholic Education Center in Sarajevo, and Jasmina teaches at the Elementary School “Centar” in Tuzla. They brought together fifth form students from both schools to learn songs about peace and tolerance for the performance. Older students from the Catholic Education Center also showed their talent with gripping dances dramatizing the role of faith in daily life. The second performance featured the Pontanima Choir. Founded in 1996 by Fra Ivo Markovic, a Franciscan priest, Pontanima's mission is to bring together people who love music and want to use the spiritual power of music to unite the people of Bosnia.<sup>1</sup> Their repertoire includes music from many faiths, and the performance included Hebrew, Orthodox Christian, Muslim, and Catholic songs. After their final song, a Negro Spiritual, Ralph Banks and Maurice Scott led everyone in a standing ovation.

## WOMEN AND RELIGION IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The first session on Saturday May 9 was a panel on women and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina that included research students from the CIPS Masters Program in Religious Studies.

**Marija Grujić** presented her research on women in the Serbian Orthodox Church. In the middle ages, women sometimes served unofficially as deacons or even preachers. Women are now depicted as virgins and mothers, while men are considered to be their defenders. Over the past decade, women have been urged to have more children with the objective of producing more Serb soldiers. This argument has been used to lobby for strict abortion laws. Abortion is

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<sup>1</sup> [www.pontamina.ba](http://www.pontamina.ba)



considered to be homicide, while same-sex relations are deemed heretical. Everything that is labeled feminist is considered to be a dehumanized interpretation of the “natural order.” The Serbian Orthodox view is that women may engage in society but not in Church matters. As a result, women are most visible through their humanitarian work.

*She is reduced to a purely biological person, abandoned, and a servant.  
The consequence of such an attitude is that the collective character of the Church,  
communion sanctorum, becomes a myth.*

**Metropolitan Emilianos Timiadis, From the Margin to the Forefront.**

**Ivan Lasić** talked about gender in the Catholic Church. He described his survey of Catholic theological students' perceptions of gender roles. He noted that almost half of the student respondents appeared to be reluctant or simply unable to talk about the notion of “inclusion.” He concluded that the inclusion of women in the Catholic Church is at a low level. As in the case of Orthodox women, female theology graduates tend to undertake pastoral activities or simply do not engage in further theological work.

**Emina Abrahamsdotter** talked about the issue of *fatwā* concerning women in Islam. A *fatwā* is a religious opinion on Islamic law issued by an exclusively male body or scholar. Everything in the Quran which is subject to interpretation can lead to confusion. Emina described the two dominant *fatwās* and contradictory interpretations by different male authorities:

- 1) The use of women as kind of territory for theological arguments such as the wearing of the *hijab* (which covers everything but the face) and the *nikab* (which covers everything including the face).
- 2) The status of women in religious functions. Can women serve officially in their religious communities? Some male leaders think the question is superficial: the answer is simply “no.” Yet in Turkey there are a small number of female muftis, which is possible because mufti is a state-civil function.

**Zilka Spahić-Šiljak** presented her analysis of women's images in the religious press, notably the Serbian Orthodox *Pravoslavlje*, the Catholic weekly *Katolički Tjednik*, and the Islamic journal *Preporod*. She concluded that the three publications show demonstrate the following:

- 1) All three religious communities perceive women as “the other.”
- 2) Women are not represented as equals in the hierarchies of the three religious communities, nor are they represented in official bodies and delegations.

- 3) Women are mostly represented in the fields of education, social and health care, domestic and other house-keeping activities.
- 4) Women authors on theology are very few in comparison with male writers.
- 5) The role of woman as “mother” is glorified in all the publications of all three religious communities, but especially the Catholic community.

Finally, **Selma Hadžihalilović** presented a short documentary film featuring Muslim women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, each representing different professions and occupations.

## FOLLOW-ON PROJECT PRESENTATION SUMMARIES

On the second day of the conference, program participants from the April and October 2008 groups who were awarded follow-on grants to conduct projects in their communities based on action plans developed in the United States made presentations about the implementation and impact of their projects.

**IT TAKES TWO FOR A DIALOGUE.** Stolac in Southern Herzegovina is a divided Catholic and Muslim community. As in many other communities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, students in Stolac attend classes at the same school but in different shifts based on national identity. The NGO Orhideja, run by April program participant **Minva Husić**, tries to bring together children of both faiths. The challenges are immense. The local priest has actually discouraged Catholic children from engaging in Orhideja’s activities. Minva’s project was inspired by Judith Nelson’s workshop on conflict resolution in Philadelphia. Her drama tells the story of how 2 students – a Bošnjak and a Catholic – discuss an exam on the Second World War while in separate bathroom cubicles. When they leave the cubicles they stare at each other in shock, saying *“Had I known it was you, I wouldn’t have talked to you!”* The performance has been and is now being made into a film to reach a wider audience.

**INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: ILIJAŠ RADIO SERIES.** Before the war, the municipality of Ilijaš was a mixed community. Now the majority of the population is Bošnjak, as most Serbs have left. April program participant **Sanja Jozić-Zagorac**’s radio project was inspired by the positive examples of inter-religious dialogue in multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities she encountered while in the United States. She designed and organized a series of radio programs on a range of topics relating to religion, including communalities and differences.

**ESSAY COMPETITION.** Following his experiences with inter-religious dialogue in the United States, April program participant **Dženan Karać** invited students from different theological

institutions to submit essays on the theme “Youth and religion: Religion in every day life”. Six essays were submitted from the Gazi Husrev-Begova Madrasa in Sarajevo, the Franciscan High School in Visoko, and the Orthodox Theological Faculty in Foča in Republika Srpska. The jury, made up of IMIC members, selected 3 winning essays representing each of the 3 faiths. All essays have been published in a multilingual booklet (English, Serbian, Croatian and Bošnjak).

**RELIGIOUS CONSCIENCE OF YOUTH AND COEXISTENCE.** April program participant **Zoran Maksimović** implemented his project with the support of the Sandžak Committee for Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms in Novi Pazar, a mixed Muslim and Serb community in western Serbia. His project brought together 30 Muslim and Orthodox youth (10 more than the target figure) through a series of interactive seminars. Speakers included religious leaders, teachers of religion, academics and NGO activists. The project also included visits to monasteries and mosques in the Sandžak region. The idea behind the project was to encourage believers to perceive their roles as religious peacemakers rather than religious warriors, and to help participants to regard their differences as a source of richness rather than as obstacles to a healthy mixed community.

**EXPRESSING RELIGION THROUGH INTEGRATION.** Lack of knowledge about other religions due to stereotypes created by the recent conflict has exacerbated divisions among the citizens of Banja Luka. Local youth have destroyed religious cemeteries as a way of expressing frustration and taking revenge. April program participant **Igor Lukenda's** project worked to inform high school youth about the religions represented in their community – Catholicism, Serbian Orthodoxy and Islam – with the support of three religious leaders. Seminars focused on the similarities and differences among three faiths. These seminars were followed by a day-long visit to three places of worship and cemeteries representing all three faiths. Participants evaluated the project very highly. It was deliberately designed to be simple so it can be replicated both in Banja Luka and elsewhere.

**EDUCATION – RELIGION – TOLERANCE.** April program participant **Haris Gorak**, from Visoko Bosnia and Herzegovina, produced a publication to address the dual problems of adolescent rebellion and intolerance of the “other.” The booklet reviews all three faiths (Serbian Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam). In order to measure the impact of the publication, Haris and his colleagues designed a multiple choice questionnaire. A sample group of 60 students completed the questionnaire before receiving the publication, and again after reading it. The results showed a significant increase in student’s knowledge after reading the booklet. Haris was very happy with the level of interest in this project among students, especially since participation was optional.

**CHURCHES AND ADVOCACY.** This project was not supported by an IREX since the proposal was submitted too late. Nevertheless it is a direct result of April participant **Ankica Dragin's** visit to the United States. It aims to strengthen the role of minority churches and to enhance the advocacy skills of young church and community leaders in the Vojvodina region of northern Serbia, which has a large Catholic minority as well as Muslim, Evangelical Christian, Jewish and other minority religious communities.

**UNITY IN DIVERSITY.** October program participants **Nedeljko Simić** and **Antonijo Aras**, from Republika Srpska and Serbia respectively, teamed up with the Srebrenica Youth Center for this project which aims to promote peaceful collaboration among youth in addressing the recent past. It involved bringing together youth from Srebrenica, Vrsac and Belgrade to learn about the daily challenges they face in their communities. The project addresses issue of stereotypes and works towards their reduction. It also provides youth with a forum to openly discuss topics that are relevant for their future. In addition, the project includes visits to religious sites in the three locations.

**FAMILY DIALOGUE.** October program participant **Zorica Kuburić** of Novi Sad, Serbia presented the first issue of a very attractive magazine entitled *Family Dialogue*. It features articles on religious issues such as family traditions in Judaism, Islam and Christianity, marriages between people of different faiths and nationalities, and computer game addiction among children. 10,000 copies of the magazine have been printed. Zorica plans a second edition that will include the Faith and Community participants' experiences in the United States.

**REMEMBERING THE FORGOTTEN ONES.** October program participant **Željko Đurica's** project aims to build trust among all religious communities that are currently present in Livno, in the Herzegovina region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, through remembering the religious communities that no longer live in the municipality, in particular the Jewish community. The result is a multi-lingual memorial plaque which was unveiled in a memorial gathering of representatives of all religious groups as well as government officials.

**SEMINARS FOR TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE.** October program participant **Jasmina Mehmedović** from Tuzla organized a 4-day seminar for 30 primary school teachers. The seminar, entitled "The Culture of Religions," focused on practical teaching methods for learning about diversity and unity among the monotheistic faiths. All participants evaluated the seminar positively, saying it will help them in their future work. Jasmina presented a slide show of the seminar. She plans to propose that the Tuzla Ministry of Education incorporate this course into the official school curriculum.

**STEPS TOWARDS PEACE.** October participants **Emanuela Borić** of Sarajevo and **Jasmina Mehmedović** of Tuzla teamed up to implement this project, whose goal is to promote understanding of different religions and regions among fifth form pupils from the schools where they teach in Sarajevo and Tuzla. Students of different ethnic and religious backgrounds participated in a one-day workshop to learn songs about peace and tolerance that were performed on Friday night. The project has resulted in true friendships between the two project leaders and participating pupils.

**MEDIA AND RELIGIOUS VALUES.** This project, initiated by October program participant **Igor Ujhazi** from Novi Sad in Serbia, brought together representatives of local media, students of journalism, religious leaders and community activists for a public debate on Media and Religious Values. The objective is to help media professionals in Novi Sad and the vicinity work to reduce religious stereotypes and judgments in the community.

**RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TALK ABOUT THEMSELVES.** October program participant **Csaba Kovač** is from Subotica in the Vojvodina region of northern Serbia, where there are Serbian Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelical, Jewish and Muslim communities. The project arranged for representatives of these communities to talk about their faiths on the Catholic radio station Radio Maria. All interviews were recorded on CDs, and these were sent to teachers of religion in the region. There are about 135 religion teachers in Subotica who work in about 254 schools, reaching about 15,000 students. The project not only contributes to inter-faith understanding among teachers and students, but also helps journalists to present different religions in an informed manner.

**DEMOCRACY AND TOLERANCE DEBATE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.** The aim of this project, developed by October program participants **Muharem Dautović**, **Hasan Spahić** and **Mersiha Smajić**, is to introduce high school students to the principles of democracy and tolerance through debates. Participants include students from Central Bosnia and Zenica-Doboj Cantons. The anticipated results of this project include: affirming student self-confidence, encouraging critical thinking, supporting student development through literature and research, and promoting dialogue among students from different backgrounds.

**BLOOD DONATIONS.** October program participant **Salih Hadžismajlović** from Zagreb, Croatia described how his project involved members of the Zagreb Muslim Youth Group donating blood to clinics in Zagreb as a gesture of goodwill to the greater community.



## FAREWELL DINNER

The final evening of the conference began with a Mexican dinner at the restaurant Caballero. On their way to the restaurant, participants crossed the central park, passing by the new memorial sculpture for children who died during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The memorial had been officially opened earlier that day, Saturday 9 May, Victory in Europe Day. Arriving at Callabero, participants were delighted to find their mural on display in the restaurant's courtyard.



Before settling down to a Mexican feast, prayers were led by representatives of the Islamic, Jewish, American Baptist and Methodist faiths.



Following the dinner, participants returned to the Hall of Interreligious Service to hear a performance by Mary Gospel, a choir from Serbia featuring a quartet from Slovenia and a soloist from Austria. The group delighted the crowd of participants and guests with rousing renditions of gospel favorites and ended with the uplifting “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.”

## THE FINAL MORNING

On the morning of Sunday 10 May, the US experts had departed. The rest of the conference participants gathered for one final session, a presentation by Božena Katava of the Youth Group of the Interreligious Council in Bosnia and Herzegovina (MRV Bosnia and Herzegovina) ([www.mrv.ba](http://www.mrv.ba)).

In the closing session Ann Stauffer, Sabina Pstrocki, and IREX staff Shannon Bruder, Kathy Evans, and Olja Hočevan Van Wely gave heartfelt thanks to the participants for the success of the program. They also discussed ways of keeping in touch for further collaboration. Ann invited participants to get in touch with IVC for suggestions on further cooperation. Shannon urged participants to create accounts with the website [alumni.state.gov](http://alumni.state.gov), a valuable resource for networking with other alumni experts, finding grant and job opportunities, posting and accessing articles, and sharing ideas with the global alumni community. Kathy ended the conference by quoting anthropologist Margaret Mead:

***Never doubt that a few caring people can't change the world.  
For, indeed, that's all who ever have.***