

“Starica poput mene ne predstavlja prijetnju Srbima” – A onda je jednostavno nestala...

“An old woman like me is not a threat to Serbs” - And then she simply disappeared...

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Godine 1992. smrtonosna iskra srpskog nacionalizma rasplamsala je ratni požar koji je jurio po bivšim Socijalističkim Federativnim Republikama Jugoslavije, uništavajući sve na svom putu. Tokom ovih agresorskih ratova, u Bosni i Hercegovini je ubijeno više od sto hiljada ljudi, a raseljeno je dva miliona. Kampanja etničkog čišćenja, prvenstveno protiv bosanskih Muslimana (Bošnjaka), često se opisuje kao najgori genocid od Drugog svjetskog rata. Pokolj je okončan tek nakon intervencije NATO-a 1995. godine.

In 1992, the deadly spark of Serbian nationalism ignited a conflagration of war that swept across the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, destroying everything in its path. During these wars of aggression, more than one hundred thousand people were killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and two million were displaced. The campaign of ethnic cleansing, primarily against Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), is often described as the worst genocide since World War II. The massacre ended only after NATO's intervention in 1995.

A sada, tridesetak godina kasnije, Putinov rat protiv naroda Ukrajine, sa svakodnevnim vijestima o smrti i razaranju, jezivo podsjeća na ove druge ratove, piše u uvodu američka spisateljica Dina Greenberg, autorica romana “Nerminina šansa”, čija radnja počinje na početku opsade Sarajeva i prati studenticu druge godine medicine – Nerminu, kojoj je rat oduzeo sve što je ikada poznavala ili voljela.

Dina je nakon objave romana nastavila prikupljati priče o ženama koje imaju mnogo zajedničkog sa Nerminom, odnosno sa ženama koje su prevazišle svoju kolektivnu tragediju da bi procvjetale, ili koje su još uvijek zatočene u boli svoje prošlosti. Među tim ženama je i Vildana Kurtović, a u nastavku pročitajte njenu priču:

“And now, some thirty years later, Putin's war against the people of Ukraine, with daily news of death and destruction, eerily reminds us of these other wars,” says American author Dina Greenberg. Her novel, *Nermina's Chance*, begins at the outset of the siege of Sarajevo and follows a second-year medical student, Nermina, who was robbed by the war of everything she had ever known or loved.

After the publication of the novel, Dina continued to collect stories about women who have much in common with Nermina, that is, women who overcame their collective tragedy to flourish, or who are still trapped in the pain of their past.

Among those women is Vildana Kurtović. Read her story below:

Generacije majčinske tuge

U aprilu 1992. godine, zajedno sa svojom sestrom, majkom, tetkom i jednogodišnjim rođakom, Vildana se ukrkala na posljednji komercijalni let iz Sarajeva. Sletjeli su u Beograd, a zatim vozom otputovali u Njemačku. Vildanin otac, ljekar, ostao je u Sarajevu tokom opsade, gdje je služio ranjenima i umirućima u gradu. Jednog dana je upucan; snajperski metak probio je prozor porodičnog stana i zabio se samo nekoliko centimetara ispod njegovog srca. Prošli su dugi periodi između njegovih komunikacija, i proći će više od dvije godine prije nego što se Vildanin otac ponovo spoji s njihovom porodicom u Njemačkoj. U ljeto 1995. godine porodica Kurtović otišla je u Royal Oak u Michigenu, gdje su Vildanini ujaci prije nekoliko godina stigli kao izbjeglice. Ipak, porodicu je podijelio rat. Poput otvorenih rana, zjapeće rupe su ostale tamo gdje su trebali biti voljeni.

Generations of maternal grief

In April 1992, together with her sister, mother, aunt, and one-year-old cousin, Vildana boarded the last commercial flight from Sarajevo. They landed in Belgrade and then traveled to Germany by train. Vildana's father, a doctor, remained in Sarajevo during the siege, where he ministered to the wounded and dying in the city. One day he was shot; a sniper's bullet pierced the window of the family's apartment and lodged just inches below his heart.

Long periods passed between his communications, and it would be more than two years before Vildana's father was reunited with their family in Germany. In the summer of 1995, the Kurtovic family went to Royal Oak, Michigan, where Vildana's uncles had arrived a few years before as refugees. However, the family was divided by the war. Like open wounds, gaping holes remained where there should have been loved ones.

Vildana danas živi i radi u Beču. Ona je, po svemu sudeći, uspješna i samouvjereni mlada žena. Ipak, kada smo se prvi put sreli putem video poziva, Vildana je opisala "krivnju iz druge ruke" koja je prati. Ispričala je priču koja se provlači kroz četiri generacije žena u njenoj porodici. Malo je vjerovatno da će ova tuga i osjećaj krivice završiti s njom.

Today, Vildana lives and works in Vienna. She is, by all accounts, a successful and confident young woman. However, when we first met via video call, Vildana described the "second-hand guilt" that follows her. She told a story that runs through four generations of women in her family. It is unlikely that this sadness and guilt will end with her.

Kada je Vildanina porodica pobjegla iz Sarajeva 1992. godine, njena baka po majci Šefika ostala je u gradu, sigurna da će, kao i mnogi drugi, rat biti gotov za nekoliko sedmica. Ali Vildanina prabaka, Derviša, živjela je u Nevesinju, gradiću blizu Mostara, danas u sastavu Republike Srpske. S razlogom se Šefika bojala da joj je majka, tada u kasnim sedamdesetim, bila u velikoj opasnosti.

Razmišljajući o svom američkom djetinjstvu u Michigenu, Vildana opisuje povremene "iskrene trenutke" kada bi njena majka, Edina, spustila gard, dozvoljavajući da dio njenog bola izmakne van.

When Vildana's family fled Sarajevo in 1992, her maternal grandmother Šefika stayed in the city, certain that, like many others, the war would be over in a few weeks. But Vildana's great-grandmother, Derviša, lived in Nevesinje, a small town near Mostar, today part of Republika Srpska. With reason, Šefika feared that her mother, then in her late seventies, was in great danger.

Reflecting on her American childhood in Michigan, Vildana describes the occasional "honest moment" when her mother, Edina, would let down her guard, allowing some of her pain to slip out.

"Moja majka je provela veći dio svog odraslog doba preživljavajući, učeći nove jezike i pokušavajući da pronađe svoj put." Kao mlada odrasla osoba, Vildana je saznala izvor sveprisutne tuge svoje majke. U ranoj fazi rata, porodica je pokušavala da ubijedi Dervišu da napusti Nevesinje, ali je ona insistirala na tome da „starica“ poput nje ne predstavlja prijetnju Srbima.

"Jednog dana moja prabaka je jednostavno nestala", kaže Vildana.

"My mother spent most of her adulthood surviving, learning new languages and trying to find her own way." As a young adult, Vildana learned the source of her mother's pervasive sadness. In the early stages of the war, the family tried to convince Derviša to leave Nevesinje, but she insisted that an "old woman" like her did not pose a threat to the Serbs.

"One day my great-grandmother simply disappeared," says Vildana.

Masovne grobnice

Masovne grobnice bile su obilježje srpskog agresorskog rata. Prema podacima Instituta za nestale osobe BiH, u spomen kosturnici u Nevesinju nalaze se posmrtni ostaci 72 neidentifikovane žrtve; mrtvačnica na groblju Sutina u Mostaru sadrži neidentifikovane posmrtne ostatke još 126 osoba. 1998. godine, nakon što je saznala za ova otkrića, Vildanina majka se vratila u Nevesinje. Možda je Derviša bila među ovim brutaliziranim žrtvama rata? Njeni napori su propali.

Mass graves

Mass graves were a feature of the Serbian war of aggression. According to the data of the Institute for Missing Persons of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the remains of 72 unidentified victims are located in the memorial ossuary in Nevesinje; the mortuary at the Sutina cemetery in Mostar contains the unidentified remains of another 126 people. In 1998, after learning about these discoveries, Vildana's mother returned to Nevesinje. Perhaps Derviša was among these brutalized victims of war? Her efforts failed.

Deceniju kasnije, Edina je počela da dijeli malo više svoje tuge sa svojom kćerkom; vitice tuge i krivice stisle su se još čvršće. Neposredno nakon što je diplomirala na Državnom univerzitetu u Mičigenu i radila na Menhetnu, Vildana je odlučila da pokuša ponovo tamo gdje njena majka nije uspela.

“Obratila sam se Crvenom krstu jer sam od porodice u Mostaru saznala da ta organizacija pomaže bošnjačkim porodicama da identifikuju posmrtne ostatke najmilijih, od kojih su mnogi sačuvani u masovnim grobnicama koje su napunili Srbi”, priča Vildana.

A decade later, Edina began to share a little more of her grief with her daughter; the tendrils of grief and guilt clenched even tighter. Immediately after graduating from Michigan State University and working in Manhattan, Vildana decided to try again where her mother had failed.

"I turned to the Red Cross because I learned from a family in Mostar that this organization helps Bosniak families to identify the remains of their loved ones, many of which were preserved in mass graves filled by Serbs," says Vildana.

Ona je u pismu Crvenom krstu s bolom ponovila priču koju joj je ispričala njena majka. Podnijela je svoj zahtjev, dobila broj predmeta i pratila je telefonskim pozivima.

“Godine su prolazile, a Crveni krst nije mogao da joj uđe u trag. Čak i nakon što je moja porodica predala DNK uzorke, nikada nije pronađena niti je ušla u trag ostacima iz brojnih masovnih grobnica – barem ne još”, kaže ona.

In a letter to the Red Cross, she painfully repeated the story her mother had told her. She filed her claim, got a case number, and followed up with phone calls.

"Years passed, and the Red Cross could not trace her. Even after my family submitted the DNA samples, they were never found or traced to the remains from the numerous mass graves—at least not yet," she says.

Jedinu klauzulu koju je Vildanina porodica ikada pronašla isporučio je mještаниn koji je ostao u Hercegovini sve vrijeme rata.

"Moja porodica se nakon rata vratila u Nevesinje, ali ne više kao mještани, već kao posjetioci grada koji su zauzeli Srbi", kaže Vildana i dodaje: "Naši domovi nisu bili uništeni, već sablasno ispunjeni novim ljudima – sa sopstvenim tradicijama – koji se dešavaju kao da je to sasvim normalno."

Bolno je shvatiti priču o Dervišinim posljednjim danima i satima.

The only clue that Vildana's family ever found was delivered by a local who remained in Herzegovina throughout the war.

"My family returned to Nevesinje after the war, no longer as locals, but as visitors to the town that was taken over by the Serbs," says Vildana, adding: "Our homes were not destroyed, but filled eerily with new people, with their own traditions, behaving as though this was completely normal."

It is painful to understand the story of Derviša's last days and hours.

"Čovjek iz grada rekao je mojoj porodici da je moja prabaka, zajedno sa ostalim muslimanskim stanovnicima, pokupljena i živa zakopana u jamu s ljudskim izmetom. Druge su zatvorili u odabrane kuće, a zatim su Srbi zapalili i živi spaljeni."

Ovaj jezivi izvještaj bio je posljednji koji je Vildanina porodica znala o svom matrijarhu.

"A man from the town told my family that my great-grandmother, along with other Muslim residents, had been picked up and buried alive in a pit with human excrement. Others were locked up in selected houses, and then the Serbs set them on fire and burned them alive."

This chilling report was the last Vildana's family knew of their matriarch.

Mir dolazi u mnogim oblicima

Niko od poginulih u Nevesinju nije dostojanstveno sahranjen. Niko od članova njihove porodice nikada neće naći utjehu. Nijedna od ovdje opisanih slika neće izbljedjeti.

Ipak, evo moje ponude i molitve za mir. Za Dervišu Husović i tri generacije Bošnjakinja koje su je slijedile; za sve ostale žrtve koje tek trebaju oporaviti, i porodice koje ih žale, sjećamo se. Na ovaj način, mi vodimo mir među i unutar onih koji su pretrpjeli najgore zločine rata.

Peace comes in many forms

None of those who died in Nevesinje were buried with dignity. None of their family members will ever find comfort. None of the images described here will fade.

Nevertheless, here is my offering and prayer for peace. For Derviša Husović and the three generations of Bosniak women who followed her; for all the other victims who have yet to recover, and the families who mourn them, we remember. In this way, we create peace among and within those who have suffered the worst crimes of war.



Autorica teksta: Dina Greenberg (američka spisateljica i autorica romana *“Nerminina šansa”* koji govori o agresiji na našu zemlju).

Author of the text: Dina Greenberg (American writer and author of the novel *Nermina's Chance* which talks about aggression against our country).