This PowerPoint is intended to be a prompt, rather than a completed lesson (hence the barebones presentation). The locations selected can be readily substituted with any number of locations across Bosnia and the United States. Fomenting critical discussions with our students about how “monuments” (both formal and informal) are endowed with historical meaning and stripped of memory is an essential skill as we work to educate both critical thinkers and civically engaged citizens.

The essentials of this presentation model are 1) locations of significant historical and cultural import (in this presentation the Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge) or so utterly everyday that they are essentially invisible (Phoenix’s Indian School Road), 2) meaningful engagement with the consequences for both the historical victors and vanquished (slides 4, 7, and 12), and 3) an effort to engage students in the multiple meanings (both widely known and forgotten) of the local “monuments” under discussion (slides 8, 9, 10, 11).

The order of Bosnian to local is purposeful. Helping students see the conflicts around memory and “monuments” in other parts of the world first better prepares them to engage these complex issues in their home communities.

Embedded within the curriculum plan are suggestions for other locations within Bosnia, as well as recommendations for alternate sites in the United States. Finding a location within your student’s own community is highly recommended. While this lesson plan has yet to be deployed in totality, based on initial discussions about Indian School Road, most local students are generally stunned to learn it is named after an actual Indian School with a troubling history. The fact that the history behind the name is largely unknown, and so troubling, promotes incredibly generative (and not always comfortable) discussions.
Mehmed Paša Sokolović Bridge:
Dobrodošli u Višegrad! Добродошли у Вишеград!
Višegrad’s Tourism’s Board Recent History:

1) 1949-1952: Fully Repaired

2) 2007: UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site:

“The bridge bears witness to important cultural exchanges between Balkans, the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean world, between Christianity and Islam . . . After the Ottomans came the Austro-Hungarians, the Yugoslav Federation, and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina”

“The Višegrad bridge is a remarkable architectural testimony to the apogee of the classical age of the Ottoman Empire, whose values and achievements mark an important stage in the history of humankind.”
It is possibly Europe's most gruesome bridge. Its foundations, legend has it, are built on the bodies of murdered twins. For more than four centuries it has been the scene of beheadings, of slow impalements on its low, stone balustrade, and massacres. The most recent was in 1992, during the war in Bosnia when Serb paramilitaries flooded the pretty little town of Visegrad to kill its men and rape its women. They slaughtered some of their Muslim victims on the bridge, pushing the bodies into the green waters below.

Peter Beaumont, 11 Dec. 2004

Many Serbs refuse to acknowledge the crimes committed against Muslims in the 1990s. The president of Republika Srpska, the autonomous Serbian entity created in Bosnia after the end of the war, called Srebrenica ‘the greatest deception of the 20th century’. Bosnian Serbs have been unco-operative in identifying mass graves and the bodies of nearly a thousand Muslim men killed in July 1995 have yet to be identified. Bosnian Serb schools refuse to teach the history of the massacre. ‘They say that history is written by the winners,’ a Bosnian Muslim told me. ‘But we don’t have any winners. We just have a peace agreement.’

Max Strasser, 23 July 2015
Sjeverin Massacre (1992)

“All night the Chetniks were taking people, even children, women, and you could hear splashing in the river.

“In only three days and three nights I saw 2-300 killed.”
Perućac Lake exhumations (2010)
The Consequences of Forgetting

“Transitional justice experts warn that this not only affects the survivors’ ability to come to terms with their past but also harms efforts aimed at promoting future coexistence. And in some cases where memorials have been established, they either contain no educational components or reflect a partisan interpretation of history, which only deepens existing divisions.”

Rachel Irwin, Velma Šarić, 2010

“. . . we always had to be careful of Yaqui ghosts. The ghosts are always traveling up and down the riverbanks searching for their loved ones. Because the Mexican soldiers slaughtered all of them. Babies, little children, old women. Yaquis who refused to acknowledge the Mexican government or pay taxes on their land were rounded up and shot. The soldiers filled the arroyos with the bodies, and families never know what had been murdered or who had escaped. Those ghosts can’t rest. Not even now.” (190)

Leslie Marmon Silko, 1992
Local Symbols: What’s the Meaning of the Everyday?
The Street’s Name: The History Behind the Everyday

“It’s cheaper to educate Indians than to kill them.”
Indian Commissioner Thomas Morgan speaking at the establishment of the Phoenix Indian School in 1891 (qtd. in Lindauer)

“When one Indian boy or girl leaves this school with an education, the ‘Indian Problem’ will be forever solved for him and his children.”
Joshua Lippincott, 1884
The School’s Meaning to Those Who Attended

“The Boarding School System was designed to erase all outward traces of Indian culture. Upon arrival at the schools during the late 1800s and early 1900s, children were stripped of their ‘home clothes.’ Their hair was cut and fine-combed with kerosene for lice. They were bathed with lye soap . . . Their Indian names were also taken away from them and replaced with appropriate ‘civilized’ English names of noted American citizens . . .”

Heard Museum

“Death was the only way you could get home . . . It had to be a sickness or death before they’d let you out of there for very long.”

Lawrence Webster, 1985

“I still picture my folks to this day, just standing there crying, and I was missing them. My grandfather, tears coming out of his eyes. I got on the train and I don’t even know who was in the train because my mind was so full of unhappiness and sadness.....”

San Juan Pueblo Boarding School Student, 1915

“I don’t believe that we can talk too harshly about what we have suffered, we Indian people have suffered from that particular point in our history, I call it . . . the Hiroshima, of Indian Education, because it basically destroyed the fiber of our family life.”

Rosemary Christiansen
An article poses the question: “The school that started, and existed in that manner for decades, as a way to force Native American children to assimilate? With a highly regimented, sometimes brutal system that meant to jettison their language, customs, even their given birth names? Effectively, cultural extermination. Does that not qualify Indian School Road for renaming?”

The community weighs in:

“When the current mob of cultural warriors realizes that Abraham Lincoln would not free slaves held in the north I'm sure the historical purification will include his namesakes and likenesses. “

“We can just use numbers and letters. Sort of like having EVERYTHING brown. Why not, because this conversation was old 10 years ago. Anything to PLEASE stop the silliness and start talking about the big problems of the day.”

“Using the same logic, Apache and Black Hawk helicopters, Tomahawk cruise missile and all the rest of the culturally appropriated names need to vanish from the military lexicon as well.”
Forgetting and Remembering Happens Everywhere: So What Do We Do?

Referencing selections from the quotes from Slide 7

Those ghosts can’t rest. Not even now. Transitional justice experts warn that this not only affects the survivors’ ability to come to terms with their past but also harms efforts aimed at promoting future coexistence.

Preface to the student discussion/assignment:

In teaching about history and equity, we must push beyond “safety”: “‘learning is not often safe as it involves profound transformation. . . The danger with calls for safe spaces is that they are fueled more by logics of identity politics than learning . . .’ [we should engage] students in dialogical conversations that might feel uncomfortable and unsafe, but have the potential to be affirming and life-changing for all involved” (102)

San Pedro 2017
Works Cited:


