

Interview with Dee Smart, Redfield and Barton Hill

Can you tell us about where you are from?

I come from Sarajevo, from Bosnia, and I have been living in Bristol for more years here than back in Yugoslavia, in Bosnia. I've been living here for over 30 years now.

I feel very very proud of being a Bosnian, and of the citizens of Sarajevo, because Sarajevo is a beautiful multicultural, multiethnic city steeped in history between West and East. In the 1990s, a war happened and the country fell apart. But people are rebuilding their lives and the city and society around them.

Is there a recipe you would love to share?

There are so many lovely dishes from Bosnia because we are a melting pot of civilizations and the influence of all those different cultures on our food is immense. We have Ottoman dishes like stuffed peppers, and Austrian dishes like Wiener Schnitzel which is pork in breadcrumbs.

But my favourite to share is a very small, small cake. It has lots of lovely chocolate and hazelnuts, and butter



and sugar – so you can't go wrong with that combination. Just mix those things together and it'll be delicious.

Is there a street in Bristol that means a lot to you?

I would choose Hayward Road in Barton Hill, because my parents lived in it after they came to Bristol as refugees. Hayward Road is a very small street of Victorian terraced houses, and that's where my parents found refuge. They found wonderful neighbours and such friendly reception, and they happily lived there for over 20 years. The street is a symbol of wellbeing for my parents. During their illnesses it was their neighbours who came to help.



It doesn't matter where you come from, what matters is the humanity that connects you as human beings, and helping each other out when you most need it. They found in Bristol such a welcoming city. They found lots of kindred people – artists and creative people and ordinary people, neighbours. So they managed to recover and recuperate.

Can you tell us about your family history?

My father was an artist, and they called him the Painter of Bridges. He found beauty in bridges as creations of masterly craftsmen, but also as a metaphor for bringing things together, bridging divides, bringing people together from different sides. It is really a wonderful symbol for human existence, how we live together! And my mother was a university lecturer. They lost everything during the war, and my father's studio burnt down. So all his work from over 40 years of being an artist, all disappeared in a massive fire. Having had that defining moment in their lives, they came to Bristol, and had a second lease of life. So my dad ended up in Bristol, which comes from the name Brigstow, which means "The Place of the Bridge". I love many of my dad's paintings but one especially stands in my memory, which is a bridge in Sarajevo. It is the bridge where the shot was fired that started the First World War, but the painting shows the multicultural city with mosques, minarets with church spires, synagogues – you know, different religions coexisting in harmony and this lovely starry sky above.

What do you think it takes for people with really different beliefs and ideas about the world to find common ground and connect with each other?

It takes open-mindedness and a bit of courage, curiosity. It is always great to learn about each other and see what connects us. There is always more that connects us. And in times of great need we put our differences aside and come together as human beings.

The sixth Bridging Histories activity is to be a changemaker. Is there a way in which art can play a role in change-making?

Art makes us think in different ways, and it makes us feel in different ways, and often things come from those feelings. I want to change something because this doesn't feel right. So something needs to happen. And those feelings are really important. Art is really good to capture those feelings and channel them in a positive way. Art is about creativity. The power of creativity is what makes the world go around. So despite all the destruction that human beings are capable of, the power of creativity is what makes us human and means we can go forward and create something really positive.

So as children are painting their unicorns they can take that idea. What they can do with these unicorns is make a little bit of magic that sparks new ideas, sparks new ways of seeing things. Final question, when you think of a unicorn, what does it mean to you?

