

THE STORIES: RANKO



First name: **RANKO**

Last name: **KRSTIČ**

Age: **30**

Country of origin: **BOSNIA**

Living in **Slovenia** since: **1993**

SHORT SUMMARY

Ranko and his family lived near Bihač. When the war broke out his father worked in Slovenia and his sister was there with him. In 1993 Ranko and his mother joined the family, but came to Slovenia as refugees. They were granted a special “temporary refugee card” which gave them access to urgent medical care (but no dental care etc.) and some other rights. Ranko could not enrol in the secondary school of his choice, supposedly because he did not have Slovenian citizenship. When he finished secondary technical school studies, he started studying medicine. Today he is a medical doctor, preparing his State exam, he got married to a Slovenian girl, he feels accepted and respected for what he has done professionally. Emotionally he does not feel integrated. He is a refugee role model up to a certain extent because he is hyper socialised. He does what he is expected to do, being motivated from outside. But emotionally he does not belong... emotionally he is a displaced person. When considering the so called integration (if it is possible) the emotional side should be considered as well.

I STARTED TO SETTLE DOWN WHEN I MET MY FUTURE WIFE

The family lived near Bihač and Ranko was lucky. Somehow. His father was employed in Slovenia. When the war broke out his father and his sister were in Slovenia, while Ranko and his mother came later in 1993 as refugees. Refugees from Croatia and Bosnia were not treated in the same way as traditional refugees, therefore their status was not quite clear. Refugees from Croatia were treated as displaced persons, refugees from Bosnia were granted the status of “temporary refugee”. Upon their arrival the Slovenian Red Cross registered them. They got a registration card giving them access to different forms of aid. Bosnian refugees were not treated according to the Geneva Convention. Their rights were limited to urgent medical assistance, the right to education, food, accommodation and humanitarian aid. They were not granted the right to work. Later Ranko was told that 71% of the refugees who came to Slovenia were Muslims 20% of them were Croats. In 1997 they were supposed to go back to Bosnia, but their home in Bosnia was destroyed and it was not possible. So they stayed in Slovenia. But Ranko was a good student in elementary, secondary school as well at the University. He did everything that was expected from him, but somehow emotionally he could not adapt. Today Ranko is a medical doctor. Professionally he is totally integrated and appreciated but emotionally, well he does not know. He started to settle down, nevertheless, when he met his future wife who is Slovene he was well accepted by her friends and family. He thinks that this is not because of who he is, but of what he is professionally. He thinks all this is his fault, that he is somehow special and wants the impossible.

THE STORIES: RANKO

CONFLICT

Ranko does not want to recall it, nor describe it. He rather describes his feelings. He says that perhaps we will understand how a child feels when suddenly he is deprived of small and big things at the same time. A child who suddenly loses his friends, home, teachers, schoolmates and loving neighbours, the protection of his street, the playground where he was playing games with his best friend. A child that flees away because he is threatened. A child who has nightmares, only that his nightmares are special. One cannot wake up and forget about them. A child who cannot understand quite well what is going on around him. He can only hope that all might end up soon. A child who is afraid for his father's, his mother's, his sister's life more than his own. Such a child immediately learns to forget that it is cold outside, that he is hungry sleepy. Such a child tries to be courageous. Such a child grows up so quickly. But his or her experiences remain sealed in their souls forever.

ESCAPE

Ranko and his mother waited to depart to Slovenia and join their father and sister there. Then some day they got on a bus and they were magically evacuated. It was in 1993. They took some luggage with them, not much. Some food as well some home made vegetable pie (Bosn. pita zeljanica) and they did not know they were going away for a long time. Then the bus was stopped at the border. Ranko's mother did not have a passport, neither did Ranko who was a small boy and for him this was his first travel "abroad". But they did have some kind of certificate proving that their father worked in Slovenia and that he would take care of them. When they arrived to Ljubljana his father and sister waited for them, so they did not need end up in a refugee collecting centre. Their escape looked like a normal trip. Fortunately.

BELONGING

Well, he still has not decided where he would like to live. He thinks it is normal that he has finished elementary school, secondary school, university studies and started working... and got married. He has not decided yet. He is preparing his state exam right now and later he will see. *"Always the same, then I will see"*. He would definitely like to go back to Bosnia on condition political and economic situation in Bosnia improved. He stays in touch with Bosnia. He tries very hard, but it is not easy. His friends, his neighbours have left. Well, now he has Slovenian citizenship. He was granted Slovenian citizenship because his father was a Slovene citizen. Now, with a new passport, travelling has become easy. Before, for instance, he went on a final baccalaureate trip with his class and he needed all sorts of visas. Well, he thinks he started belonging to this country when he met his future wife and her friends and family. He had some difficulties when he started searching for a job. He felt that Slovenian job applicants were more welcome. But this is not a rule! Where he works now, the boss would accept anybody on condition they work hard and have the knowledge and skills that are needed. Well, he felt discriminated when he wanted to enrol in grammar school and they told him that it was not possible because he did not have Slovenian citizenship. And his father enrolled him in a technical secondary school, which was nice and fine but this did not interest him. Then he enrolled at the Faculty of mechanical engineering only to discover that this was not his cup of tea. So he decided that he would switch to the Faculty of medicine. He managed and during his studies his average score was very high 9.1. out of 10. Now, in his circle, people are educated and there is no discrimination, he does not feel discriminated. But he is still convinced

Finding the thing that attracts you is very important for your endurance.

THE STORIES: RANKO

that Slovenian society is a closed society. As far as institutions and services are concerned, he has not had particular problem. There was a doctor saying that she could not treat him, that he should go back to Bosnia where he belonged. *“Today Slovenian people have accepted me and they do not mind my slight accent. Probably because I am a doctor and I am good professionally. For this matter, I am accepted. Emotionally? I do not know. Emotionally I belong to Bosnia, Croatia, or I do not belong at all. I would say that Slovenian people want to have, to possess, to progress... How shall I say. They are more business oriented.”*

MILESTONES AND STRATEGIES SUPPORTING RANKO'S INCLUSION

There are several milestones. His family lived in Slovenia and was supportive when he arrived with his mother. It was important for Ranko to be granted Slovenian citizenship. An important milestone is that he did not stay at the Faculty of mechanical engineering, that he decided to study medicine what he was attracted to. It was also important that he met his wife who is Slovenian. But Ranko points out that emotional inclusion into Slovenian society is difficult for somebody particularly if one is not from an urban environment and comes from Bosnia where relationships are cultivated on a daily basis.

**Emotionally?
I belong to Bosnia,
or to Croatia.
Or nowhere.**