

Sanela Muharemovic, Class of 2012
Dartmouth College Oral History Program
Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World
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LEDDY-CECERE: This is Meg Leddy-Cecere. I'm a research assistant at Rauner Library and a Dartmouth '12. I'm in the Bryant Room at Rauner Library speaking with Sanela—

MUHAREMOVIC: Muharemovic.

LEDDY-CECERE: Thank you, Sanela—about her experience as a Dartmouth undergraduate as part of the Dartmouth Community and Dartmouth's World oral history project. Okay. So, Sanela, can you tell me a little bit about your upbringing and your early years and your life experiences before you came to Dartmouth?

MUHAREMOVIC: I am here as an international student. I was born in Sarajevo in 1989. So that's in Bosnia and Herzegovina. And I spent there the first 16 years of my life, basically. I attended a public elementary school and public high school for two years. I was a pretty good student. I come from a sort of middle-class family. I think right after the war in Bosnia finished we were a bit sort of better off than most people, which is why I had sort of a pretty comfortable childhood. But later on, it just got equalized. It was a world that was sort of uninteresting, I guess.

I think a more defining part of my life was the last two years of my high school, which is when I got a scholarship in one of the United World Colleges, the one in Norway, specifically. So that's an international school with the focus of education on globalization; on sort of world understanding of humanity, of building certain values. It was a great experience and from there, I came to Dartmouth.

LEDDY-CECERE: That's incredible. So in Norway, how did you sort of respond to switching from countries and communities and different schools? How was that transition for you?

MUHAREMOVIC: I didn't find it difficult. I was really open to new experiences because at least my education in Bosnia, sort of my—how should I say? —my intellectual pursuits I felt were oppressed. I was a very shy child in elementary school. I never spoke up even though I... I opposed a lot of things that were happening around me. My elementary school

experience was sort of politicized along with politics in the country. I hated it, but I never spoke up.

In high school I was already starting to become a bit of a rebel. [Laughter] And I would speak up against my teachers. Once we had this competition. So my Bosnian language and literature teacher came up with a—I think it was a city-level literary competition about... You know, we were supposed to write an essay called “Sarajevo, My Love.” [Laughter]

Well, you can imagine what I wrote: a sort of satirical piece about everything in the city, and it was absolutely terrible. I remember feeling so good as I never felt in my life when I handed that in to her. And she laughed. She was very, very liberal, and she wanted to publish it elsewhere; obviously it did not go to the competition, but these things happen.

But I remember coming home to my parents because I thought this would sort of blow up into a bit of a scandal if she published it or something. So I wanted to tell them. And when I told them, they were just so disappointed with me because they didn’t understand why I did this. I don’t know why. I didn’t think it was so terrible.

And then I found my education extremely dull. I would go from one year to the next, buying a new textbook every year with pretty much the same content, except a little addition here and there in the last year. Coming to classes where teachers would sit at their desks and read newspapers or file their nails while we were just taking notes from textbooks. And then asking us to know everything and to apply it to everything. Also, an English teacher who probably didn’t speak English as well as I did at that point, although I had never spoken English to anybody until my interview for the United World College. So when I was suddenly exposed to something that was so much better—

LEDDY-CECERE: In Norway?

MUHAREMOVIC: In Norway. Going to, I don’t know, biology class and doing actual laboratory work. I remember my first lab assignment: I was partnered with a girl from Canada who, you know, knew everything about the lab, and I was just clueless. I was walking about her. You know, I think in many other circumstances, I would have felt very humiliated because, you know, all of us who were there were very used to being the best students in our school.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

MUHAREMOVIC: But I was just so thrilled to be learning something new, to be exposed to all of these ideas, that I didn't care. I was the happiest person there, as far as learning went. Also it was a beautiful place. So, you know, I liked it very much. I did a lot of community service. I took up photography. I really felt like I sort of—

LEDDY-CECERE: You came into your own, yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. It was sort of like coming home.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. So to go back to when you were in Bosnia and Herzegovina, did you feel really alone in sort of your dis—you know, how you felt disillusioned?

MUHAREMOVIC: Oh, yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: And so you sort of felt— There wasn't, you know, a group of people, friends who sort of agreed with you? Obviously, your family was not....

MUHAREMOVIC: I felt very intellectually lonely. I could relate, you know, I had a couple of friends. I wasn't very social, but I had a couple of friends, especially in high school. Actually, my classmates were very nice. Elementary school, there were a few bullies who really, you know, messed up my grades fifth through eighth. But my high school classmates were very nice and, you know, I could hang out with them.

But I found myself intellectually lonely. I was very curious, and I was very serious. I was so serious and so mature in some ways that I just couldn't relate to my classmates in that many ways, you know. I would come to school, and everybody was talking about soap operas or this or that celebrity, and I was, you know, far more interested in—I don't know—reading 18th-century philosophers or something like that.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: And I was, you know, I'm a cool kid.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right.

MUHAREMOVIC: So I felt very lonely in that sense.

LEDDY-CECERE: And then when you came to Norway, that all sort of changed for you.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes, very much.

LEDDY-CECERE: You felt like you had... Did you feel like there was more of an intellectual community and an academic sort of...

MUHAREMOVIC: Definitely. And even if not everybody was this serious, scholarly person like I was, I found it just—I found it sort of comforting that people were coming from so many different places.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: Because I think my class was composed of people from, you know, 84 countries in the world—we were a 100-person class—that I could always engage with people in a meaningful way, even if we didn't discuss Kant or [laughs] some, I don't know, linguistic peculiarity of whatever language. Although I did have those discussions, you know. I would find somebody who would listen to me ramble on about Bosnian grammar and how amazingly complex and difficult it is. I found those people there, whereas I could never find them in Bosnia. Nobody would have such conversations with me. But I also just found great comfort in the fact that I could learn so much about other places through these people, whether it was through just talking to them, I... Even there, I wasn't very social. I wasn't someone who was kind of a social butterfly—whatever that's called.

LEDDY-CECERE: No, you've got it.

MUHAREMOVIC: Me and my idioms. But I could speak to people, and I found all the events there that were organized, very stimulating, like community service, like student debates and discussions, and, you know, bringing in outside speakers. I enjoyed it very much.

LEDDY-CECERE: So the diversity there really was a life-changing thing for you.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. I loved it.

LEDDY-CECERE: So can we sort of move on to how did you get to Dartmouth? And tell me about when you first arrived here.

MUHAREMOVIC: Dartmouth was a pretty random choice. So, at some point in my second year in Norway, there came a time when these two people, mysteriously called university counselors, started emailing everybody and saying, if you're going to apply to UK, if you're going to apply to US, your deadlines are this and this. And I had no idea about higher education in the US. I remember taking my SATs; it was scheduled on a Saturday. The Wednesday before that, one of the university counselors approached me and said, "You know, you need to take this test now if you're going to apply." I was like, "okay, sure."

LEDDY-CECERE: You just took it.

MUHAREMOVIC: I just took it.

LEDDY-CECERE: Two days before, with no prep. [Laughter]

MUHAREMOVIC: They gave me a little booklet which had a couple of practice—there were practice exams. They were sort of sample questions. That was my SAT preparation. Now that I know that some people spend hundreds of dollars and a couple of years preparing to take SATs, I just—I don't know how I ended up here. [Laughter]

LEDDY-CECERE: So funny.

MUHAREMOVIC: Clearly I didn't have stellar SAT scores. But luckily, they have different standards for international students.

So I don't exactly know how I ended up applying to Dartmouth in the first place because I didn't go through—I don't think I went to a presentation, if there was one on our campus, because we did get a lot of people visiting us from different campuses and recruiting.

LEDDY-CECERE: Do you remember any of those in particular?

MUHAREMOVIC: I remember a lady from Princeton came and also somebody from Duke. I had good interviews with them. I got in trouble for having an interview with, I think, Princeton, because it wasn't scheduled in advance. But the admissions officer invited me and my roommate because we were interested and had an interview with us anyway.

And the university counselors were like bra-bra-bra-bra-bra-bra-bra. [Laughter] But that was fine.

And, yes, I remember my Princeton interview because I walked in, and I said, you know, “Good afternoon.” And this lady turned in her chair, and the very first thing that she said was, “Are you half Irish?” [Laughter] I have no idea why. And I’ve actually been asked if I was Irish again since. I don’t know why. I don’t know what Irish people look like, but apparently I look Irish.

LEDDY-CECERE: Someone like you, yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: Okay, so be it. I didn’t have an interview with Dartmouth. I think the way I applied to Dartmouth was when I was sending in applications, my university counselor informed me that I can apply [to] up to six colleges for free, that the application fee would be waived. So I said, okay, I might as well do that. So I came up with a couple of colleges myself. And then the two university counselors had a list of places which offered good scholarships. These are Davis Scholarships which means that if you are a United World College graduate, you can get a 10- to 20,000-dollar scholarship each year, if you go to an American college. So she basically presented me with that list, and I sort of did a bit of research because I knew I wanted to go to a smaller college. And I guess I ended up applying to Dartmouth. And then I got into four colleges out of the six that I applied [to], was wait-listed at one. Yale turned me down. And I remember joking, oh, I’m too good for them. [Laughter]

LEDDY-CECERE: I did the same, yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: And I think Duke was sort of my first choice. I don’t know why, because this all seemed the same to me, all of these colleges. That’s why I stopped going to presentations. They would all come, and they would all say: We have so many and so many students. And we have all these facilities. And everybody invariably mentioned that they have wireless. I guess this was the time when wireless was becoming the big thing. So everyone just mentioned— Like I get it. You’ll have wireless. I can’t make a distinction between any places anymore.

So when it came to deciding where to go, it came down to one factor, which was money, and specifically, the amount of money that they would ask my family to contribute. And Duke asked for something outrageous. So they fell out of favor very soon. Also their

financial aid office was very rude. So it came down to sort of a little match between Dartmouth and Wellesley. I'd actually applied to two all-girls colleges, to Wellesley and Bryn Mawr. And Bryn Mawr was asking for a bit more, although not a lot more. But to me, really, even hundreds of dollars mattered.

So Dartmouth and Wellesley were within, you know, a couple of hundred dollars' difference. And I wasn't sure how to decide. But what happened was my philosophy teacher's daughter had enrolled in Dartmouth the year before. And the teacher just told me, "Okay. Why don't you email her and see what she thinks, what she has to say?" And of course, she wrote back generally nice things. I don't remember it all, the letter. But I remember just thinking, okay, this is some sort of a guideline now. Now it's not just, we have wireless. Here's at least one person who's saying, I'm here and I'm happy. So Dartmouth be it.

LEDDY-CECERE: And you're here.

MUHAREMOVIC: And I'm here.

LEDDY-CECERE: So what was your sort of... So it seems like you didn't have a lot of preconceived notions walking in, other than that we had wireless. But what was sort of your initial response to Dartmouth and the community that you saw and how you fit into that community?

MUHAREMOVIC: It's difficult to remember.

LEDDY-CECERE: I know it's hard to go back that far.

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't think it's so much going back very far. It's just when you change your environment in such a dramatic way, you're sort of in a shock for days. I still can't really remember my first seven days in Norway either. They were, you know, full of activities and stuff. But over there, I slept about 18 hours a day, and I started eating about 50 percent more than I ever did. [Laughter] You know, it was the first time when I gained normal weight. I was always underweight as a kid, for no reason. I didn't have any disorders. I had enough to eat. But I just couldn't eat. And then I came to Norway, and I ate everything that was in my way. [Laughter] And I think it was sort of similar here. I really don't remember my first days. I know I wasn't here for Dimensions. I didn't come for trips.

I came late in the evening. I thought someone would be waiting for me from International Students Office. But they weren't. So I asked some random person who I thought would be a Dartmouth student on the coach. And I was like, okay, can you take me here? Because I'd studied the map before I came, but then I came at night, and I was really, you know, confused, disoriented. I didn't know. It was like aah, this looks bigger than on the map. I don't know where I am. So this very pleasant young man took me to my dorm. And I also couldn't access my bed linen, which was locked up somewhere in Collis, because the International Students Office said they would take it for us so that we could access it. But then they didn't really organize it that well, clearly. And then another student actually lent me his bed sheets for the night. And my roommate was already there. And I'm pretty sure I spent quite a bit of time with her the next few days because we had sort of orientation. There were some—I remember some events with international students. But I was just—I think I was in too much of a shock to form actual opinions at that point. I was just sort of absorbing things. But I certainly didn't have any unpleasant thoughts.

I remember one thing that surprised me pretty soon was that the student activities were so all over the place. There were so many organizations; they weren't structured at all, whereas, in my high school in Norway, everything was very disciplined. You knew you had to do so many hours of community service of this and this type. And, you know, somebody took care that everything was organized very well. Whereas here, it was like—

LEDDY-CECERE: Free-for-all. Go for it.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. And I found it difficult to—Over the four years here in Dartmouth, I found it difficult to find a group to which I would belong. And I actually failed. I've spent some time in a lot of groups.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: But I didn't find any of them to be a meaningful experience. I don't know why this happens. It must be something about me, because a lot of people find something they stick to for two or three or four years. And I just didn't. So I remember that being my impression sort of early on. But other than that...

LEDDY-CECERE: So did you spend some time with international students? Like I know that when I first—I'm a transfer—when I first came as a

transfer, I hung out a ton with the transfer students because we all just immediately had something in common. Did you find that with the other international students or not?

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes, I used to spend some time with international students. But pretty quickly, I bonded with a couple of girls on my floor.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm. Is it freshman floor?

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes, yes. And I don't actually—I always think about this—I don't know how exactly I met them or when and how I started hanging out with them. And I find it sort of... I mean, it's not really a big loss. But I wish I would remember because now they were a couple of my best friends.

LEDDY-CECERE: And you can't think back to the point—yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: And I can't think of the point where I met them, you know, what was my first... I can remember later on we added a third girl who was in a humanities class with the two of them. And I remember meeting her or at least sort of when I first talked to her. I commented on her hair. She has glorious hair. [Laughter] All curls. But I don't remember exactly, you know, when I started hanging out with these two girls. We all became part of what we called shmob; just like a large group of generally nerdy people who would go out and eat together at dinnertime. I wasn't one of the loudest people clearly. I mean I never became the loud attention-seeker in the group. I was always sort of the kind of person who finds a couple of people to hang out with. So I ended up with the three of them, and now we're all in the same coed fraternity, too.

LEDDY-CECERE: So they've remained your sort of community.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Throughout your four years. That's pretty incredible from freshman floor onto—

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: All the way up to senior year. So you were talking about how there are tons of groups, but you never really found one that you felt like sticking with. Can you sort of expand on that and talk about what you tried and what didn't work about it?

MUHAREMOVIC: I think maybe I just had bad luck. And also I wasn't focused. I didn't know what I wanted. I think some mix of those two. Well, I had bad luck with two things. One was sort of group leadership and another was timing of events. So my first year I remember joining this pro-women's rights group.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay.

MUHAREMOVIC: And at the end of my freshman year, it ceased to exist because there was just no leadership. The girl who really had organized everything, who was working very hard, somehow failed to, I don't know, attract people. So membership just dwindled. And in the end we were like two people in the meeting, and she asked, would anybody like to take this next year? And I was thinking of maybe doing that. But I had no idea of how to do that. I didn't know anything about the logistics of organizing a group at Dartmouth. So anyway, if she'd come forward a bit earlier and sort of tried to transfer some knowledge onto me, I would have done it. But this way I just thought, no.

Then I think in my second or third year, I also joined another group. This one still exists; it has good leadership. It's called Upper Valley Money Smart, and it was about sort of financial education in the community. And I liked it a lot except I really didn't—I couldn't get a chance to participate in a way that I thought was meaningful. I really wanted to go out and actually do, you know, presentations in the community or talk to people and such. But they would always schedule those hours when I had class. And I went to the meetings for three consecutive terms, and every time somehow... [Laughs] So I gave up.

Then last year I got involved with the—what's it called?—DPP Dialogs, which was led by or organized by Nora Yasumura and I liked that a lot. I mean it's sort of a low-key activity. It's just really focused on the group that's doing the dialogs. And I liked it a lot, but—and I felt I would stay involved in it as a sort of group discussion facilitator. I applied at the end of, I guess spring term last year, and I was accepted. But then this year... What happened was that Nora was changing the way that the facilitators would get training. And this somehow inconveniently clashed with my fall term schedule. So I never got the training, so I didn't continue on with it. Which for that I really feel a loss because I liked that very much. I found it one of the most meaningful experiences here.

LEDDY-CECERE: So what about that set it apart from everything else for you?

MUHAREMOVIC: I think maybe it's just what the group was about, because this is a— They just choose a group of diverse students, and you meet in a room somewhere once a week, and you talk. You just have a topic. And usually topics, you know, that are somehow relevant to our community, like different types of identities and issues with those identities and such.

So, you know, I was especially interested in sort of discovering things about racial dynamics in the US because I grew up without the notion of race. And yet here I am, living in the US for my fourth year, and I still don't always understand it. I'm still afraid I will say something that will offend somebody. And I think what I liked about it is that really, I found that, unlike in class, people could be honest. Maybe it was because it's such a small group setting, and because we made it sort of intimate and nice. It seemed that people were really willing to share their opinions, their thoughts, their experiences. And I found that very unique.

LEDDY-CECERE: And did this apply to life at Dartmouth or just life in the US or just anything?

MUHAREMOVIC: I think we focused more on life on campus.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: But it would spill over.

LEDDY-CECERE: So what kind of issues were raised in the group about life on campus? You said race was one of them.

MUHAREMOVIC: I think we also were speaking obviously about gender issues, about— Somehow it would often get into... I don't know if every topic was sort of Greek life on campus. I wasn't actually affiliated at that time. I only became affiliated this winter. And religion. You know, just like sort of the big issues.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: We'd tackle one every week, and I found it good.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes, that's really— So you became affiliated this winter.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you talk about that a little bit and what that process was like and why you weren't before and what changed your mind?

MUHAREMOVIC: Well, here's the thing. I really couldn't make sense of Greek houses or understand their purpose until probably well into my second year here. I didn't get what they were for. Some people arbitrarily becoming brothers? [Laughs] It made no sense to me, especially when I'd hear about—I don't know—the rush process and sororities or whatever. And I thought, what is the point of that? Well, what happened was, in my sophomore year, one of my three best friends joined this coeducational fraternity, Phi Tau.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

MUHAREMOVIC: And then last year, so my junior year, two others joined, too. And they were just telling me, you know, oh, why don't you join, too? Why don't you join, too? It will be fun, whatever. But I said, you know, I'm not going to do this just because of peer pressure. I see no appeal in this, so I just won't do it. And I was just sort of opposed to it. But then, I guess when they rushed, I... First, I remember feeling very lonely during their rush term because they were doing a lot of activities with the fraternity. But then later on, as I was hanging out with them, and as I was also hanging out with more people from the fraternity, I realized, well, my biggest objection to the system was that people arbitrarily become friends. But I'm sort of very organically friends with a lot of people from that place. And it seems like it would be fun. So let's just do it. And during this winter break, I actually rushed. And then I got a bid immediately.

LEDDY-CECERE: So it was more of a formality than anything else. Like you were already hanging out with everyone. You'd already sort of entered that space. And then it was sort of just a formal process of—

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: —becoming affiliated and becoming a member. How has that changed your time at Dartmouth or your experience at Dartmouth?

MUHAREMOVIC: Not very much. I mean my winter term now was my rush term. So I guess I had some activities, Sink Night and such. It was generally

fun. There's something that happened that has now distanced me from the house, although I'm not willing to talk about it at this time. So I don't think I have, you know, a grand experience to talk about. I think if I, you know, if I'd joined much earlier, I would be able to speak about its impact on my life. But the impact that there is now is just short term. I don't see it as really changing my life in any way.

LEDDY-CECERE: So how did you— Because you were talking about a coeducational fraternity. And obviously, there are fraternities and sororities that are not coeducational. And the coeducational houses sort of stand in their own category. Did you feel a different relationship towards a coeducational house than you would have towards a house full of women, or did that make it— How did you understand the position of that house in terms of the wider Greek system at Dartmouth and how did that affect your...

MUHAREMOVIC: I really didn't think about it that much, so I can't say that I did. I remember once, something—I don't know why, but the idea of rushing a sorority crossed my mind. I think it's just because I met a girl, an international student, who was in a sorority. But I sort of gave up on the idea. One factor that was important for me was always the finances also, because I know some of these house dues can be... What....

LEDDY-CECERE: Huge.

MUHAREMOVIC: So I definitely wasn't willing to pay for that. And actually, when my friends were trying to convince me that I ought to join Phi Tau, they said, We have, you know, very low dues and also they can be waived if you... because of the fact I was really leaning about...

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm.

MUHAREMOVIC: I'm not sure if it's house dues or social dues. I know social dues can be waived or reduced if you're in financial trouble. But actually when I got the bid, I got the letter which they always present with the bid, which says, you know, financial standing is not a reason to not join Phi Tau. So they made sure that that's considered. But I really didn't think—I mean now, I definitely like it that I'm in a coeducational fraternity rather than in a sorority. I think that just has something to do with, you know, my own opinions on gender dynamics. I just found it—find it healthy that people are living together in a space and feeling safe and comfortable. It's a really

comfortable house. People are very friendly to each other. But other than that, I'm not one of those people who will get into a huge debate on the Greek community on campus.

LEDDY-CECERE: So can you talk a little bit about— If you had to like categorize yourself as part of a community at Dartmouth... Because we've named a lot of different sort of places where you're involved, in terms of friend groups, in terms of the coeducational fraternity. You're an international student. You fit into all of these categories. Do you feel like those are all equally a part of your identity, or do some take precedence over others? Or are there things we haven't touched on?

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't know that they've really mattered so much at all. I was at first—I tried to be involved with the International Students Organization. But it wasn't well organized in the beginning, so I didn't... And I just—I ended up not hanging out with them a lot. I think part of that was my own pressure, like saying, okay, don't just stay within this group that makes you so comfortable. You know, go out there and explore. Because one sort of bad memory from Norway that I had was that people were often grouped by ethnicity or region. So all the kids from Asia would sit together, and all the kids from Latin America would sit together, and all the Europeans would sit together. And I thought, what's the point for an international school? You should learn.

So I sort of distanced myself from international students. So I can't say that had a lot of impact. Although I do still recognize that as a community was important, and it could have been more important if I'd needed resources or somebody to relate to. So it's not anything against this community, because we are a community. We share some of the same problems. And so it's a natural group. I don't feel especially affiliated with, you know, coeducational houses because I'm not terribly involved with that. So I never had to develop that sort of group identity. And I can't really think of much else I've been sort of...

LEDDY-CECERE: So for you, group identity has not played a strong role.

MUHAREMOVIC: No.

LEDDY-CECERE: In your time here. It's been more individual identity and individual friends than sort of entering larger structures. Because like you said, it can often feel like sororities have like it's premade: premade

sisters, premade friends. And it sort of seems like the way you're describing the international students group is a similar sort of—that you wanted to not take what you saw as sort of an easy way.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. And my best friends ended up being a really diverse group. You know, I'm an international student here. One of them, well, two of them are, I guess, from here. One of them has mixed heritage; she's also half Croatian and half Jewish and then my third friend is—she's of Ethiopian origin, and she's, you know, Eastern Orthodox. And we're just sort of a very diverse group. And our other friends are, you know, they come from a variety of backgrounds. And we all get along together, and it's very nice.

LEDDY-CECERE: So can you—Do you think there's such thing as a Dartmouth insider or a Dartmouth outsider? And if you do think that, how do you understand those structures?

MUHAREMOVIC: Well, I think there would have to be, because I do think it's a sort of a world in itself, the College is, just by having sort of its own leadership, its own—We have everything here, right? While you're a student here, Dartmouth will be sort of most of your world you'll have contact with. Your parents, your friends from high school, some wider communities, but pretty much all of your life will be Dartmouth: your academics, your interaction with friends here, with your organizations, maybe some local community here. That's what it is.

So there has to be a Dartmouth insider definitely. But I don't think it's anything mysterious and special. It's just by virtue of this institution being an institution; part of a world that's partially closed off from the rest of the world.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. I agree with that. So we've had some sort of like upheavals on campus this year in terms of... I guess that Occupy was like a— There's a lot of different responses in the community about Occupy. Same with the hazing scandal. How do you understand the position—let's start with Occupy—how people responded to that, how there was so much hostility towards that from some of the student body? Why do you think that that is?

MUHAREMOVIC: With Occupy specifically, I think people were probably much more influenced by their political or religious backgrounds, or sort of ideological backgrounds, if you will, rather than by their positions and thoughts and their feelings about Dartmouth. So I think most

people correlated Occupy with a sort of wider national movement, even though the movement itself tried to put the emphasis on, this is what's wrong at Dartmouth. Let's change that. I think a lot of people just correlated with the wider national movement. And maybe that's what provoked such hostility because the national movement provoked hostility everywhere.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right. And so you think it was sort of—it was less of looking at our individual occupy movement and finding fault in it and more of just affiliating with a larger...

MUHAREMOVIC: That's at least the way it seems to me. For instance from, I don't know, reading comments on *The D* website or reading editorials in *The D*, it seems that people are always somehow referring to the wider movement and not focusing on what Dartmouth Occupy was.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right. And moving on to the hazing situation, the hazing scandal, that leaves sort of... That's been in the wider press as well. Actually it sort of like in a similar way as Occupy was both a Dartmouth issue and a national issue, I think the hazing scandal has quickly become both a Dartmouth issue and, unhappily, a national issue. So can you give me—What did you think about how our student body responded to this and stuff like that?

MUHAREMOVIC: I think that... Well, it could have been worse, first of all. I actually think that it generated surprisingly mature dialogue. So if you wanted to write comments—I don't go to Bored at Baker, so I wouldn't know that. There's probably some selection issue there. Yes, there are people making silly comments and being angry and everything. But there are also people who are trying to have a constructive conversation about it, in whatever comments section or we discussed it, you know, in our listserv in the fraternity. And people were concerned with it.

But I think the conversation was kept generally mature. People recognize that there is a problem, but they also don't want to overreact to it all of a sudden. At least in my fraternity, some people were a bit upset that, you know—They're upset with the way that the investigation against SAE had proceeded and said, okay, the College is using this for, you know, to show the world that they're—Oh, now we're doing something, you know. And everybody was actually afraid of sort of a crackdown on fraternities that would, you know, just destroy everybody regardless of... Oh well, one thing that I forgot to mention: Of course, when I was joining Phi Tau was

that I absolutely didn't do it until I was entirely certain that I won't be hazed. [Laughter]

LEDDEY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: That was it. And then, you know, I remember just thinking to myself, well, that would be funny. Now you join this fraternity after four years, and it's like one thing that you, where you feel certain you will always feel safe and not pressured to do anything, and now here comes some, you know, College technocrat trying to build a reputation on destroying the Greeks. [Laughter]

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. No, that's so funny. So have you—you talked about the transitioning from elementary school and early high school into your—what was it called? The Norwegian...

MUHAREMOVIC: United World College.

LEDDY-CECERE: United World College. You saw that change as sort of really instigating a change in yourself. Like you saw yourself change in response to this different sort of environment. Did you see any similar movement when you moved into the space of Dartmouth? Did you see any similar movement in yourself? Or have you noticed anything like that, that marks sort of your own transition or change?

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. I don't know if it's that radical that I could speak about it now. Or maybe it's just because I haven't finished now. Because I'm done with United World College, I can reflect back on it after a while.

LEDDY-CECERE: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MUHAREMOVIC: I mean it's been four years. So maybe I'll be able to speak better about my transition from high school to college in another four years. But it was definitely less dramatic. I didn't feel like it changed me so much. I feel like I have grown. I've become more mature. Certainly more level-headed. I was a bit of an idealist when I just came here. Too much of an idealist. I'm still an idealist, but—and I was very... I think I was very naïve. I feel more mature now. Of course, you always say that, now I'm better than I was two years ago or five years ago or ten years ago. But I really feel that I have matured in ways that are almost measurable in some ways.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes. And is that—Do you think that was just an inevitable life process, or do you think Dartmouth itself and the particularities of Dartmouth influenced that?

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't think it's sort of Dartmouth itself. But certainly some people here. Because when I say mature, I mostly mean actually mature sort of intellectually.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: Settled on some, you know, life goals and positions on certain topics. And this was... I was inspired, for instance, by some professors. So in my first two terms here, I took Writing for International Students with Professor Karen Gocsik. And she has remained for me one of my strongest influences since then. In sort of a very subtle way—it's not like she changed my worldview of everything. But it's more that she helped me, she guided me in a very disciplined way towards finding... This is the way she called it: She always said, when you're writing, find your own voice. I really think she helped me find my own voice. And then just other professors, you know. I would observe them, or I would read their work, went to their classes. And I found them inspiring in many ways.

And then also, just interacting with people here. Because like I said, I have progressively become more of a social person. I was very shy. Even in Norway actually, I had a couple of people that I got along with.

But I spent most of my time alone. At that time, I enjoyed it. I would much rather have gone on, you know, a little walk on this lonely island than watch a movie with my roommate or anything. And that changed. So I matured in that way, too. And that's due, I think, more meaningful interaction with just people you can call friends.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: Which may have to do, just have something to do with us all growing up. So now, you know, I can speak about things that interest me, and I won't get laughed at for being a nerd or anything. And somehow, in relation that, I also feel like I have grown down because now with my friends, I'm not afraid of doing childish and stupid things, even though when I was in elementary school, you know, when I was 12, I wouldn't have done those things. I would

have just scoffed and said, Oh that's so childish and stupid and immature. Why would you do that? But now I'm willing to do that.

LEDDY-CECERE: So some of that seriousness that you had when you were a little girl has sort of—it's been diluted a little bit.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. And maybe it's because, you know, now I have friends that I can relate to in meaningful ways, that I'm also not averse to this sort of childishness and silliness.

LEDDY-CECERE: So just like Norway was like a very intellectually-fulfilling community for you, this has been similarly, sort of in terms of professors and those sorts of interactions—

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: —that you have with other students has been similarly fulfilling.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: So do you think that over—because you're a senior now; you've gone through four years—Have you seen any changes in the Dartmouth community that you can pinpoint in your four years?

MUHAREMOVIC: It's difficult to say. I think I would have to sort of have better knowledge of what the trends were like before I came here and what they will be like after I leave, to sort of put it in context. Because yes, sure, things changed since I've come here. But I don't notice any trend. And actually, just the other day I was copying something from 1990 or so. And I stopped to read a portion of an article in *The D*. And I noticed, we're still having the same discussion and people are still putting forward the exact same argument; they haven't moved on at all. It was so disappointing. [Laughter] I don't remember exactly what it was, but I remember feeling, why?

LEDDY-CECERE: Nothing is really... So, Sanela works at Rauner Library and was copying what, old *Dartmouth* articles?

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: From the newspaper, from like what? Twenty years ago now?

MUHAREMOVIC: Exactly. It's like 20 years, and we're still having the same discussion with the same input. And of course we'll get the same outcome: people just being totally frustrated, and then it'll come up again in five years.

LEDDY-CECERE: No, it's interesting how you sort of see it, the same issues sort of cyclically raised over and over again. And it's so funny to see sort of the response also being cyclical and sort of being the same, despite 20 years passing. Do you think that that's a strength of Dartmouth? Do you think that that's a fault with Dartmouth?

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't know in what way it could be a strength. It could be a fault. I mean, in some ways it shows a lack of institutional learning. But I'm not sure it's institutional. It's more of communal. It's a lack of communal learning. I have no doubt that, you know, the learning curve of our leadership is probably better, you know. Well, I would hope so anyway. But students?

LEDDY-CECERE: That's very interesting. Like a lack of, a lack of sort of taking the experiences and then taking something out of them, rather than just having the same thing happen. I think that, you know, you see big changes that have occurred in a community, like big things that we mark all the time, like coeducation.

But then, you see issues that are raised again and again and again and never really come to a head. Never really come to a point where we make a decision. Like I think the Greek system is a great example of that, of an issue that's raised again and again and again. But very few tangible changes are ever made.

MUHAREMOVIC: I agree. I think a couple of years ago, I did a research paper on hazing at Dartmouth or— Yes, I think it was about hazing. And I pretty much went back as far as *The D* goes back and read everything that came up in the index for hazing in *The D*. And at the end, I noticed the same thing, you know: We're still presenting the same arguments. I wouldn't say exactly the same as 200 years ago; there's definitely some progress, thankfully. Although that would also have something to do with just the fact that the system itself has changed. But, you know, the arguments that they had in the '90s when a couple of fraternities were suspended, they're there again. Same things.

LEDDY-CECERE: So what about in terms of... et's just go way back in the conversation when we were talking about Duke, and we were talking about Dartmouth.

MUHAREMOVIC: Mm-hmm.

LEDDY-CECERE: Can you tell me about—I mean I've only been to Norway for like two days. But it's very beautiful. Where in Norway were you, first of all?

MUHAREMOVIC: We were in western Norway in the middle of nowhere. Gorgeous place. Gorgeous. We were three kilometers away from, I guess administratively we would belong in Flekke, which is a small, small—it's not even a town; it's a village. I don't know how many—a couple of hundred people. And then you take a road that's about three kilometers—whatever it is, two miles—and you come to this place that just has a few houses for teachers to live in and five residences for students and three classroom buildings, administration building, and another building with library and dining hall. Oh, and there's—The other establishment that's there is a rehabilitation center. And that's it. It's very beautiful. It's right next to the fjord. If the tide is very high, then the water comes to one of the classroom buildings and floods because it's right there. And there are two beautiful little islands that get a lot of blueberries in the early summer. So you take a little bridge, and then the other one's connected to the first one with another bridge. And there's just trees and blueberries and sun and flowers and it's absolutely gorgeous.

LEDDY-CECERE: So then, you know, a lot of people come from a big city to Dartmouth. And then they find it very limiting, you know. It's also sort of in the middle of nowhere. But it sounds like this is more cosmopolitan—if you can use that word [laughter]—in relation to Dartmouth, than your previous school in Norway.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes, yes. It's really in the middle of nowhere. Nothing. You can't—People don't lock doors.

LEDDY-CECERE: Yes.

MUHAREMOVIC: There are no locks actually on the doors. [Laughs]

LEDDY-CECERE: So this, relatively, felt sort of like—there's restaurants, there's, you know... Or did you—How does this compare then to Bosnia and Herzegovina?

MUHAREMOVIC: OK, so I'm going to be a really boring interview because to me, just nothing matters. I'm so... I really didn't care much about what—I mean, if I came here and there weren't any restaurants, I would have been fine. I really would have. I mean, a few shops are convenient, and that made a difference obviously in Norway. Even though we lived in the middle of nowhere, we would get, you know, occasional trips to towns to do shopping and such things. Everything was really provided for us. That was a complete bubble, right there. But here, I wouldn't mind if it was even more closed off, just because, you know, they're not things I care for. Also, I don't have a lot of money to go to restaurants.

But in Sarajevo, I grew up in this sort of ugly suburb. Sarajevo—already when my parents moved to Sarajevo before the war, Sarajevo was sort of expanding. But it has no place to expand because it's in a valley between the mountains. So now, if you want to live as close to Sarajevo as possible, it'll be on one of the surrounding hills. So that's where I have a house, in one of these poorly connected and overpopulated suburbs.

And I never really experienced city life. You know, if I wanted to go to the city, I had to take a half-an-hour-long bus ride, and that doesn't factor in the time you have to wait for the bus, which could also be half an hour. [Laughs]

But it was a good childhood. I mean I had—it's a very relaxed life there. People are very close together because they're physically close together. You can see from your balcony what your neighbors are doing at any given moment. So it was good.

I never experienced city life where, you know, you have so many cinemas and restaurants and shopping malls or whatever. I never really had that. So I couldn't really miss it. So I'm perfectly happy here.

LEDDY-CECERE: So for you, the Dartmouth bubble, it's not a problem. It's totally fine.

MUHAREMOVIC: It's fine. I would much rather if we had more sort of wilderness around us. I mean, I go and take a walk around Occom Pond every once in a while. But that's just Occom Pond. Or maybe I'll go to what's called the golf course or whatever. I also wish we had more flowers. You see, when Wellesley sent me their admission package, there was this gorgeous—they sent a DVD with a sort of

virtual campus tour, there were millions of flowers. They have no flowers here. And also they—You know, that beautiful garden in front of the Hop, and now they tore it down to expand the stupid Hanover Inn. I am so angry over that.

LEDDY-CECERE: So am I. It was such a... It was like—you're right. It was the only... It was so beautiful.

MUHAREMOVIC: It was the most beautiful place on all campus. And that fountain was ah!

LEDDY-CECERE: I know. What a bummer. Yes. So do you feel that being located in these—Because you said that in Sarajevo, being able to see everyone sort of brought everyone closer together, just being in tight quarters like that. Do you feel like this residential campus with not a lot of outside stuff, you don't really leave that often, do you feel like that affects— Do you feel like that causes a similar effect on community?

MUHAREMOVIC: No. No, I don't. I compare it more to community in Sarajevo City where people live in large residential blocks. I was surprised when I found out one of my uncles lived there for a while before he moved to, actually, he moved to the United States. And I was surprised to find out he doesn't know any of his neighbors. Like people just climb onto the 20-something floor, and they just shut their door behind them, you know, enjoying their family life, but not much of neighborhood life.

I think in where I lived, we just have houses, a lot of houses, and gardens and kids playing in everybody's garden and in the street and everywhere. It's just that people can't not interact because, you know, you have spaces to interact, to sort of use.

If you're living in an apartment somewhere, you maybe will have a balcony or whatever, but you don't have a nice garden to go out to; maybe you will, depending on the building. But we all have a nice garden to go out to, and we'll all go out in spring and tend to our gardens, you know. A lot of people plant vegetables, and I'll be taking care of our fruit trees and our flowers. And so people will have reasons to interact and will come into position naturally to interact.

Maybe you'll help your neighbor. Everybody helps each other build their houses because in Bosnia that's how we build houses. You

take out a loan, and then you buy materials, and your neighbors who work in manufacturing will come and build it for you without any plan or anything. Who cares? [Laughs] And then, you know, you will help your neighbor till the soil in the garden or whatever. So it's sort of—it comes naturally.

But here, it doesn't really. I mean, you make your own friends, but it doesn't necessarily mean that you will be friends with everybody on your floor just because you're on the same floor. They may be the opposite and you hate them because they're noisy or rude or whatever. And I find Dartmouth students in general quite rude. Everybody's being sort of selfish in a way: I'm here, and I can do whatever I want, and I don't care how it impacts you. I'm going to party until two a.m. even if you're sick, and you have a midterm tomorrow. And if you complain about it, you'll be the bad guy because you're so uncool and boring. I hate that.

I think freshman floors bond a lot. That's probably due to the UGAs promoting socializing and organizing activities. So that comes naturally. Also, I guess there are some communities which are—I mean in Greek houses, at least the people will be much closer together because they also interact a lot. And my floor in—this is my third year, I guess—I ended up with a lot of women hockey players on my floor. And I mean they knew each other from the team, so they were always being noisy and playing hockey in the hallway. [Laughter] I'm okay. I survived.

LEDDY-CECERE: So I really love this analogy you just made between like— So you sort of established in Bosnia, in like the suburbs, which is where you were living, there are these spaces like gardens, like whatever, and there's this sort of togetherness that is just fostered in these spaces.

But you compare Dartmouth, which is like very rural, to sort of like an urban apartment in which everyone's packed in on each other, right? But no one is interacting with each other. I think that's a really interesting sort of analogy.

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't know if other people would see it that way or maybe I'm just—Maybe it's just because I don't interact so much with people on my floor. I know a few people on my floor every time, and, you know, say hi. But not to everybody.

LEDDY-CECERE: Do you think it has to do with—because I think you're really on to something with this— Do you think it has to do with a sort of lack of uncharged communal spaces? So we have like—we have Greek houses which technically during a party time you're allowed to be in. But it's a very charged space. Do you think there's like a lack of... You know, we don't have a garden where you just like go out. I guess the Green but...

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't think it's a lack of uncharged spaces. I don't think that's the big deal. But just sort of I think ... A meaningful comparison is with the actual Greek houses because I think it comes from people, from necessity of people to be preoccupied with themselves. You know, you have classes, and in many ways you are atomized. So you'll come to your floor, and you'll go to your room.

But I think the equivalent of having gardens in suburbs in Sarajevo would be to have sort of some space where you have to go every day. Like if we all had to cook in the kitchen instead of going to FoCo to eat. That's when people would— Probably everybody would know everybody on their floor or in their dorm. So you would have to interact, you would have to cooperate, you would have to have a fight once in a while. So you would get to know people.

I really think it comes from necessity or, in this case, lack of necessity because you have everything somewhere else. And you define groups for yourself. Okay, this is the group with which I will socialize, this is the group with which I will study. And then you come back to your room, and you study. And that's it. There's no need for you to really interact with people on your floor unless you happen to meet them and like them for whatever reason.

LEDDY-CECERE: Right. So there's sort of that— I like that you used the word atomization, sort of an isolation and alienation of the individual within in these —you know, what a living space is usually supposed to be: a community.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes, but I mean I don't say it with disdain that we're so atomized.

LEDDY-CECERE: No.

MUHAREMOVIC: I think that also comes by necessity because we're here. And there are a lot of people here who are liking to party a lot. It's a fact that we're here to study, to get our degree. And everything is geared towards that, towards— It's college; it's what it is. So it's normal

that you won't have, you won't share a lot with your floor mates. You will share the hallways and the bathrooms, but probably not much more than that. I mean, if you do share something with them, you will probably know them from somewhere else or you're on track with that person. But you'll not have a lot in common with other people. I mean, that's okay. That's just the way it is.

LEDDY-CECERE: So are you saying that because it's like a personal—getting your degree is sort of a personal journey and a personal goal, that that sort of, you know, necessitates a situation in which people are sort of identifying with themselves over identifying within a larger structure or group.

MUHAREMOVIC: I don't know if it's true that people necessarily are terribly individualized. It's just that there are a lot of groups. Well, not a lot; Maybe there are several groups that they will belong to, but they won't necessarily overlap. And they won't live in the same space. It's just that it's like...it's not that you are, you know, completely isolated. It's just that you will be isolated probably in your dorm because it's sort of random how you will get it. But you will have, you know, some other affiliations that you will belong to. Maybe a religious group and a community service group and I don't know whatever. But they won't overlap a lot. So whereas, you know, in Sarajevo suburb, people just live together even though they have maybe other different things; they will be close because they live together.

LEDDY-CECERE: So that despite the campus's status as a residential college, you don't think that in its sort of residential spaces that it really comes together.

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes. It comes together in probably many other ways. I don't think there's a reason for a lot of people to feel lonely here because there's a lot of ways to... And even if you don't affiliate with any, you know, defined groups, if you have a group of friends, that's fine. That's perfectly fine. But it definitely doesn't come together in residential spaces.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay. I think we're all set. Are you okay to end now?

MUHAREMOVIC: Yes.

LEDDY-CECERE: Okay. Awesome. Thank you, Sanela.

[End of interview]