When STLCC-Meramec student Ann Morrison was assigned a service learning project for her Honors Composition II class last semester, the goal of the project was to change the world. Instead of cleaning a park or holding a canned food drive, Morrison decided to expose the genocide of approximately 14 million ethnic Germans.

Morrison, with the help of several students and staff members at Meramec, has been spearheading the production of “The Forgotten Genocide,” a full-length documentary covering the persecution of Germans throughout Eastern Europe after World War II. After the Holocaust, German descendants living in Eastern European countries were persecuted by the Communist Party, the soldiers of Josip Broz Tito and the partisan forces of Edvard Beneš. However, the targeted Germans had actually migrated from Germany hundreds of years before the Holocaust.

“When people heard German, they automatically assumed [Nazi soldier],” Morrison said. “That wasn’t the case, so these people who had never stepped foot in Germany were paying for this stuff that happened in Germany.”

As the first American-made full-length documentary covering the subject, Morrison said her main goal for “The Forgotten Genocide” is to tell the story of the atrocities committed, which remains relatively unknown among most Americans today. “If you were to go and ask somebody, ‘Hey, what do you think of when you think of World War II and genocide,’ [almost all] people would say genocide perpetrated upon the Jewish people by the Nazis,” said Scott Dorough, professor of communications and editor for the film. “But not a lot of people think about this [genocide] and talk about this in that same regard.”

Morrison taped the story of Karl Voss, Ph.D., history professor at Meramec, for her film, whose relatives were directly affected by the offenses covered in “The Forgotten Genocide.” Voss’ stepfather and his stepfather’s mother were both persecuted by Soviet and Polish soldiers as they tried to flee from their East Prussian home in 1945. Both were of German descent. They were captured at one point, and Voss’ stepfather had to witness his own father being raped multiple times by military officers. He was 5 years old at the time.

Despite what his relatives and millions of Germans like them have endured, Voss said that many survivors are still afraid to tell their stories due to a fear of backlash from the Polish government.

Forgotten genocide
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