

The Link Between Women's Studies Programs and Grassroots Organizations in Lebanon, the Balkans, and the Palestinian Territories: A Comparative Study

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INTRODUCTION

A PRIMARY GOAL OF ANY WOMEN'S Studies program is to create outreach opportunities beyond the university classroom in order to make a difference in one's community, whether at the local level or on the world stage. Thus, it is perhaps not a coincidence that strong Women's Studies programs have developed in Lebanon, the Balkans, and the Palestinian territories alongside successful women's activist groups. Together, they are able to work successfully despite the trials of functioning in conflict regions. This comparative study will analyze various women's organizations in these areas and their relationships with three Women's Studies programs in particular: The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in Beirut, the Center for Women's Studies in Zagreb, and the Women's Studies Program at Birzeit University in the West Bank. With a focus on work at the grassroots level as well as on research, these unique university programs in cooperation with women's associations not only aid women trying to survive and overcome the tremendous hardships of everyday life, but they are also playing an essential role, especially in the case of Lebanon and Palestine, in official policy making within their own governments. Lebanon, Croatia, and Palestine have been chosen for this comparison not only for their common ties to the Mediterranean, but also as home to multicultural peoples representing different stages of dealing with war and rebuilding. Although there are other conflict regions with women's activist groups that could be discussed here as well, Lebanon, Croatia, and Palestine stand out in particular since they are the only ones with well-established university programs in Women's Studies. The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World in Lebanon and the Women's Studies Program at Birzeit University are the only two of their kind in the Arab world just as the Center for Women's Studies in Croatia is a model in Southeastern Europe.

Chronologically speaking, while 1990 to 1992 marked the end of Lebanon's fifteen-year civil war, it was just the beginning of a new conflict which ignited across the Mediterranean in what are now the former republics of Yugoslavia, specifically Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. However, before, after, and throughout both of these conflicts, Palestinians have lived with occupation, massacres, and intifada. It is well known that during times of war and conflict, there is an increase in violence against women either as a direct result of war or due to a spike in domestic violence. While casualties involving women and war tend to be documented more accurately, this is not always the case for domestic violence cases which often go unreported. However, university programs and women's organizations in these aforementioned regions have made enormous efforts to establish reliable statistics on all violence against women, especially since the beginning of their respective war periods.

THE NEED TO JOIN EFFORTS

Throughout history and in times of political and economic strife, women's issues have not always been a priority of governments in terms of nation building or rebuilding even though in both the long and short term, women and children suffer disproportionately in times of war. Unfortunately, even the active participation of women in the overthrowing of oppressive regimes is not enough to guarantee that their status in society will improve, as was true, for example, for women in Algeria following the struggle for independence against the French from 1954 until 1962. Gillo Pontecorvo's original 1967 film *La Battaglia di Algeri* (The Battle of Algiers) and its 2004 remake both poignantly show how women were instrumental in the struggle for independence, yet women's efforts were quickly forgotten in post-independence Algeria. In fact, women's status in Algerian society worsened as they became the targets of radical fundamentalism during the civil war of the 1990s. For over a decade, Algerian women were subjected to gang rape during widespread attacks on villages. Avoiding or surviving such attacks proved to be not the only concern, for women knew if they were to become pregnant as a result of rape, they would be considered outcasts or even risk death through honor-related killings. In her book, *Une Algerienne debout*, the feminist activist Khalida Messaoudi tells how she fought against such violent acts directed at women especially during the civil war, and recounts events in Algeria that forced her to live in hiding for over two years before eventually becoming the Minister of Culture and Communication and one of the few Algerian women in a government position. However, Messaoudi's ability to help Algeria's women through official government channels is rare. Women are underrepresented in government worldwide, and the following cases in the conflict areas of Lebanon, the Balkans, and Palestine offer no exception to the rule.

Algeria serves as just one example in a world where the unprecedented use of rape as a premeditated and highly organized tactic of war became more apparent throughout the late 20th century. Women scholars and writers from the Middle East and the Balkans such as Evelyne Accad, Dubravka Ugre_i_, and Hannan Ashrawi alerted us to the fact that even the home became an extension of the battleground, as women suffered from increases in domestic violence due to the added tensions, powerlessness, and shame caused by the very nature and consequences of war.

The situation for women in the conflict-laden Mediterranean regions of Lebanon, the Balkans, and the Palestinian territories is compounded by the fact that women in these cultures--despite their differences as Arab or Slavic peoples, Muslim or Christian--are bound traditionally by uncompromising expectations of purity and fidelity in the name of family honor. Thus, even the woman who falls prey to the "soldier-rapist", as described by Lisa Price, is often not recognized as a victim by her own family and village. In terms of genocidal rape in the Balkans in particular, Beverly Allen reported that many survivors felt "cast away by their own communities" (1996: 99). The general belief held by both men and women in many Mediterranean societies is that women are ultimately responsible for preserving the honor of the family regardless of the circumstances. The Croatian essayist Dubravka Ugre_i_ stated for example in her book *Culture of Lies*, that the sexual terrorism practiced in the Balkans during the war period was more than an attempt to "humiliate 'our' women" (1998: 116). Ugre_i_ urged her readers to "more readily associate the real rapes with the general cultural attitude to women in the Balkans, exacerbated in times of war" (Ibid.: 116). When working with female victims, all such cultural factors must be taken into account by women's organizations and programs when devising strategies to reintegrate women into society.

Although tribunals internationally have recognized mass rape as an act of war, and even with more efforts than ever before to combat domestic violence, governments have continually failed to make a connection in a concrete way between the emotional health and well-being of women, and the overall hope for success of a nation recovering from war in its recent history. Quite the contrary, in fact, governments often use women to promote their own nationalist and ethnic agendas. For example, Lebanese scholar Evelyne Accad points out that women are disadvantaged by the reality that there is no civil marriage in Lebanon, and that couples are obliged to marry instead under one of the official recognized religions (1990: 29). Civil marriage is of course possible outside the country, but Lebanese women in general are less stable financially than men, and have more restrictions placed upon them by their families and are therefore less mobile. Accad states, "Each of the group's laws, rites, practices, and psychological and sexual pressures aim at keeping women exclusively for the men of their community" (Ibid.: 29). Likewise, Croatian writer Dubravka Ugrešić emphasizes that "Passionate adherence to an exclusively national identity is just another form of alienation" (1996: 175), and this is particularly true for women. Ugrešić is highly critical of Croatian government rhetoric which frequently challenges the right to abortion, and bombards women with messages such as "[o]nly a family with four children can ensure the future of Croatia" (Ibid.: 122). Thus, such observations in Lebanon and Croatia prove that mistrust and hostilities stemming from the initial conflict linger well into the post-war period, affecting the national psyche of a country for generations to come, and women often bear the brunt of this bitterness.

The three societies mentioned--Lebanon, the Balkans, and the Palestinian territories--all share a common experience of war, but the needs of the women who live in these regions have been better served not necessarily by their representative governments, but rather through the supportive network emerging from progressive women's organizations working hand in hand with Women's Studies programs in universities there. For Women's Studies programs and organizations to be effective especially in a conflict region, a primary goal is to eliminate any semblance of hierarchy among the various social classes of women, seeing that there is little hope of women dismantling oppressive hierarchies in their countries if they cannot achieve this goal among themselves first. This ideal is reflected in the administrative structure of the Women's Studies program at Birzeit University in Palestine in particular. The following sections will elaborate on the inner-workings and dynamics of each individual program as well as their collaborative efforts with other women's organizations community-wide or nationally with the common goal being nation building or rebuilding.

THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (BEIRUT) AND LECORVAW

Although 1975 marked the official start of the civil war in Lebanon, one recognizes that the seeds of such a conflict are planted long before--a reality that may have inspired the creation of The Institute for Women's Studies of the Arab World in Beirut in 1973 at what is now Lebanese American University. In addition to research, teaching, and publications including the quarterly *Al-Raida* which first appeared in 1976, the Institute's scope also reaches beyond the campus with one of its original goals being employment training and assistance to women from war-stricken families in Lebanon (El-Shazli 2002: i). A sampling of the Institute's work seems to reflect a belief that is conveyed by Evelyne Accad who is one of the Arab world's most prominent

women's scholars and who continues to work closely with the Institute. In her book, *Sexuality and War*, Accad states, "[I] would suggest that sexuality is centrally involved in motivations to war, and if women's issues were dealt with from the beginning, wars might be avoided [...]" (1990: 27). The Institute also conveys this message not only in Lebanon and in other Arab nations, but to the world in general. In fact, this realization seemed to be the motivating principle behind one of the Institute's most recent exhibits and series entitled, "Women and War," which opened in recognition of International Women's Day in 2004 (Khalaf 2004).

Each and every organization and activity combating domestic violence in Lebanon seems to echo this same sentiment that violence against women signals a malaise in society as a whole, and thus getting to the roots of domestic violence aids not only individual women but an entire nation. One of the most active and successful organizations in Lebanon today is The Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW), which was founded in 1997 as a response to the increasing rate of violent acts against women in the country, and because of the lack of legal and emotional support for victims of this violence. The Listening and Counseling Center of LECORVAW has emerged from once being an overwhelmed hotline for abused women to eventually becoming two offices--the original office in Beirut followed by the opening of another in Tripoli in the summer of 2002, serving women in the North who were found to be poorer and more isolated than those in other parts of the country. The goals of both offices are to inform women and girls of all backgrounds of their legal rights and to provide them with social, psychological, and legal support (LECORVAW 2006: 2).

In 1998, LECORVAW played an active role in The Permanent Arab Court to Resist Violence Against Women, and the organization published the proceedings of this meeting entitled, *Arab Public Hearing on Legal Violence and Equality in The Family*. The meeting, held March 15-17, 1998 in Beirut, was attended by prominent lawmakers, scholars, and activists from across the Arab world, and the publication included testimonies of abused women of various social classes and marital statuses. This was not the only time that LECORVAW worked directly with legislative and judicial matters, as faulty legislation was precisely the target of the Council's first case for which its members launched a campaign against Lebanese Penal Code Article 522 which allowed a kidnapper or rapist to be absolved of all charges if he married his victim. The main case that LECORVAW brought to the public's attention was that of university student Suline Zahraman who had been kidnapped and raped by her cousin whom she refused to marry despite the religious contract of marriage he had made with her (Ibid.: 4). Article 522 thus allowed the cousin to escape prosecution, but LECORVAW's activism was at least able to secure Suline's release, bringing her case and others to the attention of the Lebanese public.

As a result of all of these efforts and others, LECORVAW reports an increase in demand on the part of professors and students alike for data and awareness lectures given by the LECORVAW staff (Ibid.: 6). Thus, the Council has been working actively not only in Women's Studies, but also with a surprisingly diverse group of students representing the disciplines of medicine, law, social work, and even multimedia and engineering.

Women's organizations in Lebanon have geared their message towards youth as well. LECORVAW works with high school and university students who had experienced war as children so that these individuals do not repeat a cycle of violence in their own relationships and

homes. LECORVAW recently conducted 48 workshops in 18 Lebanese high schools in order to educate secondary school students on domestic violence and child sexual abuse (Ibid.: 6).

Lebanese women's groups have also been dealing with issues unique to female refugees. After Israel withdrew its troops from southern Lebanon in 2000, LECORVAW formally recognized the needs and suffering of the 500 female detainees held over 16 years in the Israeli-occupied Khiam Camp. The Council sought to attend to not only the psychological needs of these women, but it provided job training that would allow the women to learn to live independently in spite of the trauma of their ordeal (Ibid.: 3).

Although increased incidence of domestic violence was common during the Lebanese civil war, rape warfare was ironically not a widespread problem in the country. Lebanon was indeed unique for a conflict region, in that warring factions were said to have had an understanding that women were not to be touched. Unfortunately, this was not the case in the Balkans where tens of thousands of Croatian and Bosnian women, Muslims and Christians, were brutally raped, sometimes repeatedly and over an extended period of time. This situation presented additional problems to be handled by Women's Studies Programs and activist groups in that region.

CENZENA, DE_A, CESI, AND THE CENTER FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES (ZAGREB)

As in Lebanon's case, in order to understand the issues that Women's Studies Programs and organizations in the Balkans deal with today, it is necessary to look ten years or more in the past. In her book, *Rape Warfare: The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia*, which was written at the time of the Croatian, Bosnian and Kosovo conflicts, Beverly Allen identified two forms of genocidal rape in particular which continue to have profound lingering psychological effects on Croatian and Bosnian societies even today:

1. Chetniks or other Serb forces enter a Bosnian-Herzegovinian or Croatian village, take several of the women of varying ages from their homes, rape them in public view, and depart. [...] Several days later, regular Bosnian Serb soldiers from the Yugoslav Army arrive and offer the now-terrified residents safe passage away from the village on the condition they never return. Most accept, leaving the village abandoned to the Serbs [...].
2. Serb, Bosnian-Serb, and Croatian Serb soldiers, Bosnian Serb militias, and Chetniks arrest Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Croatian women, imprison them in a rape/death camp, and rape them systematically for extended periods of time. Such rapes are either part of torture preceding death or part of torture leading to forced pregnancy. Pregnant victims are raped consistently until such time as their pregnancies have progressed beyond the possibility of a safe abortion and are then released. [...] The policy [...] considers this child to be only Serb and to have none of the identity of the mother. (1996: vii-viii).

Both types of rape were officially documented Serb policies of ethnic cleansing. The first example illustrates the underlying code of family honor and expectations of purity and fidelity mentioned previously that explain the overwhelming shame felt by the women who had been raped, making them virtual outcasts in their own villages. Most felt that such sentiments could

never be erased, and thus explains why many women refugees believed they could never return to their villages even after the war.

The second example shows how women were and still are exploited to carry out nationalistic plans with the raping of a country's women analogous to the conquering of territory. In February 1996, The Associated Press reported that typical rape victims in the Balkan conflicts ranged in age from 12 to 62. In a survey of 65 women who had become pregnant in rape camps, it was found that 35 had abortions, and 29 left their newborns at the hospital without ever wanting to see them (AP 1996). Writing about the use of rape in warfare in general, Evelyne Accad states in her book, *Sexuality and War*:

Rapes are associated with unwanted pregnancies and abortions [...] The sexual act being [...] one of rape and domination, women appear as mere objects of possession, vessels into which the men pour their anger and frustration, extenuations of the feelings and acts of war. Abortion is the direct result of rape, as destruction is the direct result of war (1990: 171-172).

It was reported that only one woman who had been subjected to fourteen months of rape by dozens of men decided to keep her child. An interview with this mother whose son was three years of age at the time of the interview revealed how a society would be haunted by its past for years to come:

When he is nice, I want to touch him and hug him, but I can't. My hand sometimes stops in mid-air [...] When he is bad, I can't punish him. It reminds me of the humiliation I felt (AP 1996).

Many ask how rape survivors such as this one can ever have normal, trusting relationships again in light of this violent past. During and after the war, refugees to be cared for in Croatia alone numbered in the hundreds of thousands, equaling nearly 10% of the country's prewar population as late as the beginning of 1995 (CENZENA 1995). According to a report issued by the Center for Women War Victims in Zagreb (today known as The Center for Women: Rosa), 80% of these refugees were women and children who faced hostilities and a lack of status and safety in various Croatian cities. It was clear that women's organizations were badly needed to rebuild trust in all of these women in order to help them maintain independent lives.

Most of the organizations that grew out of the war period were at the grassroots level. Although its origins can be traced to a protest against government violence organized in 1991, DE_A in Dubrovnik for example, began its activism officially in 1993 with two projects: The Psychological Adjustment and Help for Women Refugees Project and also The Displaced Women and Local Women in Need Project. With Dubrovnik's once flourishing tourist industry at a standstill during the war period, the sixteen founding members decided to use two empty and abandoned hotels to house the numbers of women refugees who walked the streets of Dubrovnik in a traumatized state (DE_A 2006). DE_A realized that the needs of these women were not only

economic, but the women also had to come to terms with and move on from their psychological trauma. Thus, DE_A provided such women with workshops on sewing and embroidery so that they could learn a skill that would eventually support them financially while at the same time, the workshops brought women together who had lived similar experiences despite their differences in background. Since all the women had lived the trauma of war, they took comfort in being together, this time to work creatively. DE_A still exists today, and over the years, it has continually updated its activities to suit women's current needs while still promoting the peacemaking role of women (Ibid.).

In the Croatian city of Zagreb which also saw a tremendous influx of women refugees, several more organizations and The Center for Women's Studies eventually emerged and all maintain a prominent role today, although like DE_A, these organizations and programs sometimes reevaluate their goals to fit the reality of women's lives as they progress through the post-war period. For example, The Center for Women War Victims which offered training, healthcare, and rape and post-traumatic counseling for women refugees during the war period has now become The Center for Women Rosa which deals mainly with domestic violence victims. However, Rosa's work is technically still dealing with the direct consequences of war, as many of the women cared for at the Center today are the victims of a cycle of violence which can be traced back to the war itself.

Unlike in Lebanon where the Institute for Women's Studies preceded the creation of women's activist groups, it seems that in Croatia, women's groups were the ones who called for an academic center. Zagreb had been the home to a group of feminist scholars, activists, and artists who founded The Center for Women's Studies in 1995 which is now one of the most well known programs for women in Southeastern Europe. According to their mission statement, the Center is described as the first and only independent educational center in Croatia and an acknowledged center for civil education in Southeastern Europe (Ka_i_2002: 4). The Center's main activities include public education for women leaders, politicians, and activists, in addition to research, cultural activities, and publishing (Ibid.: 3). Thus, the goal of the Center is to combine theory and true activism and the Center accomplishes this through offering--its own degree programs as well as those that complement traditional university training. By the end of 2002, 159 students had completed their programs and 700 women from various women's groups, political parties, and other projects participated in the Center's activities (Ibid.: 3).

As the Center for Women's Studies works directly with activists for women, its influence is apparent in the eventual founding of other organizations in Zagreb such as The Center for Education and Counseling of Women (CESI) which opened in 1997. This Center realizes that violence is often cyclical, and that many young adults now were the very children who experienced the violence of the war ten years ago, and this past ultimately impacts their relationships even today. In response to this concern, CESI's latest project works with high schools on teen dating violence in an attempt to raise social awareness among Croatia's youth (Dunnebacke 2004). CESI believes that it must instill in Croatia's children and adolescents the values of gender equality and tolerance along with an overall sense of solidarity and non-violence among young men and women. (Ibid.). It is this type of training which provides true hope for preventing a reoccurrence of ethnic conflict which is still smoldering in many of the Balkan states today.

BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY AND THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN PALESTINE

The case of Palestine is obviously different from that of Lebanon or the Balkans since the conflict still rages on, perpetuating violence that has already endured for a much longer period than for the two other nations studied. In such a context, women's issues such as domestic violence, although many times a direct consequence of war, tend to be ignored almost entirely by governments for the sake of putting more time into solving the larger conflict at hand. Political reality is therefore diametrically opposed to the ideas of feminist scholars such as Evelyne Accad who claim the larger conflicts might be avoided if women's rights and abuses were taken into consideration. However, despite this trend of women's issues ranking low on the list of priorities in times of heightened conflict, domestic and social conditions for Palestinian women are not completely overlooked by everyone. One ray of hope in particular is the highly respected Institute of Women's Studies of Birzeit University that has transitioned from a fledgling Women's Studies program to having a more important role as a Center, now reaching the status of Institute, in just ten years. In addition to undergraduate and graduate teaching and research, the Institute has a voice in policy making affecting Palestinian women and ultimately, Palestinian society as a whole. In a conscious effort to reject a strict hierarchical model of administration, the Institute is self-described on its website as a collegial enterprise, preferring this to a traditional director/staff organization (2006). This ideal promoting a sense of community is often needed to solve problems caused by the reality of everyday life in Palestine. Birzeit has recently been forced to seek alternatives, such as distance learning, to reach its students who have been prohibited from attending classes due to unpredictable yet long-lasting factors in the Occupied Territories such as changes in and multiplying of road blocks, curfews, checkpoints, barriers, and the like.

The Institute works not only with women in the West Bank but also with refugee camps and in Gaza. For example, the Institute conducted the gender analyses for a sanitation project in Jenin and for a women's health center in Gaza, and they also assisted the United Nations Development Program (El-Raifi 1997). These important studies feed into other projects for women in Palestine, demonstrating how the Institute has a direct effect on public policy and democratization. One of the entities benefiting from the research of the Institute is The Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) whose goal is to aid women victims of political, social, and domestic violence by providing comprehensive rehabilitation and counseling services that will enable them to re-enter society (Hejo 2004: 5).

With daily manifestations of violence occurring on a larger scale, domestic violence against women is too often ignored even though it is precisely the unstable political situation that increases cases of this nature. Furthermore, continued domestic violence becomes a trend that even abused women themselves sometimes perpetuate. As the WEP research team of Hejo, Ibrahim, and Wali explained in their report on domestic violence:

The worker suffers of daily torture when he goes at 3:00 in the morning to Israel on a daily basis. He faces all types of humiliation and scorn at the checkpoints as well as

ill-treatment from the Israeli employers, not taking into account the exploitation of his legal rights and the policy of continuous closure which Israel practices against Palestinian people. After this great hardship, the worker becomes a time bomb that may explode at any time and such explosion often takes place by letting it out on the wife. [...] This, of course, forms a pressure on her and affects raising her children. She often gets furious at her children and this presents great danger on society where we will have a generation carrying features of violence (Hejo 2004: 27-28).

Shadia El-Sarraj, a Palestinian whose family was among the original group of refugees who were first expelled from their homes in 1948, seems to support the above findings, as she writes in her article, "Screaming in Silence" the following:

Throughout the general [Palestinian] population, various forms of physical and verbal violence and anti-social behavior have increased. Families, clans, and political factions have been plagued by infighting while men have abused women and children, the most helpless and vulnerable members of society. I read these phenomena as indications that Palestinians have directed aggression inwards in reactive self-destruction (2000: 18).

Unfortunately, WEP case study statistics prove these assertions to be true as their findings indicate 62.5% of all Palestinian women in general experiencing some type of domestic violence in their lives and the percentages are even greater among certain study groups. For example, 91.3% of women with no more than a primary education are regularly abused (Hejo 2004: 17) as well as 100% of divorced women that the WEP studied (Ibid.: 13).

In addition to the alarming abuse rates discovered by the WEP, there are also several obstacles that have been identified in the fight against domestic abuse. The WEP reports that 90% of the abused women with whom they work would never report their abuse to the police who have a reputation of considering this sort of violence to be a family issue and not a criminal act. Furthermore, involving the police is considered by many Palestinians to be a humiliation to the husband who would then be expected to seek revenge against the wife with even more violence (Ibid.: 31). While women's shelters do exist in Palestine, society's view unfortunately is that they are thought to be more like prisons than safe havens, as women who come to them are perceived to be isolated from their families, or worse yet, as exposing personal problems at the risk of family honor (Ibid.: 32). In a similar trend, only 5 cases of rape were reported in Palestine in 1998 (Ibid.: 31) while it is certain that there were many more. One positive item of note, however, is that although women are reluctant to approach legal authorities concerning domestic violence, they are slightly more willing to contact women's institutions and organizations which offer services to abused women (Ibid.: 32). This sentiment seems to be reiterated in all three of the cultures studied and is thus just one reason why women-based organizations and programs are essential, especially in conflict regions.

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on just some of the links between Women's Studies programs in Lebanon, Croatia, and Palestine and women's organizations in those countries. Although these projects and programs are undoubtedly successful, all continue to be severely understaffed in proportion to the amount of work they do and the number of women they serve or potentially can serve. In addition, as is typical for most Women's Studies programs and women's organizations even in the wealthiest of countries, there is more need than there is funding and resources available. However, what these programs and organizations have been able to accomplish in spite of modest budgets and the most difficult of social and political situations attest to the commitment of the individuals involved to make positive changes affecting the present and future of their respective nations.

There are, of course, fledging projects and organizations of note in Lebanon, Croatia, and Palestine that hold great promise of adding to this growing network designed to help women living with both the direct and indirect effects of war. Many of the individuals behind these endeavors are Women's Studies scholars or are associated with such programs. In Lebanon, the group Bridges of Peace International has two Women's Studies professors on its board of directors, and is currently working with women activists in the Bekaa Valley to build a first-of-its-kind shelter for abused women that will serve as a residence as well as a counseling and rehabilitation center. In Croatia, Brigita Bajric is raising awareness of human rights violations against Romani women in that country. Romani women in Croatia, like in many countries, have been virtually ignored, and are consistently denied health care, education, and employment. Roma women in particular are in desperate need of recognition in independent Croatia, as they, too, were victims of ethnic cleansing and rape camps. In addition, domestic violence and child marriage are serious problems in the Romani community and this reality has traditionally been ignored by Croatian law enforcement agencies and the national government. Due to activism by individuals such as Bajric, universities not only in Croatia but worldwide are slowly integrating Romani Studies into their curricula. Finally, in Palestine, women's activist and scholar, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, has worked tirelessly to help Palestinian women in Jenin and Nablus in particular to devise coping mechanisms and survival strategies. This is a relatively new project for Shalhoub-Kevorkian whose activist roots can be traced to 1992 when she began working with abused woman through the establishment of the first hotline for battered women in Palestine.

In many ways, all of the programs, organizations, and individuals described in this study have made strides where governments have failed or fallen short. Their stories serve as models not only for societies who have also experienced or are experiencing war, but also for all those concerned with women's issues and education cross-culturally. Activists who come together both in the field and in a university classroom truly are working to bridge gaps between generations, social classes, and those with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The Women's Studies programs analyzed here have given concrete examples of how what is taught and researched in an academic setting may indeed be applied to realities of everyday life, and likewise, what is observed and learned in the field will return again to the classroom to influence what is taught. Therefore, one can maintain that solid relationships between Women's Studies programs in universities and grassroots organizations serving women require a certain level of

interdependence, mutual respect, and cooperation. Such collaboration is certainly bringing many goals and projects to fruition in Lebanon, Croatia, and Palestine, offering at least some stability for those who have known only the opposite.

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