Women on the Pilgrimage to Peace

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Edited by

Anna Hamling

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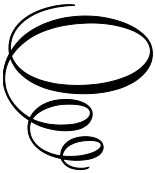

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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-6257-3
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-6257-8

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Edited volumes are the result of a collective effort, and this one is no exception. I would like to acknowledge the excellent endeavours of all the international contributors for putting so much work into this project, and the great help from the proofreader Graham Clarke and the Cambridge Scholars Publishing team. Without their assistance, commitment, and support this project would not have come to fruition.

My sincere gratitude goes to my husband, Richard, my shining star on our beautiful pilgrimage through life together.

INTRODUCTION

ANNA HAMLING

> For it isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.
> —Eleanor Roosevelt

> The first step in the direction of a world rule of law is the recognition that peace no longer is an unobtainable ideal but a necessary condition of continued human existence.
> —Margaret Mead

This interdisciplinary volume is about women from around the globe on pilgrimages to peace. Women do not always identify with organized feminist movements or gender-studies policies, and are free to tell either their own or other women's stories about their experiences and activism. They are written by and/or about women on their journey to peace. Because the concept of pilgrimage has different connotations than the strictly religious medieval one, there is a connection between a pilgrim and a secular tourist in the contemporary world. This terminology requires further explanation and better understanding. My previous volumes *Women and Nonviolence* (2021) and *Women, Creativity and Nonviolence* (2022) discussed the concepts of principled (religious, moral) and pragmatic (social, political) nonviolence across cultures; the current volume develops our understanding of women on the pilgrimage to peace across cultures. The personal stories of healing and collective journeys of empathy, compassion and "love in action" shared by different actors involved in the research and activism of peace[1] shed light on forgotten, unrepresented and unappreciated participants in the struggle. While contributors to this volume were free to use their own theoretical underpinnings and key concepts in their studies, our overall framing has been in terms of applying nonviolent strategies (such as civil resistance, protests, marches, sit-ins, boycotts, social media, music, painting and other creative strategies) leading to peace by women around the world

[1] M. Nagler, in *Women, Creativity and Nonviolence*, ed. Anna Hamling (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022), 16–17.

in their struggle for their and everybody's right to social justice and peace, no matter their race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

In this volume the focus is on two new concepts: pilgrimage and peace. I will start with discussing the concept of pilgrimage. The theme of pilgrimage is one of the oldest regular ways of mobility in human life. As Victor and Edith Turner point out, "pilgrimages are probably of ancient origin and they were found even among populations that anthropologists call 'tribal,' like the Huichol, the Lunda, and the Shona. But institutionalized pilgrimage became of real importance with the advent of the great religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."[2] The desire to take a journey started in primitive societies and continued into ancient and modern times, but the meaning of a pilgrimage as a religious journey to holy sites has been modified and expanded in the twenty-first century. It is the result of a global process that involves different forms of travel, from the physical movement of migration to tourism and pilgrimage.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "pilgrimage" connotes a religious journey "of a pilgrim; especially one to a shrine or a sacred place," but its derivation from the Latin *peregrinus* allows broader interpretations, including foreigner, wanderer, exile and traveller, as well as newcomer and stranger. The term "tourist" means "one who makes a tour for pleasure or culture." Margry[3] claims that the contemporary use of these terms, identifying the "pilgrim" as a religious traveller and the "tourist" as a vacationer, is a culturally constructed polarity that veils the travellers' motives. The analysis of this relationship focuses on the similarities and differences between tourist and pilgrim.[4]

Pilgrims and tourists are distinct actors situated in opposition. The polarities on the pilgrimage–tourism axis are labelled "sacred" and "secular"; between them ranges an almost endless list of possible sacred–secular combinations, with the central area now generally termed "religious tourism." These positions reflect the multiple and changing motivations of the traveller, whose interests and activities may switch from tourism to pilgrimage and vice versa, even without the individual being aware of the change. Damari and Mansfield[5] use the term "knowledge-based tourism" as

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[2] V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 15.
[3] P. J. Margry, "Secular Pilgrimage: A Contradiction in Terms?" in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World*: *New Itineraries into the Sacred*, ed. P. J. Margry (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 13–46.
[4] Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture.*
[5] C. Damian and Y. Mansfield, "Reflections of Pilgrims' Identity," in *Current Issues in Tourism* 19, no. 3 (2016).

synonymous with religious tourism. Most researchers identify "religious tourism" with the individual's quest for shrines and locales where, in lieu of piety, visitors seek to experience the sense of identity with sites of historical and cultural meaning.

In the twenty-first century, the centres of religious and tourist pilgrimage are experiencing functional structural changes, mostly through tertiary-sector development, and in some cases industry development, agriculture, culture, art and architecture. Some pilgrimage places have become important centres of religious tourism (Santiago de Compostela, Rome, Jerusalem, Varanasi, Kajruan, and Częstochowa). Some authors, for example Turner,[6] insist on the analogy between pilgrimage and tourism. According to them, a tourist is a half-pilgrim, and a pilgrim is a half-tourist.

It would not be correct to equalize tourism with different forms of religious and nonreligious pilgrimages, but pilgrimage has some elements of a tourist journey, and some tourist journeys have certain elements of pilgrimage. This is also a reflection of the essential complexity and ambivalence pervading the two phenomena. Tourist journeys can be filled with respect and worship of their goal to such an extent that they can be freely identified as modern forms of pilgrimage. On the other hand, some formal pilgrimages can be completely devoid of faith, respect and worship, so that their essence of pilgrimage can be denied, and they can be classified as an entertaining and educational form of travel. To perceive the similarities and differences, i.e. to determine connections between a tourist journey and pilgrimage, it is necessary to begin with determining the most important common causes of both phenomena; that is, some essential human needs and ideals which are manifested through both phenomena in some way.

Today's pilgrimage differs from that of medieval times. The journey of medieval pilgrimages represented sacrifices; modern pilgrims walking for days and weeks strive to achieve their wellbeing by eliminating the negative effects of modern life. The experience of walking a long distance in quiet and scenic surroundings alone can be perceived as a religious goal, without arriving at a holy shrine at the end of the route.

This volume mostly addresses the secular experiences of pilgrims/tourists, but in fact the experiences of participants on the pilgrimage to peace also have metaphorical religious connotations. There is a growing realization that peace is envisioned as a complex of specific political, economic and social changes that make the world in some part more just, and increase the areas of agreement among nations and people. It

[6] Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, 20.

is a continuous process, a journey, a pilgrimage extending and contributing to the viability of those elements of peace we have attained so far.

The daily work of peace is carried out by the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations, peoples' movements and individual citizens. Millions throughout the world are engaged in the struggle for peace, and women are at the forefront in all these areas. The advancement of human rights, social justice and sustainable development is dependent on peace. A general definition of peace is equal to that of pilgrimage.

According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "peace" is:

- a state of tranquillity or quiet: such as
  (a) freedom from civil disturbance
  (b) a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom
- freedom from disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions
- harmony in personal relations
- a state or period of mutual concord between governments
- a pact or agreement to end hostilities between those who have been at war or in a state of enmity
- used interjectionally to ask for silence or calm or as a greeting or farewell[7]

Based on this definition, peace is easy to understand but very difficult to define.

For the current study of the working definition of peace I will quote Johan Galtung (1930–), the Norwegian founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies who is a pioneer and leading actor in the field. In his editorial of 2019, Galtung offers the following definition of peace: "The absence of suffering and the presence of fulfillment; in the nature, human, social and world spaces."[8] He differentiates between positive and negative peace. Negative peace does not achieve any structural change in society even if wars or acts of violence have stopped. Positive peace brings positive, structural changes in society once the violence stops. In short, the content of positive peace is peace, harmony and prosperity in shared human values from shared humanity. It further leads to the establishment of social justice.

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[7] "Peace," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/peace?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.

[8] I. Galtung, Keynote Speech, International Peace Research Association (IPRA) January 7, 2006. #607 Johan Galtung. Transcend Media Service. Editorial, October 2019.

Positive peace can be achieved when all forms of inequality in the social structure are eliminated. Therefore, everyone can have equal access and rights to welfare and a better life. In this sense, positive peace aims to improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, including personal development, freedom of expression, and social and economic solidarity and participation.

Johan Galtung further divides this positive-peace typology into three: (1) Instant positive peace. Kindness towards all basic needs, life, happiness, freedom and identity; (2) Replacing quest with freedom and exploitation with experience. Strengthening the conversation of seepage, line integration, fragmentation solidarity and inclusion exclusion; (3) Positive cultural peace that supports justification for violence with justification for peace in religion, law, ideology, language, art and culture.

In line with ecofeminism, Galtung believes that women's leadership guides the world away from violence and war, and towards peace.

Holistic intercultural peace between the peoples of the world and their diverse cultural traditions and religions aims to find the way to respect the diversity of peoples and their contributions to world peace. There is a concept of Holistic Gaia Peace which is a way of viewing the Earth as a complex self-regulating system, or a part of humanity. It is expressed in different ways, and draws on centuries of experience by religious teachers from the East, Indigenous cultures, and some ancient Western cultures, where the traditions recognize the importance of peace as essential to creating a more peaceful world.[9]

In conclusion, in our volume both academic scholars and ordinary people will find a fascinating story of women's pilgrimage to peace across cultures. It is divided into two parts: The Power of Women's Storytelling in Creating Peace, and Women's Voices on the Road to Creating Peace. There is no written conclusion as the pilgrimage to peace is a process that continues to develop and change. It is a work in progress.

This volume mostly addresses the secular experiences of pilgrims/tourists, but the experiences of participants on the pilgrimage to peace also have metaphorical religious connotations. Through their writing, all the contributors bring to light new, inspiring and enriching aspects of their journey with the focus on peace. They are important as they help the reader understand the difficulties but also the healing power of story writing that is the creative tool for future generations.

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[9] Groff, L. "What is Peace, How Has Our Concept of Peace Developed, and What is a Holistic Vision of Peace for the Twenty-First Century?" 2018, https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315157344-35.

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ABSTRACTS

To give the voice to the writers of all the chapters, I include their abstracts corresponding to the equivalent chapter's number.

Part I

Chapter One
The Alexandria Community Remembrance Project Pilgrimage: A City Works to Remember, Reconcile and Repair Its Lynching History
Laura A. Macaluso

In October 2022, a group of more than 150 community members from Alexandria, Virginia, went on a pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama. The pilgrimage, made by bus, car and airplane, was the culmination of more than two years' work by members of the small city on the Potomac River to bring to light the traumatic histories of two young Black men, Benjamin Thomas and Joseph McCoy, who were lynched in the last years of the nineteenth century. The violent history of the city had been erased from history and heritage, buried below the surface in a town that exists as a suburb of Washington, DC, and relies on tourism to bolster its economy. This essay recounts the reasons for the pilgrimage, the activities completed by pilgrims in Alexandria and later in Alabama around equity and justice, and the work that is still to come. Alexandria may not be looking for peace per se, but the city and its many communities – Black and white, young and old, wealthy and struggling – are pushing forwards a more honest, equitable and healed community.

Chapter Two
"Doroha": A Road to Peace
Nina Hayduk, Liliya Klos, Larysa Klymanska, Tetiana Shapovalova, Sofiya Stavkova, Yuliia Ivaniuk Squires and Maureen Flaherty

Before the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, life had a different cadence and focus for all Ukrainians. This chapter shares some of the many twists and turns taken by a group of women in L'viv oblast who now work to assist the

healing of wounded soldiers in reclaiming their lives. These scholars were born and raised in Soviet times in different parts of Ukraine. Driven by values, vision and necessity, as well as internal and external struggles, the women who had disparate youthful aspirations and trajectories first united in a purpose and place to develop a university faculty dedicated to human service work at L'viv Polytechnic National University (LPNU). Now, as their country is being decimated by war, the women continue, along with others, to support soldiers who have returned from the front. The traumatized working with the traumatized, the women share how they try to comprehend inconceivable violence being perpetrated on their country by people previously considered kin. They also reflect on what keeps them and others going through these unimagined times.

Chapter Three
Traversing New Spaces: Trans-global, Trans-liminal Journeys for Peace
Masha Kardashevskaya, Marion Kiprop, Oluchi Ogbu, Iana Petrus, Yulia Ivaniuk Squires and Maureen Flaherty

This chapter shares the journeys of six female peace scholars, five of whom migrated across continents, cultures and languages, in their quest for ways to grow as peacebuilders. In developing this research, the participant-authors, who hail from six diverse countries and cultures and five continents, constructed questions and conversations to assist personal explorations of their educational, practical, relational and personal journeys over more than a decade. These committed peacebuilders share the impetus for their pilgrimages, their internal and external trials and the paths that led them to the ongoing quests. The chapter ends with a summary of lessons learned and "advice" going forward for those beginning on similar pilgrimages.

Chapter Four
From #MeToo to #WomanLifeFreedom: Some Frames of the Reality of Iranian Women; A Seldom-heard Feminist Movement for Peace Throughout History
Atousa Kaviani

In the last decade, after #MeToo was initially used in the context of sexual abuse, Iranian actresses have begun to use this hashtag to reveal their experiences of sexual harassment. *The New York Times* published a couple of reports of serial sexual violence done by Aidin Aghdashloo. The latest movement, now happening in Iran, is also covered by the media.

However, studies have not adequately addressed the pivotal role of social media in forming the feminine protesting voices in Iran, by narrating their pains and experiences. I argue that the tangible results of these recent efforts for justice for women's rights in Iran are directly related to and empowered by social media and its dominant resonance. My focus in this paper will be on the function of social media as a junction point in voicing justice movements. I will draw a picture of how the first movements against the dominant power and sexual violence towards women in the workplace have been revealed on social media. Then I will portray the undeniable role of social media, specifically Twitter and Instagram, studying the two main hashtags in creating the grounds for the Woman Life Freedom movement.

Chapter Five
Women, Identity and Cultural Belonging: Self-reflection through the Diasporic Imprints
Nisar Tehseen

The question of identity is quite central to the theme of culture. Culture represents and shapes identities. In our modern world we have very complex notions of identity, especially when we start to live in a culture other than the culture of our origin.

The complex issues of belonging and representation occupy a very important theme when it comes to questions of gender, religion, inclusion, pluralism and even multiculturalism. Although religion represents a part of culture, culture can represent spirituality even beyond religion. Therefore, spiritualism and spirituality need a refocus in the context of multiple/ complex/hybrid societies.

There is a dire need to dwell on the most profoundly and deeply resonating personal journeys of self (discovering the self through the discovery of the other). The paths of a true human dialogue cannot begin without the inquiry of who we are and what we aspire to.

Personal narratives based on spiritual resonance can shape new patterns of diasporic diversity representing the hybridity of cultural forms, beliefs and identity, and can contribute effectively to enriching the discourse on belonging, representation, spirituality and identity.

The methodology is based on narratives recounting my journeys, including short written travelogues, personal memoirs, diaries, individual testimonies,

poetry, pictures, digital database of places and video/audio recordings.

Furthermore, the methodology includes the epistemic study of primary and secondary sources including books, monographs, poetic compositions (mystical), electronic databases including online sites, YouTube, Instagram, videos, blogs and podcasts.

Part II

Chapter Six
Female Voices and Advocacy from Hiroshima and the United States of America: Working Towards a World without Nuclear Weapons
Christelle Barakat

On August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb was detonated by the United States over the city of Hiroshima in Japan, in a bid to end the Second World War. Chaos and destruction ensued. Never had a city or a population before experienced the explicit and direct pain of nuclear weapons. Seventy-seven years later, through the joint efforts of the Hiroshima prefecture, Hiroshima city and hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombing) themselves, Hiroshima has been able to rise from the depths of destruction to become a beacon for peace across Japan and the world. Advocacy efforts were particularly led by the survivors, especially female survivors in Hiroshima and abroad who were most discriminated against in their societies and all over the world due to their exposure to nuclear radiation. Moreover, the city succeeded in keeping the memory of the atomic bombing alive through its peace park and museum. Not many individuals are aware of Hiroshima's story. Nevertheless, what fewer individuals know is that residents of the United States were not immune to the suffering caused by nuclear evil. Known as downwinders, individuals living close to nuclear test sites began to fall ill in 1945 and the decades that followed. Speaking out against nuclear testing, American female activists have led advocacy efforts to raise awareness and demand governmental assistance to those impacted by these tests. This chapter focuses on the pain inflicted by nuclear weapons and the advocacy efforts of female survivors speaking out against nuclear arms and demanding governmental assistance and retribution for the harm inflicted on them. It draws inspiration from Setsuko Thurlow and Mary Dickson among many others dedicated to the fight against nuclear arms, and highlights individual, organizational and societal efforts to include more female voices in the disarmament narratives. In addition to shedding light on women's contributions to nuclear disarmament, this chapter seeks to

emphasize the non-discriminatory nature of nuclear weapons, and argues that nuclear weapons do not bring an end to wars (as opposed to the belief that the bombings of Japan ended the Second World War).

Chapter Seven
Women on the Pilgrimage to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
Kathleen A Tobin

Beginning in the early 1960s, women expressed their opposition to the production and testing of nuclear weapons in unique ways. Much of the early protest was inspired by American women, but the movement ultimately engaged women from around the world. Disenchanted by existing discussions of the bomb, mothers acted based on health issues, including the health of their children, and used communication and organizing tactics known by women. The women's liberation movement of the 1970s influenced more vocal and radical strategies by the 1980s, when weapons manufacturing intensified. This chapter tells the story of how the women's anti-nuclear bomb efforts transformed during those decades.

Chapter Eight
Resilience Through Global Disasters: How the Pilgrimage to Gender Equality Helped Promote a Culture of Counter-violence in Tunisia
Hajer Ben Hadj Sale

On January 26, 2014, the globally televised constitution ratification ceremony featuring predominantly Tunisian Islamist men and women as promoters of progressive gender policies in Tunisia and the Muslim world painted, with a distortive Islamist brush, every legal step towards democratization and gender equality desperately fought for by the non-Islamist women's rights activists since the rise of the so-called "moderate Islamists" to power in 2011. What the global media offered as pure facts obliterated a saga of non-violent nationwide grassroots activism channelled by the majority non-Islamist women's rights activists to salvage the historical legal gains of Tunisian women from a ravaging constitutional and societal Islamization project.

This paper studies the pivotal role that the bourgeoning women's rights grassroots countermovements played in promoting a culture of counterviolence in Tunisia after 2011. Proceeding from the presumption that global disasters and conflicts have always played a pivotal role in influencing the ebbs and flows in gender policies in post-colonial Tunisia, it offers a diachronic study

of such dialectics in relation to recent global conflicts/disasters. It claims a ground for itself by demonstrating how global variables have always been decisive, and how the perennial pilgrimage to gender equality in postcolonial Tunisia has helped buffer unforeseen domestic offshoots of global conflicts. The paper builds its conclusions on a review of the literature on women's rights in Tunisia and on ethnographic research.

Chapter Nine
Women Peacebuilders of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Vedran Obućina

Gender-inclusive religious peacebuilding is often overlooked and marginalized, and one case study in this research shows a lack of interest in including women's peacebuilding leadership. However, women suffered greatly in the violent conflicts of former Yugoslavia and were the first to initiate forgiveness and healing. The local culture is very male-oriented and patriarchal, and it is necessary to assess further women's traditional role in society and their potential, and initiatives by women groups. Religious peacebuilding practitioners should nevertheless pay attention to women's role in peacebuilding; in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, women lead the most successful subgroup of the Interreligious Council, but one may ask if this group was shaped only to push women away from the mainstream processes and decision-making.

This paper focuses on creating a women's network of religious peacebuilders within the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina who represent Roman Catholic, Serbian Orthodox, Islamic and Jewish women dealing with repercussions of the Bosnian War (1992–5) and the durable segregation of ethnic communities in the country. It follows their marginalization within the religious institutions but also acceptance in local communities; the effort of making the first-ever guide for clergy on how to approach women who are victims of war crimes and rape; and their spiritual reasoning of coming together, transcending the political, religious and national differences that run deep in Bosnia and Herzegovina's society.

The paper is based partially on PhD research on religious peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and is supplemented with direct interviews and field research.

Chapter Ten
Mom-ing for Peace: Russian Women Confront Their Government's Human-rights Abuses against Ukrainians and Themselves
Sierra Cougot

The Union of Soldiers' Mothers Committees of Russia (USMCR) was founded in 1989 as a nonviolent organization focused on calling out their government's human-rights abuses and ending compulsory military service for Russian men aged eighteen to twenty-seven. During the first Russian–Chechen War, they were commended for their work entering active war zones to collect male family members as well as their push for the Chechen participation to participate in negotiating the London Memorandum of 2005. Non-violent, grassroots activism remains prevalent in Russia today, despite Putin and the Russian Parliament's best efforts to block public demonstrations. The USMCR's work has persisted through the years, consistently adapting their goals to meet the needs they see in the international community and their own.

Now, Ukrainian civilian groups and government agencies alike are calling on the resonance and vitality of this movement to prevent further Russian violence within their borders. Captured Russian soldiers – aged as young as eighteen – are being allowed to call families back home who had no idea their loved ones had been sent into an active invasion. These calls are being broadcast to Russian citizens to undermine any seeds of doubt being sown by their own government. The message is clear: these abuses are occurring, and your loved ones are being used as cannon fodder. Ideally, getting Russian mothers and other civilians involved will create the pushback necessary to deter further warfare, and historically this method has been effective.

Chapter Eleven
Women and Spirituality in India with Special Reference to Nature Worship: An Evolving Practice
Aditi Basu

Since ancient times, Hinduism has been replete with the richness of nature worship in India. Its elements like the sun, moon, stars, water bodies, mountains, wind, rain, flora and fauna are highly revered because the Indian economy, being agrarian, is nature dependent. The Atharva Veda, written in the Later Vedic period (1000–500 BCE), symbolises nature and the universe as the mother, and women's contribution in nourishing their

families and in turn making the earth an excellent place to live in. However, in the twenty-first century, the rise of Anthropocentric activities has led to nature's destruction and exploitation. Women in India have been voicing their views over a free, pure and healthy environment as their fundamental human right, without which no creature can survive on this earth. Consequently, ecofeminism was born in India which shaped its environmental legislation and still fights for promoting sustainability and nature-centred human development.

Therefore, this paper analyses the tripartite relationship among women, nature and spirituality in India, tracing its roots in Hinduism in the past, and how nature-worship has assumed the form of ecofeminism in contemporary India.

Chapter Twelve
Should the French Forget or Repent the Atrocities of the Algerian Colonization and Decolonization Wars? Let the Archives Decide!
Mayy ElHayawi

The French colonial legacy in Algeria is still a highly controversial issue in modern times. The historical perspective on the French–Algerian relationship is a complex one, with differing narratives that highlight contrasting viewpoints. On the one hand, the French emphasize their role in liberating Algeria from Ottoman rule, introducing progress through a massive civilizing mission, and incurring heavy sacrifices to combat terrorism and safeguard the wellbeing of the community. Algerians, on the other hand, contend that the French mission was a guise to exploit Algeria's resources, benefiting European settlers while oppressing native Algerians. They see the "pacification of Algeria" as a long-lasting genocide, wiping out their people and heritage. Internal divisions among the French and Algerians themselves drove historians to argue that the Algerian War was a French civil war, an Algerian civil war or a Franco–Algerian War.

In 1830, Algeria was annexed to France and soon became the "jewel of the French empire," and one of its longest-held colonies until gaining independence in 1962. While the history of French colonization in Algeria was marked by brutality, it is the period of the Algerian War (1954–62) that serves as the epicentre of the ongoing debate. This conflict left a profound and tragic mark, with reported casualties spanning from at least 400 thousand Algerians, as recorded in French archives, to staggering estimates of up to 1.5 million, as reported in Algerian historical accounts. President

Macron's acknowledgement of the torture in Algeria (in 2018) is considered a step forward in the long-awaited French–Algerian reconciliation. However, breaking the vicious circle of oppression, fear, agony and guilt can only be achieved when the mistakes committed on both sides are admitted, repented, corrected and legally recognized. Investigating archives on both sides of the argument aims at answering the question of whether the French should forget or repent the atrocities committed during this period. It also aims at highlighting how the glamorous ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity can be twisted, ignored or betrayed for the national interest.

PART I

THE POWER OF WOMEN'S STORYTELLING IN CREATING PEACE

CHAPTER ONE

THE ALEXANDRIA COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE PROJECT PILGRIMAGE: A CITY WORKS TO REMEMBER, RECONCILE AND REPAIR ITS LYNCHING HISTORY

LAURA A. MACALUSO

Two large glass jars with screw tops sat together on a table at the front of the open room in the old Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) building in Montgomery, Alabama. The building was old in the sense that the EJI, under the leadership of lawyer-activist Bryan Stevenson, had since built a new multi-million-dollar museum nearby, called the Legacy Museum, as well as a new, substantial and celebrated memorial, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.[1] These projects – the memorial marks a five-year anniversary in 2023 – caught the attention of not only Americans across the country but people around the world. The old brick museum building on main street in downtown Montgomery, and the two glass jars inside, was simple and rustic in comparison with the brand-new museum and memorial. But the soil inside the glass jars was the very reason for the pilgrimage, and in this intersection of the old and the new, the marginalized and the centred, the sacred and the secular, a city and its people are actively working together to address historical injustices and violence and take steps towards peace in the form of equity for all.

This chapter is a first-hand account of an unusual public-history-based project: in October 2022 a pilgrimage of more than 150 people travelled from Alexandria, Virginia to Montgomery, Alabama to bring two jars of soil representing the lives of two Black teenagers, Joseph McCoy and

[1] The work of Bryan Stevenson can be traced in his *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (One World, 2015), which was a bestselling book and the inspiration for the movie of the same name (2019). The Equal Justice Initiative and the life and work of Stevenson are intertwined. See https://justmercy.eji.org.

Benjamin Thomas, lynched in Alexandria at the turn of the twentieth century.[2] The jars of soil were headed to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum. Using guidelines provided by the EJI, the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project (ACRP) has been working since 2019 to crowdsource awareness of and participation in Alexandria's brutal history, installing two historical markers with detailed information, offering commemorative events and calling for equity throughout the city, from education to economics. This chapter is a look at the pilgrimage to Alabama, a three-day program which brought together people – some who knew each other, many who did not – for an intense and purposeful journey of remembering and reconciliation with the past. The point of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice is based on public participation, as communities across the United States with a history of lynching source it literally from the ground-up. In fact, the EJI designed the memorial so that each place-named memorial within has a double or a twin – American communities are thus encouraged to do the work of remembrance and repair to claim and install the twinned monument for their town or city. Stevenson's conception of the memorial and museum gave form to a participatory platform for memorialization, and Alexandria, like any American community that wants to work with the museum and memorial, must do the work. The pilgrimage, while a large undertaking for a small municipal department – the Office of Historic Alexandria oversaw the pilgrimage planning in collaboration with the volunteer ACRP committee – was only one part of this work. The full effort of the ACRP is varied and large in its initiatives, touching multiple parts of the small city through multiple avenues of remembrance and repair.

While other Virginian cities pedal back on social-justice efforts, driven by the election of a Republican governor in 2022, Alexandria continues to move forward, undaunted by the political pushbacks at both state and national levels. As a one-time resident of Alexandria (in Fairfax County), a historian and writer, and a participant on the pilgrimage, the thoughts presented here are my own and do not represent the City of Alexandria nor the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project committee. As an outsider to the internal workings of the committee and Government work, I can only report on what I experienced and/or felt during the pilgrimage, knowing that every individual on that journey has a valuable contribution to the evolving story of Alexandria, many of which contributions are being collected in an Oral History project, another arm of

[2] See the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, Office of Historic Alexandria, https://www.alexandriava.gov/cultural-history/acrp-pilgrimage-to-eji-montgomery-alabama.

the ACRP. At the same time, as a historian and writer, I also acknowledge the privilege of sharing my perspective here: the perspective of a middle-aged white woman who did not grow up in Alexandria nor attend school there, but who thinks the small city on the Potomac is special – and not for the reasons usually celebrated in marketing or tourism literature.

The pilgrimage we undertook was something between the spiritual and the secular, the internal and the external, for each pilgrim. But overall it was representative of a city which makes room for all these things and more. The pilgrimage from Alexandria, Virginia to Montgomery, Alabama was a tool for the city to use in its remembrance, reconciliation and repair of the past.

The Weight of History

Alexandria, Virginia, does not sit alone on the west bank of the Potomac River, unconnected to the area around it. If you were to look at a nineteenth-century map of the District of Columbia where the capital of the country, named for George Washington, is located, you would see something unexpected: Washington, DC is in the shape of a diamond on its axis, straddling both sides of the Potomac River, a major waterway that travels to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. That is not the Washington, DC that is known today because the Commonwealth of Virginia retroceded what were once Virginian lands (on the west bank of the Potomac) back to their control in 1847.[3] Alexandria – seen as a perfectly gridded town plan in the lower point of the diamond, nestled next to the Potomac – was thus once part of Washington, DC. On its own for the past 175-plus years, the so-called "Port City" thus has deep connections to the state in which it resides, but also to the seat of national government just to the north. When standing at the water's edge in Alexandria, it is possible to see the dome of the United States Capitol building (the location of the infamous January 6, 2020 insurrection which attempted to stop the election of the next president, and thus stop democracy itself).

As the seat of the Confederate States of America, also known as the Confederacy, the Commonwealth of Virginia in the United States has an especially onerous historical past which is condemned by some and celebrated by others. It is a place of reconstructed history at sites such as Colonial Williamsburg (a pilgrimage site for many people who cherish a romanticized view of early American life) and Thomas Jefferson's Poplar

[3] Michael Lee Pope, *Hidden History of Alexandria, D.C.* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011).

Forest (a house completely reconstructed after a nineteenth-century fire), and also the place where one of the country's most egregious contemporary white-supremacist rallies took place in 2017 (in Charlottesville). Virginia is also the state where one of the country's largest Confederate monumental artistic programs – Monument Avenue in Richmond – was vandalized, deconstructed and hauled away in pieces to be stored out of view in 2021–2. Virginia exists in these many forms, an uneasy side-by-side view of the political and cultural polarities in American society, on a spectrum from the radical left to the radical right. Although it is most easy to see political difference between city and county on colour-coded maps,[4] sometimes these disparate positions are plain to see in public view and are easy to decipher: while driving through neighbourhoods, brightly coloured flags and signs, some of which stay up long past presidential, state or local elections, often announce the political affiliation of the people within.

Pre-pilgrimage, Part One: Visible Marks on the Historic City

Alexandria runs on tourism, receiving almost $76 million dollars in tax revenue in 2022, which directly supports the city and its residents.[5] As a tourist-heavy town, the image of a historic, charming Old Town Alexandria – the original historic core at the waterfront of the larger city – is primary, and the small city supports this identity with a walkable riverfront, multiple restaurants and iconic historic sites, such as Carlyle House (1752), Gadsby's Tavern (1770) and Christ Church (1773). Alexandria has a central marketplace called Market Square and several intact cobblestone streets, lined with authentic rowhouses painted in different colours. Historic architecture is a huge draw for tourism and serves as content for marketing. Old Town Alexandria intentionally portrays itself as a charming scene not far from the nation's capital.

Two small architectural details have had a big impact in Alexandria: the first is the use of "fire marks," which are round or oval cast-iron plaques featuring early fire trucks and firemen. Many historic rowhouses have these fire marks on their facades, and the story goes – often told on walking tours – that if you have a fire mark on your building, this

[4] See, for example, the gubernatorial (governor's) race in 2021, which resulted in the state house reverting to Republican control: https://www.politico.com/election-results/2021/virginia.

[5] See the Visit Alexandria tourism website, for "Research and Reports": https://visitalexandria.com/about-us.

indicates the owner paid for fire insurance so firemen would know the house was insured, should the occasion arise. The second architectural feature is the use of gaslights, attached to the facades of houses or on tall poles placed around the Old Town (these gaslights are now electric, but with a flame effect that resembles gas). These small details make Alexandria unique in comparison to other Northern Virginia cities and exude an air of historical authenticity. Tour companies make the most of this flavourful scenery by offering ghost tours of the Old Town, or one of its many variations: ghost and graveyard tours, ghost and pirate tours, and ghost and haunted pub tours.

The point is this: both the fire marks and the gaslights are recreations of a historical past in a pastiche of Colonial Revival sentimentality. Fire marks were not used in the ubiquitous way they are attached to rowhouses today because the fact is that fire was a fearsome event, and any town or city built of wooden structures, as Alexandria was, would have tried to put out fires no matter who owned a structure, and no matter whether there was fire insurance or not. An out-of-control fire could take down a whole city and everyone knew it (the Great Fire of London of 1666 and the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 are well-known such events). These modern fire marks were part of the Colonial Revival movement, which sought to "colonialize" material culture in the United States, often during specific time periods such as anniversaries. Alexandria, for example, celebrated George Washington's two hundredth birthday in 1932, while the Bicentennial in 1976 offered another Colonial Revival moment. During these years, colonial figures, images and stories were celebrated, and there was no better place to do this than in George Washington's centre of business (he kept an urban town home here; his plantation Mount Vernon is located less than ten miles away).

Alexandria's love of gas streetlights is well known and a commodity. In 2022, for example, the Office of Historic Alexandria – the same department that sponsors the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project and the pilgrimage – created a Christmas ornament for purchase to raise funds for their many historical endeavours, which includes preservation work on historic buildings. The ornament, in the shape of a traditional gas lamp, costs $25 and is still available in the online shop.[6] The description of the ornament advertises that:

> Gas lamps were installed on some Alexandria streets by the early 1860s. The ornament is based on four remaining gas lights from the 19th century. As part of the City's Urban Renewal Project in the 1960s, electric

[6] See https://shop.alexandriava.gov/Products/GasLampOrnament2022.aspx?skuid=6006109.