

Assault on the Soul: Women in the Former Yugoslavia

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Assault on the Soul: Women in the Former Yugoslavia, edited by Sara Sharratt, PhD. and Ellyn Kaschak, PhD (Vol. 22, No. 1, 1999). *Explores the applications and intersections of feminist therapy, activism, and jurisprudence with women and children in the former Yugoslavia*

Learning from Our Mistakes: Difficulties and Failures in Feminist Therapy, edited by Marcia Hill, EdD, and Esther D. Rothblum, PhD (Vol. 21, No. 3, 1998). *"A courageous and fundamental step in evolving a well-grounded body of theory and of investigating the assumptions that unexamined, lead us to error."* (Teresa Bernardez, MD, Training and Supervising Analyst, The Michigan Psychoanalytic Council)

Feminist Therapy as a Political Act, edited by Marcia Hill, EdD (Vol. 21, No.2, 1998). *"A real contribution to the field. . . . A valuable tool for feminist therapists and those who want to learn about feminist therapy."* (Florence L. Denmark, PhD, Robert S. Pace Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Chair; Psychology Department, Pace University, New York, New York)

Breaking the Rules: Women in Prison and Feminist Therapy, edited by Judy Harden, PhD. and Marcia Hill, EdD (Vol. 20, No. 4 & Vol. 21, No. 1. 1998). *"Fills a long-recognized gap in the psychology of women curricula, demonstrating that feminist theory can be made relevant to the practice of feminism, even in prison."* (Suzanne J. Kessler, PhD, Professor of Psychology and Women's Studies, State University of New York at Purchase)

Children's Rights, Therapists' Responsibilities: Feminist Commentaries, edited by Gail Anderson, MA, and Marcia Hill, EdD (Vol. 20, No. 2, 1997). *"Addresses specific practice dimensions that will help therapists organize and resolve conflicts about working with children, adolescents, and their families in therapy."* (Feminist Bookstore News)

More than a Mirror: How Clients Influence Therapists' Lives, edited by Marcia Hill, EdD (Vol. 20, No. 1. 1997). *"Courageous, insightful, and deeply moving. These pages reveal the scrupulous self-examination and self-reflection of conscientious therapists at their best. AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO FEMINIST THERAPY LITERATURE AND A BOOK WORTH READING BY THERAPISTS AND CLIENTS ALIKE."* (Rachel Josefowitz Siegal, MSJ.V, retired feminist therapy practitioner; Co-Editor, *Women Changing Therapy; Jewish Women in Therapy; and Celebrating the Lives of Jewish Women: Patterns in a Feminist Sampler*)

Sexualities, edited by Marny Hall, PhD, LCSW (Vol. 19, No. 4, 1997). *"Explores the diverse and multifaceted nature of female sexuality; covering topics including sadomasochism in the therapy room, sexual exploitation in cults, and genderbending in cyberspace."* (Feminist Bookstore News)

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CONTENTS

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Preface <i>Ellyn Kaschak</i> | xv |
| Introduction <i>Sara Sharratt</i> | 1 |
| Feminist Psychology and Global Issues: An Action Agenda <i>Anne Anderson</i> | 7 |
| Interview with Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia <i>Sara Sharratt</i> | 23 |
| Interview with Elizabeth Odio Benito, Justice of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia <i>Sara Sharratt</i> | 39 |
| Interview with Patricia Viseur-Sellers, Legal Officer on Gender Issues <i>Sara Sharratt</i> | 53 |
| The Foca Indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia <i>Sara Sharratt</i> | 79 |
| Beyond War Hierarchies: Belgrade Feminists' Experience Working with Female Survivors of War <i>Lepa Mladjenovic</i> | 83 |
| Confusing Realities and Lessons Learned in Wartime: Supporting Women's Projects in the Former Yugoslavia <i>Ingrid Foeken</i> | 91 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Traumatized Women Working with Traumatized Women: Reflections upon Life and Work in a War Zone <i>Gabriele Kramer</i> | 107 |
| War, Life Crisis and Trauma: Assessing the Impact of a Women-Centered Training Program in Bosnia <i>Sabine Scheffler</i> <i>Agnes Miichele</i> | 121 |
| The Burden Left My Heart: Psycho-Social Services Among Refugee Women in Zenica and Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina During the War <i>Berit Schei</i> <i>Solveig Dahl</i> | 139 |
| Sympathy for the Devil: Thinking About Victims and Perpetrators After Working in Serbia <i>Anja Meulenbelt</i> | 153 |
| Some Pitfalls for Effective Caregiving in a War Region <i>Edita Ostodic</i> | 161 |
| Index | 167 |

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Sara Sharratt, PhD, is Professor Emerita of Marriage and Family Counseling at Sonoma State University in California and has been actively involved in the development and application of feminist therapy since its inception. Born and raised in Costa Rica, she has also been active in multi-cultural psychology with a particular emphasis on Spanish-speaking clients in the US and in Costa Rica. For the last four years, she has focused on international human rights with an emphasis on the rights of women and currently resides in the Hague.

Ellyn Kaschak, PhD, is Professor of Psychology at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. She is the author of *Engendered Lives: A New Psychology of Women's Experience*, as well as numerous articles and chapters on feminist psychology and psychotherapy. She has had thirty years of experience practicing psychotherapy, is past Chair of the Feminist Therapy Institute and of the APA Committee on Women and is a Fellow of Division 35, the Psychology of Women, Division 12, Clinical Psychology, and Division 45, Ethnic Minority Issues of the American Psychological Association.



Preface

I am proud to present in the first volume of my new editorship this collection of writing on applications and intersections of feminist therapy, activism and jurisprudence with women and children in the former Yugoslavia. Focusing on the former Yugoslavia offers a look at applied feminist practice in a cultural context outside the American or Northern European. Nor is it the more usual milieu of working in the undeclared war zones. As many of the women writing in this volume have crossed man-made boundaries to honor the feminist connection of women, so I hope that this book can contribute to the project of making visible the still too often invisible connections between and among women in various cultural contexts. Sometimes even we do not know all the places in which feminists are practicing. To reach back and borrow a phrase from the sixties in the United States, "We are everywhere." The writers in this collection are German and Dutch, Norwegian and Costa Rican, North American. They are therapists, lawyers and justices of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. All of them are struggling with the profound immorality of the circumstance, with keeping their vision and its applications culturally sensitive, contextually based and psychologically or legally useful. All have been profoundly changed by doing this work. A Serbian and a Croatian woman offer their perspectives on the situation, on the arrival of many of these women, foreign by official standards, to offer aid, to offer what skills they have, often inadequate in the face of the horrors with which they are confronted, to offer themselves in a struggle from which they could easily have turned away.

This material will never appear in official records, in the records of the United Nations or of the International Criminal Tribunal. It is women's psychology, women's history, women's geography, women's jurisprudence. It always has been and still is our work as feminists to make visible what patriarchy conspires to erase or confine to the margins. And so I hope that these writings will serve as part of the record of what women have done in

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this war: this cadre of women, some crossing the borders, others working in the international courts of the Hague, still others from the war-torn territories, who offer their skills, their visions and their hearts without hesitation.

This collection, then, is also intended as an historical document, an assurance that both the plight of women and the role of women in bringing it to visibility, to the attention of the international community and the justice system, will not be erased. The official version will likely include "the facts"-who got tried and convicted, how many individuals were put in camps, tortured or killed, how many rapes were counted by the voice of authority. In these articles, the authors tell us what really happened to the most ordinary women and children. And to themselves. They recount a heroics of the ordinary.

This collection of articles includes three interviews with representatives of the justice system. They are not included to imply that women receive greater justice in the courts than in other social institutions, but that they receive greater justice when women are part of the decision-making process-not just any women, but those who are able to see with women's eyes, to notice the injustices that would simply have gone unnoticed except to someone who also lives life in a woman's body. Secondly, the intersection of justice and healing is a crucial one. Healing from such severe injuries inevitably requires an arena in which the truth is finally spoken and heard. The courts are only one possible arena for this to occur and it may be long overdue for feminists to devise others as part of the treatment of the effects of such atrocities. Here we visit some of the places where justice and healing come together.

What can happen when one female justice of the court decides to stay up all night looking for indictable instances of rape that she was told were not there? When a Serbian woman refuses nationalism for the connection of international feminism? When women already brutalized are willing to put themselves in further peril to testify against their torturers? When others living in relative comfort and safety are willing to place themselves in peril, to cross men's borders to offer their skills and compassion to other women trapped in the former Yugoslavia? And what happens when they return home too traumatized themselves to continue their previous lives?

Women go to war after war after war ministering to the wounded and the weary with the latest in psychological techniques. Many still use diagnosis and the DSM, for what tools and signposts do they have other than the woefully inadequate Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)? Would that in this world of postmodernism, declared postfeminism and various other posts, we might actually arrive at a time of post-trauma for women and children. Would that we really had more cases of post-trauma rather than chronic or repeated acute trauma. For as I have long argued (Kaschak, 1992), there is nothing *post* about trauma for women who continue to reside in the former

Yugoslavia and nothing *post* indeed for any women who reside in violent and damaging patriarchal societies even if they have not officially declared war on women.

And what of the idea that such trauma causes stress, a concept much too small to contain the multiple reverberations of ordinary life as a woman, much less the terror and grief, the shame and loss of being treated not only as the enemy, the spoils of men's wars, but not even as the enemy, instead as the battlefield itself. Women's bodies are part of the ground upon which war is waged; women's psyches and souls are damaged and compromised until feminist therapy must begin with reminding these women of their basic humanity. These women have committed perhaps the most ancient crime of all in patriarchal society, that of being women.

It is an artifact of the narrower lens of non-feminist psychotherapy that commitment is spoken of almost exclusively in the context of dyadic partner relationships and with a particular concern for its absence. For feminist practitioners, for those with a wider lens, the kind of commitment that these women demonstrate to the victims of this war, to the lived practice of feminism and to humanity is obviously one of the most profound kinds of commitment there is.

Still, how disappointing that, almost thirty years after the introduction of feminist theory and practice, there is still such need for us to continue to develop and apply feminist interventions for tortured and traumatized women. How disappointing that these immoral acts continue, that we have to go to war yet another time, that I have to repeat the very words that many of us spoke for the first time as we were developing the earliest feminist interventions almost thirty years ago. May all our practices in the name of damage to women's bodies, psyches and souls be rendered obsolete.

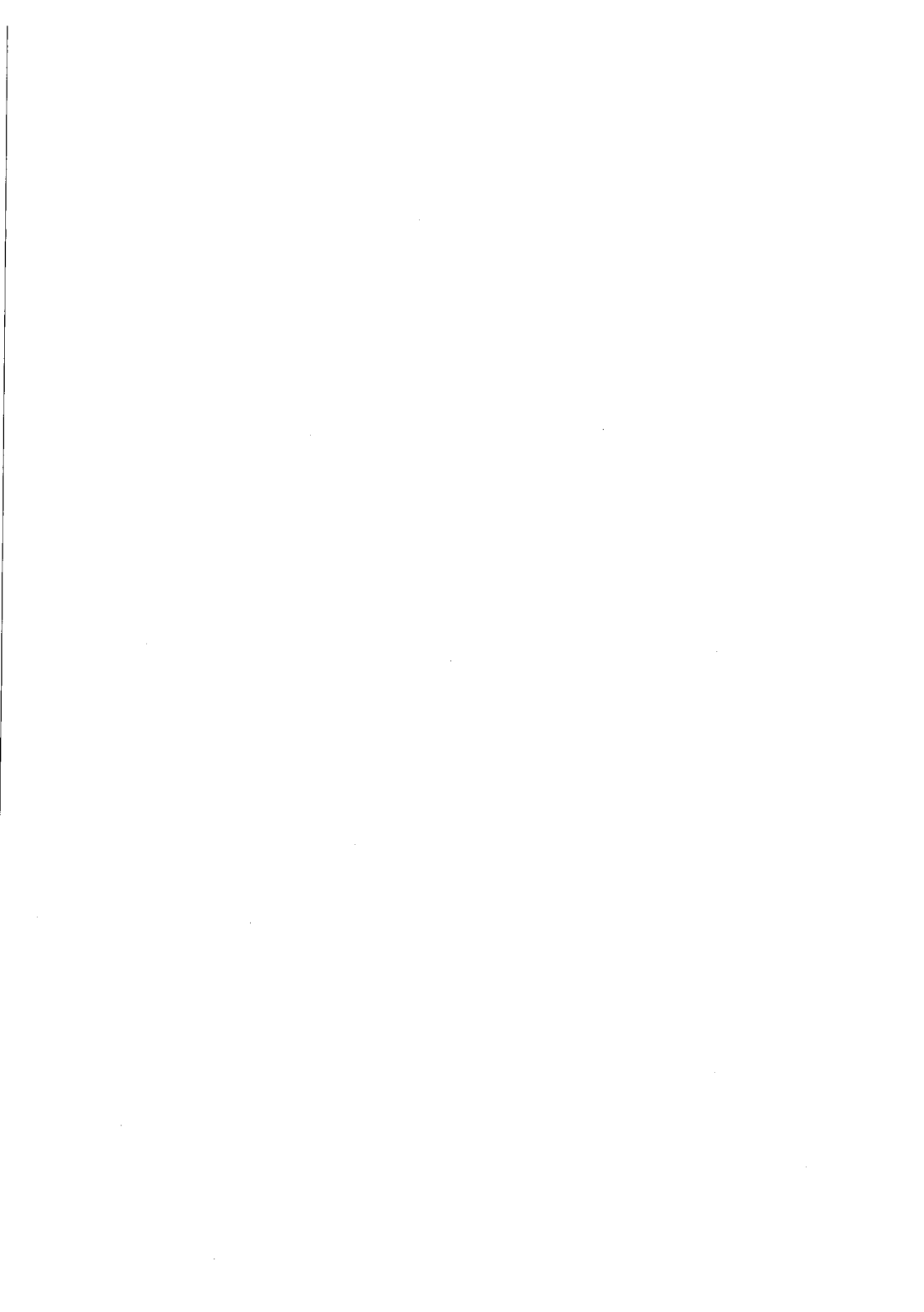
Ellyn Kaschak

NOTE

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Introduction

Sara Sharratt

Our purpose in this special volume is to shed light upon women's wartime experiences, and to make sense of their coping strategies in the face of the innumerable atrocities committed against them. The war in question is that which accompanied the break-up of the Former Yugoslavia, and it is one with which I am all too familiar, having spent the past four years in Holland researching women's treatment at the hands of the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague. Needless to say, exposure to the effects of war has provided both me and the contributing authors with a new perspective on the relationship between justice and recovery, and the impact of enormous and repeated trauma on helpers and victims. Moreover, one might argue that analysis of this conflict makes manifest issues that are of vital significance to feminist psychotherapists in particular, and to those working in the healing professions more generally.

Wars Make Visible the Declared and Undeclared Wars Against Women

Violence against women is magnified during armed conflicts, in the process exposing the artificiality of the boundary between "wartime" and "peacetime" violence. Indeed, one might even go so far as to say that attacks upon women in conflict zones are simply one more manifestation of the "undeclared" war upon women everywhere.

Challenging the Erasure of Women's Victimization in Wartime

To a large extent, war crimes committed against women have been marginalized, trivialized or ignored by the International Tribunals charged with

Address correspondence to: Sara Sharratt, PhD, P.O. Box 2292-1000, San Jose, Costa Rica.

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investigating them. In this way, challenging the erasure of women's experiences is central to the political struggle against male violence, whether in the detention camps of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or in the suburbs of Los Angeles. At a personal level, I have found few things more shocking than the juxtaposition of clear evidence of atrocities committed against women on the one hand, and their absence from most accounts of the war in the Former Yugoslavia on the other.

It is generally accepted that the majority of casualties in armed conflicts are women and children. While not wishing to suggest that contemporary jurisprudence has suddenly broken with its misogynist past and prioritized the interests of these groups, attention is increasingly being focused upon the rights of victims (see Odio), with impunity seen as an impediment both to justice and to peace. This is an important point, and one which feminist therapists would do well to bear in mind: atrocities, including rape, need to be publicly acknowledged as war crimes and their perpetrators punished rather than the victims, as is usually the case in instances of sexual violence (see McDonald; Viseur-Sellers). Thus, it makes sense for us to work with institutions that punish crimes against women, and push them towards strong forms of redress and unequivocal condemnation of rape and other manifestations of male violence.

Wars Make Explicit the Links Between Treatment and Advocacy

Although feminist therapy and ethics have always placed great emphasis upon the integration of theory and practice, this becomes especially important in the context of armed conflicts such as that of the Former Yugoslavia. How so? In short, an activist stance in the fight against impunity may very well have a direct impact upon collective and individual healing, to the extent that feminists are able to persuade International Tribunals to recognize rape as the war crime and torture that it is. If we are successful in doing so, this could, as Nancy Kelley states, "... change things for women all over the world" (Chesler, 1996, p. 56), as well as helping us overcome powerful feelings of helplessness and despair (see Scheftler and Michele).

War Crime Tribunals Force the Perpetrator to Take Center-Stage

By focusing attention upon those responsible for war atrocities, International Tribunals provide a basis for the public repudiation of perpetrators and the acts they have committed. In this way, justice becomes a way of expediting individual and collective recovery.

*Wars Necessitate the Adoption of Broad-Based Models of Healing
in Which the Search for Truth Plays an Integral Role*

In the recent past, we have seen numerous examples of "truth commissions," such as those organized in South Africa or Guatemala, in which immunity from prosecution is traded for public admission of guilt. Whatever the strengths or weaknesses of such an approach, it does offer victims and families a chance to confront the perpetrator, and listen to him describe his crime and ask for forgiveness. Moreover, in Latin America in particular, there is also a tradition of victims coming forward to speak publicly about the violence committed against them, in the process breaking the silence and gaining the solidarity and support of other witnesses. Taken together, these approaches provide useful markers in helping us to find more communal ways of helping victims of violence, for example, by instituting "abuse tribunals" in which victims learn how to overcome self-blame and face those who victimized them in the first place (see McDonald; Viseur-Sellers; and Odio [interviews]).

War Alters Notions of Trauma

As one might imagine, not only does war trauma highlight the inadequacies of current psychotherapeutic theory and practice, but it also shows how our emphasis on the individual ignores the degree of traumatization within communities more generally. Moreover, given the magnitude of the suffering, it is difficult for some of us *not* to think politically, and see healing and recovering as possibilities *only* if existing social structures are radically transformed: there is no recovery from injustice that has not ceased; there is no healing when traumatization reoccurs on a daily basis. While such a perspective leads us, on the one hand, to make explicit the links between "wartime" and "peacetime" victimization of women, on the other it forces us to re-evaluate the interrelationship between the justice system in general, and psychotherapy in particular.

We must ask ourselves whether the justice available to war victims in the International Tribunals is therapeutic. If we answer affirmatively, does it not behoove us, as therapists, to expand our understanding of therapy when working with "peacetime" victims of violence? Indeed, one might even go so far as to argue that the judicial system, in championing reconciliation and the rehabilitation of victims, is introducing psychological and therapeutic elements into its mandate. In similar fashion, therapists would gain by learning and drawing inspiration from recent trends in jurisprudence, since both justice and healing are crucial if the victimization of women is to be effectively challenged.

Such a perspective, adopted by many of the contributors to this volume, demands that psychologists work with a far wider range of actors than has traditionally been the case (see Anderson). In this way, attention is shifted from individual women to the wider structures in which they are embedded, whether these serve to oppress and dominate, or to foster justice and peace to the world. Needless to say, at an individual level, this understanding calls for healing methods that are contextual and global, and focused on causes as much as effects (see Scheffler and Miichele).

*Wars Highlight the Secondary Traumatization of Healers
and Our Unwillingness to See Ourselves as Part of the Collective Damage*

As I have suggested above, therapists working in war zones must reorient themselves from the intra-psychic to the social. Within that context, not only does our vicarious traumatization as healers become evident, but we are confronted with the impossibility of remaining neutral or detached from the sociopolitical forces that led to our clients' victimization in the first place (see Scheffler and Miichele). Obviously, there are certain dangers inherent within this state of affairs, including the likelihood that one will become caught up in the collective psyche of those with whom one is working (see Kramer; Scheffler and Miichele; and Foeken), and the risk that a colonial relationship will develop between survivors and healers on the one hand, and foreign and local professionals on the other (see Ostodic). As such, one of the recurring themes of this book is the danger of relying too heavily upon intra-psychic medical models in a war context. Needless to say, such approaches are naive at best, and unethical at worst. Indeed, I would go so far as to ask practitioners working in the "undeclared" war zones of Europe, North America and elsewhere also to reflect upon the ethics of de-contextualized interventions that do not take into account the institutionalized and systematic nature of violence against women.

Wars also serve to raise a number of other questions for feminist psychotherapists, including most notably those related to the existence of evil in our midst. How does it become so prevalent within a given social context? What happens to individuals who are witnesses or subject to evil acts? As one might imagine, these issues can only be addressed if we seek out the sources of the evil and learn how to face them in all their enormity and power. For the legal system in particular, this involves offering justice to the victims and punishment to the perpetrators, in the process rendering future conflicts and acts of vengeance less likely. Therapists would do well to learn from such an approach, and adopt a perspective that is sensitive not only to the suffering of individuals as a result of abuse, but also to the collective trauma that comes from living in a world filled with violence and despair. In short, Western psychotherapists tend to devote too much effort to the task of fostering

intra-psychic recovery, and too little to that of restoring individuals at a community level, for example through victim testimonies, rape museums, public declarations of contrition by perpetrators or funds and monuments for survivors. While this is not to suggest that psychotherapy is superfluous or unnecessary, it must be accompanied by broader-based interventions as well.

There can be little doubt that the war has changed the perspectives of all those who have contributed to this volume, making us realize that, if we are to move forward in the treatment of rape victims, we must de-stigmatize the survivors while stigmatizing the perpetrators, both by accusing them publicly of their crimes, and by sending them to prison. Moreover, we have also learned that traumatization of those working with war victims is inevitable, not only from the perspective of countertransference, but also in terms of the war's impact upon the very essence of our being, causing us to question our existence, our choices, and what altruism and morality mean for ourselves and our communities. Thus, for the three interviewees in particular (McDonald; Odio; and Viseur-Sellers), they all make reference to a similar range of issues with which they have had to contend while working at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY): evil, racism, sexism, and the trauma that comes from being exposed to war crimes testimony on a daily basis. In another instance, I asked one of the contributors why she had not gone for therapy in the two years since she had left the Balkans, despite suffering severe traumatization. In reply, she said, "I have been too incapacitated to do so." I then asked her how she would have reacted had one of her clients told her that. She laughed, and I joined her. In all too many cases, healers forget to take care of themselves while in the midst of looking after others.

In this collection, we gather together the voices and perspectives of a number of women whose work has brought them face to face with the hatred and violence of the Yugoslav conflict. They include a gender specialist and two judges involved in the ICTY in the Hague; a Serbian feminist and founder of the Women's Autonomous Center in Belgrade; the North American coordinator of Psychologists for Social Responsibility; a Bosnian psychologist engaged in research into the complexities of women's networking at an international scale; two Norwegians involved in the implementation and assessment of programs designed to help traumatized female survivors in Bosnia-Herzegovina; a team of German psychotherapists engaged in training activities for Bosnian para-professionals; a Dutch psychotherapist also involved in the training and supervision of local health workers; the German founder of one of the first treatment centers for women to be opened in Bosnia-Herzegovina; a Dutch social scientist offering advice and a new vision on treatment interventions; and finally the special editor herself, who

conducted the interviews, gathered the voices and bore witness to the women's testimony.

All of these individuals are intrinsically connected to one another. As a scholar researching the activities and mandate of the International Tribunal, I developed a relationship with the three women interviewed for this volume. I met Anne Anderson in the Hague when she took part in one of the consultation sessions organized for the Tribunal by Psychologists for Social Responsibility. As for Edita Ostodic and Gabriele Kramer, I got to know them through my friendship and close collaboration with one of the founders of Medica Mundiale. This latter individual also introduced me to Sabine Scheffler and Agnes Miichele who had previously provided training to Medica personnel. She also served as a point of contact for Berit Schei and Solveig Dahl, whose team was also based in Zenica and often collaborated with Medica. Turning to Ingrid Foeken, I had been friends with her in Holland many years ago, and we reestablished our friendship when I returned to the country. As an individual closely associated with the activities of Admira in the Former Yugoslavia, she is an especially well-qualified contributor to this publication; she is also the one who recommended her friend Anja Meulenbelt. Finally, the circle closes with Lepa Mladjenovic, who agreed to participate in this project after approaching Ingrid for help and support, who subsequently put her into contact with me. While I do not pretend to suggest that the views of these authors are necessarily representative of all those who have ever worked with war survivors in the Former Yugoslavia, they are nonetheless women who care deeply about other women, and who found themselves in a foreign land or with foreign visitors at a time of profound horror and devastation.

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Feminist Psychology and Global Issues: An Action Agenda

Anne Anderson

SUMMARY. Highlighted in this article is a call for feminists to expand their level of intervention to include global awareness. Several projects are described as examples of feminists working as positive facilitators of change for victims and survivors of war. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpre5sinc.com]

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Anne Anderson, MSW, is Coordinator of Psychologists for Social Responsibility and in practice with the Washington Therapy Guild in Washington, DC.

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Consultants included: Anne Anderson, MSW, Coordinator, Psychologists for Social Responsibility; Leila Dane, PhD, Director, Institute for Victims of Trauma, McLean, VA, who was particularly instrumental in developing the first draft; C. J. Frederick, PhD, UCLNVA Medical Center, Los Angeles, CA; Mary Harvey, PhD, Director, Victims of Violence Program, Cambridge Hospital, MA; Kathleen Nader, DSW, Director of Evaluation, UCLA Trauma, Violence and Sudden Bereavement Program, CA; Shana Swiss, MD, Director, Women's Program, Physicians for Human Rights, Boston, MA; Janet Yassen, MSW, Boston, MA.

Address correspondence to: Anne Anderson, Psychologists for Social Responsibility, 2607 Connecticut Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20008, U.S.A. Electronic mail may be sent to: psysrusa@interserv.com; Website: <http://www.rmc.edu/psysr>.

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Feminists have long been active in the peace movement. Early Western feminists often made a connection between militarism and sexism and were active opponents of war (Brock-Utne, 1985). Today many feminist peace psychologists and other mental health professionals (Van Soest, 1997) are working on global issues to respond to violence and to build peaceful communities. Traditional peace psychology, informed by feminist perspectives (Murphy, 1995), addresses not only issues of war, international and inter-ethnic conflict, but also has expanded to include "the elimination of coercive systems of interaction as a basis of interaction between individuals and groups" (McKay, 1996, p. 94). The multiplicity of manifestations of structural violence, violent conflict and oppression that afflict our world calls for multi-level, multifaceted interventions.

Feminist psychotherapists, by definition, are familiar with this type of analysis and are working with their clients "towards strategies and solutions advancing feminist resistance, transformation and social change in daily personal lives and relationships with the social, emotional and political environment" (Brown, 1994, p. 22). But the press of individual situations and cases can often cause us to lose sight of the larger picture. We overlook our capacities to participate at several levels of intervention well beyond the confines of our office walls. With this report I hope to stimulate the creativity, passion and hope of feminist therapists to expand our horizons and find ways to support, extend and multiply the work of our colleagues around the world.

We find feminist psychologists in a variety of settings—from working with individuals in the treatment room, to performing community-based interventions, teaching psychology, pursuing action research, providing policy analysis, and initiating political action. This article discusses several projects as concrete examples of the multi-leveled interventions being undertaken to support women and foster peaceful, sustainable societies around the world. These projects were chosen because they adhere to the following feminist principles:

1. They contextualize individuals in their societies;
2. They are aware of and alert for gender differences in experience;
3. They analyze power relationships relevant to situations;
4. They use a range of empowerment models of therapy;
5. They use collaborative processes to accomplish goals;
6. They listen and learn from others, across cultural and language barriers;
7. They are based on an ethical, non-neutral stance regarding social justice, equality and misuse of power.

Many of the programs described in this article were developed by members of Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) or have been supported by PsySR members. PsySR is a United States-based international

network of psychologists and other mental health professionals who draw upon the research, knowledge, and practice of psychology to promote durable peace at the community, national, and international levels. Members work to: (a) apply the growing body of knowledge about conflict resolution and violence prevention, (b) facilitate positive change for victims and survivors of personal, community and civil violence, (c) advocate for basic human needs-including actions which decrease poverty, ensure ethnic and gender equity, increase work opportunity, promote healthy and sustainable environments, and achieve wiser balance between human needs and military budgets, (d) ensure that relevant information from psychology is used in local, national and international public policy. The first project we look at facilitates positive change for victims and survivors of war.

WAR TRAUMA AND RECOVERY BROCHURE

In 1992, when the stories of mass sexual assault and rape began to break from the territories of the former Yugoslavia, PsySR realized that women would be needing psychological services but that many would not have access to them. Few services were available and there was little social support for seeking mental health therapeutic help. With Irena Sarovic, M.A., originally from Croatia, as our principal author and translator, we consulted with a number of mental health professionals with particular expertise in dealing with the aftermath of sexual violence and trauma and developed a self-help psychoeducational brochure for use throughout the region. Several principles guided our process: the information was to be drawn from the best that feminist psychology had to offer at the time; the product needed to be short and inexpensive-easy to reproduce, transport and distribute in a war zone; the brochure needed to be "user-friendly," offering its help in a culturally acceptable way. For instance, since rape carried such social stigma, the subject needed to be approached in the larger context of the trauma of war. The resulting brochure recognizes the social context of trauma experienced by individuals and their communities. It gives information on normal human reactions to experiencing trauma, includes paragraphs on rape and torture, and provides some concrete suggestions for self-care and support. Recognizing that many people would be experiencing chronic stress because of the continuation of the war, self-care suggestions focused on maintaining as much control over one's life as possible, deciding carefully, for instance, about who to talk to about what and when to do it. There are versions printed in both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, so that all sides of the conflict are able to use it.

Well over 15,000 have already been directly distributed by grassroots women's groups working in all parts of the former Yugoslavia, by U.S.

mental health professionals providing workshops and other support there, and in asylum countries for use with refugees. Since people are encouraged to copy the brochure, and the brochure has been reprinted in some handbooks, it is impossible to say how widely this resource has been distributed.

Anecdotal information as to its usefulness has been forthcoming from a number of sources. For instance, mental health professionals have found it most useful as a conversation starter for groups of refugees and some have used it as training materials for paraprofessional volunteers. Women's knitting circles, developed by displaced women as a way of making warm clothes and providing a support system for themselves, have used the brochures as a way of helping members of the circle to deal with their experiences. Women for Women, a U.S.-based non-profit organization that hand delivers funds and sponsors microenterprises for women in Bosnia, distributed the brochure and reported that children as young as ten were able to read it out loud without difficulty. The brochure is now also available in a more generic form in English and continues to be distributed more widely.

TRAUMA, TESTIMONY AND SOCIAL MEMORY

Inger Agger, a psychologist from Denmark, has been instrumental in creatively addressing issues of appropriate treatment for women and girls who have experienced gender-specific human rights violations. She was responsible for the Psycho-Social Projects of the European Community Task Force during the war in the Former Yugoslavia and subsequently was Psycho-Social Advisor at the OSCE Democratization Branch in Sarajevo. She has been a strong advocate for taking "an ethical non-neutral stand" (1995, p. 35) when working in therapy with women who have survived sexual assault, torture and other human rights abuses. " 'Mixing therapy with politics' is in fact unavoidable in psycho-social assistance to victims of political conflicts. If aid workers do not take an ethical stand against injustice they are still acting politically, because they are joining the conspiracy of secrecy and silence which maintains the traumatizing and oppressive power of shame" (1997, p. 123).

In her research project interviewing women from 10 different countries in the Middle East and Latin America (Agger, 1994), Agger used her office as what she calls "a ritual space" in which women could tell their stories "so that people in asylum countries would know more about the human rights violations which take place against women" (1995, p. 37), to contribute to social memory. She used a tape recorder to record their testimony so that the woman knew "that her voice and her name could be heard" (p. 37).

Agger describes this extension of the traditional therapeutic hour this way:

... I attempted to unite my experience from the use of testimony in the consciousness-raising groups of the women's movement with experi-

ences from my therapeutic training and my work with testimony as a trans-cultural therapeutic method. This method implies that the research process and therapeutic process are not separable. For victims of human rights violations, testimony has a special significance, because it becomes a documented accusation and a piece of evidence against the perpetrators. 'Testimony' as a concept has a special, double connotation: it contains objective, judicial, public and political aspects, and subjective, spiritual, cathartic and private aspects. (1995, p. 37)

Agger is very concerned about "the major contradiction between the psychological processes involved in reconciliation and those involved in social memory. Reconciliation involved recreating trust between people who are divided by hatred and fear of each other; social remembrance and testimony require keeping all that happened-both the good and the evil-in the collective memory of these same people" (p. 38). The term reconciliation has many meanings. At one end of the spectrum we see that when a conflict has terminated there is social pressure on people to come to some accommodation with the former foe, to "live and let live," or "forgive and forget," so that some order and stability may return to the community. Galtung probably expresses the most ambitious end of the spectrum best when he describes reconciliation as using "creative, positive conflict transformation ... not only to avoid violence ... but to increase the entropy [of peace] by emerging from that phase of conflict with more mature selves and more mature social formations ... " (1996, p. 272).

At the same time there is a need for recognition of and restitution for the suffering experienced by both sides, and for social memory to act as a preventive to "never again" let such atrocities happen. Of particular concern for feminist therapists is the fact that women's experiences are often lost in the social memory, that the underlying structural issues which fostered the conflict are not addressed in the aftermath, and traumatized individuals are caught in the middle. If they go along with the reconciliation then they contribute to the sense of community, feeling connected again, but are in danger of denying their own reality. On the other hand, if they maintain their insistence on publicly remembering their experiences they are in danger of remaining outside the community and stigmatized when their society wants to forgive and forget. Issues involved in both effective reconciliation leading to durable peace (Lund, 1996) and accurate and inclusive social memory need to be addressed in the "search for new methods and aims in trauma therapy" (Agger, 1995, p. 39). This is an area that requires much attention and creative innovation, with feminist therapists uniquely positioned to bring their considerable insights and experience to bear on this problem.

**CONSULTATION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL
CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS**

In 1994, in my role as PsySR Coordinator, I was contacted by an international women's rights Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), The Coordination of Women's Advocacy (CWA), for help with their process of consultation with the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY/R), which is based in The Netherlands, at The Hague. CWA began its work as a group of women from 10 asylum countries in 1993 and has since organized a number of consultations with institutions of the United Nations system. These have focused primarily on the question of gender-specific war crimes against women during the war in the former Yugoslavia, and more recently, also in Rwanda. CWA has consistently called for prosecution of rape as a war crime, has advised the Tribunal on ways to reduce retraumatization of women survivors who agree to provide evidence, how to best support witnesses in the process of testifying, and has called attention to the problems of witness protection.

For instance, when the Tribunal was deciding on whether or not to require public disclosure of witnesses' identity in open court, the prosecution staff asked for expert opinion on the issue. The Tribunal needed to balance the defendant's right to know the identity of his accuser against the right of the witness to protection from physical and psychological harm and intimidation. The PsySR network was able to provide the Tribunal prosecution staff with background psychological information on the probable chilling effect of allowing public identification of witnesses testifying in cases of sexual assault, especially given the very serious stigma attached to rape in their society. This contributed to the Court's decision to allow anonymity of witnesses.

My fellow CWA consultants have been working with refugees, potential witnesses, and survivors of war crimes, both in therapeutic situations and in other advocacy and service roles. Their dedication and concern for maintaining the dignity of their clients, empowering their recovery and providing the best they can offer to the ICTY/R in its quest for some measure of justice is palpable whenever they gather in consultation. They maintain a clear-eyed view of both the limitations of international institutions to make real differences in individuals' lives, and also the power of reaching international consensus on such issues as declaring and prosecuting rape as a war crime.

Former Chief Prosecutor Justice Richard Goldstone, said,

The role of gender-based war crimes in the former Yugoslavia . . . is of much greater importance than we originally expected. . . . The question of rape in Rwanda and the frequency of crimes of sexual assault point to the need for more focus there. . . . You may not realize how important your inputs have been all these years. The Tribunal has carefully lis-

tened to your recommendations and it has responded to the quest for solutions in many of the areas which you brought up with us. (CWA, 1996, p. 12)

The consultations have also contributed to successful political action. We developed a draft resolution which was adopted by the European Parliament, which increased the budget for the protection and support of people testifying before the Tribunal. CWA provided a whole list of suggested psychosocially informed support systems and improvements in the treatment of female witnesses interviewed by Tribunal personnel (CWA, 1996). For instance, we have recommended that all witnesses be allowed to bring a support person with them, with their travel also funded by the Tribunal, that interviews be held in the mother tongue of the witness, that translators, when used, be trained to handle testimony about traumatic events sensitively, and that asylum countries (where many potential witnesses currently reside) be called upon to offer increased witness protection. With the increased funding, the Tribunal should be able to implement at least some of the improvements in their support of witnesses. The most recent Consultation considered how witnesses are faring back in their communities. A questionnaire is being developed for use with the now hundreds of people who have been interviewed by the ICTY/R, to give them a voice and an opportunity to affect the future workings of international tribunals through the telling of their experiences as people who testified for the ICTY/R. These practices, established at the international level, can also be used, eventually, as models for women activists striving to improve treatment of women in their own countries.

WOMEN AS PEACE BUILDERS

Women in roles as peace builders are often invisible. "Women have a long history of negotiating conflicts and creating compromises in the private sphere and at the community level. Yet rarely is this ever called upon in situations of armed conflict and war" (Bunch, 1997, p. 7). To shed some light on this critical aspect of women's lives, a multicultural research project has been developed by another PsySR member, Susan McKay of the University of Wyoming, and Cheryl de la Rey of the University of Cape Town, South Africa. McKay notes:

. . . we think that women work in ways that are distinct from men's but these have not been documented. It is interesting that several peace building projects are presently occurring . . . and I am not free to give any details because of concerns for women's safety. [Women] tend to work quietly and at community levels, building coalitions and network-

ing for proactivity. . . . We think we can start to learn more by asking women themselves, women who do this work. (McKay, personal communication, 3/12/98)

The project, based in South Africa, consists of two parts:

1. A workshop which will bring together women leaders to discuss peace building processes within the context of their own organizations and culture and to describe women's approaches (Phase I). The workshop will be held during a two-day period and will be dialogic, a model traditional to South African culture. Participants will be 15 to 20 women in South Africa who represent diverse ethnic, racial and geographic perspectives and who are leaders within governmental, non-governmental and grassroots social movements.
2. An implementation phase (Phase II) which will utilize workshop proceedings as a foundation for developing a program model and researching peace building training for emerging women leaders. McKay again comments on this work in progress:

One of the problems we think occurs, and I have discussed this with very experienced people, is that there seems to be a trendiness in doing peace building training and it is a quick affair without extensive and ongoing capacity building (capacity building is key in peace building work) which we see as critical. So a central question is how to develop woman-centered programs to build women's capacities in peace building. (McKay, personal communication, 3/12/98)

In another example of ways in which small projects relate to wider levels of intervention, McKay also notes the direct connections between this project and one of the goals specified in the United Nations Beijing Women's Conference Platform for Action (United Nations, 1996), that of increasing women's capacities for peace building. Included as part of this goal is the development of policy recommendations for governmental and nongovernmental organizations about best practices and training models which can help facilitate sociopolitical and psychosocial reconstruction processes (McKay, personal communication, 2/6/98).

Community-Based Intervention-Angola

Psychologists and other mental health professionals are increasingly called upon to treat the survivors of the chaos that is unattended to in our cities, our rural communities, and in war-torn countries. And yet, often those programs are designed and implemented without tapping the local knowledge

and resources, often held by women for their communities. The project described below is an attempt to correct those problems.

Carlinda Monteiro, an Angolan psychologist in Luanda, has been leading an all-Angolan team of mostly women, under the auspices of Christian Children's Fund, on a seven-province project to assist war-affected children. Since over half the population of Angola is under 15, and includes many child soldiers, the problem is immense and cannot be addressed through traditional Western-based individualized treatment for PTSD and other related diagnoses. For one thing, there are very few trained psychologists available and Western interventions must receive appropriate cultural tailoring in order to be effective. But more critical to the situation is the fact that "the psychological wounds are communal and cannot be addressed effectively at the individual and family levels" (Wessells, in press).

One of PsySR's past presidents, Michael Wessells, has been working with Monteiro and her team in an effort to bring an effective blend of Western psychological expertise and traditional methods to bear on the problem. Using a "train the trainers" approach, the team has been conducting seminars with groups of people from around the country who have been nominated by their communities as trustworthy and effective in caring for children. The team's process has been effective in eliciting traditional views of what children need to grow up healthy, as well as community assessments of the problems children are facing today. For instance, in 1995 the team

conducted a study of a nonrandom sample of 200 unaccompanied children who had come to the capital city, Luanda. . . . Although it was a worst case analysis, the results were shocking: 27% had lost their parents, 94% had been exposed to attacks, 66% had witnessed mine explosions and 55 had been victims thereof, 36% had lived with troops, 33% had suffered injuries by shooting or shelling, 65% had escaped death, and 7% had fired guns. These experiences had a powerful psychological impact on the children who exhibited trauma symptoms such as fright and insecurity (67%), disturbed sleep (61%), intrusive images (59%), frequent thoughts about war (89%), and sensory-motor disturbance (24%). Moreover, 91% of children in the sample exhibited three or more symptoms of trauma. (Wessells and Monteiro, in press)

The team has also been able to teach basic Western-based psychological perspectives on child development, and has developed culturally appropriate techniques for helping children work through the trauma they have experienced and for helping restore spiritual harmony. For instance, in Angola,

. . . traditional Bantu societies place a strong emphasis on extended family and community, which includes both the living and the spirits of

the ancestors. . . . The spirits of the ancestors protect the living community, which is an extension of the ancestral community. If the ancestors are not honored through the teaching of traditions and the practice of appropriate rituals, their spirits cause problems manifested in poor health, misfortune, social disruption, and even war. (Wessells and Monteiro, in press)

Given that the children experiencing the trauma described above are also part of the Bantu culture, these spiritual, communal issues must be part of the process of healing.

Participants in the project have been using art, dance and music as vehicles for the children to address their distress. They have also worked with traditional healers to handle the difficult problems of people not having been able to bury their dead properly, and in arranging for the proper cultural rituals that will allow child soldiers who have killed to reenter the community and be reunited with their families wherever possible. These last two factors could not have been addressed without a willingness to listen respectfully to all the voices with an openness to understanding the meaning and significance of the issues being brought forth. It also required respect for local cosmologies. While there are many traditional cultural practices that are harmful, especially to women, the team is committed to gender equity and believes that the process of listening with an eye for healing and prevention of future problems can only help with the change process in the long run.

This particular project, while still in progress and therefore not fully assessed, has had good interim results in reducing problems of children's flashbacks, sleep disturbances, aggression and social isolation, while improving child-child and adult-child interaction and helping to mobilize communities around children's needs. Working with local helpers, the team is documenting ethnographically traditional healing ceremonies and their impact. The project activities have also been helpful for primary caregivers, most of whom are women, who themselves have been strongly affected by 35 years of war (Wessells, personal communication, 2/2/1998).

UNITED NATIONS FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN-BEIJING, 1995

PsySR and the APA Division of Peace Psychology, under the auspices of Women for Meaningful Summits NGO statu.<, sent a delegation of psychologists to the NGO Forum that accompanied the official UN Women's Conference in Beijing. A major concern for the delegation was to strengthen the focus of the Conference on peace issues and how they affe<,l women's lives. The delegation led open dialogues on conflict resolution processes in different

cultures, women's experiences of human rights violations and the role of forgiveness in conflict resolution. Upon their return, psychologists gave over 100 presentations to community and student groups who were interested in the Conference. They reported on the forum and educated people on the significance of the world-wide consensus reached on a number of issues critical to women which appeared as the Platform for Action (United Nations, 1996).

The President's Interagency Council for Women was charged with the official U.S. follow-up of the Platform for Action and invited continuing consultation with NGOs. PsySR participated in the nationwide conference televised through satellite down-links and provided analysis and suggestions both at the roundtables and through written responses. As peace psychologists, PsySR especially emphasized the lack of attention to issues of peace and war in the follow-up agenda. Recently, the Council published its report, "America's Commitment: Federal Programs Benefiting Women and New Initiatives as Follow-up to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women" (1997). A second report, "Building on Beijing: United States NGOs Shape a Women's National Action Agenda" (Stanley Foundation, 1997), is a compilation of the suggestions from many NGOs, including PsySR, who contributed to the dialogue.

Even a cursory look at the sections of the Platform highlights how far the United States has to go in meeting these international goals within our borders. Feminist mental health professionals understand that public policy decisions affect the health, mental health and well-being of the people with whom we work. For instance, social policy in the United States is inextricably tied to the policy priorities that place continued high military spending as a given and also require a balanced budget. Those same policies support continued sales of conventional arms to almost any country who pays for them, exacerbating the tensions in that area and turning simmering conflict into lethal violence. That lethal violence is then used as a rationale for continued high military budgets. Then, to complete the vicious circle, high military budgets mean decreased resources available for health care, job training, child care, environmental clean-up, etc.

It is in our best interests, as feminist psychotherapists, to use our expertise to advocate for governmental policies that will alleviate and prevent the devastation we see every day in our offices-to help meet the real human needs of the women, men and children of our world. And, we need to advocate not only for the physical human needs of people, but also for those psychological needs with which we are most directly familiar-"the equitable satisfaction of human needs for security, identity, well-being and self-determination" (Christie, 1997, p. 329). The implementation of the Platform for Action is a unique opportunity to focus attention on the full range of human needs with a feminist lens.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The projects reviewed in no way encompass the breadth and depth of the work being pursued by feminist psychologists around the world. Although this article cannot even attempt to be fully inclusive, there are several good resources that can add significant analysis and suggestions for action.

The United Nations Report on "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" (1996), led by Graca Machel, former Minister of Education and First Lady of Mozambique, must be mentioned here. It highlights the need for psychosocial interventions at the community level which include supporting and caring for the women who often end up being the sole caretakers of our world's future generations. Machel brings the point home that prevention of violent conflict must become a priority for the international community and provides a number of specific suggestions for changes in policy. Feminist mental health professionals will find much in this report to support arguments for reductions in conventional arms sales, support for psychosocial services, and shifting resources to meet human needs.

A recent book, *Myths About the Powerless: Contesting Social Inequalities* (Lykes, Banuazizi, Liem, & Morris, 1996), provides a powerful analysis of ways that Western psychology has been misused in the assessment and treatment of "other" populations. As feminist psychotherapists participate in the facilitation and development of more cross-cultural connections, cross-fertilization, partnerships, support systems, research projects, and practice alternatives that match the cultural milieu in which they are to be carried out, we need to tread with care. Banuazizi points out that,

. . . the potential role of a culturally sensitive psychology within an interdisciplinary approach to problems of development in the Third World can be quite significant . . . collaborative efforts between Western psychologists and their Third World counterparts in recent years cannot help but broaden the horizons of both groups. (1996, p. 192)

AN ACTION AGENDA

The global feminist coalition for women's rights as human rights has proven extremely effective in advancing our cause on a global level. Those activists have chosen an issue and pursued it from the grassroots level up to the largest global arena they could find. We, as feminist mental health professionals, need to do the same thing. I'd like to propose a framework within which we can work together, bringing our many strengths, talents and interests together to focus on a specific vision-building sustainable, peaceful

communities. This vision encompasses a vast array of issues from the most local and individual to the global and international. For instance, the projects mentioned above all contribute to the development of such communities. Feminist psychotherapists can provide psychological perspectives to existing programs and projects or develop their own. I suggest the following strategies as a sampling for your consideration, in the hopes that they support and encourage your own thinking and action.

1. *Foster prevention.* My own personal view is that we need to place prevention of all kinds of violence and oppression at the core of our work. Albee and Gullotta note that "no mass disorder afflicting humankind has ever been eliminated or brought under control by attempts at treating the affected individual" (p. 19-20). And yet, most therapists spend most of their time working with individuals or small groups. Gather together and think with your colleagues what policies and programs you want to develop and support in order to prevent the kinds of devastation you see everyday in your offices. As Agger did, we can consider the work we do with individuals and, moving with appropriate care for the dangers of innovation, continue to develop creative responses that empower women and men to make societies more just and equitable.

2. *Focus on one aspect of the system.* Since the issues are complex, multifaceted and structural, no one intervention will cure a problem. By the same token, any intervention can affect the system. So choose one you know about, you feel passionate about, and can do something about.

3. *Raise questions.* Questions are powerful, easy to ask, and give lawmakers important information about the concerns of their constituents. For instance, one does not have to be an expert on a particular issue to ask one's Congressman or Senators the simple question: "What effect will this proposed law have on the lives of women in the U.S. and around the world?" Treat lawmakers and their staff like regular people; use your listening skills when you are talking about an issue with them.

4. *Join together as mental health professionals.* Become part of networks that address global issues and add your perspective and expertise. For instance, PsySR is developing such a communication system called "International Practitioners' Network: Building Cultures of Peace." The mission of the Network is to promote holistic, equitable, culturally appropriate applications of psychology for building peace at all levels. As the membership in the Network grows, practitioners with similar interests from different cultures will be able to collaborate and support each other in work which can often be very isolating and overwhelming. This form of collaborative partnership can serve as a model for the peaceful societies we are attempting to build for women, men and children around the world.

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Interview with Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Sara Sharratt

SUMMARY. This frank interview with the President of the Tribunal explores the issues of social power and the historical dehumanization of women during times of war and civil unrest. Gender bias as it relates to sexual assault in the context of a war is considered along with recent legal attempts to broaden the scope of war crimes to include rape. Judge McDonald discusses her personal and professional experiences as a civil rights lawyer, a judge and an African-American woman. The intersection of justice and healing is considered. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

KEYWORDS. Race, gender, rape, war crimes

SS. We talk of ending impunity so that the victims can heal. As a therapist, I hear the implicit connection of justice and healing. There is no

Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, LLB, is currently the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Address correspondence to: The Honorable Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Churchillplein 1, 2517 JW, The Hague, The Netherlands.

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peace without justice. Can justice be a form of psychotherapy? What can we do to heal such enormous wounds?

GKM. Well, I guess there are two schools of thought, though there may be several. Some say talking helps to heal and some people believe that if you talk about things, you risk opening up additional wounds and perhaps have further need for a psychologist. I am not a psychologist, but this is my opinion. But having sat through the Tadic trial, I do not really know whether it is one or the other. I don't know how to judge whether it helped or exacerbated the situation for the witnesses because we did not do any follow-up.

I think just generally, though, based on my own life experiences, that it is better to talk about something because when you keep something inside you do not have a discussion with anyone except yourself, and you get only what you give back. So generally I believe in talking things through.

SS. Have you ever been in therapy yourself?

GKM. My ex-husband and I went to therapy when we were going through our divorce. We so frightened this white Anglo-Saxon male therapist. He was so shocked [laughs] that we had been yelling and screaming in front of him that he wrote us a letter saying something like "I can see you have very difficult issues to resolve and you must resolve them for the sake of your children." He was not used to black folks. We were married 18 years and they were long tough years. I also went to therapy with my son when he was having some problems, and later I went for help myself.

SS. Did you find it helpful?

GKM. No, I didn't. When I look back upon it, I think some of the problems I had should have been identified and acknowledged. She may have known what they were and simply not acknowledged them. But I do not know enough about psychology, and I think some psychologists believe that they should not tell you things, but instead let you find out yourself. So maybe that was her approach. The therapist and I became friends afterwards because she was an African-American woman who belonged to the same club for middle-class African-American urban professionals.

SS. But she did not give you much more than silence?

GKM. Right. For a long time she just sat there while the family was in need of help and I was having problems coping with all the pain. But that is my personal situation and I tell you that only because it gives you a certain perspective on what I perceive as a judge.

SS. How did that experience influence your work as a judge?

GKM. I think it makes you more sensitive because I recognize vulnerability in myself that I had never seen before. I had always been, as I found out, a human who was "doing" rather than "being." I thought I could conquer the world and I have always been very cause-oriented. I was a civil rights lawyer and when you give me a cause I'll take it on and I go with it until the end. I believed that I just could take on anything and nothing would stop me and I think that, for the first time, I was going through something that I could not control and could not change. That made me more sympathetic and empathic to vulnerability and to people caught in a situation that they cannot get out of.

Also, I think it has made me more aware of my own feelings, allowing me to respond more naturally to situations. I was much more guarded before and made sure that my emotions were always under control. So in some respects it made it more difficult for me because as I would be sitting there, listening to the testimony, and I would want to cry. I have, in a sense, lost some of the control that I used to have over myself, and so it was more difficult for me, as a judge, to exercise self-control.

I was a judge in the United States for ten years. The pressures were enormous. People expect you to have a greater degree of control and wisdom and that you are always right. As a judge, you do not have the luxury to admit that you do not have all the answers. So what can happen is that you end up transferring this belief into your personal life. I was also isolated as a judge, particularly as a Federal judge in the States. When I became one in 1979 through 1988, I could not keep the relationships I had in the community because I was now part of a white institution that I had always challenged as a civil rights lawyer. That forced me to divorce myself from my whole way of life. I was under constant strain. So what I learned through therapy is that I do not have to have all the answers and that it is all right not to be responsible for everything.

SS. As psychologists, we learn to protect ourselves. As a judge you have been listening to horrific testimonies of cruelty. How did you protect yourself?

GKM. I didn't. I don't . . .

SS. During the Tadic case. Some of the cases . . .

GKM. No. I was fortunate to have two judges with whom I was very close. I mean we did not have any conflicts with each other. There was a sensitivity that we had for one another. It is amazing because I was the presiding judge, the youngest, African-American and a woman. But I believe I was respected by both judges. One is ten years older than me, the other 20. Yet they respected me and told me how quick I was and how much control I had over the trial proceedings. I asked one of them when we were assigned another case, "Why don't you take the position of presiding judge?" "No," he answered, "you are doing a good job, just keep doing it."

Also, I think it was a good experience for one of the judges because he has five daughters. Although we never talked about it, I knew his daughters were very active with feminist and human rights groups in his country. I believe he is a rather conservative person in many respects, and so I think it was an eye-opener for him to see a woman in a position of power, who, if I may pat myself on the back [chuckles], did well in a way that didn't make him feel uncomfortable. He was at ease and did not feel bombarded by my style. I wouldn't give myself an A, but I think I did well under the circumstances. My other colleague had tremendous respect for me. His wife is a lawyer so he sees me from a different perspective.

Also, when the judges were working on the rules, some were not vocal when we were addressing the issue of sexual assault. There were others who were. But the experience of working with a woman they respected enabled them to at least camouflage their perspective. However, it's the little experiences which change people for the better. I remember one incident in the Tadic case. A witness testified about reportedly being raped. It was so horrendous, one rape after another. My colleagues were visibly moved and very disgusted by it. I bet if we had considered the rules on sexual assault after hearing this testimony, some of the judges would have had a different attitude. There were a couple of days when I was really upset.

SS. By the testimony?

GKM. Yes. Mostly by the magnitude of it and sometimes I still choke up when I think of it. It was not just the graphic nature of it, although there was some vivid testimony. Mostly what affected me was the loss. When you hear people like this woman, let's call her Natasha

K, who testifies that she has lost 35 people in her family, and then the prosecutor asks her to look at photo after photo, and she says this was her husband, this was her uncle, and this was her father-in-law . . . You listen to that kind of loss and it's just unbearable.

I read an article by one writer who said that while listening to the testimony, he saw me visibly grimace on one occasion. My face is very expressive, so I probably did. For example, a witness testified that he was at Omarska [detention center and site of numerous war crimes]. One son had already been killed on the way there. He and his other son went to Omarska together. One day he was asked to go and get his son. So he called him and he came out and said, "Father, take care of my family." And he testified that he never saw his son again. I can see this man. I can still see these people.

SS. So what did you do?

GKM. I read mystery books by the ton. Because you can just lose yourself. I also talked a lot with my own son. He and I are very close. There is a group of Mrican-American women here and we get together every now and then. Mter the Tadic verdict, I was telling them how upset I was. I stayed up the night before writing, trying to figure out what I would say to this man, and I wrote what I then read the next day. I read it and when I got to the point of reading about the conflict with the Muslims and why did he do it, I said: "Why? Why?" Elizabeth [Judge Odio Benito, the only other female judge] thought I was going to cry. I was nervous, but I was also upset. I was not trying to be dramatic because I am not a dramatic person. I asked "why" but I did not expect an answer. But it was the question that stuck with me throughout the proceedings.

And then I said, "It came to pass" and I had written that. And when I said it, it was like, "Oh God"; it came to pass because before then there were thousands of Muslims in the area and afterwards there were only about 300. So again I was touched by the loss, by the magnitude of it. It is not just one individual doing horrible things to another. It is absolute inhumanity to man, as we say.

SS. Do you think that evil is inevitable? Have your perceptions about people or the world changed?

GKM. No, no! Because what is happening here is, in a sense, what I have seen as a civil rights lawyer, only that it is happening on a much larger level. Racial intolerance and hatred has not, in my lifetime, risen to this level of destruction. Slavery happened a long time be-

fore I was born. But it has changed me in large and small ways. For example, although I was never much interested in "action" movies, I now cannot bear to watch violent films at all. They just make me grimace.

SS. You say it has not changed your perceptions about people.

GKM. I do not think so.

SS. You were the first African-American judge to sit in the federal bench and the third African-American woman in the United States Are there parallels between what happened to African Americans in the USA and ethnic cleansing in the Former Yugoslavia?

GKM. Well, it is all based on intolerance and a lack of respect for difference, and also a failure to resolve what has happened in the past. Many people in the United States say, "What's the problem? We have the Civil Rights Act and you are equal. There is no problem." But you just do not beat someone for ten years and then stop and say, "Well, I stopped. What is the problem?" I want you to know that you have beaten me for ten years. I want you to acknowledge the horrific experience of slavery, the complete destruction of a culture. President Clinton said last year that there should be a dialogue and an acknowledgment of what happened. A more direct acknowledgment.

SS. You are talking about a more direct acknowledgment. What kind do you have in mind?

GKM. I do not know. I do not know that you can have it on a mass level. I look more to individual human relationships.

SS. But the French apologized to the Jews and I thought Clinton at one point was suggesting an apology.

GKM. I do not know what form it would take. I suppose it helps [pensive]. I guess it would affect individual relationships. Sometimes you do not want to even bring up race. I have many white friends, but I do not even want to bring up the topic of race with them.

SS. Whynot?

GKM. Because, well . . . **It** depends. **If** they are not close friends, if they are business acquaintances, I know they believe it is all over and happened a long time ago, so let's not talk about it. So you do not want to destroy that kind of relationship. You want to be accepted. What is good about me being here [i.e., Europe] is that I do not have to face this race problem that has pursued me my whole life. That is why I went to Law School.

My mother was half Swedish and half African-American, but she looked white so there were many instances where we had problems. She was lighter than I am, very light. **As** a single example, once in New York I made an appointment over the phone at the same beauty parlor where my mother has her hair washed and cut. However, when I arrived, I was told right to my face that they did not do "that kind of hair," even though my hair is not that different from my mother's.

It is a relief to be in Europe. **It** is less personally agonizing. When I sit on the bench, I am used to, not to the horrible atrocities, nobody can get used to that, but I am used to the concept of people being intolerant to each other. At the Tadic trial, I asked a principal, "How can you explain these atrocities when Muslims, Croats and Serbs had gone to school together, lived together, intermarried with each other?" Now, I asked him this question because I wanted to know about the conflict, but also because I wanted to know for myself. How can you explain this important battle for desegregation in the 1950s and it's now thought that everybody is going to go to school together and supposedly everything is okay, yet it is not. There is re-segregation and there is intolerance on a different level.

I was once having dinner with an African-American woman at a Thai restaurant in The Hague. I told her, "You know, if I were in the United States right now with this slow service I would put on my NAACP button and think it was racism. But it's .just slow service." People like Americans here. So it feels like a burden has been lifted from my shoulders not having to expect a daily affront.

SS. Are you saying they like African-Americans?

GKM. Americans. Period. I think the Dutch love Americans. I think they look upon me as an American and not as an African-American. For the first time in my life, I do not have to face it. So it might have been easier for me, but it also hurt more because I saw it happening again. So when I asked "Why?" I was trying to get an answer about this conflict, but I was also trying to get an answer for myself. Why do people do this to each other?

SS. Have you come up with an answer?

GKM. No[emphatic]. The principal answered my question by saying that he did not know, that a madness had just taken over. So in effect you had these latent feelings, similar to those existing in the United States, these old wounds dating back from World War II or maybe even from 1389 when the Ottoman Turks defeated the Serbs. They held onto these feelings and passed them down from generation to generation. Then, you have a group of power-hungry politicians on both sides who are feeding and fueling these old wounds and old grievances that have never been resolved. Of course, I do not expect the same thing to happen in the United States, but there are similarities.

SS. I want to go back to something. You said that maybe there should be an apology to African-Americans, that more needs to be done. I was thinking in terms of race and in terms of women here. Should there be a monument for rape victims? Should we have international declarations of repudiation of rapists? Should we do more or do things differently?

GKM. I was talking to Elizabeth [Judge Odio Benito was also interviewed in this volume] just this morning about the number of rape Indictments. Yes, there should be a monument, but before you get one, you have to be seen to deserve it. The way that you do that is to get the story of rape out. We know it happens in war all the time but what we hear is, "Oh, I guess boys will be boys."

I recently confirmed an Indictment and rape had not been charged. There were one, two, three Indictments, major Indictments and while rape had been charged in one Indictment, but it was not charged in the major one. As soon as I looked at the Indictment, I called the prosecutor assigned to the case and asked him about it and he said, "We do not have any statements. There is no support for it." So I said, "You know me. I am going to go through every single page, every single page of this material, and if I find something, I am going to tell you." I worked through it all and I found numerous statements referring to rape. One of the physicians who had treated rape victims had not even been contacted to find out whether there were any who would want to talk about it. In the statements, the women said that they would be willing to testify. It was not like they were saying, "This happened to me and I don't want to talk about it." That is usually the excuse given, that they do not want to talk about it. If they do not want to, that is another story.

I called a legal assistant and I said, "We have some problems here and I need you to help me." We prepared a whole list of references to rape in the material. So when I confirmed the Indictment I said, "Now I want to get into something else. Rape has not been charged. Let me go through what I have found." I went through it affidavit by affidavit. I turned each page and just kept on going, affidavit by affidavit. Then, in one Indictment, rape was charged on the basis of an affidavit that had been redacted; they had deleted all the names and everything about the woman that would identify her. In another Indictment, the whole affidavit was in there but was not redacted. Right there in the material. The prosecutor was not even charging rape. They were shocked by that. So I say that before you get a monument, you have to earn it, meaning that rape has to be charged; it has to be brought out; it has to be a part of the trial. So far, this has not happened. The numbers are certainly there: 20,000 or more women have been raped in this war. You do not get a monument unless there is an acknowledgment that you are a hero or a heroine.

SS. So you are saying that there are not enough indictments?

GKM. Yes. I saw the prosecutor a couple of days later at a party and he came over and said, "Gaby, I am sorry." He acknowledged it, and was personally committed to charging rape as a war crime, yet since he left us there has been no movement on this front. This case has gone on and there is no word of rape. They charged rape in the biggest of the cases and I bet they do not have more evidence than was available here.

There is a danger, in my estimation, of running away from the issue. It can be very difficult to identify with women's issues, for men because of their position of power, and for women because some may be reluctant to be identified as women. They want to pretend that they are equal and that they made it on their own. When we talk about sex crimes, sex and gender are important. Many women do not want to acknowledge gender or race. Yet in this way the former Chief Prosecutor was an exception, he was committed to the cause.

SS. You said race ... And that is true, too.

GKM. All through my life it has always been race first and gender second, and when I became a judge there were some women's groups who said, "Look, you haven't been active in women's groups." I said, "I have filed lawsuits against every major corporation in this area and

all the petro-chemical companies." You can only take on one cause at a time and I have taken on the women's cause. I mean on the rape issue, I participated in the First National Women's Political Caucus, spoke on the same panel with Sarah Weddington of *Roe vs. Wade*. But in my experience it has always been race first.

SS. Has it shifted?

GKM. Yes, it has shifted. It has shifted particularly in the Tribunal because rape has been used as a weapon of war and therefore gender issues have become very important. It is more obvious to me now.

SS. I am wondering, do you think that your election as President of the Tribunal represents a turning point?

GKM. Yes, I suppose so. I have already given one interview to Human Rights Watch who were doing a study on rape. I told them, "Rape has been used as a weapon of war in this instance in the Former Yugoslavia, and for the first time it is specifically listed as a crime. We should treat it like any other new weapon. If there was a new rocket that was devastating in its destructive capacities, wouldn't we want to focus on it and make sure that we stopped it before people started using it all the time?" Rape does not only destroy women, it destroys the family.

SS. In the States, many women don't want to testify because they feel they are being violated again by the system. Is, for example, cross-examination unfair?

GKM. Yes, that is true. Our rules establish the principle that consent is not a valid defense and also that prior sexual conduct is inadmissible. So our rules are very far-reaching in this respect.

SS. But it does depend on who is the presiding judge. I have seen judges here in the Tribunal who do not exercise sufficient control, resulting in the abuse of the victim.

GKM. I wouldn't have allowed that to happen to any witness but obviously I have more sensitivity because of who I am. As a woman, I can feel the act of rape. I can empathize with it. Men look at it differently, if they are sensitive. It is almost as though they see themselves in the shoes of the perpetrator, and they see more the damage that can be wrought because they could be a perpetrator themselves. I feel, as a

potential recipient, that I can feel the pain more. I don't want to be too graphic, but I can feel it in my body more than they can.

SS. Because cross-examination is so much a part of the common law system, many women in Europe are shocked that rape victims are subjected to this process. They see it as extremely violent. Are we, for historical reasons, placing too much emphasis on the rights of the accused, and not enough on the rights of the victim?

GKM. Certainly the rights have to be balanced, particularly at the ICTY, because our statutes direct the judges to provide rules for the protection of victims, and especially victims of sexual assault. No other system has a similar provision.

In the United States it is horrible because women are put on the stand. I mean they are put on trial. For example, the whole business with Mike Tyson, the discussions that I have had with my son who is not at all sexist. The frequent arguments that my daughter and I had with him about why she went to Mike Tyson's room. She went to his room, but that doesn't mean she was going to consent to sex, and even if she went there thinking about it, she still had the right to say "No" at any particular time. I can go up there to have drinks or whatever, but I don't have to have sex. I can change my mind and say, "I don't want a drink anymore."

SS. I wonder if, as a North American, your sense of justice has changed since being here?

GKM. I suppose so. The trials we've held are not just about individual accountability, although that is our primary goal. There has to be individual accountability so that there won't be group stigmatization. We also have to record what has happened so that it won't happen again. Never again. So, I look upon justice now in a somewhat broader fashion.

SS. What do you mean by group?

GKM. We don't want to stigmatize a whole group of people, but it is a major problem. It is not just one man killing someone, or one man killing several people. It is the question of why did he do that? What was the cause of this? What was the role of the media? What was the role of the politicians? What were the group dynamics? Not that you blame all Serbs, Croats or Muslims in the group. During the Tadic trial there was evidence which suggested that these politicians had

completely taken over the media, and look what happened. Although we talk about individual accountability, there is more to it than that because it is a community problem. It is a community problem because of the attitudes that people, as a group, have for one another. However, that doesn't mean that when a Serb is tried the whole Serb nation is on trial. But in a sense it does go beyond the individual, because you need to look at what caused the individual to act in the way he did, so that you can hopefully avoid repetitions in the future.

SS. When you looked at Tadic what did you feel?

GKM. I used to look at him a lot and I kept him with me a lot. Maybe I became a little obsessive. I kept testimonies in my head because I had to concentrate so much. I'd look at him sometimes and just try to figure out what was going through his head and what kind of a person he was. And the key thing for me was when he said, "Nobody else seemed bothered about what was going on. I don't think anyone is guilty." That kind of thinking is probably what allows him, and other people, to keep their sanity. They feel that what they were doing was all right because everyone was doing it. I'd look at him and I'd catch him looking at me and it was really a strange kind of a relationship that developed.

SS. A relationship?

GKM. Yes. I'd often look directly at him and he'd look at me. I think that he knew that I carried clout and if he could convince me, I would be sympathetic. He picked up on things when I asked questions, and he pointed out loopholes. He had already seen them. He would then look at me and volunteer the answer to a loophole that I had mentioned during the trial. I don't know. It was a strange relationship.

SS. Were there times when you liked him? Liked him in the broadest sense of the word?

GKM. No, though I know what you mean. It was not liking so much as he became part of this court family almost. You sit in that room, that little tiny room, week after week, month after month. We went through 73 trial days and he was a major part of the process. I was very conscious of the fact that he was there, very conscious of him. He became a part of my life, really, for a long time.

SS. Do you still think about him?

GKM. No, I have moved on to other things now. We've got other issues. And I am very busy as president and see the issues from a broader perspective.

You are talking about the tremendous personal impact that these experiences have and how there is no way of going through them without having them affect your life. I remember when I went back to the States one year, and I was angry that most people knew almost nothing about Yugoslavia. I really get angry about that. I speak to Americans and I tell them, "Americans are not interested because Yugoslavia is thousands of miles away and the people have these funny names you can't pronounce. Why should you care? Because it is important in a moral sense. How can anyone not care about the destruction of humankind?"

SS. If you are going through a rough time, they often say it means that you are not strong. No, it means that strength encompasses vulnerability.

GKM. Yes, that's true, and being able to acknowledge pain.

In the past there was a commonly heard phrase, "blacks and women," and Alice Walker asked, "What about black women?" There were black people, mainly men, and there were women, mostly white. Black women were totally out of the picture. For many African-American women, there has been a struggle to identify with feminism. What I gathered from what you were saying before is that for you it had to be a split.

I was in the South and the same women who were feminists were either married to white men who were racist or racists themselves. You see, racism was so dominant in the South that I had a difficult time connecting with them, especially because I was suing their husbands, or men who looked like them, who were heads of corporations. We are talking about the early 1970s. I went to Houston in 1969. I once saw an article in the *New York Times* that said that most of society has always looked at black men to speak about black issues, and at white women to speak about women's issues. Where is the black woman? She is not in the equation. If we look at my daughter, she is just as ardent as a feminist as I was in my work in civil rights. She just reminds me so much of myself and she is very active in women's groups, AIDS and other issues. She is an ardent feminist because times have changed. We don't have the same types of race issues, though I still believe that white women have benefited more from the civil rights movement than black people have. You see more white women in managerial positions in the United States

than you see blacks in those positions. In Europe I don't see that, so it is so nice that one doesn't have to be concerned with race issues on a personal level.

I am now at a point in my life where I am more conscious of the fact that I am a woman who is faced with different issues than the men here. More than being a black person, I feel that I am a woman, and this awareness has allowed me to focus on my gender and what it means in my relationships.

SS. Does it surprise you that the men in the Foca Indictment have not been arrested?

GKM. When I met with the Minister of Justice in France, who is a woman, I made specific reference to that Indictment even though I have as President said that I was not going to talk about Karadzic and Mladic by name. But I bent the rules a little bit and talked about it and sent her the Indictment. I also spoke with the French Foreign Minister and told him about the case. I told him, "Let me show you on the map where Foca is." He said, "Let me see that map." He gave it to an assistant and told him to make a copy. I said that I would send him the Indictment in French. It will certainly be on their minds.

SS. You are saying that because Foca is in the French sector. The Indictment is all about crimes committed against women. Do you think that has got anything to do with it?

GKM. I have no idea, but there is an attitudinal crisis that makes it seem like it's okay. "These men are under strain and, after all, they have only raped." I still think they've got the mentality that "Boys will be boys." I remember reading about an Allied military commander in the Second World War who was questioned about this issue and he said, "In times of war this will happen and you can expect it of our troops." You hear rumors about UN troops themselves. That they were implicated in raping also.

In rapes, in forced prostitution. So, it brings up a whole range of issues that I don't think they want to face. We are not talking about women like you or me. We are just talking about women in general. In the one case that I confirmed, this woman was held for weeks on end and was raped repeatedly by group after group. It would just turn your stomach.

However, they will not find it as justifiable when you talk about it in terms of enslavement. It presents an entirely different dimension of what is acceptable in times of war. If men were held and became

victims of sexual assault, of course they would want to punish the perpetrators. In *Tactic*, the testimony about biting a testicle was sensational. That's all they talked about. So if they can talk about that, why can't they talk about rape? I guess I am contradicting myself when I said people don't want to talk about sexual occurrences.

SS. Thus, what is clearly seen as torture when it happens to men is not as easily seen as such when it happens to women. Most of the women who are writing for this volume went to the former Yugoslavia. My sense through my contacts with them is that they are traumatized.

GKM. Well, maybe I am traumatized and I don't know it. It will take a long while for me to feel the full effects of this experience. It was horrible. I couldn't sleep during the *Tactic* trial. I think it is still inside me and sometimes when I start to talk about *Tactic*, I feel tears welling up, I think perhaps because I did not have the luxury of doing so during the trial. Judges don't cry, so you just have to sit up there. When I came back after we finally sentenced this man, I felt like I could just let it all out, and I really did cry. I really did, but it's still inside me, so when people ask me "Why?" I find I get really upset, and then I start asking about how can people do that to each other? But I have to let go of the question "Why?" It happened and I don't have to solve it.

SS. You're a judge and I am an expert in human behavior, and I have no idea. I don't know. I don't understand. I don't know why. I know that soldiers who do that aren't human.

GKM. One woman judge I know, who was strongly affected by some of the testimony, said that maybe she was not cut out to be a judge. I replied that "Maybe it is the opposite. Maybe it's because you get emotional and you feel it, that you should be a judge." If you don't express your emotions, you go crazy. The problem, as I've said before, is that I've learned as a judge to control it. But I've suffered on account of this. I mean you control it all and then, when you finally release it, you sometimes do so in what is not necessarily the healthiest fashion.

SS. I just talked to a Holocaust survivor in Costa Rica, and I asked her about what kind of support she received from her husband when she talked about her experiences in the camps. She said that she never discusses it with him. I know, it doesn't surprise me.

GKM. How could you not?

You know that in the United States in 1957, Central High School

in Little Rock was desegregated and, in order to do it, President Eisenhower had to send in troops. In Brussels, there is a sister of one of the "Little Rock Nine" and another black woman who was actually one of the "Nine" now lives in Holland. These are all black women. They had a 40th anniversary recently and they got together. All these people are my age and so their children are in their 20s. For the first time, the children heard about these things because their parents had never talked about them before. I have read about what went on in that high school and I can understand why. You read it and you see the humiliation that you were put through, you were kicked and spit upon, and books slammed and all kinds of death threats. You want to fight back.

SS. Yes. Thank you for giving me a chance to talk with you. It was very moving for me.

Interview with Elizabeth Odio Benito, Justice of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Sara Sharratt

SUMMARY. This interview is with a previous Justice of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and current Vice-President and Minister of the Environment of Costa Rica, Elizabeth Odio. Such issues as women's rights as human rights, the relationship of justice and recovery and the nature of evil are considered, among others. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

KEYWORDS. Human rights, women's rights, rape, torture, genocide, Costa Rica

SS. What is important for us to know about you?

EOB. Perhaps the most important thing to know with respect to my job here is my past experience working in human rights. I came to the

Elizabeth Odio Benito, Lie. in Law, was a Justice of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and has returned to Costa Rica to fill the elected position of Vice President.

Address correspondence to: The Honorable Elizabeth Odio Benito, Office of the Vice-President of Costa Rica, Apartado 2292-1000, San Jose, Costa Rica.

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Tribunal from this field and not from any background as a judge or criminal attorney. Human Rights started to become prominent after the Second World War, following the horrendous ways in which human rights were violated during that conflict. I am not suggesting that human rights were invented after the war but rather that the International Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 projected onto the international community what had traditionally been handled by different States at the national or regional level.

Thus, it was only in national legal systems that protection of human rights was encoded. After the Holocaust and genocide of World War II, there was tremendous pressure to internationalize the protection of human rights. Nevertheless, it is obvious that since that conflict there has not been a true synthesis between this preoccupation and the protection and punishment of individuals, which remain the responsibility of the nation state. We did not create supra-national organizations which could truly protect human rights and punish its violations.

SS. How did you become involved with Human Rights?

EOB. I was interested since my early life as an academic and practicing attorney. I became aware then of the tremendous discrimination and inequality faced by women in the judicial system, and started, together with other women, to try to change some of the laws that worked against us. That was a time in my life when I believed that changing the laws would change the world. Afterward; I realized that nothing was ever that simple and that it is much easier to change the laws than to change human attitudes and behaviors. In 1978, when I became Minister of Justice of Costa Rica, I focused my attention on the problems of political refugees from Argentina, Uruguay and Chile seeking asylum in large numbers in Costa Rica. Shortly thereafter, I became a member of a United Nations Committee which handles funds to rehabilitate victims of torture during armed conflict. Since then I have been working with projects to help rehabilitate people who have suffered torture and/or inhumane and degrading treatment during national or international conflicts.

SS. You have been talking about discrimination against women and human rights. When did these interests converge?

EOB. In a way they were always connected but there has certainly been lots of development in my thinking. When I started participating in human rights work, I did so in a genderless fashion. I developed a

gender perspective some time later, I would say in 1986, when it became obvious to me that violations against women were more serious because they were being committed against women simply on account of the fact that they were women. My gender perspective was clearly a lens through which I have looked at the world since then. It became clear to me also that international humanitarian law and international public law did not have the mechanisms to demand individual accountability of those who violate human rights laws. It is important to remember that violations of women's human rights occur outside what might technically be called the context of armed conflict. Violence against women is clearly a manifestation of the same phenomenon, with domestic violence, street violence, sexual harassment at work, and violence during war conflict all being manifestations of power differentials and inequality. What became more evident and painful was the realization that there was in the international community neither the mechanisms nor the political will to hold responsible those who violate women's basic human rights.

Since I started my work in the Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, it was immediately clear that there had been heinous, massive violations of human rights and women's rights in particular. The situation for women has been especially painful because one sees a new component: the use of rape being as part of ethnic cleansing. In this war, we have begun talking about ethnic cleansing just as we did after World War II. Our challenge from the beginning, and in this I was accompanied by both Judge McDonald, Patricia Sellers from the Prosecutor's office and with the support of Chief Prosecutor Judge Goldstone, was to make sure that the serious nature of the crimes against women was acknowledged, investigated and prosecuted.

SS. You were the judge who confirmed the petition for a deferral in the case of Dusko Tactic and you publicly appealed to Judge Goldstone when you said, "Do not forget the women." This was broadcast by CNN and other media worldwide. That was an unusual step for a judge. What was the reaction? Did you receive support or not?

EOB. From the perspective of a traditional judge, I guess it was unusual. But remember that I told you that I did not come to the Tribunal as a judge or academic. I was not a professional judge and I think it is true that they have a different attitude. I came as an activist who expresses concern for the violation of human rights and does not think it may have a negative impact. I guess it was the gesture of a novice.

SS. Do you regret it?

EOB. No, not at all. On the contrary. If I had to do it over again, I would do it even more forcefully than the first time.

SS. Are you saying that you were criticized or did not receive support?

EOB. I was not criticized directly but I was told in the Tribunal of the "concern" expressed by some judges. However, I never received any criticism from my two colleagues. They did not say anything. I found out later from an old friend of mine that there has been a great deal of discussion about the proper behavior of a judge with the clear implication that I had fallen outside of those parameters. It was felt that I was pronouncing judgment ahead of time. I thought I was doing that in terms of the application of norms. I was expressing my own worries about the Tribunal's political future and legal work.

If we had started working on cases from an armed conflict in the former Yugoslavia where the United Nations legal documents documented massive rape of women and there was not a single mention of rape in this indictment, I thought I had a very valid reason for expressing my concern. I was worried that once again we were going to invisibilize what had happened to women with the pretext that we did not have any evidence or that no one was talking about rape. However, I also received support: I found out that it was extremely important for many women to hear my intervention, and that it continues to be important for them to know that there is a supporting presence within the Tribunal.

SS. You were in Vienna in 1992 for the International Conference on Human Rights. Women from all over the world organized a mock Tribunal, of which you were one of the judges, to hear testimony from women about violations of human rights. After hearing wrenching testimony, you said with tears in your eyes that maybe you were not made to be a judge. Now, you have been a judge. Do you still feel the same way?

EOB. [Laughs] We had a very different situation in Vienna. In the first place, I did not really have much idea about what that Tribunal would be like. In Vienna, we had acts of profound solidarity where we created what we called the "Tribunal of Conscience" in order to hear the testimony of women who had suffered, in a number of contexts, heinous violations of their basic human rights. As I said before, we were trying to link the different kinds of violence under

the same umbrella. We were struggling to ensure that everyday and "exceptional" violence against women would be recognized as human rights violations and help extract them from the private sphere where they had been kept hidden for centuries. In the Tribunal, we heard testimony from women who had been battered at home, survived incest, had been tortured by police while under arrest or raped during an armed conflict. It was very moving, especially to hear women from the former Yugoslavia, Muslims, Croats and Serbs, talking about what they had gone through, and what they expected to go through in the future. At that time it was still in the middle of the war. All of this took place in one session. I was not prepared to hear about that much indiscriminate, unjust and painful violence. I felt totally overwhelmed and publicly said so. I did not feel I could be impartial in the context of so much violence committed against women.

SS. How does one prepare for such an event and do you think it is possible not to have a multitude of feelings?

EOB. It is very difficult. I have felt similarly in this Tribunal. I feel this solidarity, which instinctively links me with those who have suffered atrocities and, if anything, I feel even stronger about it than before.

Seeing at close range the tremendous pain and agony of women and men caused by war has only strengthened my commitment to fight against the violation of anybody's human rights. I have seen the violence suffered by civilians who have nothing to do with the political games of these wars. I have seen them and I shudder.

SS. As I listen to you, it reminds me of my work as a therapist where I learned to protect myself in order to maintain some professional distance, even though I knew it was impossible to avoid having feelings.

EOB. Exactly. That is the way it is. It is not possible to separate feelings and thoughts. I do not believe in that. In my own case, my feelings are right there and are part of what I listen to when I am paying attention to the testimony. I have also learned that the accused is protected by the presumption of innocence and is also a human being. One has to be very careful. As judges we evaluate the evidence with freedom of conscience.

SS. Would you then say that you are cut out to be a judge?

EOB. I would say that my words in Vienna were said in a different context and my experience here proves that I can be a judge.

- SS. Do you think that it would make you a better judge?
- EOB. Yes. One can be a better judge if one has direct experience with the victims, as happened to me in Vienna.
- SS. It has been over four years since you made your remarks in the Tadic deferral hearing. Did your fears prove to be justified?
- EOB. I would say yes. In spite of my remarks and Judge Goldstone's efforts, the indictments that followed did not reflect the crimes committed against the women. I was responsible for confirming the first formal indictment after that, namely the Nikolic case. In that indictment, there was no mention whatsoever of crimes or sexual abuse committed against female detention camp prisoners.
- SS. Could he have been implicated?
- EOB. Yes, because in the United Nation's report by the Special Rapporteur, that was one of the regions where massive rapes were reported to have occurred. I was told, because I asked, that it had not been possible to gather evidence. After that, both Judge McDonald and myself had to really struggle to ensure that what happened to the women would be reflected in the indictments. Therefore, my concern was quite valid.
- SS. In another historical case, the equivalent to a trial in absentia of Karadzic and Mladic, it was obvious that you were spearheading with our colleagues the struggle for rape to be considered one of the weapons of ethnic cleansing. That became part of the official record when the conclusions were read. That was a historical first. You are currently one of the judges in a trial where rape has been charged as torture and two female witnesses have testified in court about their own rapes with the alleged rapist in the courtroom. That is again unprecedented in the history of International Tribunals. In spite of all the obstacles, it is obvious that women can have a tremendous impact. Did you believe that before?
- EOB. When the Tribunal was created, all the official United Nations documents mentioned crimes committed against women, especially the massive rapes of women of all ages. Nevertheless, the first unpleasant surprise came when only two women got elected to the Tribunal out of a total of 11 judges. To me that was a bad sign because I had hoped that if more women were part of the Tribunal, their presence

would serve to make these crimes more important in the proceedings. The two of us have had a long difficult struggle, although we were supported by some of our colleagues. I imagine Judge McDonald would feel the same way. But the need for more women has been painfully evident during these years. During the next four years, there are only two women again. Always two.

SS. Was it lonely?

EOB. Yes. It was true in the beginning and I think it continues to be true today that women's organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have not kept as close watch over the proceedings as they should have, especially in the very early stages. I think the lack of vigilance was a mistake on our part, and we should have actively supported the Tribunal rather than remaining silent. Also, we should have given more publicity to the Foca indictment. There was almost no reaction when it came out; virulent criticism would have been preferable. When something important happens, we should make it known worldwide. There must be an echo of women's voices so that each time these voices get louder and more difficult to ignore. If they are transformed into isolated screams, if there is not a universal cry, we will have a hard time getting to where we want to go.

SS. You are currently involved in a case against three Muslims and one Croat. What do you feel when you look at them?

EOB. I have been really sorry and angry at the irony of life that has made me one of the judges in the only case where the accused are Muslims. They suffered the highest number of casualties in what had been recognized as numerous crimes against humanity; women were massively and systematically raped as part of an ethnic cleansing strategy; their monuments were bombed with the sole intent of destroying their culture. So it is ironic that three out of the four accused are Muslim. It is very painful to realize and I have often asked myself how people who know suffering can become victimizers of others. What happens to solidarity and empathy?

The four men are human beings. When I worked with inmates in Costa Rican jails, I learned very quickly that what separates the perpetrator inside from the one outside has a lot to do with chance and politics. What makes an individual commit an offense is quite complex. I have often met in jail individuals who I would say are very good people, who were helping other people in jail adjust and change. Often the older folks would be worried about the younger

ones and advising them on how to stay out of trouble. Lots of them wanted to better themselves and lots of them did. For these reasons, the four in front of me are not any different. How people got caught up in Milosovitch's perverse and criminal discourse is something for all of us to think about. But one thing is for sure: the consequences will be hard to erase.

SS. You were not reelected in the last elections. When I talked to women's groups in the United States, I was told that they were not informed that the election would be taking place that day. Were you disappointed?

EOB. I was very disappointed and disillusioned, especially with my own government which did nothing to promote my candidacy. They did not care essentially because I am a member of the opposition party. It also showed a total lack of interest in what is happening at the Tribunal.

But I was also very disillusioned because I felt alone. I felt that my friends in struggle from Vienna had disappeared. It is true that the election was not publicized, but it was public. It was known that national governments were making their moves within the United Nations and those who work or lobby there knew very well what was happening. It was known that my candidacy was going to be submitted and I did not get one word of support from any of the women's groups, including those in Costa Rica. As a candidate from a small country, I would have needed a great deal of support from the women's community. Yes, it hurt me and I hope it never happens again.

SS. Do you think it has something to do with the way we are politically organized? Is that why we often do not follow through or give support at crucial times?

EOB. I am sure we are not very well organized at all. We must organize globally in order to change the world. Like the old Marxist saying, "proletarians of the world unite," I would say "women of the world unite!" My vision of Yugoslavia strengthens my conviction that we women have to change the world, because men are not really interested, as much as they say they are or as much as they call themselves feminists. We always leave each other alone, almost as if we felt that once we win a battle, everything is accomplished and the women who scored a victory should be able to make it on their own. If we are left alone, our chances of success quickly diminish.

- SS. You have been a strong supporter and defender of the Tribunal. You have repeatedly said that there cannot be peace without justice and that we must put an end to impunity. Do you think getting justice helps with recovery?
- EOB. Justice is not the only means to achieve peace. But let's understand justice in its broadest sense: as something that transcends tribunals and as encompassing the need to somehow redress what happened to the victims. Let's give victims of the conflict an opportunity to be heard, to be supported, to be valued and respected in their grief and loss. Only then will we be finding paths towards justice. Without justice, vengeance is given center stage, and vengeance is violence and violence begets more violence. In order to put an end to this downward spiral, victims have to be heard, respected, valued and seen. I also believe that is important to punish individually all or at least some of the direct instigators and perpetrators of these crimes. I believe in individual responsibility for one's actions and that is why I believe in tribunals; they are the only mechanism available to punish the perpetrators while giving them a fair chance to prove their innocence. In this regard I'm wary of the notion of collective guilt because it includes not only the perpetrators, but also the innocent ones and those who actively tried to put an end to the atrocities. Collective guilt can also lead to revenge, whereas individual guilt confronts the perpetrator with his actions. This is also why I support the creation of a permanent international criminal court. History has taught us that we must fight with all our might against impunity.
- SS. You have also been a great spokesperson for the rights of the victims. You come from a juridical system where there is no cross-examination. What is your experience with it, especially with regard to victims of sexual assault?
- EOB. In general, I think it is an inadequate mechanism. I say inadequate because during cross-examination the intent is to impeach the witness and not to seek the truth. This is personally very distasteful to me because it often ends in the humiliation of the witness, and the public exposure of their weaknesses simply because they have come to testify. I find it offensive, especially when it happens to victims and witnesses of rape and sexual assault. It is very cruel and painful to watch, since what the defense is looking for is impeachment and, if this is the case, there is an absence of empathy, respect and human compassion.

SS. What would be the alternative?

EOB. What exists in continental law. The witness is not cross-examined but re-questioned which is different as the intent here is to seek contradictions within the witness's testimony. Her personal life, habits and weaknesses are not used to impeach her. And, in the case of rape victims, previous sexual behavior is often used as a way of discrediting her.

I was a practicing attorney for many years and I can think of many instances where it emerged that the witness was lying using their own testimony. I did not need cross-examination nor did my colleagues in Costa Rica. Really, I find North Americans go to frightening lengths to defend their "right" to cross-examine.

SS. Anglo-Saxon law also has the principle of the right of the accused to face in court his accuser. Do you think that it is an absolute right?

EOB. No, no. I do not believe in that either. Anglo-Saxon law is based on some old and worthy principles which grew out of the need to protect the rights of the defendant against institutional abuses. The obvious example is the Inquisition, where the accused had no right to know who the accuser was or what the charges were. That was a horrible travesty. However, the right to a fair trial does not automatically imply cross-examination or the right to face the accuser in court. In my opinion and that of others, the defendant should even have the right not to appear during the trial, so long as they are represented by an attorney. I also believe, again contrary to the tradition of Anglo-Saxon law, in trials in absentia. Hence, I do not feel there is a need for the defendant and the victim to face each other in court, especially in cases of sexual abuse.

SS. Are you suggesting that the rights of victims may have been violated?

EOB. I would say that primary importance has not been attached to them. However, it's a very delicate situation as a careful balance must be established between the rights of all parties. However, in many instances the rights of the defendant have come first, often at the expense of those of the victim.

SS. Justice can be puzzling. I have heard that there is a higher probability of going to jail for stealing items from a store than for committing genocide. Do you agree?

EOB. I am absolutely in full agreement with that. North Americans' obsession for serial killers is absurd if we compare it with the absolute indifference they have shown towards those who are responsible for the genocide in Rwanda or toward what is happening to women in Algeria and Afghanistan. That is another real genocide. But very few citizens of the world worry about that.

SS. Do you think Costa Ricans worry more about these genocides?

EOB. I would say that because the United States is the most powerful country in the world, theoretically it should be the most informed. I have learned that this is not the case. In Costa Rica, we are also more preoccupied with individual crimes and with what happens in our cities than with international atrocities. In that way, we are very similar to Americans.

SS. One parallel is that in war most of the atrocities committed are against civilians and most of these are women and children. In civil society, crimes against women are often ignored, dismissed or trivialized.

EOB. I agree. It is mostly white men who run the world and make the political decisions. Most victims are women and children and since we lack representation in the halls of power, there is little concern for developing mechanisms to eradicate systematic violence against us.

SS. Even though crimes committed against women were instrumental in the United Nations creating the Tribunal in the first place, it has often been my experience, especially in the early years, that we as women did not exist.

EOB. Yes, it was profoundly mystifying and agonizing. Crimes against women are hidden. They disappear when one reads accounts, number of indictments, legal decisions, press reports. I would go back to what I said before: we needed more gender-sensitive women. Given that the ratio of men to women was so uneven, crimes against men were what predominated in all the discourses and concrete actions.

SS. What has been the price of being involved in the Tribunal for the past four years?

EOB. One pays many prices. One suffers a lot . . .

SS. Why does one suffer a lot?

EOB. Because one's identification with human suffering becomes sharper and more intense. I also now have a total incapacity to tolerate violence. I shudder at the slightest hint of it on television or at the movies. I deliberately avoid violent shows. They hurt me at a level which is almost unbearable. That is a price. On the other hand, I also think I have developed a deeper maturity which comes not only from aging.

SS. What do you mean by maturity?

EOB. Let's say a greater capacity for empathy, for understanding, for solidarity with others. A profound feeling that I am part of a wounded humanity.

SS. Can you say more about that?

EOB. In my previous work with victims of torture, I had identified with their suffering and had seen the devastating consequences in their lives. I had learned that torture was the most perverse punishment inflicted upon a human being. It is more perverse than murder because if one is murdered at least at some level the suffering ends. Torture tries to destroy the person, physically, emotionally and psychologically. It also tries to destroy the victim's family and all that was associated with that person.

Interestingly, though, during all those years nobody talked to me about rape as part of torture: neither the men nor the women. It was only in this Tribunal that I became aware that rape is the most heinous form of torture. I started looking at the four articles of the Tribunal [i.e., crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes, and violations of the laws and customs of war], and I knew we had to include rape in one of them, and not only if it was massive and systematic as it is the case in crimes against humanity. This is the only place where the word "rape" appears in our Statute. This is a legal point but a very important one. I remember feeling it very poignantly: rape is torture and must be made a crime if only a single woman is raped during an armed conflict. Its intent is to destroy the person, and is an evil act.

SS. When you spoke of your previous experiences in South America, rape, which we must infer happened, was never spoken about and now it is almost as if your work in the Tribunal has brought you closer to the cruelty and pervasiveness of violence against women.

EOB. That is true. I have a much keener sense of the enormity of violence against women. By comparison, my previous experience had been focused on individual torture victims. I had worked with them as people, trying to help them overcome some of the post-traumatic stress they all suffered from. But the war victims are so numerous that the whole experience has magnified the context into a universal one of perversity and evil aimed explicitly at women, and this I find very heartbreaking.

SS. What do you do with this?

EOB. I have been very fortunate to have a close intimate support network which has allowed me to survive and to process, as you therapists say, these experiences. Had I not had this support, I think I would have given up earlier and the personal price would have been much higher. This confirms my profound conviction that we need emotional support and kindness to live. Without this type of support, it is very difficult if not impossible to live through these kinds of experiences.

SS. Has your impression of people changed?

EOB. The daily contact with evil and wickedness was very intense. I am a natural optimist. I believe in human kindness and that there are millions of people who are kind and good. Sometimes when I get depressed I wonder if we are not fewer in number and less powerful than the evil ones. Yet, those moments of despair have also made me want to renew my efforts to get the good people of the planet to join forces. This is why I ask women of the world to unite. I believe a great many of us are on the side of humanity, peace and solidarity. It is not that we do not have problems. The choice before us is whether we are going to use wickedness to resolve them, or whether we are going to use kindness and solidarity.

SS. I am hearing you say that, in having closer contact with evil, it has also put you in closer contact with purity and human kindness.

EOB. Yes. Otherwise, I would want to shoot myself.

SS. Thank goodness you had emotional support. What did you do to have fun?

EOB. [Laughs] Go to museums. Art is the most sublime manifestation of human kindness. Many artists dedicated their lives to the creation of beauty and I have a great deal of admiration for that.

- SS. After you lost the election to the Tribunal, you have been elected Vice-President of Costa Rica and appointed Minister of the Environment. What do you see in your future?
- EOB. A new opportunity to set new goals and engage in new projects. This is very gratifying for me because it was a team effort and intended to make my country a more just and equal society. I am a great believer in teamwork. Now I have been given the additional opportunity to work in a different context which involves seeing the environment as an integral part of the human development equation. The challenge is not only how to work for nature's preservation but how to become a harmonious part of that nature. This is one of life's curious ironies that I end up working in an area that has been called the third generation of human rights: the right to breathe fresh air; the right to a safe habitat; the right to clean water. We are talking about the right to live in societies which co-exist harmoniously with and within nature; the right to use natural resources without destroying them; the need to replace them responsibly. This is what we are talking about when we discuss the rights of people to sustainable and harmonious development. I am very enthused about this new direction.
- SS. I think it is most fitting that you get a great opportunity to focus on life, human kindness and solidarity. It is about time.

Interview with Patricia Viseur-Sellers, Legal Officer on Gender Issues

Sara Sharratt

SUMMARY. In this interview such issues as morality and integrity, the meaning of rape in various social contexts and the demand for justice from the international community are discussed. In addition to her role in the legal system, Viseur-Sellers discusses her experiences as an African-American woman in the social systems of Europe, the United States and Latin America. The personal effects of this work on her are also explored. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]*

KEYWORDS. Gender issues, sexual violence, trauma, war crimes

SS. Could you share with us some of your personal and professional background?

PVS. I am a US citizen and an African-American. Originally, I am from Philadelphia, but have lived in Europe for about 13 years and have been working in The Hague at the War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia for close to five years. I was a Public Defender in

Patricia Viseur-Sellers is Legal Officer on Gender Issues, Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. She also functions as a prosecutor for certain cases dealing with sexual violence.

Address correspondence to: Patricia Viseur-Sellers, Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Churchillplein 1, 2517 JW, The Hague, The Netherlands.

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Philadelphia. Then I worked in the field of human rights in Latin America at the Ford Foundation, after which I worked in foreign affairs at the European Union before coming to the Tribunal, where I've been working almost since its inception.

SS. You came as a gender legal specialist?

PVS. Yes, as a legal advisor on gender issues, for both Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

SS. Why a gender specialist?

PVS. The sexual violence and rapes that occurred during the Yugoslavian conflict were not only too egregious to ignore, but were the focus of the human rights community, and the women's community in particular. It certainly was known that countless rapes and other forms of sexual violence took place. The Secretary General incorporated rape into statutes related to crimes against humanity, and stated in his report that sexual violence was considered a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Therefore, Judge Goldstone and Graham Blewitt [Chief Prosecutor until 1996 and still current Deputy Prosecutor, respectively], asked me, soon after I arrived, to be the legal advisor on gender-related crimes since they were to be an important area within our investigations, our evidence and eventually the prosecutions.

SS. My sense was that Judge Goldstone's previous work in South Africa was important.

PVS. Coming out of South Africa, I think Judge Goldstone had an ease with which to understand different types of prejudice and oppression and how law could either support that oppression or assist in redressing it. He applied this awareness directly to issues related to sexual violence during war time, making it something that he wanted his office to actively pursue.

SS. Was he supportive of you?

PVS. Yes, he was.

SS. How?

PVS. He was supportive by creating and then asking me to occupy this position. The fact that he placed me and the issue of gender at the

cabinet level of the Office of the Prosecutor made it possible for me to intercede in investigations and speak with investigators and lawyers horizontally. This was a tremendous help, and I'm sure if his support was not there from the beginning our ability to address gender issues would have been compromised.

SS. Where else did you find support?

PVS. Within the Tribunal we sometimes underestimate the staff that have professional backgrounds pertaining to sexual violence. There are several attorneys who have worked with sexual violence, including child abuse, within their careers. There was also quite a bit of support from lawyers who studied international law and understood the importance of this issue. I think also many women in the office made an attempt to integrate gender policy internally in order to support and accelerate our gender policies in the investigations and prosecution of sexual violence. They were very supportive, and caught the connection between their everyday life as women and the possibility of sexual violence during armed conflict.

We moved into the second stage under Judge Arbour. Now our policy and operations concentrate on normalizing the inclusion of sexual violence under our mandates [Judge Arbour is the current Chief Prosecutor. She is from Quebec, Canada]. The subject has become more like the air we breathe; it's no longer disquieting, shocking, intrusive or invasive. We have developed a legal framework, an investigative methodology. Moreover, we understand how great an impact the gender of the interpreter can have on our sexual assault investigations.

SS. That was not taken into account in the beginning?

PVS. Perhaps not consciously. Most of our interpreters are female. When we developed internal expertise, we started examining and understanding more deeply the role of the interpreter; the gender of the interpreter; the age of the interpreter and the nationality of the interpreter. As we analyzed our internal teams, we looked for the best strategy to investigate evidence of sexual violence. How should an investigation team be configured? How should we amass the evidence? Should we separate sexual violence out from other crimes? Or integrate sexual violence into other crimes? There has been much internal evaluation and, after pointed debate, we decided to have mixed gender teams.

SS. What are the differences that you have found?

- PVS. A major difference is that, in the context of a war, the crime of rape is no longer "just" rape. It's a crime against humanity manifested through sexual violence. It's a war crime in which one side is a non-combatant, and the other is party to the conflict. Just having those distinguishing legal elements removes rape from the realm of "non-consensual sexual penetration," a definition more appropriate to the prosecution of rape within a neighborhood in Brooklyn. Also, one has to remember that rape is generally not the only crime inflicted against that person on that day. Often in wartime you might have a victim or witness who has been shot, has seen family members killed before their eyes, been detained, starved or tortured, in addition to the sexual violence inflicted on them. So rape during war is not an ordinary crime. War crimes by themselves are serious violations of international humanitarian law and as such cannot be considered ordinary crimes.
- SS. In addition to the multiplicity of crimes, what is the difference for the rape victim in Brooklyn as opposed to the former Yugoslavia?
- PVS. Rape in war is connected to a much larger political content. Of course, this is not to say that rape in Brooklyn is not connected to the policies and the politics of patriarchy or the policies and politics of urban poverty. But the sexual violence that occurs during an armed conflict is distinctly related to the political and the societal upheaval that has led to war in the first place. Societies don't usually have temporary detention centers where segments of their population are interred and guarded by soldiers on a random basis. There is a parallel, but also a pronounced difference between detention during war and "peacetime" incarceration.
- SS. Or detention centers where women are raped constantly.
- PVS. That's right, it's not as formalized. Although you might have sexual violence in US prisons, it's not the same political context where you have a reckless society "breaking down" in the midst of an internal or international war.
- SS. Do you think the trauma would be any different?
- PVS. I think that is a very difficult question. Most of the psychologists I have talked to acknowledge that during war, trauma is multi-faceted. Some trauma is related directly to the sexual violence. One always has to ask when precisely the sexual violence occurred in the midst

of the traumatization of a given person. Was it the first traumatic act or did it occur after a series of ten acts?

I think we have to start looking at the context of war-related trauma, and broadening it so that it encompasses trauma from sexual violence either as a victim or witness, or as someone who has had to incorporate the fact that their daughters, sons or wives were raped. Thus, I think we have to look at post-traumatic stress in war-like situations, whereby sexual violence is certainly a part but not necessarily the entire trauma.

- SS. I have heard expressions like "collective damage" to the community, or to the soul or to the country.
- PVS. Both would work. While the trauma does remain very individual it also becomes part of the community trauma. This strikes, as I suggested earlier, at the very heart of the political context in which war-related sexual violence occurs. In municipal or domestic situations, you do have a community that is perhaps affected on a certain level, with all women being aware that one shouldn't walk through dark parking lots at night because we know there is danger. I don't think it's to the level of traumatization, but we have a sense of what is dangerous. Moreover, there is a community reaction in terms of the domestic rape situation. So it is not contradictory or surprising to think that there is going to be a communal reaction to war-time sexual violence in addition to the reaction of an individual person who has experienced sexual violence or post-traumatic stress reaction.
- SS. We've also talked about atrocities. How has that impacted you personally?
- PVS. I can't even bear the thought of going to see a violent movie. When I see a movie advertised with Sylvester Stallone or Bruce Willis with a gun, I block the poster right out. I couldn't even tell you what the name of the movie would be. I know from myself personally that when I started doing this work I didn't go back to my gynecologist for two years. I'm sure that was part of my reaction to the sexual violence.

Another reaction is that I find myself crying over things that are not really that important. Over a soapy television commercial, for example, or when I go to my son's basketball ceremony and they're handing out medals to these eight- and nine-year-old kids. They all think they're going to be the next slam dunk champions and I get all

weepy. I know that it won't last for very long but for ten seconds it can be realized. It's so nice to be able to look at a kid and enjoy them in that way. I know it's related to these horrendous things and hearing how families are destroyed. I wasn't crying over those basketball medals. Instead, I was realizing that, "O.K., I can exhale for a second."

SS. Innocence . . .

PVS. All of a sudden the innocence came back. At least I think I am being very honest with myself: This is when it comes out and I'm happy it can come out. On the other hand my reaction to the sexual violence from work, as with most people, could appear in the form of vicarious trauma that might not show up for years. Ten years from now while walking down the street something might click a memory that I hadn't even been aware that I had suppressed.

SS. Were you prepared for it at all? Did anything in your background prepare you for this?

PVS. Not really, but perhaps. I think maybe the time I spent living in Latin America helped, since Brazil was just coming out of a dictatorship at the time. There were certain narratives about torture in Latin America and there were certain situations where you saw people who had gone through politically traumatizing situations, sometimes related to sexual violence. But nothing could have prepared you for this. Unless you were an investigator from, say, Guatemala, I would challenge anyone in this building to say that they were prepared. Thank goodness you don't have to walk around being prepared for these kinds of stories in your life.

SS. What did it do to you?

PVS. In many ways it made me understand better the multiple ways in which people try to destroy each other. Often, whether from a right or left perspective, we allow violence to be seen as heroic. I mean the violence that was used to overcome: oppression, nationalism or colonialism. One takes up arms and you've got this very nice, idealized "everyman" who is pictured defending the homeland, or whatever. However, when that same violence strikes an individual, it is aghastly dehumanizing thing. There are very few ways to shoot someone nicely, and there is absolutely no way to rape someone and be a hero. The Quakers say that if violence is part of the manner in which you

gained or you have acquired your society, violence is already integral to that society. When part of that violence incorporates sexual violence, one really has to question the validity of any violence whatsoever, no matter how romantic. And I admit to not being completely clear and sure on this issue.

SS. What issue?

PVS. On the issue that all violence is bad. Yet, I still have certain romantic notions of violence, as we all do. The *Amistad* movie has just come out. I haven't seen it yet. It might be too violent for me to see. I'm not too sure that I want to see it. However, I'm sure that it is about people fighting off chains of repression, a slave woman fighting off a man who might be trying to rape and kill her. That is all violence that one "should be in agreement with." What I'm saying is that violence is horrid. It's horrible.

SS. Are there connections between the former Yugoslavia, slavery in the US, Rwanda and other ongoing struggles?

PVS. Well yes, but I don't think one can compare these struggles in a straightforward fashion. If you look at slavery in the Americas, that was institutionalized torture for a period of two hundred years. One recognizes that this institution provided economic benefits, and deculturized large regions of the Americas. Not even to talk about the genocide committed against Indigenous Americans, we had institutionalized sexual violence that is reflected in the legacy facing African-American women and Brazilian women today. In the make-up of the African-American community, part of our legacy, our differentiations of color, are associated with past rapes that occurred during slavery and the blood has descended down through the generations.

Now, is that comparable to the psychic damage of sexual violence that occurred in Yugoslavia? There might be some parallels. However, I have never lived in a war situation; I am talking about six generations after slavery and how does that feel, compared to someone else who is talking about three or four years after an armed conflict, and their legacy of rape. In Rwanda, the sexual violence that occurred during the genocide, is that related to an African-American sense of slavery? I don't know. I haven't thought about it that much, but what I will say is that there will be a psychic legacy in Rwandan society due to the sexual violence. Why should individual psychic scars and societal scars be anything new? I think it's normal.

It derives from patriarchy and it is part of the legacy of sexual violence.

SS. Is it easier to live in Europe than in the USA?

PVS. No, I don't think so. I think that anyone who is really dealing with their life is dealing with it no matter where they live. I'm not living in Europe because I think it is less racist. I am in Europe because this is where my husband lives and we decided to live here. I think that Europe has a lot of its own problems and legacies. They have plenty of stereotypes of black women. Where I used to live in Belgium, men would stop me because they thought I was a prostitute on the street. I had to tell them, "No I'm not a prostitute but if you are looking for one, come with me, maybe I can help you." Then I would say in a loud, public voice, "This man needs a prostitute. Does anyone know where he might find one?"

They see a tall black woman and from their colonial legacy of Zaire the only black woman that they imagine is a sexual partner. And thus they act surprised and devastated when I tell them I am not a prostitute. I am American, an educated American, and they don't have anywhere to fit that in psychologically because it's not a part of their worldview in Europe. I think Europeans need to truly deal with their own colonial legacies and sexual myths associated with this legacy.

SS. To go back to something that you were talking about before, about support for people who are involved in your line of work, have you ever felt like talking to a psychologist and have you?

PVS. I think many of us have talked about this and I think we should have an in-house psychologist who will assist the staff, whether the people who input the evidence into the computers to interpreters, attorneys, investigators, guards and supervisors. We must not underestimate how traumatic each person's job could be at any step of the way. The bailiff who is calling out the case, listens to that testimony everyday. What is their reaction? What about the guards who are sitting next to the accused? I wouldn't underestimate anyone's need to speak with a psychologist to express their feelings. However, it would have to be user-friendly enough that people would feel comfortable. But the need comes and goes. That is one excellent thing about working in the Tribunal: You don't feel victimized because you have identified a problem and you're actually doing something about it. If it doesn't always give you the illusion that you are

contributing to the common good, it does allow you to control the trauma in a different way.

SS. They may need to go to somebody sometimes but not all the time, that is what you are saying.

PVS. Yes. I don't think people necessarily go around denying that. I mean no one is keeping a stiff upper lip. At times a little stress is going to have to come out, and it is probably good that it does.

SS. What shocked you the most so far?

PVS. Sometimes the extent of barbarity within the witness statements affects me. I also have been pleasantly shocked, for example when reading the *Golden Notebook* by Doris Lessing. She describes the beauty of a little blade of grass coming up amongst the cracked pots. Sometimes you're shocked by that little blade of grass and you walk over to protect it. Sometimes you are amazed and shocked by the tiny heroism that, had someone not been interviewed on a side issue, you may never have seen this. My God, when humanity grows it can bloom wonderfully, to the extent of shocking you.

That stands in sharp contrast to the barbarity, the banality of it all I think those of us who work here all the time put up certain defense mechanisms. We all get into this nice, water cooler type of gossip, right next to the horrendous things that a witness is saying. Or you declare that I've just had it, I'm not taking it anymore. I'm not taking what? You shock yourself at your own pettiness [Laughs].

At the same time you have to understand these are normal non-war folks who have come to work at the War Crimes Tribunal. So, there is a whole part of "normal" society that continues to exist alongside of these traumatic war scenarios.

SS. There must be an impact. There is no way of going through it without changing something about your views of the world and people in it.

PVS. I would say yes, but sometimes I ask myself whether those views would not have been changed anyway. The work probably accelerated the change. I am much less inclined to underestimate people. I think that people are capable of everything.

SS. You don't underestimate anyone?

PVS. I don't underestimate anyone, to the extent of how barbaric or how heroic they could be. I think also that it is very important to have morals and to know yourself.

- SS. I am very interested in morals. Tell me more about morality.
- PVS. I really had to question myself here. What do you value in life? What is your self-integrity? What are your values in terms of human beings? Who can be used? Who is the throw-away population? Can you ever pre-judge who that throw-away population might be? I mean the more you start looking at people . . .
- SS. You are assuming that there is a throw-away population.
- PVS. Well, I think we have to assume that no one can be thrown away. Does that mean the perpetrators are good or that there is some redeeming quality in them? I don't think you can throw them away either because people can change. How one is treated is how one will treat someone else. I think of that when I look at that blade of grass or hear about the men who go in and instead of raping say, "Hey, don't say anything let's just sit here for 10 minutes, but don't say anything when we go out either." I mean that person is someone who had some moral integrity.
- SS. Where did you go with that?
- PVS. Where you go with that is the recognition that it is important to have some values, and that there are some things you are not going to do. Would you do them if someone had a gun to your head? I don't know, everyone likes to think that they are heroic, but you do need to have some values. When you have no values you can commit any act, any crime. I think people reflect the integrity they have about themselves and others. People with less morals always assume that no one else has any morals either. Why would you kill children? Why would you kill children if they're not armed?
- SS. You qualified your words by saying, "if they were not armed," because you know what is happening in the world.
- PVS. Right. Although I really think it is important for people to have values and morals, at the same time I have a lack of understanding and disdain for what my value judgment refers to as stupid nationalistic morals. I believe that people can go through a nationalistic phase and then move onto an international level. I think particularly after you emerge from a colonial situation, you go through a nationalistic phase. It's a way of saying, "I'm okay, I'm good, my culture's fine." But just don't get stuck in nationalism. When that happens,

you think your country is the best, your way of doing things is the best, and eventually your way of seeing things is the best. Eventually no one else's way is valid and they have to be eliminated because all you are doing is preserving the "true view," whether some type of absurd Aryan race ideology, or an equally absurd middle kingdom notion coming out of China.

When you think that there is only one way of ever doing something, and you don't allow any competing values, it lets me know that you are not quite secure in your own way. So I think you have to go through nationalism in order to get to internationalism. I think that if we have so many absolutely demonic-like perpetrators it has a lot to do with their value structure, not just as individuals, but also as societies.

No country has a monopoly on justice and freedom, and that's made it very hard for me to live in the USA. Of course, this is also something that American lawyers working here have had to learn, along with the fact that there isn't a single law system in the world. There is also a civil law system which has been around for two thousand years. I think that the difference with the United States is that we have much more legalistic values in our culture. Why do we put on all these court-room shows on TV which are a combination of entertainment and civil value lessons, whether it be *Night Court* or anything from the comic to the very serious? They do influence us. Thus, Americans seem to have more of a sense that they have legal rights in their everyday life. In civil law countries, they do not have such exaggerated notions of individuals' legal rights. Legal notions are things you get around or avoid, and you certainly would never go to court to sue, to vindicate your rights, because you don't have this particular legal concept embedded within your worldview. Americans often run to court too quickly, but it is ultimately because you have a notion of an individual life backed by law. There should be a middle way between the civil and common law poles. However, I don't necessarily think that common law soldiers perpetrate less violence during war-time than civil law soldiers.

SS. What would be the evidence?

PVS. I don't see any evidence for that. So what is the value of all of those legal systems during an armed conflict? Maybe we need to incorporate values as to how one should act in war-time, but I'm inclined to agree with the Quakers who say that war should simply be eliminated. Why don't we just start incorporating values where raping someone is not seen as a solution to anything?

SS. Are you a Quaker?

PVS. No, I am not. I come from Philadelphia and I have been influenced by Quaker values. I participated in Quaker missions and sat on their boards. They first came to the United States with a vision, I guess as outcasts, as many European immigrants did, but they have been very vociferously non-violent, against war, for three hundred years. They have influenced and affected me.

SS. Have they become more relevant now?

PVS. I was more involved with them before in Philadelphia. I readily relate to their religious values and vocabulary. They have said a couple of things that have really influenced me: As I have mentioned a couple of times now, the values that you put in your society at the beginning will flourish, whether violence, patriarchy, racism, or homophobia.

SS. Maybe that is why there is so much need for the Tribunal. There has to be some justice, otherwise we will be recreating the pain in Yugoslavia in twenty years.

PVS. I think so, too, though I don't know if we can necessarily talk about justice. Maybe we can talk about some deterrent and small instances of individual injustice. But until the international community is committed to demanding justice and establishing institutions to do so, passing out justice by calling upon some witness, victim or survivor, to testify will not be sufficient. We must get to the point where we see Yugoslavia as part of an international community, and that everyone is equally outraged at what has occurred.

SS. It is pretty arbitrary as to who gets brought in.

PVS. It's arbitrary in a sense. But those who are indicted are the only ones who risk being arrested. The Office of the Prosecutor represents the international community. The Tribunal was set up by Security Council on behalf of the international community. I would really like to see people in every part of the world, from Argentina to the most far-flung island in Norway banging their shoe on the table, demanding that the perpetrators be brought to justice.

In other words, we need more outrage in the international community, and once we start to feel the same way about the horrific acts that have been committed in Angola and Guatemala, then we may

get to a different level. When the international community says there is absolutely no room for sexual violence, then justice will be served. You can still have legitimate killings during war, you can still have legitimate bombardments of our civilian population, but there is no reason why there should be any sexual violence in war whatsoever. While this is a women's issue, it's also an issue that affects everyone: women, children and men.

- SS. Yes. I would also like to talk about some of the rape victims that I have heard testify and I am wondering how you feel about cross-examination? Is it fair?
- PVS. Really, I think it is too early to judge that. When you look at the cross-examination of the sexual assault evidence related to the Tadic case, I don't think it was unfair for the women who testified about their own rapes as part of the evidence in support of wide and systematic violations. In truth, there was very little cross-examination in that case. However, I do think that the cross-examination in the Celebici case was the worst. I certainly hope it will be the exception. Your cross-examination has to be bound by the fact that you are dealing with a crime against humanity, and questions about prior sexual conduct are not permissible. Indeed, for anyone who is sexually violated in wartime, prior sexual conduct has to be absolutely unrelated, even if sexual conduct occurred the night before in a detention center.
- SS. You know that they brought up such issues as one of the women having contraceptive pills in her possession. Why should we keep cross-examination?
- PVS. Well, I think we have to keep cross-examination in terms of a fair trial procedure. Under civil law you have a form of questioning and, under common law you have another form which is more abrupt because the two parties are to eventually bring out the truth with their astute questioning. With civil law, the judges play a more active role. In these cases, you have three parties that are bringing out the truth. The system in the Tribunal is evolving. It is not quite civil law nor common law. Cross-examination is expected to clarify and bring out some truth yet judges' questions will also serve to bring out the truth. I've seen the cross-examination at the Rwanda Tribunal as well as at the Yugoslav Tribunal, and sometimes you do have what might be termed "pointed" cross-examination.
- SS. It still depends on the judges.

- PVS. Yes. It is much more tri-party here. It is not just the two sides as in common law or the judges playing the central role as in civil law jurisdictions. That type of cross-examination would not develop here.
- SS. It still does amaze me how much it takes to recognize rape as a war crime.
- PVS. I think in most people's minds killing remains the worst crime. Male-oriented investigation and prosecution has highlighted that, not to say that there hasn't been evidence of sexual violence as well. Also, people feel that once we have identified who killed who, we were just about finished. Only then can we address such questions as who raped who, who burned what, and then finally who stole the cows. This has been the norm until women declared, "Hey, I'm part of the international community, what about the other 53 percent of the world's population?"
- SS. Not as many women in the international community before . . .
- PVS. Yes, completely. I think that when people begin to partake in civil society they need to have much more of a voice to say "as a member of society, this is unacceptable." So this is part of the process that is going on right now. In addition, we are still rather parochial. We think that things like war won't happen again. However, when war returned once again to civilized Europe, Europe was in a state of shock. I can almost hear people say "I can deal with rapes when they happened in the past, or when they're happening in Bangladesh, but I can't believe that it's right now in my own backyard." Well, hello! You, too, are being called upon to join the world and make it move forward.
- SS. You have a very global outlook, which I appreciate. I remember a saying: "Think globally, act locally." Should it also be the reverse?
- PVS. Both at the same time, yes.
- SS. When I was planning this special volume, I was asked if it was going to be relevant to American psychologists. What would you have said to someone who asked you that question?
- PVS. I would have said, "Take off your sunglasses, honey, you look a little ridiculous. The sun shines on you too. There is no place to run; there

is no place to hide and you wouldn't want to run and hide, not from this stuff."

SS. It's happening everywhere.

PVS. That's right. Take for example the domestic violence issue, which is something we talk about a lot in the States. How you see women in your civil society and how you are going to treat them when you're at war and the structures suddenly break down are closely related. If we permit domestic violence, incest and all this stuff, why should we be shocked when rape is committed in war-time?

SS. We will publish a summary of the Foca indictment. It is a historical indictment and you were instrumental in making it happen. Before you got it confirmed, what was it like? What did you have to do?

PVS. Well, before we could have the indictment confirmed it had to follow the path of all indictments: an investigation, followed by a legal analysis of the statements, and then we had to draft the indictment and finally go through a very interesting process here. The team that conducted the investigation, together with their legal advisor, drafted the indictment.

After that, all of the attorneys in the Office of the Prosecutor are invited to participate in an indictment review. Every attorney can critique or support that indictment in a way that they feel is justified. Foca, an indictment which was based almost entirely if not solely on sexual violence, went through a rather lengthy indictment process. We must have had three or four indictment reviews.

SS. Is that unusual?

PVS. I wouldn't call it highly unusual. It went through that process not just because of the complexity of some of the legal arguments we were putting forward, but also because it was the first time that we were charging torture and discussing how to group various rapes together on such a large scale. We decided to place many together under one count and not one count per rape, as that would have been too unwieldy. It just took time. People gave us their time and I think the investigative team and the lawyers were quite patient. When you go into an indictment review, you have someone who knows nothing about your case. That person will ask the hard questions that the judge might ask or that the defense attorney might ask. The team is already convinced because they have been living with the investiga-

tion for a year and a half. They have seen the faces. The person who has been working on a completely different indictment comes into your indictment review and has to be convinced that there is evidence of a prima facie legal case.

SS. What was the most agonizing question?

PVS. Let me give you an example, not of a question that was asked, but of a decision that had to be made. How does one charge all these rapes? When you look at indictments from the Rwanda Tribunal you might have 8,000 killings in one indictment. We can charge that as one count of extermination under crimes against humanity. For example, in one Rwanda case, we had several rapes, fifteen or more, and they were charged as one count of rape under crimes against humanity. The Foca indictment has numerous rapes. Therefore, we had to ask ourselves whether we should count the rapes and give each rape one count, or should they be pleaded as one count of crime against humanity. Our solution, when we presented the indictment, was to plead separate counts of rape for each defendant. That was a very difficult charging decision, and is one of the reasons why, when you read through the indictment, it is impossible to know how many rapes occurred just by adding up the counts.

SS. You make it sound so easy.

PVS. [Laughs] Is that so easy?

SS. It never happened in the other International Tribunals.

PVS. In Foca, the indictment deals with events that happened during the takeover of the town. The charges in the indictment involved sexual violence during interrogation, sexual violence during detention, sexual violence during military and paramilitary maneuvers. The evidence is unfortunately abundant. I think that perhaps in Nuremberg and Tokyo the intent was missing and while they had evidence of sexual violence, they did not pursue it in a diligent fashion. I think that the intent to follow through is precisely what distinguishes the Second World War trials from the current ad hoc Tribunals.

SS. You obviously had the intent.

PVS. Yes. The re-drafting and re-writings are part of my job, and very important to the workings of the Tribunal. The team worked very

hard on the investigation and the indictment. While I think most teams feel very attached to their own investigations, people understood there was something even more special about the Foca investigation. We understood that Foca was going to be a ground-breaking prosecution. We wanted to be cautious. We wanted to be prudent, so that people would not be able to criticize this indictment for being less rigorous or not providing sufficient evidence.

SS. It always pains me how much harder we women have to work. Two weeks ago [March 98], one of the defendants unexpectedly surrendered. There was going to be a Foca trial. How did you react?

PVS. I think everyone was elated. The fact that he surrendered was also unexpected. But that was almost immediately overridden by the fact that he pleaded guilty. Guilty pleas, cases to prosecute, sentencing, all this has to start becoming normal. We should be able to look up at a court docket and say to ourselves, "Okay, what do we have today? Looks like a couple of murders, some sexual violence, nudity and other standard war crimes." We want to be at that stage.

SS. Which I think, as you and I have discussed before, is a very strange and bewildering honor.

PVS. Yes it is, but when we get to that stage then we can really start comparing the early indictments with the later ones. Then we can start fine-tuning the process and seeing what we've been doing right and what areas still need more work.

I had never been in a court where an accused pleaded guilty to rape even though he has now pleaded not guilty. He was obviously pleading guilty to something. It felt like a relief for me to be looking at a rapist and not an alleged rapist. What was very surprising was that there was no indication, at least not to the Judges or prosecution, that this plea would be entered. His attorney probably knew that he was going to plead guilty. I have never seen this scenario at an initial appearance.

SS. Here you were one of the attorneys also.

PVS. I remember Hildegard [She is the German co-council for the prosecution] and I just looked at each other. I said, "What do we do now?" It was really quite funny. We had no prior contact with the accused nor his attorney, except to shake hands. We had just assumed that there would be a "not guilty" plea and we would proceed to the next status conference.

- SS. One often hears that women who have been raped need special protection. How do you feel about that?
- PVS. In the Tribunal's experience, it depends very much on the individual cases. Usually in situations of physical perpetration between the defendant and the witness, anonymity is almost impossible because you are dealing with an identification issue. The defendant will need to know the person who is accusing him. However, most witnesses request confidentiality, which means that the public does not know their identity. The defendant might know, particularly if he is the physical perpetrator anyway, but the public has no interest in knowing the identity of the witness. Meanwhile, some women want to be identified and seen, not only by the defendant but also by the public. "What do I have to be ashamed of and why should I hide?" they might ask. Others have a very different sense of privacy and don't want to be identified. So the prosecution, in almost all of our cases, files motions for witness protection during the pre-trial preparation phase of a case. Then, as we move into the trial phase we talk to the witnesses in order to establish what the reasonable risk or fear for the safety of themselves and their families is. For sexual assault witnesses, it suffices that they are survivors. Those confidentiality motions have been very favorably received by the court.
- SS. When I hear that rape victims will not testify I wonder who is it that doesn't want them to testify, because I think that a lot of them want to testify.
- PVS. I am very curious also about who does not want them to testify, because that hasn't been the Tribunal's experience so far.
- SS. That's right, but it's said consistently all over the world that women do not want to come and testify.
- PVS. Yes.
- SS. I am just as mystified because when I talk to women they are all willing to come. Maybe they do not want their names to be shown or maybe they do not want their faces to be seen, but they are willing to come and testify. In the one particular case that we talked about before, two women who were raped came and accused one of the defendants directly.
- PVS. Yes. They didn't even request any confidentiality.

- SS. They didn't ask for anything.
- PVS. The same scenario happened during another trial. A woman came who was raped 11ve times. She testified very openly, over two days. It is all part of the public record. There is a fear among some NGOs with regard to some witnesses testifying. But the real question comes down to the individual women when it is time to testify. Do they want to come forward or not? I don't think that you can necessarily generalize how they are going to feel at the moment of decision, either from your own feelings or from a group's stand on testifying. What I am trying to say is that we tend to ignore that there are women who are willing to come forward.
- SS. Yes. I think a lot of the claims the women do not come forward is fear or projection.
- PVS. There has been a lot of criticism of the media for trying to find rape victims for the evening news: "Just tell me who raped you, how many times, where, who was watching?" And then after the interview, after they've used her, they leave her. Rape and testimony in general raises the issue of the protection, physically and psychologically, of witnesses, and as you know I have been very critical of the protection offered by the Tribunal which has shown almost no willingness to be proactive in addressing the issues of victim and witnesses.
- SS. That is a question all the International Tribunals in the future are going to have to really address. What does witness protection mean in different stages of an investigation? What is the responsibility of the Tribunal? What is the responsibility of the nation state? What are the responsibilities of the transiting-state?
- PVS. I think the Tribunal is set up in very practical terms. I don't think that it is just because the witness unit has ten people or fewer that this determines the type of services offered.
- SS. It is severely under-staffed though.
- PVS. I don't think that any international body like this Tribunal can go into Tuzla or Sarajevo and give private police protection to a witness. At this point we have to tell the witness: "What is your reasonable risk or fear for your safety? If you come to the Tribunal protective confidentiality measures can be taken that will ensure that your neighbors

do not know that you have come to the Tribunal to testify. Transit to The Hague can be kept confidential. When you return to your town you say nothing." That might be the best method of protection at this point in time. On the other hand, you have to understand that witnesses are going back to areas that are not completely secure, areas of high criminality, of increasing crime.

- SS. What kind of services are offered then?
- PVS. When investigators in the field interview someone or contact a potential witness who is in a bad psychological state, they will usually attempt to put them in contact with local social services.
- SS. But you can't predict it.
- PVS. No, you can't. At this stage some people will say that they don't need social services, including mental health care.
- SS. And then they will . . .
- PVS. When you return and you speak to witnesses who are closer to the trial stage, you might find that those who were stable at an earlier stage now require social or psychological services. So you try to locate the resources within the community, near the person, because local care is where they can build up a relationship with the provider and where there is a language compatibility. Then, when they come to The Hague to testify, they have access to medical and psychological services here. When they return home there has to be follow-up. The person still needs services and they need to have access to that local NGO. That is the real productive partnership between witnesses and civil society.
- SS. It has not been done.
- PVS. It has been done.
- SS. It has not been done in lots of other instances.
- PVS. In a lot of other instances people have said they don't want to, they don't need to. Some people have support from their families and some people have fallen through the cracks. Now, that is also related to people not identifying themselves as a witness when they go back. Some interviewers could be handling people who were witnesses but

who chose not to say anything. We have told witnesses that they do not have to identify themselves, because it could be a security risk.

SS. At the same time we know that the more we ask them to keep secrets the longer it is going to take them to heal and we also know that it is important that they talk about it

PVS. I think this is true but then you get caught in a bind: security and the secrets. Some people feel much more comfortable telling certain members of their family, letting part of the secret out. That can facilitate some of their recovery. At the same time, they can go for psychological assistance, not necessarily identifying themselves as a witness.

The idea I had about a protection unit goes beyond getting witnesses to The Hague, getting them into a hotel and then transporting them back. We were fighting over the availability of funds for rape victims to bring in a therapist or not being able to secure a bus trip for witnesses stuck alone in The Hague giving testimony. I also felt that sometimes you have an obligation to the witnesses to follow through and help them with the next step. We must talk about rebuilding civil society, as that is the only way that witnesses will ever have long-term psychological protection.

SS. We have to de-stigmatize rape in civil society. We have to take that stigma away because otherwise she will get victimized again. The rapists are not on trial and she continues to be. I think that is part of the problem. Maybe you can't just solve it by having them come here, if they will have to go back to a disaster back home.

PVS. I agree completely. I agree that the Tribunal is only a small part. The impact will be magnified and scrutinized but the real work will go on in civil society.

SS. That's right, and also we really have to put rapists on trial. In some ways these are related. For example, the Vatican just came out with another attempt at an apology to the Jews. Clinton has talked about an apology to the African-Americans.

PVS. There was an apology and compensation to Japanese Americans.

SS. Compensation, yes, but I don't think they apologized. Do you think there should be an apology to African-Americans in the United States even though it is not only the United States that is responsible for this institutionalized torture as you called it?

PVS. Yes, but you should get all the countries that were involved in slavery and the slave trade to apologize. African-American literature speaks of redemption. The perpetrator must seek redemption through an apology to the victim/survivor. It helps when say you are sorry. But only when the apology is sincere. You have to acknowledge guilt in relation to the problem that you caused. Some people want to measure that sincerity in terms of income or compensation. So yes, I think that apologies, like guilty pleas, do help but they have to be sincere and followed by concrete action. In the Vatican's case, I heard it was an apology but it took a step back from saying that they had any impact on racist attitudes towards Jews. I mean the Vatican can't have it both ways. Then I'm wondering if we should also do something more in civil society for our rape victims?

SS. Why not have a monument?

PVS. A friend said they would probably desecrate the monument!

SS. That would really show that society wasn't ready to show honor.

PVS. But there is something we need to do to really de-stigmatize rape. It is very interesting. I gave a speech in Washington in the fall, and I mentioned our indictments, saying that in the future we will know all the names: Foca, the Bungalow, Omarska [an infamous detention center}. A member of the audience approached me afterwards, and said, "You recite the names of those places as if you were referring to Gettysburg, as if they were monumental." And I replied, "Yes, I am, because this is exactly what they are."

I am certainly not suggesting, for example, that we will have, a year from now, a Foca fund for any person, particularly women, who have been sexually violated during an armed conflict. Or will we? Who knows, we are not doing any of this now.

SS. You work for both Tribunals. What are the differences for you? There have been allegations of racism by the international community when looking at the Rwanda Tribunal.

PVS. Well, I think that one can look at the facilities, the physical buildings.

SS. The amount of money.

PVS. No, it's not the money. It is a very strange situation to a certain extent. The Rwanda Tribunal is funded at a comparable level to

Yugoslavia and their trust fund has even more money in it than Yugoslavia. Thus, one might ask oneself whether it is a question of administration. One might ask about the location: Was the building housing the Rwanda Tribunal readily convertible from its former use to its present one? One might ask oneself about the impact of the local skills and local goods that one had to use. However, setting up an organization like the Rwandan Tribunal in Arusha sends a political signal. This is the center of the East African community and there was a good political reason why the Tribunal needed to be there, just as there were good reasons for the Yugoslav Tribunal to be here in The Hague. If, however, both Tribunals were situated in New York, with the Rwandan Tribunal on the third floor and the Yugoslav one on the fifth, my guess is that they would look identical.

SS. So you haven't felt any differences?

PVS. Sometimes people would like to say that since it looks poorer and it's in Africa, there must be racism. I think that when people say things like that, the real question is whether Rwanda is a kind of second cousin to the Yugoslav Tribunal. Much of this has to do with our impression of the importance of the Rwanda genocide as opposed or compared to the importance of the Yugoslav conflict. However, you've got to ask yourself who is it important for. To the Western world? To Africa?

SS. Do you think the Western world, where there was hardly any interest in Yugoslavia, can get interested in Rwanda?

PVS. If you read Western newspapers on any given day, you will see more interest in Yugoslavia and western countries in general. Although there's been war in Angola for the past twenty years, it doesn't make the papers on a daily basis like Northern Ireland. Somewhere in the back of many Western minds, there is the idea that wars and genocide always happen in Africa and that this is not news. When you look at Yugoslavia, people were shocked that the war took place on European soil, where it wasn't supposed to occur. As for women and issues of sexual violence, we can turn to the Rwanda Tribunal for important advances in the prosecution of sexual violence cases. Rwanda has been the first to prosecute genocidal sexual violence. Rwanda is the first Tribunal that had a group of six women come forward and testify about their own sexual violence in the Akayesu trials, and in other cases, men described sexual violence committed against women that they witnessed.

SS. Were they raped?

PVS. Yes, the women were. I think Rwanda is a place where we have already offered in evidence various forms of sexual violence, not just rape, but also sexual mutilation, impaling of the vagina or slicing of genitals as a method of killing. It is very important to view both Tribunals jointly in terms of sexual violence.

SS. Has all of this made you less sexual?

PVS. That is an interesting question. I don't know whether it is the sexual violence or it's just that I'm getting older, period [laughs].

SS. There are too many variables!

PVS. There are so many variables, but, I don't think so. I think I now appreciate sexual integrity much more. I mean it is a wonderful part of a human being.

SS. Yes, sure. But we are talking about perversions . . .

PVS. You know, it becomes clearer and clearer that violence has very little to do with sex. Yes, it does have a lot to do with sexuality. But these acts are connected to aggression, to war and not to how one feels about oneself in terms of being sexual. It does not make you responsible for any of the acts that could ever have happened. You could have dressed like a nun and you could have been the most absolutely neutered person, but if you were to be sexually assaulted in these wartime situations, it was going to happen. None of the witnesses that I know spoke of being "sexually attractive," or inviting in any way. While some of the perpetrators supposedly chose beautiful women, most, however, were people who were running, were scared. They were frightened. They were nasty. They were dirty. They were starved. I'm sure that they all had bad breath. I mean this has nothing to do with sexuality.

SS. I notice that when I read a lot of rape testimony, I get very edgy. In fact I was walking down the beach yesterday and I noticed three heterosexual couples. All three men were playfully pushing the women into the water. It just hit me.

PVS. When I look at some of this in terms of non-war situation sexuality, I think of the names we use to describe why men rape: power, entitle-

ment, violence. You can see how these might be part of everyday sexuality. However, when you have a war, if men really deep down believe they are entitled, powerful and so on, they will act out. Not all men are rapists in war which is very important to bear in mind. It's a question of morals. But we have to understand how sexuality in a non-conflict situation could reveal characteristics related to war-time acts.

SS. I don't think that I have any more questions. I wonder-we have talked a lot-do you have any reflections?

PVS. One thing that I was thinking yet have never articulated was the passage of Mrican-American women through institutionalized sexual violence and raping, and the question of how this is related to Yugoslav women or Rwandan women today. In many ways, and for very good reasons, we tend to focus a lot within the women's movement on the question of rape. But I think sexual violence is so much broader. Violence in general often occurs prior to the act of rape.

With slavery, it goes much further than that. Breeding was sanctioned; forced birthing was sanctioned; selling of children was sanctioned. What about forcing someone to be a wet nurse? What about the master or the state owning your breasts and you don't own the liquid in them? That is sexual violence, yet it is not rape.

SS. Yes, which is what these Tribunals can truly accomplish.

PVS. If the Tribunals can accomplish just that, it would be a great step.

SS. What does it feel like to be part of history?

PVS. I feel like I'm part of the path of history. You feel a wonderful obligation and a very intense privilege.

SS. Do you feel very proud?

PVS. Yeah, I feel very, very proud.

SS. You did it.

PVS. Thank you. It is extremely rewarding, and when people say, "My God, how could you get up so early in the morning and do all this?" I think to myself that I'm descended from women who had to get up at the same time, if not earlier, to go pick cotton. This is not hard. It's a real historical challenge.

- SS. You are saying something that I strongly believe in, namely that the presence of women can make a difference in the world. I am amazed by that and also amazed by the way that some of their male colleagues take the ball and run with them.
- PVS. Like you cannot imagine.

The Foca Indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Sara Sharratt

SUMMARY. The following is a brief summary of the main implications of the Foca indictment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This case is mentioned in the interviews with McDonald and Visser-Sellers. It is of central relevance to the concept of justice in relation to women's issues. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]*

KEYWORDS. Foca, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, rape, war crimes, Grave Breaches

On June 26, 1996, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia made history with the "Foca" indictment against eight Bosnian Serbs for the rapes, gang rapes, sexual assaults and sexual enslavement of women and girls living in this town in the southeast of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muslim women and girls were detained in a number of sites, including houses, sports halls, detention centers, apartments and the Foca High School. They were raped, gang raped, tortured, enslaved, forced to perform domestic chores and sexual services on behalf of allies and friends of the perpetrators. In several instances, they were sold for profit by their masters. These crimes

Address correspondence to: Sara Sharratt, PhD, P.O. Box 2292-1000, San Jose, Costa Rica.

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were carried out with either the active or passive knowledge of a number of individuals in positions of power, including paramilitary leaders and Dragan Gavovic, Foca's Chief of Police. In the indictment, they are charged with crimes committed against at least 14 victims, some of whom are young adolescents. Meanwhile, the eight perpetrators remain at large.

This is the first indictment in the history of International Humanitarian Law in which an International Criminal Tribunal has indicted male perpetrators for war crimes committed exclusively against women and girls in which all of the charges are related to sexual offenses. In turn, this means that there has been no "mainstreaming" of the war crimes committed against women.

Of course, this is not to say that the present Tribunal has never before charged a perpetrator for rape. But this is the first time that rape has not been bundled with several other charges or used as a means to achieve other ends. In short, the gendered nature of these crimes has been made entirely explicit: these are acts committed by men, in wartime, against women and girls because of their sex. Moreover, these crimes must be understood to be gender-specific because they are committed disproportionately against women, because they are women.

Yes, men do get raped, but it is mostly by other men and it happens less frequently than is the case for women. Yes, men are also enslaved, but usually it does not entail limited or unlimited sexual access to their bodies or forced impregnation.

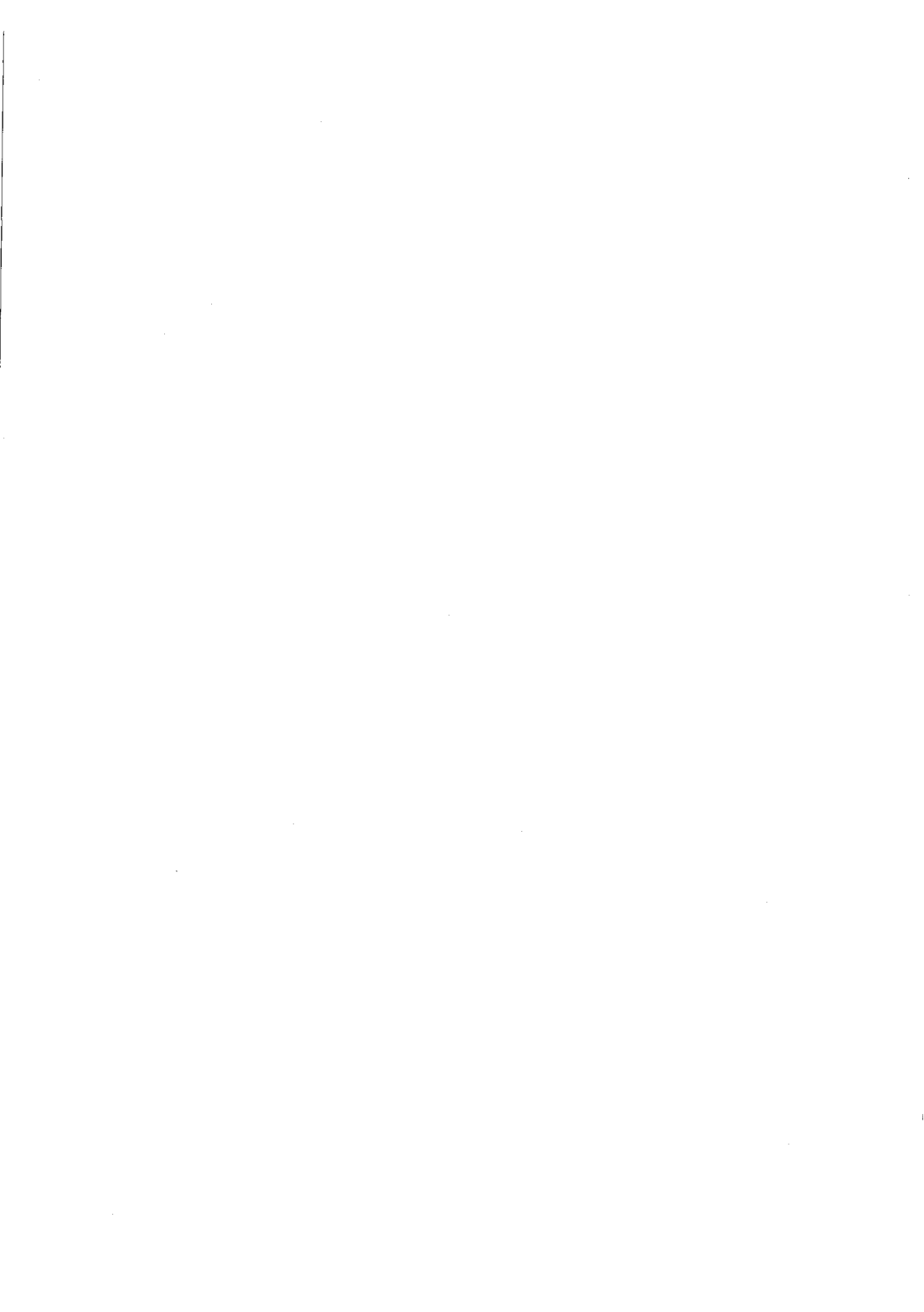
Also to be stressed in this regard is the fact that such acts have neither the same attribution nor meaning for women and men, and thus the gender specific aspects of the same "act" must be carefully analyzed and understood. Quite simply, the narrow view that crimes committed against both women and men cannot, by definition, be considered gender specific overlooks the fact that women are routinely persecuted because they are women, whereas men are not persecuted simply because they are men. Moreover, when women are raped, the institutional and structural consequences are radically different than they are for men: the latter are not cast away by their wives; they are not seen as having dishonored their partners or families; they are not deemed to be unmarriageable; questions are not raised as to whether or not they were consenting, and so forth. As well, the implications of forced/unwanted impregnation must be considered: death, botched abortions, sterility, horrific traumatization, unwanted children, abandoned children, stigmatized children, etc. For women in general and those living in the Former Yugoslavia in particular, we must look very closely at the intersections of class, religion/ethnicity and gender: women and girls were persecuted as Muslims, Croats or Serbs and as females. Men were persecuted as Muslims, Croats or Serbs. The crimes were directed principally against Muslims. How-

ever, in the case of rape, the problem is that women often suffer subsequent persecution at the hands of their own families and societies.

Also important in this indictment is that rape is typified as torture, both under Crimes Against Humanity and under Grave Breaches. However, there is continuing disagreement among legal experts as to whether the incidence of rape and enslavement must be massive and/or systematic to be considered Crimes Against Humanity, or whether it is sufficient that the rape itself be massive in its violence. There is no such debate in relation to Grave Breaches: *one* crime of rape, committed by *one* individual against *one* woman or girl *once* is deemed to be a serious war crime. The dualistic thinking that rape is bad when massive and/or systematic in scale but not as bad when sporadic must be overcome. Describing it as torture also labels rape for what it is: torture and as such a serious war crime.

This is the first time that an International Criminal Tribunal has charged perpetrators with the sexual enslavement of females. This highlights once again the gender specificity of slavery, with women and girls forced to perform household duties, while their bodies become sexually accessible to their masters and their masters' associates.

It is hoped that this short summary of the main implications of the Foca indictment will prompt the feminist community to pay more attention to the significance of what has been happening at the Tribunal, particularly in relation to women's issues. We must insist that all indicted criminals be brought to trial and, if the political will continues to be lacking, then we must also ask that these eight perpetrators be subjected to the Tribunal's Rule 61, allowing the prosecutor to present further evidence against them and issue international warrants for their arrest. This will ensure that, if they are found guilty, they will become the international pariahs that they are. It will also ensure that we, as women, will get a chance to speak. Let us work towards this goal.



Beyond War Hierarchies: Belgrade Feminists' Experience Working with Female Survivors of War

Lepa Mladjenovic

SUMMARY. The experience of a Belgrade feminist now defined as Serbian by a government that she rejects is explored in this article. The organization, Women in Black Against War, of which she is a founding member, works to help women regain a sense of dignity as they move from victim to survivor. Other goals include strengthening women's rights and training paraprofessionals to participate in the healing process by witnessing the women's retelling of their experiences. The solidarity and connections that have developed among women in the Former Yugoslavia and with other women around the world is an important aspect of this process and one which undermines nationalism. [*Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com*]

KEYWORDS. War crimes, trauma, Belgrade, Women in Black Against War

For the Former Yugoslavia, 1992-93 was marked above all by the ascendancy of fascist power and the mobilization of patriarchal violence in pursuit of a demonized Other. The presumed ethnicity of an individual's name or her street address determined her destiny, whether it was life, death, rape or

Lepa Mladjenovic is a Belgrade feminist and founding member of the organization Women in Black Against War.

Address correspondence to: Lepa Mladjenovic, Women's Center, Tirsova SA, 11000 Beograd, Serbia.

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displacement. What was done to protect that individual's rights and liberties? For many, nothing. Thus, Serb security forces were able to run concentration camps in Bosnia according to a particularly twisted logic: men, as potential soldiers, were killed; women, as potential sexual objects, were raped. The regime currently in power in the state in which I live was responsible for these war crimes. What does it mean politically and professionally to us, as feminists living and working in Belgrade?

At the very beginning of the conflict, in October 1991, a group of us founded a pacifist organization called Women in Black Against War, under whose banner we held weekly vigils in Belgrade. We felt that it was imperative that we go out into the street in order to communicate our message to the public at large that we opposed the Serbian regime, its involvement in wars in Croatia and Bosnia, and that we opposed militarism and violence against women. Each Wednesday I would get up and think of the clothes I would wear. By choosing black in a time of war, we hoped that part of our sense of helplessness would be transformed into strength and action. So it continued, standing on the street in black and in silence, season after season, for all the years of the war.

Needless to say, the latest news from Kosovo hints at more ethnic cleansing on the part of the Serbian regime. In the face of this threat, Women in Black are currently in the process of planning the forms which our opposition to the fascist regime will take.

By 1993, our commitment to feminism had led some of us to travel between Zagreb, Belgrade and Zenica in order to gather and focus support for women raped in war. These efforts culminated in the creation of the Autonomous Women's Center Against Sexual Violence in Belgrade, which offers psychological and social support to women traumatized in this way. Thus, while volunteers visited hospitals to talk to physicians about the issues at stake and the Center's work, we devised and put into practice a counseling program. Throughout this process, we received the support of many women, who offered books, funding and their own time and energy. We were often struck by the incredible lengths to which women would go to help us and, in truth, it was these interventions that sustained us on a day-to-day basis.

Having been part of both these groups during the war, in the pages that follow I will seek to summarize what I believe to be the essence of our experience.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Women Are the First Enemy of Men

The SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence was founded in Belgrade in 1990 as a service provided by women for women. As

the war in Bosnia and Croatia progressed, we began to hear from women who had never contacted the Hotline before. Particularly significant in this regard were calls made at the very beginning of the war, at the same time that the regime was televising daily propaganda broadcasts in which scenes of mutilated corpses were accompanied by an emotive voice-over. Clearly, the regime's purpose was to rouse the population into a frenzy of nationalism and lust for revenge. However, the broadcasts also had another, unintended effect. Men who watched the programs would become agitated and angry, and start hitting their wives or children as a proxy for the "enemy" that was far away and not as easy to reach. For many of the women it was the first time they had been struck by their husbands, and they would call SOS asking, "What happened to him?" We named the condition "post-TV news violence syndrome." Needless to say, these incidents only serve to confirm the view that the enemy of first resort is Woman; ethnicity comes in a distant second.

Misuse of Women Raped in War by State Institutions

Seeking to make contact with female war survivors, the Autonomous Women's Center Against Sexual Violence approached numerous medical facilities in the Former Yugoslavia. However, as we undertook this task, what immediately became apparent to us was the fact that the regime was exploiting women's suffering for its own ends, identifying those with Serbian names in order to provide evidence of war-time atrocities committed against Serbs. To cite but one example, in 1994 a psychiatrist working in a Belgrade area mental health center provided a foreign journalist (known to us) with the medical histories of women who had been sexually abused during the war. Thus, not only was this hospital breaking the first principle of medical ethics in the name of nationalist politics, but the women themselves were being treated as any other mental health patient, while being forbidden from meeting with the representatives of feminist NGOs.

It should be noted as well that there was a general reluctance on the part of medical facilities to collaborate with the Center, a reluctance that was in all likelihood due to our strong disavowal of Serbian nationalism. In this way, state-run health care institutions proved themselves to be more interested in serving the nationalist cause than serving the needs of the women under their care.

Rape in War Is Part of a Continuum of Male Violence Against Women

Although the Center has evidence to show that women from all ethnic groups-Serbian, Croat and Muslim-were raped during the war, most of our work was with women possessing Serbian names, simply because they were

the ones who felt safest in Belgrade. At the same time that the Center denounces the Serb regime and its genocidal policies, war rapes must be understood in the larger context of male violence. In short, we believe that atrocities committed against women in wartime are driven by the same dynamics that have resulted in so many women calling the SOS Hotline after having been raped, battered or humiliated by their husbands or boyfriends.

WHAT DO WE DO? WHAT ARE OUR POLITICS?

Enhancing the Dignity of War Victims

Humiliation is intrinsic to every war crime. Thus, in our work, we have sought to create the conditions necessary for women to regain their sense of dignity, a journey which takes them from victim to survivor, and possibly to transformation of the social conditions that led them to be victimized in the first place. Central to this process is the development of spaces of dignity, through the establishment of non-hierarchical relationships and respect for women's bodies and otherness.

Strengthening Civil Rights

Wars, by their very nature, circumscribe the rights and lives of those who are forced to live through them. Our experience has been no different, and to survive under these suffocating conditions we have engaged in a number of strategies. These include working with women from the conflict zones, publishing statements denouncing war crimes and their perpetrators, holding weekly peace vigils, and promoting nonviolent means of conflict resolution. We also sought to undermine the nationalist agenda by exchanging letters with friends across the front lines, and ensuring that women's NGOs were places where women of all ethnic names could gather in dignity and solidarity.

Witnessing Pain

If one is to work with female survivors of war, one must learn to listen, to act as a witness for the pain they have suffered. In this capacity, we have sought to provide women with support that does not categorize, question or judge their experiences. Of course, there are many other feminist groups in the region that played a similar role, each of us bearing witness at both the political and personal level.

Undermining Nationalism Through Personal Narratives

Over the years, the regime in Belgrade has been unswerving in its efforts to arouse hatred of the other nations in the war, while hiding from the popula-

tion the fact that these "others" have also faced great suffering and deprivation. Given this lack of knowledge, we have learned that a single person's story can have an enormous impact upon people's perceptions, and break the cycle of ethnic chauvinism and hatred. Thus, we have devoted considerable energy to the task of bringing the Other into our communities, through the publication of life histories, the production of film documentaries and the organization of face-to-face encounters. To recount one particularly telling example, the political views of many Belgrade women changed abruptly in 1995 after the Center screened documentary footage from the massacres in Kozarac and concentration camps in Omarska.

BEYOND THE HIERARCHY OF DISCRIMINATION

If one accepts that the production and reproduction of hierarchies plays a key role in sustaining patriarchal power, one will not be surprised to learn that we were faced with many such hierarchies in our work with female war survivors.

Hierarchy of Pain

Each region in the war was left with its own legacy of trauma and pain, and individuals laden with so much suffering of their own that they had little capacity left to feel empathy for others. It is important for those working with women war survivors to recognize and understand the implications of this process, which typically involves the creation of a circuit of blame and guilt whereby women from one region ask those from another, "Where were you during the shelling?" Needless to say, the effects of such questioning are highly pernicious: women who live outside of the war region feel guilty; women who have had only one family member killed feel guilty; female refugees who return home are made to feel guilty, as are those who do not go home. The cycle is never-ending, with patriarchy being the only real beneficiary of this process. If we are to avoid falling into the circuit of blame, we must all try to come to terms with our own guilt feelings.

Hierarchy of Rapes in War

Although some feminists distinguish between "ordinary" and "genocidal" forms of wartime rape, there are others, myself included, who would argue that any such distinction is dangerous, since it posits a rape hierarchy that places the violation of nations ahead of that of women. Whether one sees such rapes as instruments of war or of genocide, they are all acts of torture, war atrocities, and crimes against humanity.

Hierarchy of Rape in War and Rape in Peace

We know that men have been raping and abusing women continuously over the past three thousand years. We know that the trauma suffered by war survivors is very similar to that experienced by women who have been battered or sexually abused by their partners. Finally, we know that an invisible war has been waged by men against women from the origins of civilization until the present. Given that we know all these things, why is male violence against women not considered a war crime? Clearly, there is ample scope for feminist jurisprudence to intervene in this area and lay the groundwork for a new understanding of war atrocities.

Hierarchy of Rights in Wartime

In times of war, there is usually room for only one human rights issue, namely that of who is to live and who is to die. While it is by no means surprising that this is the case, one of its consequences is that other forms of rights, along the lines of gender, ability, sexual orientation or race/ethnicity, are all too quickly forgotten or subsumed under the individual's will to survive.

Although it was not uncommon for human rights organizations, along with the peace movement in general, to fall into this trap, it was important for those involved in Women in Black Against War to avoid reproducing this hierarchy of rights. As such, we devoted considerable energy to the task of ensuring that the rights of all women, whether older or younger, lesbian or heterosexual, Roma or Serb, were respected and cherished.

Solidarity with Women Across the Front Lines

Throughout the war years, feminist groups in Belgrade were in constant communication with their counterparts in Croatia and Bosnia. We sent news, food and books, as well as making the journey ourselves across the front lines in order to meet with our sisters face-to-face. Building solidarity with women across the lines was both a personal and political objective, and remains a priority today in face of growing tensions in Kosovo.

International Solidarity with Women Around the World

In September 1992, we welcomed three women who had come to Belgrade from the small Italian town of Mestre in order to visit the SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence. They knew no one here, had never been to Belgrade before, yet, because of their work against the war in Iraq, had decided that they should show their solidarity with women who

were facing a similar prospect in the Former Yugoslavia. At the time, we did not really understand why they had traveled 14 hours by train in order to bring us chocolate and soap, visit with us, and then get on the train again to go back to Italy. Of course, at the time we also did not know what the war would entail nor the true meaning of women's solidarity in wartime. Only later did we come to understand these three incredible women. They were the first angels of support who would be followed by many others in the difficult years that followed, all of whom made personal sacrifices for our sake.

After five years of war there are many of us here who can say that women's solidarity in war has profoundly influenced our work and lives as feminists. We have welcomed countless women into our midst who have come to the Former Yugoslavia on their own initiative, using their own savings, to offer us support at both a material and emotional level. At the very beginning of the war, women from The Netherlands and Germany provided us with training in crisis intervention. Women from Austria gave lessons in self-defense, while women from Lausanne showed us how to take and develop photographs. A group of women drove trucks laden with foodstuffs all the way from Great Britain; these we distributed among women living in the refugee camps. Women from Seville and Madrid traveled to Belgrade in order to ask how we were and to mount an impromptu Flamenco show. Women from Freiburg sent us our first computer. Women in the United States sent us care packages which we gave to female refugees who were in need. Women from Australia sent us glittering paper stars that would reflect the sun if hung from the window. A few of the women who came decided to stay on in Belgrade, and are with us even now.

However, of all those who provided assistance and support over the years, few had a greater impact than the sixteen women from Switzerland who visited in December 1992 and told us, "Set up an organization for women raped in war and we'll provide you with the necessary financing." This is how the Autonomous Women's Center Against Sexual Violence came into being, and is what gave many of us a chance to become political activists in the full sense of the word. In this way, the solidarity that was part of our everyday lives during the war became inscribed in our minds and souls, and as such will remain with us for the rest of our lives.

Confusing Realities and Lessons Learned in Wartime: Supporting Women's Projects in the Former Yugoslavia

Ingrid Foeken

SUMMARY. The personal experiences of the author working with women's organizations in regions destabilized by war is the focus of this article. The author summarizes the results of a report commissioned by the Dutch government to analyze the state of para-professional work, describes her own work in the Former Yugoslavia and makes recommendations for the training of Western feminists to work in war regions. She also examines the effects of the trauma of doing this work on her own life. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

KEYWORDS. Trauma, refugees, feminist counseling, nationalism, AD-MIRA.

INTRODUCTION

Professional and Personal Motivation

When the war started in the summer of 1991, I had been working for ten years in the treatment of sexually traumatized women, including many with

Ingrid Foeken, MS, is a Dutch psychotherapist and social psychologist, specializing in lesbian feminist and international issues in private practice and with a Regional Institute for Mental Health in Amsterdam.

Address correspondence to: Ingrid Foeken, Okeghemstraat 16/ii, 1075 PM, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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histories of rape or incest who were suffering from dissociative problems or identity disorders. I had also engaged in research on the impact of confrontation between incest survivors, perpetrators and other family members. Thus, I felt that my experience, both as a psychotherapist and as an educator (in which capacity I have trained shelter and crisis hotline volunteers), could prove useful in the war-ravaged region of the Former Yugoslavia. In addition to the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder per se, I was well aware of the long-term dangers inherent in denying or repressing trauma experiences, and of the importance of real contact, of being there to listen to survivors talk about the atrocities committed against them. There have been many times that I have witnessed "wars" within families, so that I knew not to be surprised at the sadistic, impulsive and unpredictable behavior of which men, and sometimes women as well, are capable. I knew that dissociation, denial, hostility and scapegoating should not be seen as pathological reactions on the part of victims, but rather as normal responses in the face of unbearable life circumstances.

Societies have been all too willing to ignore the importance of grief and collectively acknowledging war injustice, and the Balkans are no exception, as is attested to by the perpetuation of revenge sentiments from one generation to the next. Thus, in deciding to work in the region, I not only hoped to gain some insight into the war situation itself, but I also wanted to help its victims, most of whom are women and children.

A good friend and psychologist from Belgrade phoned me one day just after the war started in 1991. She said, "I am no longer seen as a Yugoslavian feminist, but as a Serb, a citizen of the criminal nation that started the war and all these atrocities. As you know, I never chose this political system and I hate the politicians it's produced. I still think of myself as a Yugoslavian woman and an international feminist. Please be my witness. I need friends here who believe in the work we're doing, like that of the 'Women in Black' who protest every Wednesday in the center of Belgrade, as well as the SOS hotline we're running for raped and sexually abused women and girls. I need the warmth of friends from abroad to help energize me and keep me focused on the anti-war cause." For my friend, the war engendered feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. When she called, I was suddenly brought face-to-face with these feelings myself, and I was left with the sense that the only way forward was to try to transform my sense of powerlessness into concrete action.

Dutch Policy in the Wake of Publicity About Mass Rape

Prior to disbursing funding in support of women's projects in the Former Yugoslavia, the Dutch government commissioned a report analyzing the state of para-professional and volunteer organizations working with traumatized

or war-raped refugee women (Foeken and Kleiverda, 1993). Gunilla Kleiverda, a gynecologist, and I spent three weeks in the region in September of 1993 gathering data for this report, which we subsequently presented to our government. A summary of our findings follows.

INTERVENTIONS

Most refugees were sheltered by their relatives, with only five percent in Serbia and thirty percent in Croatia housed in refugee camps. The principal problems they faced included lack of contact with family members who had remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina, tensions with host families, little opportunity for meaningful activities, uncertain prospects for the future, and poor mental health, itself the product of such traumas as the loss of home, family members and personal belongings. In the camps, mothers' wide-ranging responsibility for the care and education of their children would exacerbate feelings of apathy and depression, making them less likely to set limits upon the aggressive behavior of their offspring, angering camp leaders in the process. Children would latch onto teachers and other adults, making burnout that much more likely among these latter groups. As for more complex psychiatric problems, outside professionals visited the refugee camps whenever possible. For example, a Bosnian psychiatrist based in Zagreb organized regular group sessions for adolescents, ex-concentration camp prisoners, and women from different ethnic communities. However, she admitted to us how difficult it was for her group of professionals to integrate questions about rape, even if participants had no problem in discussing other violence-related issues. There was simply too much shame, and raped women were at risk of being driven out of their community if they were found out. Despite these difficulties, the group was very interested in receiving training in this field.

At a more general level, state mental health agencies were overwhelmed by the demands placed upon them, particularly in an environment in which lack of funding delayed or stopped altogether the payment of salaries. Indeed, many female professionals decided to leave their posts in order to work, on a volunteer basis, for feminist NGOs providing health services in the region.

The Implications of Nationalism

For many refugees who were forced to relocate for economic reasons or because of their ethnicity, retraumatization was a daily occurrence. Anti-Muslim sentiment ran so high on the Croatian coast, where refugees were housed in empty hotels, that some police agents would simply tear up the documents of Muslim individuals whom they encountered. The politically

neutral stance of United Nations agencies and foreign NGOs was interpreted by many as evidence of anti-Croatian sentiment. We had occasion to experience this hatred directly, when stones were thrown at our vehicle when we were traveling in a United Nations car. In short, it was widely believed that the United Nations coddled the Serbian and Muslim refugees, providing them with two meals a day while many local people were forced to go hungry. It was also reported to us that there were cases of refugees being raped and beaten up by members of their "host" families. Needless to say, the level of general aggression in these societies had increased enormously over the war years.

It was also in this region that we encountered, for the first time, strong nationalist feelings, even among women. In one particularly telling incident, a leader of the Women's Association of Bosnia-Herzegovina grew angry with me when she heard of our plans to meet with feminists in Belgrade. In her view, Serbian feminists had no value, since they had betrayed their sisters elsewhere in the Former Yugoslavia, had done nothing to prevent the war, and had been shielded from the sexual attacks suffered by Croatian and Bosnian women. When I asked her what possible influence she thought Serbian feminists had over their government, she had no response.

As it was almost impossible to visit or send money to projects in Bosnia, and Serbian feminist organizations received little sympathy in any case, Croatian projects benefited disproportionately from international funding initiatives, with the Center for Women War Victims in Zagreb being an especially notable case. Individuals working at the Center were receiving salaries that were considered extravagant by local standards. Not only did this serve to engender widespread jealousy among area residents, but it led many non-feminist women to become involved in the project only because of the wages.

Meanwhile, in our hotel in Split (Croatia), pornographic pictures were shoved under our door and we received obscene calls during the night. We assumed that the hotel's owner was responsible. However, despite the crudeness of his acts, he was not alone in showing hostility to us. In several cases, professionals accused us of only wanting to work with Bosnian women, and of underestimating the suffering of Croats. Obviously, it was all too easy to go astray in this nationalist minefield, and we were left with the sense that ADMIRA's philosophy of promoting transnationalism (see discussion below) by its insistence that support be given to women's groups regardless of ethnicity was more a case of wishful thinking than a reflection of actual conditions.

Politics served as a constant interference in the handling of the mass rapes. Politicians from all sides wanted gory accounts of rape and sexual abuse that they might present to the international community as evidence of the barbar-

ity of their foes. Of course, in doing so, they showed themselves to be all too willing to sacrifice women's emotional recovery on the altar of political expediency. While these incidents served to underscore the extent to which nationalism and health care were working at cross-purposes to one another, they also highlighted serious problems among health workers themselves, including feminists, many of whom were competing to be first to exploit the stories the victims told.

Of course, foreign journalists were not blameless in this regard, fueling this exploitation by offering money to raped women who were English-speaking. Western governments' policy of making raped women a priority in aid programs was in many cases counterproductive, since it served to downplay the seriousness of other war crimes committed against women. In the end, I was left feeling very confused, since I had expected the issue of rape to be treated in a careful, respectful manner, only to discover a reality in which callousness and insensitivity were the norm.

Consequences of Rape

Although the number of women seeking abortions has doubled since the beginning of the war, hospital staff never ask why the abortion is being sought. While this is in part due to the fact that the procedure is generally far less controversial in Eastern European countries than it is in the West, it is also the case that many physicians did not want to know the answer. What would they do with the information? Also, we know of at least one incident where a colleague was raped by her husband who had come home drunk from the war zone. As one might imagine, such an attack was even more shameful for the victim than one inflicted upon her by the enemy.

In our workshops for mental health professionals and volunteers, the issue of sexual violence was ever-present. Participants often asked us if we thought it wise to ask clients directly whether or not they had been raped. In one scenario described to us, a 16-year-old girl was placed in care in a psychiatric hospital for refusing to speak and severe anorexia. She was the daughter of a Serbian father and Croatian mother and, over the course of several weeks, was subjected to multiple rapes by her father and his friends. She hated herself for being Serbian, and her revenge was to attempt to starve herself to death. Faced with these circumstances, we argued that it would be impossible to talk about the rapes at this point; of far greater importance was to make contact with her in a manner with which she could identify. The psychologists attending the workshop were relieved, as they had the idea that Western psychotherapists always address the issue of rape explicitly, without taking into account the particulars of a given case.

Other participants asked us to comment on the accuracy of their guesses regarding signs of sexual violence among concentration camp survivors. As

an example, they referred to instances where mothers would adamantly declare that only they had been raped and their daughters had been spared, whereas the girls themselves showed signs of depression, recoiled at every touch, suffered from vaginal infections and spent long periods of time under the shower.

We suggested that the daughters could also be protecting their mothers. Women would often claim that they were forced to undress, but that they had been too skinny to be raped, or that they were spared because of their period. Everyone understood what it meant when a Bosnian woman arrived in the camp dressed in Croatian clothes, or when a woman hated and neglected her newborn child. Everyone knew, yet no one challenged the stories told. Thus, we agreed that all of the signs touched upon above could be indicative of a rape experience, and we supported them in integrating questions about rape into their discussions with this individual.

We also sought to emphasize the importance of seeing denial and repression as necessary survival mechanisms rather than pathologizing them. Interestingly, most workshop participants appeared not to be familiar with this perspective. Thus, we suggested that rape was one of many traumas where women should be encouraged to verbalize their feelings in order to overcome the sense of shame within them.

Issues Raised by Staff During the Consultation

Guilt feelings for not doing enough and individuals' sense of powerlessness in the face of so many multi-traumatized people were other areas touched upon during the workshops. We shared with those present the helplessness which we so often felt during the course of our own working lives, and noted that things must be far more difficult in a war situation. We stressed the importance of boundary issues and the need for self-protection. Although participants recognized immediately the risk volunteers ran of becoming entrapped in the "rescue triangle," we realized that further training about this issue would be needed.

During consultation, participants would often be left feeling drained and overwhelmed, so we would also ask them to share with us their successes as well as their problems. On one occasion, we suggested that we should try to find at least one funny thing in the midst of the misery. Several group members came forward to share humorous anecdotes, with one refugee describing, all the while laughing out loud, how she had seen a woman in Sarajevo rushing out of her house the moment a mortar exploded nearby to lock all of her doors and windows. The smoke blowing around her body while she was doing this gave her the appearance of a ghost. Having heard the story, all the participants burst out laughing.

In conducting workshops and consultations throughout the region, we

were generally very impressed with the educational background of professionals working in the field, whether psychologists, psychiatrists or social workers. Some had been trained in the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. Thus, in many cases we were simply providing participants with information on recent theoretical advances in the field or giving them concrete suggestions that might prove helpful in their counseling work. At the same time they were very interested in learning about other countries' experiences in refugee counseling, indicating that there had been no local research done in this area, and that they believed that the extent of sexual violence during the war was unprecedented in their society. One woman went so far as to suggest that the latter may be due to the intrusion of Western capitalist values into the region. Incest was another area where information and training were lacking. However, volunteers were beginning to be faced with it more and more often, perhaps because women felt at greater ease talking about sexual violence than they had prior to the beginning of the war.

Although we found women's volunteer projects to be in a pioneering phase, with enthusiasm and willingness to learn new techniques and approaches, most were also in severe need of organizational support. The majority were being sustained through the charisma of their managers and the strong commitment of the volunteers.

Founding of ADMIRA

Presented with our recommendations, the Dutch government initiated funding of ADMIRA for three years, which it subsequently extended until 1999. Members of this new foundation included women's organizations working in the field of sexual violence, along with the Mental Health Institute for Refugees (Pharos) and a research center studying the sociological and psychological impact of the Second World War.

The Aim and Policy of ADMIRA

The purpose of ADMIRA was to provide information, advice, support and training for NGOs in the Former Yugoslavia working with multi-traumatized women from different ethnic and religious communities. However, following implementation of the Dayton peace accord, the emphasis has shifted somewhat toward the provision of support to key organizations, which would then be in a position to train other women's groups, networks of care providers and professional mental health agencies working with sexually traumatized refugees, women and children.

In order to carry out this mandate, eight trainers with a background in refugee counseling and sexual violence were dispatched to the region. The

group was divided into four teams, each consisting of a specialist in one of the two areas. I was selected as one of the teacher/trainers. To participate, organizations had to have a policy of anti-nationalism and be willing to work with women and children of all ethnic and religious backgrounds.

My Experiences as a Trainer

Workshops were developed that focused upon the recovery process and staff empowerment. However, once the workshops were underway, we found that issues related to leadership, task management and delegation of responsibilities were just as important in many women's organizations as trauma counseling.

Developing Knowledge from Experience

The concept of experience-based knowledge is central to women's therapy. In short, insight into a particular problem is gained by analyzing one's own feelings, cognitions and conclusions, together with the reactions and responses of others. In the example below, I seek to illustrate what I mean by discussing a guided fantasy I used with workshop participants.

First, I asked group members to focus on their childhood and think of a secret that they had not shared with their mother or caregiver. Then they were to write down the reasons why they had not been able to tell their secret and what would have been necessary for them to do so. In sharing and analyzing the range of responses that this exercise engendered, the group learned that it is "normal" not to reveal a secret, how secrets isolate individuals, and how shame or fear of punishment prevents people from opening up. The exercise was also useful in establishing a connection between participants' childhood experiences and those of girls or women who have been sexually assaulted, in the process blurring the boundaries between "us" (the care providers) and "them" (the clients).

Along similar lines, emphasis was also placed upon the contradictions inherent in the mother-daughter relationship. For example, although men's violence is a given, it is seldom presented as an inevitable part of marriage. However, when daughters verbalized different, more romantic expectations of the men in their lives, mothers blamed them for being naive or stupid. Another issue that was frequently discussed in the workshops was the problems associated with men's inability to perform sexually, causing them to be rejected by their mates. A number of women laughingly put it, "no fun, no marriage." I suggested that the increase in alcohol consumption by male war survivors may partially explain this problem, as would war traumatization itself.

Differences in political ideology were also a source of difficulty for many workshop participants, particularly among those who were Serbian. That is to say, parents would often accuse their daughters of disloyalty when they voiced their hatred for the war or indicated their preference to be identified as feminist rather than Serbian. After sharing these views, volunteers who worked on crisis hotlines (such as the SOS Telephone Hotline for Sexually Violated Women and Children in Belgrade) found it easier to understand their irritated reactions when listening to women who expressed nationalist sentiments, many of whom were members of the same generation as their mothers.

Learning Techniques for Counseling Clients

Although some techniques were readily adaptable to conditions in the Former Yugoslavia, others had to be modified somewhat. On the one hand, participants welcomed information on strategies to avoid feeling overwhelmed, such as self-protection measures which involved thinking about happy memories before sitting down with an individual suffering from severe trauma. On the other hand, techniques focused upon the development of a "safe place" in one's mind were generally less well-received. For example, our suggestion of imagining a forest caused one woman from Sarajevo to experience unpleasant flashbacks to the time she had to flee through the woods to escape the fighting. The suggestion of a beach was painful for many Serbian women because they were barred from traveling to the Dalmatian coast at that time. Faced with this situation, we asked those present to take a moment to comfort each other. At this point some group members criticized us for placing so much emphasis upon fantasy when the real world was so hard and cruel. We agreed whole-heartedly with this assessment, and argued that it was for precisely this reason that fantasy might play a useful role in helping them to cope. Another woman came forward to tell us that she had been living a fantasy life in Sarajevo the last few years, and was fed up with the need to do this. We indicated that we respected her position. We added that we had come to the Former Yugoslavia from a country that was at peace, and asked what we could do that would be preferable from their perspective. Needless to say, this experience taught us that we must be careful not to assume that strategies that work well in one context are necessarily the most appropriate in another.

In other cases, the women were so tense that conflicts within the group manifested themselves, making it impossible for us to relinquish a measure of control. Indeed, it was precisely in this context that we brought up the question of safety, stressing the importance of always maintaining self-control in dangerous situations, either by means of a pause for self-reflection or by focusing on one's breathing and physical feelings. Interestingly, once group

members began to use these techniques themselves, their capacity to address other difficult issues was enhanced.

Techniques to Encourage Cooperation Among Participants

Personal conflict within organizations was identified as a problem that was becoming increasingly serious. As one might imagine, lack of communication was one of its root causes. Thus, considerable energy in the workshops was devoted to communication training, stressing the development of listening skills, distinguishing between feelings, opinions and intuition, giving positive feedback, being honest with one's emotions, and curbing destructive behavior such as projection. Generally speaking, participants found it extremely difficult to express their anger in a self-reflective manner and avoid scapegoating others. To make sense of this anger, we would first interview all of the individuals involved in a given organization, then analyze and categorize the different responses. In most cases, problems were due to one or more of the following reasons: the structure of the organization itself; the nature of its work; poor communication among staff members; lack of clearly defined roles; and issues related to leadership style or personality. Once we had undertaken the analysis, we would share the findings with all members of the group, and then help them work through the problem areas, thereby lessening the level of mistrust and facilitating communication.

While these exercises did not differ significantly from those we had previously undertaken with volunteer groups in The Netherlands, our efforts to help women's organizations in the Former Yugoslavia move toward greater professionalism and transparency were met with a markedly different reaction. Our attempts to encourage group members to invest in the development of their agency's organizational structure engendered considerable opposition, albeit at an unconscious level. At first we did not understand why participants were responding in this way, but it soon became obvious that the problem was in large part due to the fact that many were faced with such uncertainty in their own lives that long-term planning meant little to them. As several women asked us, why should they think of the future of the organization when it was what they were doing right now that was important? There was also significant resistance to the models of coordination and leadership we presented. Probing participants' feelings in this regard, we were told of the deep distrust, fear and anger that welled up inside them whenever they thought of the politicians who had brought so much grief to their country, both before and after the fall of communism. They tended to associate leaders with manipulation, deceitful power games, and only being interested in helping their cronies at the expense of all others. This in turn meant that women who attempted to assume a management position were also looked upon with suspicion or contempt by other members of the organization. However, after

we discussed these issues in the workshop, the groups generally became more open to new models of coordination and task delegation. In our view, the disappearance of communism had left something of a vacuum where new forms of democratic governance needed to be developed.

Boundary Issues

As trainers, boundary issues often proved problematic for us. In one case, a para-professional asked me if I would be willing to meet with her for a private consultation in connection with a couples counseling issue. I agreed, and also accepted her choice of translator. In the meeting, she indicated to me that she was fearful she was taking sides in her work with a particular couple, and I helped find a solution to the problem with which she seemed happy. However, as I walked out of the room at the end of the session, the translator turned to me and said that the couple in question was her and her partner. I felt manipulated and asked them why they had not told me earlier; they replied that they thought I had known all along.

Boundary issues were also complicated by the war situation. Volunteers resented the fact that they were not being paid, and all the more so because of the long hours they worked, and the apparent lack of appreciation for their efforts on the part of the refugees. Meanwhile, the professional staff would become defensive and blame them for not setting limits or establishing clear boundaries. As one might imagine, communication group work was extremely helpful in addressing such conflicts.

Interdisciplinary Work

In our training workshops, we also encountered significant problems in the area of interdisciplinary cooperation. Although we offered facilitation to help work through these issues, there was great resistance to our interventions, particularly within those organizations dominated by physicians. In these instances, psychologists would generally serve as the survivor's advocate, defending her right to remain silent in the face of physicians' demands that she immediately reveal the details of her assault to the police or other state official. However, as the groups became sensitized to their colleagues' perspective, they were more likely to engage in cooperative behavior and support each other's interventions.

Among the other issues raised by workshop participants in this regard, many wanted to hear about the working relationship between gynecologists and psychologists in the West and what I, as a psychotherapist based in The Netherlands, thought gynecologists in the Former Yugoslavia should know. Interestingly, it was precisely in this context that cultural differences between

the trainers and the participants arose. My partner, herself a gynecologist, suggested that physicians may wish to give a small mirror to patients during the course of a gynecological exam with the aim of familiarizing women with their bodies and giving them a greater sense of control. When she said this, all those present started to laugh and suggested that the patients were more likely to use the mirror to look at their hair. However, the next day one of the physicians did offer a mirror to a patient, who was curious enough to use it in the proposed manner. As long as one is in a position to make one's own choice, the chance to act in a novel or unconventional way can be refreshing.

Hate and Guilt Divided Feminists

As one might imagine, we were particularly interested in working in Serbia, as this would give us the opportunity to hear the perspective of the war's "perpetrators." At the beginning of the conflict, the guilt feelings of the Serbian volunteer staff were overwhelming, causing them to feel torn between their sense of shame and their belief that Serbia was being unfairly demonized by its neighbors and the international community. However, the wish to help former friends and refugees from all ethnic communities was great. In the words of one Serbian woman, "The war is the most awful and shameful experience of my life, but I also want to do what I can for the refugees and other traumatized women." Many volunteers kept in regular touch with their old friends in Sarajevo, sending them letters and care packages, as well as crawling through a tunnel under the city's occupied airport in order to visit them in person.

The multi-ethnic professionals working for Medica Zenica emphasized to us the importance of personal friendships in preventing the perpetuation of hatred. For example, when Bosnian Croats rampaged through villages in the northeastern region of Bosnia-Herzegovina, burning houses and killing people, one of the organization's Croatian staff members felt ashamed because she knew that her colleague's parents lived in one of the affected towns. She did not dare speak to her friend, fearful that she had lost all respect in her eyes. However, the Bosnian staff member sought her out and said, "I need your friendship now more than ever before; otherwise I'll start hating all Croats and I don't want that." In this way, not only did the friendship survive, but it helped each of them avoid generalizing their hatred to an entire nation. At a broader level, it is clear that feminists, both locally and internationally, have invested a great deal of effort into bridge-building between communities split by war and hatred.

The Psychological Power Balance and Internalized Oppression

In order to gain a deeper understanding of difference and the unconscious mechanisms which serve to discipline and control marginalized groups, we

asked the participants of a large workshop to write down on a piece of paper the various "majority" and "minority" groups to which they belonged. We all have mixed identities, and group members mentioned many of them: ethnicity, class, religion, (dis)ability, age, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, among others. We collected all of the responses, divided them into "majority" and "minority" categories, and proceeded to discuss ways in which power differentials among women might be reduced or overcome. One suggestion involved always endeavoring to be honest and listen carefully to the words of others without interruption. To illustrate the importance of this type of healing work, a disabled woman suffering from muscular dystrophy was asked to describe some of the challenges she faced in her everyday life. She touched upon a range of issues, including the tendency of some to question her in a highly offensive way. Most of the women present had never realized how one's unconscious actions help to reproduce oppression and injustice. In another exercise, we asked two women, one lesbian, the other heterosexual, to engage in a role play. Their interactions gave the group considerable pause for thought, with one lesbian woman describing the intense loneliness she had felt her whole life, along with the forms of discrimination she has faced. The support the women gave each other and me in this session was very useful in promoting healing and countering internalized oppression.

ADMIRA's Dutch Trainer Group

As trainers, we held regular meetings in order to share experiences and discuss logistical or administrative issues. However, in spite of our best intentions, differences of opinion often arose during the course of these meetings. For example, several organizations asked for training that did not comply with ADMIRA's criteria for inclusion in the program. While a strict interpretation of our policy demanded that they be excluded, extenuating circumstances often made us reluctant to take this step. In one particularly telling case, a Croatian women's project that was characterized as nationalist by international feminists, had applied to participate in the training. We were forced to weigh their nationalist designation against the fact that they reached many Bosnian and Croatian rape survivors and ex-prisoners from concentration camps. Although there was a heated debate among the trainer group, in the end ADMIRA agreed to the NGO's request. In another instance, the Belgrade Mental Health Institute submitted an application to us. None of the trainers was willing to become involved with this organization because it was both Serbian and non-feminist. However, because of its background in providing support to many survivors of sexual violence, we added two new educators to the group so that we might offer the Institute the training it had

requested. In this way, we sought to make use of pragmatic means of dealing with the challenges at hand.

Related to these problems was the fact that trainers found it difficult to stay aloof from the ethnic conflicts that surrounded them. In several cases, educators became partisans of the community from which "their" project had emerged, resulting in considerable rivalry among the trainers. However, we were for the most part successful in keeping this rivalry in check during our meetings.

CONCLUSIONS

The realities of working with women's organizations in a region destabilized by war make it impossible to plan exhaustively or place cast iron limits upon the scope of one's activities. In the context of ADMIRA's work in the Former Yugoslavia, we were often forced to change our agenda in the face of cuts in staff or exhausted personnel. Moreover, competition among international organizations, national agencies and women's NGOs proved to be a significant obstacle to cooperation and coordination. Finally, all of our interventions took place against a backdrop of growing nationalism and ethnic cleansing, which in some regions continues to this day. As Western educators are still asked to share their knowledge with local groups, it behooves the latter to sensitize themselves to local contexts and to recognize that not all nationalisms are alike. That is to say, one should not attempt to equate any and all verbal expressions of hatred with the National Socialism of Adolf Hitler (Pusic, 1994).

Because feminist organizations tend to identify less with particular ethnic communities and more with a transnational sisterhood of women, many female refugees avoid seeking help from agencies characterized as feminist. Thus, by distinguishing between the different forms of nationalism as Pusic (1994) suggests, one is placed in a position where one can engage in meaningful collaboration with the wide range of organizations that work with severely traumatized women, yet do not have a clear feminist perspective.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAINERS

Many of the Western trainers who take it upon themselves to work in areas affected by war are motivated by their own personal histories and traumas, such as rape, incest, sexual assault or victimization in a previous conflict. Although they are able to deal with the effects of these traumatic experiences in their home countries, being exposed to the legacy of war can be exceedingly disturbing in its own right, and thus it is important that individuals prepare themselves for this eventuality.

In a somewhat different vein, although burnout prevention is an issue that receives considerable attention in training sessions for field staff, I would argue that secondary traumatization is inevitable for all those involved in such work, including the trainers. In short, not only is there a tendency to make the unconscious distinction between "us" and "them," recreating confusing or dysfunctional patterns of interaction in the process, but individuals' exposure to a multiplicity of extreme traumas necessarily affects their ability to function. To counter these problems, training must include the development of a system whereby care providers can express their innermost feelings and emotions. In parallel fashion, a similar system must be put into place in the trainers' home country if the latter are to avoid burnout or the adoption of unhealthy coping mechanisms. Steps must be taken to address the "mirroring" phenomenon, which causes outsiders to lose their detachment and become party to the conflicts of their host country. This was seen within the team of Dutch trainers, who were at times indistinguishable from the warring communities of the Former Yugoslavia. Thus, rather than merely focusing upon what the trainers can do for those they will be working with, adequate attention must be paid to the "mirroring" issue and the best means of avoiding it.

Shame is another problem with which trainers must contend. Labeled "experts," we arrive in the region only to discover that we know far less than we thought. This in turn leads to feelings of powerlessness and lack of confidence in our own abilities, reactions that are themselves part of the secondary traumatization process. In this way, trainers become indirect victims of the war.

One must also be sensitive to the fact that not all theoretical insights that are useful in the West are readily transferable to other cultural and socio-political contexts. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a case in point. Given that individuals' trauma in the Former Yugoslavia is rooted in the political structures and conflicts of the region, post-traumatic stress is a misnomer, since the violence and hatred are ongoing. Thus, trainers' focus must be changed so as to incorporate peace work into their interventions. Similarly, even as one acknowledges the usefulness of physical exercises, guided fantasies and other creative techniques in the training workshops, one must also be wary of using symbols or images that may trigger unexpected flashbacks related to the war.

Finally, it is important to recognize the key significance of feminists' efforts to build ties and friendships that transcend the bounds of nationalism, helping to break them down in the process. In my view, one of the most valuable aspects of our work in the region has been the contacts and connections it has helped to engender between women of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Still, there can be little doubt that the time I spent in the Former Yugoslavia, along with the fifteen years I had spent as a psychotherapist before that, has taken its toll on me. I returned to Holland experiencing many of the same symptoms described in this article: exhaustion, shame, confusion, anger and a profound sense of powerlessness. Faced with these problems, I decided it was in my best interest to take a year of medical leave. I started taking art courses, visiting museums and focusing on the beauty of life. It has been a long journey, but I have slowly recovered my sense of joy and optimism.

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Traumatized Women Working with Traumatized Women: Reflections upon Life and Work in a War Zone

Gabriele Kramer

SUMMARY. In this article, the author shares both her personal and professional experiences in working with women and children who have been subjected to soul-destroying violence in the Former Yugoslavia in recent years. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

KEYWORDS. Bosnia, Tuzla, trauma, women's projects, refugees

Although one might argue that there is nothing unique or novel in the kind of soul-destroying violence that has killed so many in the Former Yugoslavia in recent years, what is remarkable is the fact that it took place in the heart of Europe, less than one hour by airplane from Germany. Also extraordinary is the solidarity shown by women from all over the world with their counterparts living in the war zone. In this article, I would like to share with you my own experiences in this regard.

Gabriele Kramer, PhD, is a clinical psychologist in private practice specializing in working with women and children.

Address correspondence to: Gabriele Kramer, Prinz-Friedrich-Kari-Strasse 34, D-44135 Dortmund, Germany.

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THE CONTEXT

"Just start at the beginning," was the answer I received when I said that I did not know how to begin or what to write. But when did it all begin? I became aware of the escalating violence in the Former Yugoslavia in 1991, at the same time that Germany was reeling from a wave of neo-fascist militancy, characterized by numerous attacks upon immigrants and asylum seekers. Taken together, these events conjured up for me images of the Second World War, the stories my parents had told me, the flight of my mother and sister, and my shame and guilt for being German.

It was in this frame of mind that one day I visited some old friends from Kurdistan, and well remember my sense of anger and helplessness when I saw the fear in their eyes and the knives they kept on hand should skinheads attempt to burn down their home. It was precisely the same feeling that swept over me when I first read of the mass rapes being committed in Bosnia. Will we never learn anything from history? Is humankind fated to repeat the same mistakes over and over again until finally there is no one left to kill?

With these thoughts in the back of my mind, I did not hesitate for a moment when a friend asked me to become involved in a woman's aid project she was in the process of developing. It was no longer enough merely to attend demonstrations or engage in intellectual debate; the time had come to do something, and three of us, three women, sat down in order to plan what this would be. However, it soon became obvious to us that we would not be able to determine what was needed by Bosnian women and children so long as we remained in a living room in Germany. Instead, we would have to travel to the region and ask the women themselves what they needed and what they wanted us to do.

Thus, in June 1993 we set out for Tuzla (Bosnia). We had decided on this destination for two reasons, first because of the political situation—the town was under the control of a coalition (non-nationalist) government—and secondly, because we had a number of local contacts. However, our journey was not an easy one. In the first instance, we had to struggle to obtain a permit from the UNCHR headquarters in Zagreb to enter Bosnia. They asked us for evidence of support from an international aid organization, and smiled when we told them of our plans to implement a women's project in the war zone. In the end we did obtain the necessary permits, though only thanks to the timely intervention of DHH, a German humanitarian organization engaged in work throughout the region.

The next stage of our trip was equally harrowing. Landing in Sarajevo in the midst of shelling, we were transported by armored car to a United Nations base in Kiseljak, and from there by jeep to Zenica. This is where the waiting began, since Tuzla was being blockaded at the time and the main road was impassable due to fighting in the area. Eventually, we were able to secure a

ride with a supply convoy organized by a group of ex-soldiers from Britain. Traveling along small mountain tracks with the sound of shelling and machine gun fire in the distance, we were very glad when we arrived safely at our destination. We were immediately struck by the apparent lack of life: no cars, no noise and no electricity. However, the town was not lifeless. Children were playing in front of their homes, and it seemed that every open area—even balconies and terraces—was being used for growing fruits and vegetables. Meanwhile, walking into the hotel lobby was like entering a man's world of Bosnian soldiers, UN personnel and French Legionnaires with rifles slung casually over their shoulders, talking with one another or sipping drinks at the bar. Everyone appeared to be astonished by our presence, and by the fact that we had come all the way from Germany to find a project or agency to which we could lend our support.

Although the level of need in Tuzla was obviously immense, most of the organizations that were active in the town were either strongly nationalist in character or only interested in providing support to maimed or injured combatants. We spent two months in the region evaluating the needs and wishes of local women, in the process meeting a wide range of individuals, from refugees and displaced persons, to politicians and psychiatrists. While area residents were clearly trying to lead as normal a life as possible under the circumstances, there was no doubt in our minds that the war was taking a dreadful toll upon their minds and bodies. The local hospital, for example, was chronically short of basic medical supplies, with doctors and nurses forced to work long hours under the most primitive conditions imaginable.

If this were not shocking enough, refugee camps in the vicinity of Tuzla were characterized by even greater deprivation. Hundreds of women, children and elders crowded into a large hall, without any privacy and everything they owned sitting in a cardboard box under their bed. "What do you want?," they shouted at us during our visit to one of the camps. "Did you just come to stare? Either go back home, or tell the world about us!" Their anger was palpable, as was their pain in the face of the terrible losses and atrocities inflicted upon them.

In the end, having consulted widely, and profoundly moved by the suffering around us, we decided to focus our energies upon the development of a center that would provide psychotherapeutic counseling to traumatized women and children. Although we envisioned ourselves playing a key role in its genesis and early growth, it was to be a project that would be run by Bosnian women for Bosnian women. We returned to Germany in August 1993, and I spent the following months writing proposals and searching for funding bodies willing to support our initiative.

We made our next trip to Bosnia in December of the same year, after having secured our first funding commitment from a women's organization

associated with the German Evangelical Church. However, their support was conditional upon one of us overseeing the implementation of the project in the field. Needless to say, we were all aware of the living conditions in Tuzla at the time, and we were all afraid. I, for one, spent long hours deliberating whether or not I should accept the assignment, and finally decided to do so during the course of our visit to a women's project that was already in place in Zenica. We spent five days here before traveling on to Tuzla, where the situation had clearly deteriorated since our last visit. It was winter, mortally cold, and we heard numerous reports of people dying of hunger or killing themselves. Still, we had much with which to busy ourselves: renting a building; preparing contracts and meeting with the local women who would work on the project with us.

I made one final trip to Germany before relocating to Tuzla on a more permanent basis. It was at this time that I quit my job as a hospital psychologist, as well as engaging in fund-raising and other tasks necessary for project implementation. When I was finally ready to set out in March 1994, I was fortunate enough to be able to take advantage of a new air service operating between Sarajevo and the American Air Force base outside of Frankfurt. As one might imagine, this cut down considerably on my travel time, allowing me to arrive in Tuzla while still in relatively good spirits. In possession of one lap-top computer and limited financing, the two Bosnian women and I began work immediately on the new Center. Looking back on these early days with the hindsight I now enjoy, I would say that I was strongly motivated, but very, very naive.

THE PROJECT

As previously stated, the aim of the initiative was to provide counseling to women and children traumatized by the war, regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds. In embarking upon this task our first priority was to establish a center that would function as both a hospital and women's shelter. Given the degree to which women were being re-traumatized on a daily basis, it was critical that a safe environment be created; only then would recovery become possible. When the center opened in June 1994, it became home for 18 women and 40 children, with the average length of stay being approximately eight months.

Once this phase of the project was operational, we turned our attention to two further areas of intervention. The first of these was centered upon the creation of a mobile unit of psychologists who would provide individual and group therapy, as well as support the development of self-help groups in the refugees camps surrounding Tuzla. The unit visited its first camp in August 1994, with an average of 90 women receiving counseling on each occasion.

In 1995 the unit was provided with an ambulance, so that medical care could be offered alongside its counseling services.

Our third priority was to furnish the women who came to the Center with the means to become self-sufficient afterwards, so that they would not have to return to the refugee camps. To this end, we acquired three houses (with a total capacity of 40 women and 90 children), each offering its own distinct range of services. House objectives are summarized below:

1. Women living in the first house were interested in enhancing their educational credentials while organizing their own lives. A coordinator was hired in October 1994 to oversee project implementation, with psychologists and social workers available on call.
2. Opened in March 1995, this house was geared towards women who wished to live independently yet have ready access to support services should the need arise.
3. Centered around an agricultural initiative, women living here were given the chance to become involved in an income-generating activity. This house opened its doors in the summer of 1995.

All of the women involved in the project were integrated into a therapeutic model comprised of the following elements:

Medical care (somatic interventions and psychotherapy)

Therapies (psychotherapy, body therapy, art therapy, among others)

Social work (counseling by a social worker; help in searching for missing family members; assistance in planning life goals)

Education (day care services; training in literacy, sewing, computers and languages)

As much as possible, we attempted to involve everyone in the day-to-day operation of the houses and the Center. For example, residents were expected to help prepare meals and work in the garden, as well as being responsible for the upkeep of their own room. In the later stages of the project, once we had acquired sewing machines and looms, the women were also given the opportunity to make clothes or carpets during their spare time. Finally, staff and residents would assemble every week for a general meeting, in which disputes would be resolved, proposals tabled and schedules drawn up.

By the end of 1994, the project employed a total of 30 staff members, drawn from all ethnic communities and encompassing a wide range of competencies. Moreover, personnel were divided into four separate teams: Technical/administrative support, Therapies, Medical care, and Education. General staff meetings were held once a month, while therapists met on a weekly basis. I served as project coordinator, meeting with team managers on a regular basis in order to address key issues and engage in strategic planning.

Of course, in assessing the project's structure and objectives, it bears emphasis that our original plan, when we first set out for Bosnia in June 1993, was more narrow in scope than that upon which we subsequently agreed. How so? In short, while we had intended to focus our efforts solely upon those women who had been raped or sexually assaulted, it quickly became obvious to us that women in Bosnia were being victimized in any number of ways, sexually, physically and psychologically. Although it was this awareness that prompted us to refer to our project as a psychotherapeutic center for traumatized women and children, we were also aware of the dangers inherent in such a name, most notably that of obscuring women's suffering on account of rape and other forms of sexual violence. In the face of this risk, we have made it a priority to bring the issue out into the open whenever possible, both with the women who were taking part in the project and the public more generally.

When we first began work in the Tuzla area, we did not have a clear sense of how many of the women who came to the Center or whom we visited in the camps had been raped. We did not ask, though in some cases they would broach the topic themselves; in others we would simply guess. However, as we became more and more familiar with local conditions, we were left in no doubt of the full extent of women's victimization. Quite simply, not only had almost all of the women living in the camps been forced to flee their homes, but most had also witnessed the torture and killing of family members. Indeed, we know of several cases where individuals had lost 30 or more male relatives, including husbands, fathers, brother and sons. If this were not traumatic enough in itself, many women were subsequently raped and tortured by militia forces, as well as being subjected to psychological humiliation by government officials and others.

Given this context, it is not surprising that the women bore terrible scars, at both the physical and psychological level. Among those who came to the Center, their symptoms were usually quite similar, encompassing loss of self-esteem, depression, mood swings, somatic illnesses and flashbacks, to name but a few. While in some instances we also encountered individuals with a distorted perception of reality or suffering from dissociative identity disorder, in all cases the scope for destructive behavior was considerable: many were addicted to one or more pharmaceutical drugs, while outbursts of extreme anger toward their children or other residents were not uncommon.

Although we had hoped at the outset to focus much of our attention upon the recovery of women and children traumatized by war, we soon discovered that the need for crisis intervention was such that at least some of our energies would have to be reoriented in this direction. Not only were there relatively few relief agencies operating in the area, but the refugee population was

immense, consisting of roughly 300,000 individuals (predominantly women, children and elders) living both in camps and in the town itself.

THE REALITY

I spent my first three months in Tuzla engaged in a frenzy of activity: obtaining permits, hiring staff, arranging for telephone and electrical hook-ups, buying furniture and countless other tasks. It was also at this time that I became aware of the size of the challenge that lay before me. Not only were bribes routinely demanded of us by public officials anxious to enrich themselves at our expense, but we were initially faced with considerable hostility on the part of refugee camp administrators, who were either unwilling to let us into the camps in the first place or insisted that any woman who returned with us to the Center would immediately lose all of her rights as a refugee. Needless to say, this placed us in a difficult position, which we only managed to resolve with the assistance of Tuzla's mayor.

In the end, the Center welcomed its first residents on June 15th, 1994. The initial complement consisted of 18 women and 40 children; all were from the region surrounding Srebrenica and most had lost the majority of their male relatives. From the very first day of the Center's operation, the work was at once difficult and empowering. Most of the staff had other jobs, and thus would spend part of the day working elsewhere, and part of the day at the Center. However, for all those whom we hired, the hard currency they earned played a crucial role in helping them meet their families' basic needs.

In light of the working conditions, not to mention the anxiety which many staff members experienced when thinking about their children at home or family members in other parts of the country, it should come as no surprise that we were forced to contend with interpersonal conflicts within the organization, either between myself and employees, or between employees and residents. As one might imagine, language differences were especially problematic in this regard; only three staff-members could communicate in English or German, and my own language training was proceeding at a frustratingly slow pace. Thus, not only was it impossible at first to engage in casual conversation with employees (since a translator was necessary for interaction to occur), but the risk of misunderstanding was omnipresent. However, the situation improved substantially once we began to offer personnel foreign language training, and once I became more confident about my own language abilities.

As I have already suggested above, the relationship between residents and staff members also proved to be problematic. In large part, this was due to the fact that most of our employees were from cities or towns, whereas the overwhelming majority of refugees, including those taking part in the project,

had lived in rural areas before being displaced by the war. On the one hand, this meant that there were significant cultural differences between the two groups, with city-based women generally having far more scope to travel, obtain an education or pursue a career than their rural-based counterparts. On the other, the Bosnian countryside suffered disproportionately from the war-time violence, causing many of the refugees to resent city dwellers for escaping relatively unharmed, with their homes intact and their family members alive.

Psychotherapy is a relatively new field in Bosnia. Individuals who wish to specialize in this discipline must travel either to Zagreb or Belgrade for the necessary training. As such, I had absolutely no luck in finding psychotherapists living in the Tuzla area who would be willing to become involved in the Center's work. In order to overcome this difficulty, I located a number of psychologists, social workers and educators and told them that I would help train them providing that they were willing to learn, and would be supportive of the life contexts of those with whom they would be working.

The first therapy session took place shortly after the Center opened. Needless to say, everyone involved was anxious and insecure, ensuring that we had plenty to discuss during our initial staff meeting. However, despite the fact that I was taking part in these meetings every week, it took some time before I realized that many key issues related to the work and the patients were simply not being addressed in an adequate fashion. It took even longer before it dawned upon me that I was part of the problem. Quite simply, the therapists were struggling with a number of challenges, the risk of secondary traumatization not least among them, and they needed a safe place where they could work things through without constantly feeling the need to prove themselves (as they did when I was present).

However, even as I acknowledged the importance of providing the therapists with adequate support and positive reinforcement, I lost touch with my own needs and boundaries. That is to say, I was so absorbed in fulfilling my responsibilities to the project-as coordinator, fund-raiser, psychotherapist, referee and resident strong woman-that I ignored the warning signals my body was sending me. In the end, it took a series of setbacks, including a medical operation in Germany and an attack by six soldiers in my home in Tuzla, before I started asking why I was not taking better care of myself. Although this awareness did not lead me to make an immediate change in my lifestyle or activities, I began to devote more and more time to writing in my journal, as well as making a number of weekend trips to the coast in order to visit with a friend from Germany who was working with another organization. Also helpful in this regard was the decision to restructure the work teams, with the art and physiotherapists transferred from Therapies to the Education and Medical Care teams respectively. In so doing, the therapists

were placed in a position where they could meet as a small group every week in a closed session, and discuss work-related problems, as well as other pertinent issues. Finally, it was also roughly at this time that I organized a "self-experience" retreat for all staff members in a Tuzla area hotel. It proved to be a good experience for all of us. Not only did the change in venue make it easier for people to open up and be frank with one another and me, but the exercise helped to engender a new atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

Needless to say, it was largely this atmosphere that provided the basis for the project's success and growth over the first two years of its existence. Not only did the purchase of an ambulance substantially increase our capacity to serve the needs of refugee camp residents, but we started increasingly to plan and implement new initiatives, such as computer and language training for the women living at the Center and in the houses. However, at the very moment we were registering these successes, the political situation in the region was becoming increasingly unstable, with the kidnapping of United Nations peace keepers, NATO air strikes against Bosnian Serb military targets, and, in July 1995, the capture of UN safe havens in Srebrenica and Zepa by the Bosnian Serb militia. In all, 40,000 people were forced to flee, of which a significant proportion ended up in the Tuzla area.

As the new refugees arrived, we began to make arrangements to accommodate additional residents at the Center. However, we were immediately struck by the fact that these women had substantially different psychological profiles than those who had fled to Tuzla previously. Although many had emerged from their ordeals severely traumatized, having been subjected to rape and other forms of physical and psychological torture, the memories were so fresh in their minds that they had not had time to repress them. Given this finding, we launched into counseling as quickly as possible, and found that, for a significant number of women, a series of regular meetings for debriefing proved quite helpful, obviating the need for long-term therapy.

However, as horrible as the attacks upon Zepa and Srebrenica undoubtedly were, the real turning point in the conflict was not until December 1995, when the Dayton peace agreement was ratified by the warring parties. Although the refugees and residents of Tuzla were happy that peace was at hand, the vast majority were exceedingly disappointed by the terms of the Dayton accord, most notably its willingness to recognize Serb sovereignty over the Srebrenica region. In effect, this meant that the bulk of Tuzla's refugee population would never be able to return home again.

While the Center's social worker continued to devote much of her energies to the task of locating missing family members on behalf of residents, others' husbands began slowly to trickle into the Tuzla area, many having not seen their wives for well over two years. Not surprisingly, this was often the

source of considerable tension, since both wives and husbands had undergone significant traumatic experiences, and many women were loathe to give up the relative autonomy and independence they had enjoyed during the war years. In this way, spousal abuse rapidly became a serious problem within refugee families, as men sought to compensate for their low self-esteem by assaulting, raping and sometimes even killing their marital partners.

In the midst of these developments, we continued to carry out the mandate of the Center to the best of our abilities. Moreover, we were particularly gratified to learn that a German organization had agreed to provide specialized training to our therapists during the first half of 1996, as well as offering body therapy to Center residents. Finally, it was also at this time that we started to prepare for my own departure from Tuzla in February 1996. Having originally planned to stay for one year, which was subsequently extended to two, the time had come to step out of the way so that project staff could take charge themselves. However, we agreed that I would continue to serve in an advisory capacity from Germany, and would endeavor to ensure continued funding for the project until such time that it became wholly self-sufficient.

THERAPY

When I first arrived in Tuzla, I was simply too busy with project logistics to spend much time thinking about the implications of undertaking therapy in an unstable environment in which traumatization was ongoing. Moreover, even when I did become sensitive to this issue, there seemed to be little that could be done. I was immersed in a cultural context with which I had little familiarity; my colleagues were for the most part inexperienced and not confident; and there was essentially no scope for bringing in outside experts so long as the town was under a state of siege. Thus, we had no choice but to attempt to find our own way of working with clients and overcoming the challenges inherent in the environment in which we found ourselves.

As one might imagine, these difficulties were themselves exacerbated by problems in adapting therapeutic approaches to the life contexts of clients. That is to say, whereas the therapies had been designed for work with individuals who were well-educated and lived in a Western industrialized country, the women involved in the project had little formal education and emerged from a cultural background that was at once highly traditional and patriarchal in its orientation. Sensitive to these differences, the challenge we faced was one of making contact with the women while at the same time resisting the urge to force our theories, structures and techniques upon them.

Given my own background as a German woman who had no previous work experience in the Former Yugoslavia, I found this to be particularly difficult. In short, not only was I forced to modify many of my expectations

and assumptions, but it also became clear to me that I would have to have the courage to leave the "normal" structure of therapy if I was to reach the women with whom I was working. This latter point was brought home to me in particularly stark terms in August 1994, when the husband of one of the residents returned to Tuzla, having managed to escape from a Serb-run concentration camp. His description of the atrocities committed there left all of the other women in a deep state of depression (as many had relatives who were being held in the same camp), and there seemed to be no way of making contact with them. At wit's end, I decided spontaneously that I would organize a special evening of music and dancing, having noticed previously how much the women appeared to enjoy singing and listening to the old traditional songs. The evening proved to be a remarkable success, with everyone—even those who had until that point been entirely non-communicative and apathetic-taking part in the festivities. For me, the night also brought understanding, highlighting as it did the extent to which something as seemingly mundane as music could bring the women back to their roots, and give them the sense of being on common ground.

After this evening I began to notice myself interacting with the residents in a different way, as I placed more and more emphasis upon uncovering their feelings, relationships, and ways of understanding the world around them. For example, in the sessions I held with women living in one of the Center's houses, I suggested that we rearrange the meeting room, replacing the tables and chairs with pillows on the floor in traditional Bosnian fashion. Having done so, everyone felt more at ease, and increasingly willing to talk about their lives prior to the war, whether their childhood, their family, or their first contact with men. Like the music and dancing, storytelling offered the women a means of regaining a lost sense of identity and stability.

Still, this is not to suggest that the latter was the only therapeutic technique used in the sessions. On the one hand, we engaged in a number of exercises involving imagination and dreams, though I was always careful to avoid references to images (such as forests) that might bring back unpleasant memories of the war. To the extent that I was successful in doing so, participants found the exercises to be quite helpful, particularly those involving the seaside and inner helpers (e.g., wise women). On the other hand, I also made ample use of drawing and painting as a way of helping the women to come to terms with their pain and shame, feelings that had led many of them to abuse or mistreat their children. Needless to say, this latter behavior was especially disturbing in light of the fact that the children were often severely traumatized themselves, forcing us to devote considerable energy to the task of working through this issue with both parties.

However, regardless of the therapy used, it quickly became apparent to us that the degree of traumatization, among both women and children, was

immense by any standard. Indeed, many could only make sense of their suffering by placing it within the context of a plot designed specifically to punish them, at a personal level, for misdeeds which they had committed in the past. In other words, they were incapable of grounding their trauma in the wider political and social structures of which they were part. Thus, our aim in working with the women was to help them overcome their sense of helplessness and guilt. However, as strenuously as we tried to empower and reenergize them, we were often unsuccessful. In these cases, we simply attempted to provide the women with a set of structures around which they could organize their lives, and support them step-by-step in their journey towards independence and autonomy.

Of course, an important element in this regard was the fact that we were there to bear witness for them, and to affirm them in naming those who were responsible for their suffering. This was neither the time nor the place for neutrality; the crimes were too horrible, and the women were simply too much in need of someone who would be there for them and believe in the stories they told. However, this is not to suggest that the therapists were unaware of the dangers of transference and counter-transference, leading them to pay particular attention to boundary issues in the sessions they held with the women. While it was vital that staff members protect themselves from the effects of secondary traumatization and burnout, it was also important that they assist the clients in recovering a sense of control over their everyday lives, for example, by showing them how to manage traumatic memories in a constructive fashion.

Reference has already been made to the problems inherent in attempting to provide therapy in a context where one's clients are being re-traumatized on a daily basis. Almost all of the women taking part in the project had been forced to flee their homes, taking only what they could carry with them, and most had missing family members as well. Needless to say, this made it very difficult for them to acquire a sense of closure, and all the more so because their lives continued to be circumscribed by the violence around them. Obviously, this presented us with a serious challenge, made that much worse by the fact that many of the women were not willing to accept closure in any case, since this would entail admitting to themselves that there was no hope of returning to their old homes or old ways of life.

Indeed, from this perspective it must be acknowledged that much of our work in Tuzla was focused upon crisis intervention and supporting women as they struggled to regain their will to live. As such, we encountered many individuals who were suffering from symptoms akin to dissociation or psychosis, as well as many others who had adopted highly destructive coping mechanisms. For example, it was not uncommon for survivors to engage in a form of projective identification with the perpetrators, seeing them as essen-

tially good people who were merely punishing them for evil acts they themselves had committed. To cite one particularly disturbing case, a woman who was suffering from profound guilt and shame from a previous rape experience was attacked once again by the same group of men. However, on this occasion she had her period, and they told her that she was so dirty and worthless that they would not even bother to rape her. Afterwards, she was so traumatized that it almost came as a relief when she started to articulate her hate and rage by means of self-injury. Although her anger was directed towards the inner enemy rather than the outer and real one, it provided an opening through which she could vent her pain and, in so doing, avoid going insane.

CONCLUSION

As I have endeavored to make clear in the discussion above, the overwhelming majority of female refugees whom we met during the course of our work in the Tuzla area had been subjected to extreme victimization at the hands of militia forces and others. Moreover, as a therapist myself, I could see how their suffering, along with the stress of living in a war zone more generally, was having an effect upon my own well-being. Although I tended not to experience any ill-effects while I was in Bosnia, as soon as I returned to Germany for a holiday I would immediately become physically ill, all the while suffering from nightmares, insomnia and a deep malaise. Needless to say, these symptoms were warning signs from my body, informing me of the dangers of working in an environment where relaxation was at a premium and constant vigilance a necessity.

In the event, I left Tuzla in February 1996. Upon my return to Germany, I devoted several months to the task of finding new sources of financial support for the project, since the organization with which we were originally involved was in the process of winding down its commitment to the Center. Although it was clear by July that sufficient funding would be available to ensure that the project could continue to operate for at least another year, I remained actively involved in the Center's work until early 1997. At this time, I decided that it would be in everyone's best interest if I stepped back and let others take my place.

However, this is not to say that I have become disengaged from the vision that drove me to Bosnia in the first place. I continue to work with refugees, many of whom are from the Former Yugoslavia, and many of whom bear scars remarkably similar to those which I encountered so often in Tuzla. I also continue to get angry, angry at the individuals who inflicted such suffering upon my clients, angry at the ritual of humiliation which asylum seekers must endure before they are allowed to stay in this country, angry at the War

KEYWORDS. Woman-centered training, trauma counseling, training witnesses and their families. It was precisely this same anger that drove me, along with two other women, to take action in 1993 in the face of the unimaginable atrocities being committed in the name of ethnic nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia. That had not changed.

War, Life Crisis and Trauma: Assessing the Impact of a Woman-Centered Training Program in Bosnia

Sabine Scheffler
Agnes Miichele

SUMMARY. This article presents a woman-centered approach to healing that is necessitated by trauma inflicted by armed conflict. The authors present a historical context within which they depict many of the daily consequences that citizens experienced. A training program was developed during a trip to Bosnia in which sixteen women, among whom were social workers, psychologists, physicians, teachers and one Islamic theologian, participated. This program was comprised of five training modules: introduction to basic concepts and issues, the social psychology of war, the counseling process and techniques, social work in a wartime environment, and termination. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

Sabine Scheffler, PhD, is Professor of Social Psychology, College for Applied Sciences and Co-Director of the Zentrum für Angewandte Psychologie und Frauenforschung (Center of Applied Psychology and Women's Research) in Cologne, Germany. Agnes Miichele, PhD, is Co-Director of the Zentrums für Angewandte Psychologie und Frauenforschung (Center of Applied Psychology and Women's Research) in Cologne, Germany.

Address correspondence to: Dr. Sabine Scheffler, Zentrum für Angewandte Psychologie und Frauenforschung (Center of Applied Psychology and Women's Research), Fridolinstrasse 27, D-50823 Köln, Germany (e-mail: zap.frauen@t-online.de).

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THE HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

When the war in Bosnia began, we were living in Vienna, Austria. Thus, it was very much a conflict in our neighborhood and, as such, awoke many of the old feelings of fear and anxiety that we had experienced as children, either as a three-year-old forced to flee with her parents through large parts of rural Germany, or as a young girl immersed in the tension of the immediate post-war era, when many thought another conflict was imminent. Dulled by time, these fears were roused once again in 1956, when the Hungarian Crisis burst upon our consciousness.

From the beginning, events in Bosnia filled us with rage. The power politics of the governments involved, their actions designed to sabotage any hope of a negotiated settlement, together with the empty rhetoric of the European "community" more generally left us feeling helpless, yet determined to contribute in some small way to the cause of peace. It was at this time that feminist groups from various countries began to make contact with local women's organizations, providing support and assistance that went mostly unnoticed by a mainstream media narrowly focused upon government-sponsored aid programs. Moreover, it was also in this context that we embarked upon our first intervention in the region, offering training courses in Zagreb and Split (Croatia) in an environment that might be characterized as one of collective shock and emotional desensitization (Scheffler and Michele, 1996). Without wishing to downplay the difficulties and challenges we faced, this was preferable to the sense of powerlessness we had previously felt in Austria.

Planning for the project was undertaken in 1994/95, and the work itself was carried out over a three-year period, from 1995 to 1997. Our objective was to provide woman-centered training in therapy and psychotherapeutic counseling, with a total of 16 women taking part, among them social workers, psychologists, physicians, teachers and one Islamic theologian from Bosnia. All were involved in the activities of NGOs working in the region.

As one might imagine, our work in Bosnia and Croatia was motivated and underpinned by our own political commitments and consciousness. In short, it is our position that the attacks carried out against women during the conflict were part of a deliberate strategy that is reflective of the gendered nature of the societies in which we live. Through our intervention, we sought to contribute to the healing of those who had suffered violence, while helping to build capacity among women of the warring region.

ORGANIZATION AND FINANCING

Project financing was derived from the following sources: German People's Aid (coordinated by Karin Schiiler); Norwegian People's Aid (coordinated by Liv Bremer); Caritas Leverkusen (coordinated by Friedel Herweg); personal donations by women psychotherapists at the Fritz Perls Institute, Dusseldorf, Germany; and Women's Association of Split (responsible for project logistics in Split). Translation services were provided by Lejla Derzic. Our co-trainer in two courses was Angela Reinhardt. Planning, management and implementation were conducted by Dr. Sabine Scheffler and Dr. Agnes Miichele.

PROJECT DESIGN

If our initiative was to be successful, we deemed it vital that we make a preliminary trip to the region; not only would this allow us to gain some insight into the day-to-day challenges faced by the women themselves, but we would also be in a better position to tailor our training program to the needs and requirements of participants. Setting out in August 1995 (during the time of the Krajina offensive), we visited several women's projects being implemented in Tuzla and Zenica (Bosnia). On the one hand, our trip was useful in forcing us to question our assumptions and become more realistic in our goals and objectives. On the other, it served to strengthen our resolve to carry out the training program in Croatia, and not in Bosnia as some participants had originally wanted. In our opinion, a relaxed environment is critical for meaningful learning to take place, and the atmosphere in Bosnia was anything but relaxed at that time. Finally, on a more mundane level, our journey to the region gave us an opportunity to discuss the aims of the project with our local partners and to assess local working conditions. It should be noted that this aspect of the trip was of particular symbolic importance to our partners, who took it to be indicative of the non-hierarchical nature of the project.

Assumptions

Throughout the planning and implementation stages of the project, we were guided by the premise that, for healing to occur, women's suffering must be understood within the broader politico-historical contexts of nationalism and patriarchy. That is to say, women who are victims of war cannot be expected to regain their dignity and self-esteem unless the processes and events that led to their victimization have been acknowledged and exposed

for what they are (Laub and Weine, 1994; Graessner, Gurriss, and Pross, 1996).

Injustice Against Women During the Injustice of War

At a personal, social and historical level, war means something different for women and men. Thus, while dominant discourses (including those of the mainstream media and the state) are focused narrowly upon the "organization of war" and issues of concern to men (e.g., battles lost and won; number of personnel injured, missing or dead), the violence experienced by women is targeted and total, and is used as a way of sapping the morale and weakening the resolve of men. Objectified and subjected to torture, humiliation and violence, the destruction of women's dignity undermines and destroys the social bonds and values of the culture in which they live. However, in spite of these attacks, women struggle continuously for their dignity and freedom, both in the face of wartime atrocities and the daily humiliation and violence of life under a patriarchal social order. Indeed, in this regard one might argue that the public response to violence is equally as important as the psychological resources available to an individual who is setting out on the path to recovery. Recognition of the truth must precede the victim's recovery, as Judith Herman (1994) has so aptly noted.

Of course, the wartime victimization of Bosnian women is an atrocity that has been largely ignored by the international community and mainstream media, which is reflective of the taboo nature of the topic itself. For example, it was only in the early 1990s that German feminists were able to initiate a public discussion of the atrocities committed against women during the Second World War (Sander and Johr, 1992). In a similar fashion, Austrian women had a very difficult time indeed convincing the Minister for Women's Affairs in that country to accept rape in war as a basis for political asylum. While by no means wishing to suggest that either Austria or Germany has gone far enough in addressing the issue of violence against women in war, they are sadly two of the more "progressive" cases. In many other countries, there is absolutely no interest in the issue, which serves as a shameful testimony to the willingness of societies to accept male violence and its pernicious effects upon women's lives.

Aware of this situation before we had even embarked upon the project, we arrived in Bosnia expecting to be confronted with women whose socialization into a patriarchal, conservative culture would leave them feeling ashamed of their victimization, as well as causing them to suppress its effects. However, as we began the training courses, we were reminded of the fact that talking leads to recovery, and that joint responsibility in combination with the women's own coping strategies would provide the basis for them to overcome their suffering. Significantly, these findings are confirmed by scholars

examining healing processes in the context of women's shelters (Bruckner, 1997; Walker, 1979).

A Woman-Centered Approach to Healing

That violence toward women is grounded in patriarchal relations of power is well-established, and is equally the case for Bosnia as it is for Austria or the United States. However, it was our hope in intervening in the manner that we did to contribute to a process of change whereby Bosnian women were able to make gains similar to those achieved by women in other countries. Of course, there is a long tradition of solidarity among women in the face of domination and violence, and we have shown our power to overcome the latter in order to begin life anew. Drawing upon the legacy of women's projects the world over, one might identify the following premises upon which to ground our anti-violence work. In particular, there is a need to: acknowledge injustice and injuries; find a language to describe the act; become responsible and bear witness; reestablish individual and collective self-esteem; promote self-confidence; and achieve balance between dependence and independence.

Needless to say, these aims require facilitators to establish active contact among all members of the group. Our strategy in this regard involved taking the skills and competencies of participants seriously, and using them as the starting point for a two-way learning process. On the one hand, this demanded that we focus continuously upon the group and group events. On the other, we had to resist the temptation to take charge, since it was critical that members find their own solutions to the issues they were facing. Our role was to offer support, stimulation and knowledge in a manner that would be helpful in developing self-confidence and confidence in others.

The Concept

Aims

Focused on the development of professional skills in social-therapeutic work with female war victims and refugees, the training course was designed especially for the women who would take part, among whom numbered physicians, psychiatric nurses, teachers, social workers and psychologists. Moreover, we identified three areas in need of priority intervention: Enhancement of theoretical knowledge; Counseling methodologies; The work context.

At a theoretical level, the course dealt with such issues as the psychodynamics of trauma, diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, sociodynamics of war, models of crisis intervention and trauma counseling. We also dealt with a

number of general concepts, including: Contact and relationships; Defense and resistance mechanisms; Transference and counter-transference; Group settings; Counseling techniques and media (creative media and dreams, role-playing, body techniques and exercise-centered work). Of course, in dealing with all of these issues we also emphasized the importance of focusing, identifying one's strengths and weaknesses, taking care of oneself, and strategies to avoid bum-out.

Structure

The meetings we held with prospective participants during our preliminary field visit were useful in familiarizing us with one another, as well as helping all concerned finalize their decision as to whether or not they would become involved. From our perspective, it was important that the group be heterogeneous, since we wanted to bring together a wide range of experiences, while at the same time fostering networking opportunities.

The course itself lasted two years, and was divided into six modules, consisting of 40 units (each unit was 45 minutes in length) spread over the course of five week-days. The modules may be summarized as follows: Introduction to basic concepts and issues related to work with war and trauma victims; Establishing group strengths and weaknesses; Social psychology of war and violence; Deconstructing gender roles and relations; Counseling techniques and the counseling process; Social work during and after a war; Completion of counseling processes; Discussion of the case studies; Conclusion.

At the end of the two-year period, all participants were expected to document a counseling experience, as well as describing their application of methodologies we had discussed in the training. Finally, it should be noted that we are currently in the process of planning a seventh module, scheduled for September 1998, when we will have returned to the region in order to take part in the day-to-day counseling work of project participants.

Principles of Evaluation

Seeking to engage with our own assumptions in planning and carrying out the project, we distilled a number of key questions from the training material, our progress reports and evaluation exercises. These may be summarized as follows:

1. Is there any evidence of change in the language used in our reports to describe the women, interpersonal dynamics and course contents?
2. In what ways does our attitude and working method change according to the degree of acceptance by participants of the course's goals and objectives?

3. What unconscious processes and dynamics become visible as issues around violence and traumatization are raised and discussed?
4. With respect to the last point in particular, we engaged in a deliberate attempt to interrogate and question our intervention strategies, so that they might be rendered appropriate to the contexts in which we found ourselves (The Adjectives);
5. Moreover, we also sought to relate these questions to our course objectives, which are summarized below (The Concept);
6. Enhance and systematize participants' understanding of the long-term effects of traumatization and individuals' coping strategies;
7. Identify and discuss means of strengthening the working relationship with women who have been traumatized or are in crisis;
8. Identify and discuss alternative intervention strategies (i.e., use of media or creative material);
9. Contribute to participants' understanding of the dangers inherent in burnout and secondary traumatization, identify and discuss professional coping strategies;
10. Facilitate the development of woman-centered approaches and methods, paying particular attention to such issues as violence against women in wartime, the socio-political context underlying women's exploitation and humiliation, and the effects of wartime experiences upon women and men's post-conflict relationships.

However, while these objectives informed our interventions in the training courses, it should be noted that we placed particular emphasis upon group work (e.g., dream work, role-playing and sculpture work), as we were concerned that we might exhaust ourselves if too much time was spent in individual sessions, and all the more so because participants were dealing with the legacy of their own war-time experiences.

Challenge# 1: The Way from Dependence to Independence

Before the training courses began, we assumed that those taking part would be cooperative, appreciative and motivated to learn as much as possible within the existing time constraints. However, once the project was underway, we were forced to revise our expectations somewhat. Although the participants were prepared to accept our leadership, even in the face of difficult or provocative topic areas, it became clear to us that they were anxious, and would become silent and introverted whenever we pushed them too far. This response, together with the chatting, loud laughter and somewhat frantic attitude during leisure-time activities suggested to us that we should reduce the intensity of the sessions and provide more release mechanisms.

Challenge# 2: Acknowledging the Needs of Those Traumatized by War

When we made our first trip to Bosnia in 1995, we were immediately struck by the looks of exhaustion on the faces of our colleagues, and by their willingness to accept whatever we offered with the words, "It would probably be useful." We interpreted their wariness as indicative of the traumatic experiences they had undergone, experiences that made them fearful that the training course would lead to nothing but the repetition of their wartime humiliation.

Faced with the exhaustion of the individuals with whom we had come to meet, along with that of the country itself, we felt an enormous pressure to give something of ourselves, to present a token of our solidarity. However, we soon realized that solidarity, professional support or money was not what was required here. Instead, what our partners needed above all was recognition of the humiliation and injustice they have suffered, and so to bring an end to their sense of shame and isolation. Needless to say, this presented us with a significant challenge, since on the one hand, we hoped to validate and acknowledge their grief and, on the other, we wanted to ensure that they learn to act by themselves and overcome their sense of humiliation. Thus, we sought to provide constant support and positive reinforcement, so that the women began once again to appreciate themselves and to develop the self-confidence necessary to make use of their skills and talents. However, by no means do we wish to downplay the difficulty we experienced in negotiating this knife edge between over-identification and the need for distance; all too often we were left feeling overwhelmed and tempted to give up.

Challenge# 3: The Ambivalence Inherent in a Solidaristic Relationship

From the moment that we first set foot in the Former Yugoslavia, we were faced with a discernible gap, between us-foreigners, prosperous, our lives in no direct danger-and those with whom we were working, women grounded in a mixed socialist-Islamic culture heavily oriented toward family. Needless to say, we often asked ourselves "What are we doing here?" as we nursed our self-doubts. "Are we good enough? Do we have something useful to offer? Are we imposing our Western feminist values upon participants (which we were communicating unconsciously to them in any case)?" As for our partners, they confronted us with their attitudes towards children and men, testing the limits of our tolerance, although soon warming up enough to share with us their cordiality, directness and charm. It should also be noted in this regard that the gap appears to have reproduced itself among the participants themselves, as they went about their work with female refugees who had come down from mountain villages in the Bosnian hinterland.

We strongly believe that our relationship with the participants was a spe-

cial one, characterized by a deeply hidden intensity of emotions on both sides. From our perspective, we interacted with the women in a way that was reflective of our own sense of sympathy and solidarity, our fury at the horror and injustice of the war, and the ambivalence of participants who were forced to make do in a highly precarious, dangerous environment. This ambivalence was evident in the conflicting messages they sent us; at one moment they would be serious, highly productive and creative, and the next this would be replaced by avoidance, regression and a tensed silliness.

Thus, as facilitators, we could only give of ourselves, our sympathy, solidarity and knowledge, while acknowledging that these were merely a symbol of our belief in the injustice of the war. In other words, we were forced to accept the fact that participants' behavior in the course was only tangentially related to our own motives, desires and expectations. Of course, relinquishing control in this way was difficult and often painful, and at times we would seek to regain our sense of power by pushing through difficult topics.

The issues touched upon above encapsulate our experiences during the course of the training project, and, paradoxically enough, they help to explain its success as well. That is to say, not only was the latter due to the particular manner in which we approached the participants and the issues addressed, but it also depended crucially upon the women themselves, who engaged in their own interpretations of the material, which provided the basis in tum for its incorporation into their personal and professional lives.

Evaluation Strategies

External Standards

This would include the trip made by the project coordinator to assess its impact. She carried out interviews with participants concerning changes in their work lives. Also relevant in this regard is a women's shelter being planned for the Tuzla region by some of the women involved in the training course.

Internal Standards

Falling in this category would be the participants' assessment of the project; the case studies, which were presented and discussed at the end of the course; and, finally, our own evaluation reports. It is our position that the evaluation reports provide an especially powerful lens through which to assess the relative success or failure of the project. In short, they reflect the complexities inherent in communicating, in a theater of war, topics related to trauma and crisis, but they also lay bare our own engagement with the women

and the topics covered, summarized as follows in the form of two key questions:

How does the language of the reports mirror and reflect our attitudes and prejudices towards the participants?

How do we describe and reflect upon our experiences?

The reports also include references to our fantasies, our prejudices, our likes and dislikes. In the pages that follow, we analyze this material, in its entirety, in order to shed some light upon that which is usually unconscious, in the background, the gestalt. In so doing, we hope to show that our facilitation of the training courses was informed throughout by our positioning within a complex web of social relations and structures (Benjamin, 1990; Nadig, 1992).

The Evaluation Questions

As the preceding discussion suggests, our evaluation strategy is part operational, part discursive. In this regard, we would argue that the context of the project, i.e., the fact that it was undertaken in a post-war environment, the war-time experiences of the women themselves, along with the professional demands placed upon them in terms of the lack of preparation for the type of psycho-social problems generated by the war, together served to create what one might call a special learning situation. How so? Consider the following points: The energy and tension engendered by the crisis were given concrete manifestation in the training seminars through the actions and reactions of participants. The relationship between participants and facilitators was characterized, on both sides, by ambivalence and resistance. On the one hand, we were the conveyors of skills and knowledge, and they the receivers. On the other, we were women outside of our own cultural milieu, interacting with individuals who were on their home turf, albeit one shattered by the effects of war. In this way, the evaluation reports offered a means of working through the implications of being immersed in a special learning environment by giving us the opportunity to reflect upon the events, the participants, and the ways in which we dealt with the process.

EVALUATION PROCEDURE

Group-Centered Interventions

We scrutinized the evaluation reports in search of examples of interventions that were related, at an operational level, to the project objectives.

Having identified relevant cases, we then assessed participants' responses to our interventions, and registered their effects. We discuss our findings in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

The Adjectives

We extracted all the adjectives contained within the reports and divided them into categories. In doing so, it was our contention that an activity as complex as "working with traumatized women" engenders reactions at the psychological, somatic and social levels, thereby influencing behavior, perception, sensation, cognition and affect. It was also our belief that these coping mechanisms would be changed, emphasized, corrected and extended as we pursued the training objectives over the course of the project.

Adjective Categories

In total, we identified 968 adjectives in the six reports, not including those used in the assessment circle undertaken in the final training module. Although we discuss each of the adjective categories below, the reader should bear in mind the fact that equivalent words do not always exist in English and German. However, we have endeavored to ensure that our translation is as faithful to the original as possible.

Category 1: Modifiers

Adjectives which intensify, increase, underline or make more extreme.

Examples: very professional, very slow, tiny deviations, only German women, little courage, lots of fear, very silly

Category 2: Value Statements

Words that judge, value or rate.

Examples: good answer, wrong, bad, morally, nice, professional, lazy, good attitude

Category 3: Body Sensations

Adjectives which describe an individual's condition at a sensuous body level.

Examples: wrinkled-up nose, ill, wounded, shitty, strong

Category 4: Activity

Descriptors of initiative, vitality, vigor (or their opposites).

Examples: exhausted, explosive, powerful, quick, slow, tough, vivid, politically active, sexual

Category 5: Relational Statements

Words that imply or describe a relationship.

Examples: keen, empathic, polite, social, open, erotic, present, reserved, competitive, lonely, affected, appreciative, together

Category 6: Emotions

Examples: anxious, guilty, happy, furious, pissed off, desperate, sad, funny, proud

Category 7: Cognitive or Technical Terms

Adjectives related to cognition (i.e., perception or thought).

Examples: pensive, resigned, perplexed, disappointed, vague, impressed, clever, traumatic, depressed, hysterical

Category 8: State of Being

Any word that implies an assessment of one's state and that cannot be categorized under Emotions, Cognitive or Technical Terms or Body Sensations.

Examples: apprehensive, pleasant, satisfied, finished, comfortable, strange, diffuse, cheerful, quiet

Principles of Evaluation and Group-Centered Work

As we have already made clear, our interventions in the training course were group-centered. That is to say, we placed particular emphasis upon group development, seeing it as a way of building self-confidence among participants. The following example illustrates the precise means by which we accomplished this.

During the second morning of the first module, we asked participants to describe their moods and dreams. Having spent the first day in small groups, punctuated by a number of mini-lectures, this was our first real opportunity to perceive and appreciate the women and their feelings. After the session, one of the group members approached us and asked if she could introduce a rule, namely that participants should avoid speaking, discussing or interpreting when another woman is making a statement. We took this as a reaction to the experience of having to deal with such a diverse group, as well as an attempt to provoke us into setting group norms and rules of behavior.

In our evaluation report, we described the group's mood as "immediately tensed" after the participant voiced her request. We responded to her by noting that there are as many opinions and perspectives on a given problem as there are women in the group, and thus that it behooves each member to decide for herself what feedback is helpful and what is not. Following this

intervention, a conversation ensued regarding the distinction between what might possibly be manipulative and what it means to be a mutual influence. The discussion became increasingly confused until there was no longer any scope for understanding. It was at this point that we decided to end the session: it was time.

In the seminars, participants continually expressed their disappointment with the fact that we were not more forthcoming with advice and opinions, and that all of our attention was directed towards their knowledge, their views and their possibilities. Even when we were engaged in dream work, the focus was always on the group's feelings, fantasies and associations. Thus, we were pleased when, during the course of the final module, several participants came forward to express their surprise at how far they had come in perceiving and appreciating their fellow group members, and how much they had learned from them. These comments were especially gratifying in light of the self-doubt, counter-transference and mood changes we had recorded in the evaluation reports, all of which we took to be indicative of our fear that we would be unable to meet the needs of participants. Of course, to a large extent we were merely reflecting the emotions of the group, who were constantly expressing their desire to "consume" our authority.

This meant, in effect, that we were often faced with participants who perceived our knowledge as more important or significant than that of the other group members, a problem that was especially marked during the supervisory elements of the course. Moreover, this in turn was exacerbated by the fact that we were not always successful in stimulating the women in their activities and reflections. We often reminded ourselves in the evaluation reports not to use the group like a stage (in the manner of gestalt therapy), but rather to focus upon developing a group-centered position. In the end we were somewhat successful in this regard, as attested to by the fact that the women were becoming increasingly active in their statements, in their personal presence, and in setting themselves apart from one another. We will relate another example in order to illustrate the dynamics of this process.

Relatively early on in the course, when we were at an emotional low point, both from trying to come to terms with a culture other than our own and worried that the project would fail to meet its objectives, we embarked upon a guided fantasy exercise to enhance personal power (Pendzik, 1996, p. 104). After spending a period of time in small groups painting and visualizing, the participants reassembled, each identifying with the role of an imagined wise woman, so that the group became an assembly of wise women. At that moment, a shy, anxious group member came forward to take over the leading role, and initiated a feedback and sharing exercise. The group followed her in this, rendering our instructions and guidance superfluous. We had not expected this woman, generally tradition-minded and reserved, to take charge

in the manner that she did. As we stated in our evaluation report, playing the role of the wise woman, she became iridescent and seemed to grow, adopting a tall, straight posture and occupying more physical space.

Evaluation Principles and the Use of Language

From Dependence to Independence

Participants' development in this regard can be traced through reference to the adjective categories "activities" and "emotions," with attributive descriptions changing as individuals' capacity to act and become more differentiated grew. In other words, our descriptions became less polarized (e.g., irritated, harassed behavior) in a manner that was reflective of growing self-confidence, competence and control on the part of group members. As is made clear in Table 1, this change was especially evident in the final module, when the score for activity statements (21.53 percent) was far higher than that registered in any of the earlier sessions. What makes this all the more remarkable is the fact that we had described the final weekend of the course as "rather sluggish," with the topic "suicide and prostitution" proving too much for the women, although they had been in favor of including it in the syllabus.

A'i for adjectives related to "state of being" and "body sensations," we understand these to be indicative of the women's socialization and identity formation, with the body in particular becoming a container for tensions and conflicts. Thus, while the first module was rife with negative attributions (e.g., broken, exhausted, muted, scared), a discernible change was already evident by the time of the second (e.g., safe, well, contemplative, comfortable, relaxed), with the sense of release becoming even more palpable later on (attested to by the use of such adjectives as witty, humorous and silly).

From Needs to Resources

Along somewhat different lines, we also registered significant growth in the use of cognitive adjectives over the course of the training (from 7.1 percent in Module 1 to 15.38 percent in Module 6). As one might imagine, not only was this due to the development of a shared reference system, but also to the project's role in stabilizing participants' capacity to classify and regulate events, so that they no longer felt overwhelmed by them.

Significantly, change was also apparent in the use of adjectives denoting emotion, particularly at our final meeting and in those modules that dealt with self-experience. We would argue that this was suggestive of participants' growing ability to perceive and accept their own emotional state of being.

TABLE 1. Adjectives Used: An Overview

| Categories | | Modules | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | II | III | IV | V | VI | |
| Modifiers | quantity | 61 | 43 | 36 | 35 | 38 | 11 |
| | % | 24.11 | 29.45 | 26.0 | 18.81 | 20.0 | 16.91 |
| Value statements | quantity | 22 | 14 | 15 | 29 | 10 | 3 |
| | % | 8.69 | 9.58 | 10.87 | 15.60 | 5.26 | 4.62 |
| Body sensations | quantity | 30 | 13 | 19 | 18 | 27 | 2 |
| | % | 11.85 | 8.90 | 13.76 | 9.67 | 14.21 | 3.07 |
| Activity | quantity | 26 | 17 | 20 | 27 | 19 | 14 |
| | % | 10.27 | 11.64 | 14.49 | 14.51 | 10.0 | 21.53 |
| Relational statements | quantity | 38 | 11 | 14 | 21 | 24 | 10 |
| | % | 15.01 | 7.53 | 10.14 | 11.29 | 12.64 | 15.38 |
| Emotions | quantity | 21 | 17 | 9 | 11 | 21 | 12 |
| | % | 8.30 | 11.64 | 6.52 | 5.91 | 11.05 | 18.46 |
| Cognitive or technical terms | quantity | 18 | 16 | 6 | 19 | 26 | 10 |
| | % | 7.11 | 10.95 | 4.34 | 10.21 | 13.68 | 15.38 |
| State of being | quantity | 10 | | | 11 | 13 | |
| | % | 4.9 | | | 5.91 | 6.84 | |
| TOTAL | quantity | 27 | 16 | 19 | 15 | 12 | 2 |
| | % | 10.67 | 10.96 | 13.77 | 8.07 | 6.31 | 3.08 |
| Body sensations and state of being | quantity | 253 | 146 | 138 | 186 | 190 | 65 |
| | % | 23.45 | 19.86 | 27.53 | 17.74 | 20.52 | 6.15 |

Meanwhile, attributions denoting anger, aggression or annoyance were reflective of the women's ambivalence and frustration as they entered into the training course, feelings which were themselves derived from fears of helplessness and powerlessness, and guilt that their own lives were better than those of the refugee women with whom they worked.

Needless to say, we had prepared ourselves for the outward surge of emotions (remembering the phases of the mourning process) by maintaining a measure of distance between ourselves and the group. To our mind, the manifestation of greater emotional openness served as confirmation that our resource-oriented work had improved the participants' capacity for control, thereby reducing the anxiety they felt in being honest about their emotional state.

The Ambivalence Inherent in a Solidaristic Relationship

In this section, we address the use of adjectives falling under the categories of "relational statements," "value statements" and "modifiers." As Table 1 shows, the frequency of relational adjectives in particular was subject to considerable fluctuation over the course of the seminars. Not surprisingly, they were especially common during the first module, when we were struggling to make contact with participants, and the atmosphere was one of affection and dependence on the one hand, and criticism and claims-making on the other. In one case, a participant who was a physician was asked for her professional opinion on an issue that had just been raised. She refused, saying that she was there to learn.

The group was surprised and taken aback by the manner in which we sought to guide them, give instructions, and introduce order into the chaos. Of course, our purpose in acting this way was to serve as models and to set boundaries, with the latter being particularly important in crisis management. In subsequent modules, our description of the relationships became increasingly varied, itself a function of the growing salience of the supportive element in our interactions. Still, it should be emphasized that our leadership position was never called into question, except for challenges related to our seeming failure (in the eyes of participants) to set limits or cut off discussion. As we already suggested, the pressure upon us to set limits was closely related to group members' desire that the "other one" regulate and impose conditions on their behavior.

Meanwhile, our use of modifiers and value statements in the reports serves to underscore very well the pressure and drive we were feeling from the group. Often during the breaks we would argue among ourselves concerning the "right" procedure or intervention, as the group listened with perked-up ears. Underlying these arguments, of course, was our sense of horror and fury at the injustice of the war, combined with feelings of self-doubt and unworthiness. Thus, it is not surprising that we tended to rate the working conditions as poor and the women as naive and non-feminist. However, even as we became increasingly morose in the face of our exhaustion and hopelessness, we sought to overcome our self-doubt by endeavoring to find value in the situation. The evaluation reports were of significant assistance in this regard, both as a way of protecting ourselves and helping us to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Still, despite this sense of unworthiness, the modifiers used in the reports made clear "how very much," "how completely" and "how deeply" we identified with the project and its objectives, even if this identification was severely tested by the participants, the "others" who were judging us and our work. They were individuals with lifestyles very different from our own: heavily family-oriented, subject to a highly patriarchal gender order, and

leading lives circumscribed by the needs of their children, husbands and relatives. It was only because of the war that they had become conscious of patriarchy's deleterious effects, forcing them to come to terms with disillusionment and disappointment. Needless to say, it took considerable energy and flexibility on our part to move away from our understanding of emancipation to the possibilities which they were willing to consider. We sought to highlight and discuss our differences, but at the same time we tried to encourage them to remain assertive and to retain the sense of power they had gained during the war. Moreover, it was precisely in this context that a space began to open for participants to give voice to their alternative biographies. For example, when one woman told the group that she lived alone, unmarried and without children, she was not criticized by other participants, but rather appreciated for who she was. Meanwhile, another woman came forward to say that, although her father had died during the war, she was not sorry and would never forgive what he had done to her family while he was alive. Finally, a widow was able to talk to group members about her secret lover without risking their judgment. The time for secrecy was past; the creativity inherent in alternative life arrangements was exposed for all to see.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have used self-evaluation as a lens through which to assess the impact of a feminist training project we carried out in Croatia in 1995-97. We wanted to share with the reader the difficulties inherent in undertaking such a project in a country still reeling from the effects of war and deprivation. Of course, part of our purpose in going to the region at the time that we did was to bear witness to all that had happened during the war, though this was not our only reason; we also wanted to assist in the skill enhancement of local professional women. In either case, the building of trust was crucial to the success of the project, and we believe that a feminist psychotherapeutic approach provided an appropriate basis upon which to initiate change and recovery.

This view was confirmed by the case studies submitted at the end of the training course, in which participants documented their use of the course material in their own work lives. In a particularly telling case, one of the women reported that "I felt changes in myself and my attitude towards other women. To show weakness is human and helps to build rapport." She went on to describe the process which led her to this insight: Everything that came out of the group was important. Each woman was part of the process. The group had its own strength and energy; it was weak at the beginning, but grew increasingly capable of self-reflection.

Meanwhile, another participant commented, amazed, that topics were de-

veloped through body work and relaxation. "After the war, relaxation is a novelty." Needless to say, these statements by the women in their case studies have provided us with important feedback, all the while underscoring the fact that we were able to succeed in our aims, despite being "strange, foreign, feminist women."

While many of the topics that had been raised in the seminars came up in the case studies as well, among them guilt, loss, helplessness and fear of violation, a number of the women went on to illustrate how the trauma induced by sexualized violence can be made tolerable through storytelling. This was also an important element in the training course as well, where it served either to promote or reinforce positive developments. Indeed, in this regard we cannot overstate how much we enjoyed the resounding vitality and friendliness of the women, and the warmth they showed us.

Finally, the project also confirmed in our minds the importance of difference to feminist theory and practice. That is to say, feminism can only gain by recognizing and celebrating the widely variable cultural contexts from which women emerge. We believe the training course gained by doing so, and we hope that our Bosnian partners share this belief as well.

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The Burden Left My Heart: Psycho-Social Services Among Refugee Women in Zenica and Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina During the War

Berit Schei
Solveig Dahl

SUMMARY. This paper presents psychosocial services for displaced women living in the war zones. Two study groups were formed from two cities in Croatia, Zenica and Tuzla. The services were designed to ameliorate distress and improve psychosocial functioning. A questionnaire-based evaluation indicated that highly distressed women derived greater benefit from group psychotherapy (Tuzla) than did the group

Berit Schei, MD, PhD, currently holds the Atkinson Chair in Women's Health Research at The Centre for Research in Women's Health, Toronto, Canada. Solveig Dahl, MD, PhD, is at the Psychosocial Center for Refugees, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, The University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway.

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Address correspondence to: Berit Schei, 790 Bay Street, Room 749, Toronto, Canada (e-mail: berit.schei@utoronto.ca).

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who participated in occupational activities (*Zenica*). [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678*. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

KEYWORDS. PTSD, psychosocial, trauma, war trauma

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina started in April 1992 and brought great suffering and hardship to the non-combatant population. Not only were deliberate military attacks upon civilians and civilian areas common, but so were arbitrary arrests, arson, murder, torture, detention, executions, rape and sexual assaults, forcible removal, displacement and deportation.

According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (1994), roughly half the country's inhabitants were driven from their homes. Although many sought refuge outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the majority were displaced within the former republic.

WOMEN: THE HIDDEN VICTIMS OF WAR

Reports of rape being used as a weapon of war began to circulate in the Western media towards the end of 1992. This information was confirmed by several international missions to the region, including Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, the World Council of Churches, the European Communities, as well as UNHCR.

In Norway, as in many other countries, news of such victimization aroused an immediate response on the part of women, with the shelter movement in particular putting the issue at the top of its agenda. Meanwhile, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), a large non-governmental organization that had been among the first to respond to the tragedy in Bosnia-Herzegovina by setting up refugee camps, launched a fund-raising drive called "Women: The Hidden Victims of War." Having already raised two million dollars by the Spring of 1993, the urgent question became one of how best to direct the funds so as to maximize their impact upon refugee women trapped inside the war zone.

PREPARATION: DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION

In order to address this question, NPA retained the services of one of the authors (SD), who is a psychiatrist with long experience in setting up services for rape victims in Norway. Her first task was to assess the situation and advise NPA on what it could do in this field.

During an initial visit to the Former Yugoslavia in 1993, it was impossible to enter Bosnia-Herzegovina due to the fighting. Thus, she used her trip to study the type of projects being set up in Croatia. Community-based women's organizations had set up a variety of services for women, with mental health professionals going into the camps to work with women on a volunteer basis. Among those working in the health field, gynecologists were the most likely to encounter raped women; psychiatrists would only meet those who came to them with severe trauma. Discussion with various groups indicated repeatedly that care for raped women should be made an integral part of all health interventions.

Zenica

In June, SD visited Zenica, a city in Central Bosnia that was under the control of the Bosnian government. With a pre-war population of 120,000, the city had also become home to an additional 40,000 refugees, of whom the majority were women and children. Most were accommodated by their relatives and friends, while the remainder lived in a number of sites, including schools, sports centers, cinemas and public buildings. Living conditions were extremely poor. Refugees had to contend with shortages of food and water, along with frequent power outages. Moreover, their movement was restricted both by the war and the breakdown in infrastructure.

Many of the refugee women were overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness, and had lost interest in life and their children. Since the schools were not in operation, the children were left either to roam the streets with little supervision or to fall into a passive, depressed state. Although various types of services had previously been established for the women and their children, dialogue with stakeholders made it quite clear that there was a continuing need for a range of psychological services.

NPA's psychosocial center for displaced women and their families in Zenica was officially opened in September 1993. Personnel included a Norwegian coordinator, a local coordinator and a professional staff of one psychologist, three social workers, two pre-school teachers, two teachers and one interpreter. In addition, six individuals were hired to provide support services, including cooking and cleaning. Half of the latter contingent were displaced people themselves. The aim of the service was to improve the psychosocial functioning of displaced women by giving them an opportunity to overcome problems of passivity and helplessness, and to identify victims of severe traumatization who were in need of additional psychological intervention, either as individuals or families. The program's agenda was set by staff members and open to change based on feedback from participants. The women engaged in group-based occupational activities, structured group conversations, educa-

tional and recreational activities, as well as being given the chance to receive individual or family counseling.

All women and children living in the refugee centers were invited to participate. The response was overwhelming and, in order to provide services to as many individuals as possible, two shifts were created, with participants only allowed to come in every second day. By December 1993, there were approximately 400 women and 250 children in regular attendance at Center activities.

Handicrafts were chosen as one of the activities because many participants wanted this, and it was a pastime that traditionally brought women together. Women were invited to take part in knitting, sewing, spinning and embroidery. Products were either sold in a shop created for this purpose (in the process providing individuals with a source of income), or made for use by family members. Emphasis was also placed upon cultural and educational activities, with courses offered in the English language, music, dancing and singing. Generally, women would also bring their children, who were divided into pre-school and school-age groups. With the educational system in disarray, many children had not attended classes since the beginning of the war.

The various groups were seen as ways for the women to engage in meaningful activities and reawaken their interest in life. The development of a social network was also facilitated by the presence of a social worker, who participated in structured group conversations. While there were no formal psychotherapeutic group activities, the psychologist or social worker routinely met with the women so that they could talk about issues of concern. The focus was on expressing feelings and coping with the present situation. Individual counseling was offered by both the social workers and the psychologist, who also acted in a supervisory capacity. Training in counseling was also provided to those who would be working with the women.

By inviting all female refugees to attend, the aim was to offer a large group of women psychosocial support, and to provide individual and family counseling to those who were in greatest need. The service was also grounded in the assumption that social support is essential for those coping with many types of traumatic experience. Lack of support is often a contributing factor to mental health problems among victims of sexual violence. Many women might choose not to disclose their experience, and a broad-based approach affords women with different traumatic experiences a chance to benefit from the service while giving individuals who have been raped the opportunity to disclose and receive targeted psychological treatment.

The program was expanded in 1994. When it was observed that there were groups of women who wanted to become involved, yet were unable to visit the Center itself, a mobile unit was established, consisting of a number of local professionals who visited refugee centers, where they offered counsel-

ing and other services. Also, whenever possible, they arranged for the women to meet together in groups, thereby making it more likely that individuals would receive referrals if they were in need of medical treatment.

Tuzla

Tuzla is an industrial city in northern Bosnia with a population, including outlying areas, of approximately 600,000. During the war, hundreds of thousands of people sought refuge here. As in Zenica, these individuals were accommodated in private homes and in various public buildings. Also like Zenica, NPA had a long-standing presence in the city, where it was involved in building housing for the refugees. In Autumn 1993 the war was in its full intensity. Poverty and blockade meant that the basic preconditions for survival were not being met. Hunger was rampant.

The situation in Tuzla differed from that in Zenica in that the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) had already embarked upon a psychosocial program focusing on the educational and recreational needs of displaced women. However, as UNICEF staff had pointed out, there was an ongoing need for psychological services. NPA decided to respond to this challenge by initiating a project that would complement the interventions of DRC. The aim of NPA's project in Tuzla was to deliver a range of psychological services to support and treat women who had been exposed to war trauma and were at risk of developing serious mental health problems as a result. Furthermore, NPA also sought to build local capacity by offering training to local professionals in the mental health field.

Headed by psychiatrist Dr. Irfanka Pasagic, a group of local professionals had initiated an outreach program in the Fall of 1993 meant to serve the needs of women living in some of the local refugee centers. Their work was undertaken in extremely difficult conditions, without any outside funding. NPA's arrival meant that they could benefit from professional support while at the same time being assured of sustained financing. Drawing upon the expertise of these individuals, NPA's Psychological Center came to employ two coordinators (one Bosnian, the other Norwegian), one project assistant, four part-time professionals and 21 therapists employed on an hourly basis, responsible for one to four group sessions each. Together with UNICEF, NPA developed training and education programs for those who would be employed at the Center, which were to be delivered by outside professionals.

The Center opened in June 1994 and was located in an existing home for women and children. Given that a number of other projects were being delivered in the same building, including a DRC-run activity center and an education program operated by *Gemeinschaft für Frieden und Hilfe* (GFH), it was hoped that inter-organizational cooperation would be facilitated, as would be refugee women's access to a range of services.

Women were either referred to the Center by a health professional or approached project staff themselves. Personnel visited refugee centers in order to describe the project and identify potential participants. An interview guide was developed to assist in the assessment of the women. Individuals who might benefit from the program were interviewed by a staff member and the most distressed were advised to join a psychotherapeutic group. The latter were generally made up of eight to ten women, with their activities guided by a strategy that was at once self-reflective and sensitive to the local environment. It was for this reason that women from similar educational and class backgrounds were placed in the same group, as were sexually traumatized young women. In all other cases, the groups were heterogeneous in composition.

Conditions under which the psychotherapeutic work evolved were extremely difficult. Most of the refugee women were from rural areas with little formal schooling, and many were widows or single mothers. Most suffered from multiple forms of traumatization, such as daily artillery shelling.

The first sessions were used to introduce participants to one another and lay the groundwork for subsequent interventions. Once mutual trust was established, the therapist could then move forward to the next stage, where women were invited to describe their histories. In order to work through the participants' traumatic experiences, a psychoeducational model was applied. In this model, women were shown how to recognize their psychological reactions and understand them, along with the relationship between their experiences and their present emotional state. Anxiety reduction strategies were also addressed. As the trauma became more integrated into the women's life histories, the therapist moved to the last stage, when women were encouraged to face the realities before them and make choices based on this awareness.

The groups met once a week, over a period that ranged from three to four months. The short duration was primarily due to a lack of resources. As more funding became available, the sessions were extended to six months, with staff taking steps to ensure that there was continuing social support for the women after the completion of the psychotherapeutic process. Moreover, therapists also encouraged participants to create self-help groups, with which they would subsequently meet on a monthly basis in order to discuss ongoing problems and concerns.

EVALUATING NPA'S SERVICES IN ZENICA AND TUZLA

Background

The development of NPA's projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina was shaped by local conditions and circumstances; the needs of the refugee women trapped

in the war zone; and the heroic efforts of local professionals, many of whom were themselves displaced within the former republic. As the services evolved, we (i.e., both the local and Norwegian professional staff) felt the need to document our activities in a systematic fashion, and determine whether or not we had succeeded in meeting project objectives. Thus, the authors of this paper, along with Atifa Mutpic, a psychologist, carried out an evaluation of NPA's work in Zenica and Tuzla, drawing upon funding provided by Norway's Council of Mental Health.

THE EVALUATION STUDY IN ZENICA

After the Center had opened its doors in Zenica, there was a discernible change in the attitudes and outlook of refugee women and children. That is to say, they began increasingly to share in the enthusiastic, caring atmosphere generated by the project and the organized activities. As one woman put it, "It makes me feel like I'm worth something." However, despite these impressions, we wanted to address a number of specific questions concerning women's use of the Center and the degree to which they benefited from it. In particular, we asked ourselves:

Were traumatized women able to attend the Center?

Were post-traumatic stress symptoms common among the women?

Was there any relationship between the severity of the trauma and the likelihood that women would suffer from post-traumatic stress? Was there a discernible difference in women's evaluation depending upon whether or not they suffered from post-traumatic stress symptoms?

Having developed a questionnaire with the assistance of the Center's interpreter, a small pilot test was conducted with four women. It included questions on socio-demographic characteristics, types of traumatic experiences and post-traumatic symptoms. Additionally, women were asked to describe the kinds of activities in which they were involved and how these had affected their psychological well-being. Drawing upon a typology of traumatic events, participants' responses were then grouped according to the severity of trauma. In other studies of human rights violations during wartime, it was generally found that women who had been detained were most likely to have been sexually abused.

Hence, Group 1 consisted of women who reported being incarcerated in a concentration camp, detained with other women, and/or been witnesses or victims of rape. Group 2 was comprised of women who had either witnessed or been victims of interpersonal violence. Group 3 included individuals who

had been placed in situations where they felt their lives were in danger. Group 4 was made up of women who indicated that family members had been killed or were missing. Finally, Group 5 consisted of women who had been separated from their families and/or their homes had been destroyed.

The Post-Traumatic Symptoms Scale (PTSS-10) was used to assess the degree to which women suffered from such symptoms during the seven days prior to the study. This is not so much a diagnostic tool, but rather a simple screening test. However, Weisreth (1989) argues that a positive response for six or more symptoms might be taken as indicative of a clinical diagnosis of PTSD. Accordingly, we chose six symptoms as our cut-off point in identifying post-traumatic symptoms cases (PTS-C).

All women present at the Center during the morning shifts of June 13, 14 and 15, 1994 were asked to fill out a questionnaire. Due to a shortage of paper products, only 239 forms were available. These were numbered and given to the women as they arrived. The women were asked to complete the form and leave it in a box. Those who did not wish to participate were asked to leave the questionnaire blank, though they were still encouraged to provide background information. Moreover, we endeavored to ensure that the women were given a measure of privacy by asking half of the women to go into one room and half into another. Staff members were on hand to assist participants if asked to do so. Of the 239 questionnaires distributed, 209 were completed. Results were analyzed with SPSS. We conducted an initial assessment of the data, which was then presented to the Center's staff as a basis for discussion and interpretation (November 17-26th, 1994). Personal interviews were also conducted with three women who visited the Center, as well as three staff-members. Finally, we invited women served by the mobile unit to fill out the questionnaire, with 69 agreeing to do so.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION STUDY IN ZENICA

The women who participated in the study ranged in age from 15 to 70 years (mean 35), and had been displaced anywhere from two to 32 months. Of the 119 married women, 31% were separated from their husbands due to the war. Roughly 23% of the participants had children who were less than 13 years of age. While a high proportion of the women had suffered severe trauma (see Table 1), none reported being raped. In total, 111 participants (53%) could be classified as a PTS-C. Incidence of distress was highest (71%) among those in Group 1 (see Table 2). Moreover, it was also found that multi-traumatized women were more likely to suffer from post-traumatic symptoms, as were those with children and/or an absent husband.

When asked to evaluate the Center's activities, women without severe PTS symptoms (91%) were significantly more likely (91%) than those who were

TABLE 1. War Traumas Among Bosnian Refugee Women Involved in the Norwegian People's Aid Centre in Zenica and Attending or Having Attended Group Psychotherapy in Tuzla

| Type of traumatic event: | ZENICA | | TUZLA | | TUZLA | |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|
| | #of women | % | #of women | % | #of women | % |
| Concentration camp | 23 | 11 | 8 | 12 | 11 | 7 |
| Detained | 54 | 26 | 26 | 38 | 24 | 15 |
| Raped | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 6 |
| Witnessed rape | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Experienced violence | 29 | 14 | 6 | 9 | 23 | 15 |
| Witnessed killing | 46 | 22 | 20 | 29 | 27 | 17 |
| Witnessed violence | 45 | 22 | 16 | 23 | 31 | 20 |
| Threats to life | 176 | 84 | 66 | 96 | 134 | 85 |
| Family member(s) killed | 60 | 29 | 34 | 49 | 95 | 60 |
| Family member(s) missing | 50 | 24 | 17 | 25 | 69 | 44 |
| Separated from fam. mem. | 138 | 66 | 49 | 71 | 130 | 82 |
| House/flat destroyed | 155 | 74 | 58 | 84 | 143 | 90 |

TABLE 2. Posttraumatic Stress

| Traumatic Background: | ZENICA | | TUZLA | | TUZLA | |
|---------------------------|--------|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | N | PTS% | N | PTS% | N | PTS% |
| Detained | 55 | 71 | 26 | 69 | 36 | 81 |
| Violence exposed | 44 | 50 | 12 | 75 | 28 | 82 |
| Life otherwise endangered | 82 | 51 | 29 | 65 | 75 | 62 |
| Severe loss | 11 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 71 |
| Loss | 17 | 29 | 2 | 50 | 4 | 50 |
| Total | 209 | 53 | 69 | 68 | 157 | 71 |

PTS-C (82%) to rate "being with other women" as very helpful. Moreover, differences were also identified in women's evaluation of their emotional problems. Among those with few symptoms, 93% stated that they felt "somewhat or much better" after having taken part in Center activities, as compared to 88% among women who suffered from six or more symptoms. However, it should be noted that the incidence of PTS-C was significantly higher among women who never visited the Center (68% as compared to

53% for women who took part in Center activities on a regular basis). While acknowledging that one must be careful in making comparisons between the two groups, there was nothing in the women's profiles that could explain this discrepancy, leading us to conclude that it was likely due to the role of Center activities in diminishing PTS symptoms.

Many traumatized women came to the Center and post-traumatic stress symptoms were common. Although the war took its toll on everyone, individuals who had undergone severely traumatic experiences were among the most likely to suffer from PTSD. Moreover, this group of women appeared to derive less benefit from Center activities than others who were less distressed.

THE EVALUATION STUDY IN TUZLA

As was made clear above, the approach taken in Tuzla was somewhat different from Zenica, in that the project was designed specifically to identify women who were highly distressed, and hence in greatest need of therapy. Moreover, by the time evaluation had begun in Tuzla, several groups had already completed the program and others were starting. The specific questions were:

How might one characterize the traumatic background of women who are attending or have attended group therapy?

How did participants evaluate the group treatment?

Might one identify any differences in symptom level between those who had completed the program and those who were just starting?

The Zenica questionnaire was used as a guide for developing the one in Tuzla, with the only major alteration being the replacement of the word "rape" with "sexual abuse." This change was made at the behest of local staff. Moreover, an instrument was added for evaluating therapeutic success that was based upon Yalom's model: 1995. Twelve statements (see Table 3) were listed, with women asked to identify the one that they agreed with most (ranging from "did not help me at all" to "helped me very much").

Collecting Information

During two weeks in May 1995, women attending the psychotherapeutic groups were asked to participate in the study by completing a questionnaire. The procedure was similar to that used in Zenica, with personnel available for assistance should the need arise. Women who had already completed the

TABLE 3. Evaluation of Group Therapy in Tuzla. Number and % Reporting "helped me a lot"/"helped me very much"

| | PTS-Cases n = 111 (%) | PTS-Cases n =57(%) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Belonging to a group of people who understood and accepted me | 94 (85) | 36 (77) |
| Learning I am not the only one with my type of problem*** | 105 (95) | 33 (70) |
| Feeling more trustful of group and of other people** | 101 (91) | 34 (72) |
| Therapists and group provided me with something to do | 101 (91) | 30 (81) |
| Getting things off my chest | 81 (73) | 29 (62) |
| Learning how to express my feelings | 85 (77) | 31 (66) |
| Trying to be like someone in the group who was better adjusted than me | 88 (79) | 35 (75) |
| The group was something like my family*** | 106 (96) | 35 (75) |
| Seeing and knowing others had solved problems similar to mine | 96 (87) | 37 (79) |
| Recognizing that life is at times unfair and unjust | 80 (72) | 29 (61) |
| Learning that I must take responsibility for the way I live my life no matter how much guidance and support I get from others** | 97 (87) | 32 (68) |
| Helping other group members has made me more satisfied** | 103 (93) | 35 (75) |

** p < 0.01' ***p <.0.001

program were recruited by means of the self-help groups in which they were involved.

RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION STUDY IN TUZLA

Of the 172 questionnaires that were returned, 14 were incomplete. The women had been displaced for periods of time ranging from three months to more than three years. The majority (75%) had children under 13 years of age, and most were separated from their husbands (67%). Not only were many of the participants characterized by severely traumatic backgrounds (23% were in Group 1), but most were PTS-C (70% or 111 women). When comparing the incidence of PTS symptoms among those who had completed group therapy (N = 82) and those who had not (N = 76), no significant difference was observed. However, the groups did differ in other characteristics related to the risk of becoming PTS-C. In particular, among those with children, the level of PTS-C was considerably lower for those who had

completed the therapy program (69%) than those who had not (81% were PTS-C). Again, while acknowledging the difficulties inherent in assessing whether or not this is a valid comparison, one might nonetheless suggest that the therapy had helped to reduce the level of distress within this particular subpopulation. Further credence is lent to this conclusion by the fact that the women's subjective evaluation of the therapy points in the same direction. Here, participants with children who were identified as PTS-C were among the most likely to state that the group therapy had helped them a lot or very much (see Table 3).

Although the proportion of participants who indicated that they had been severely traumatized was similar in both Zenica and Tuzla, the level of PTS-C was higher among the latter group. Of course, this is only to be expected given the criteria for taking part in the Tuzla program. Despite the fact that almost all of the women stated that the group therapy was helpful, a higher proportion of participants who were PTS-C reported that specific aspects of the program helped them "a lot" or "very much." As well, women with children who had completed the program were generally found to have fewer symptoms than those who were still in therapy, thereby underscoring the latter's effectiveness. In the words of one of the women, "I feel more relaxed and I can sleep now."

CONCLUSION

Displaced women living in a war zone constitute a high-risk group for traumatization and mental health problems. Moreover, in the context of the Former Yugoslavia in particular, there was wide recognition of the need to empower and support women who were victims of the conflict. As one might imagine, this was largely the product of sustained media attention on the issue of rape as a weapon of war, which served in turn to awaken the international community to the fact that the traumatization of women is closely associated with the destruction of families, social networks and societies.

In this paper, the authors have described two psychosocial projects focused upon the needs of displaced women living in war zones, as well as discussing the results of a questionnaire-based evaluation of the same. Of course, given the degree of difference between the target populations of the two projects (the Tuzla project was aimed specifically at women in need of therapy, whereas the Zenica Center was not), one must be extremely cautious in comparing results. Still, the findings do suggest that highly distressed women derived greater benefit from group psychotherapy (as was offered to them in Tuzla) than they did from the occupational activities organized by the Zenica Center. Those planning future interventions in war conditions may very well wish to take these findings into account.

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Sympathy for the Devil: Thinking About Victims and Perpetrators After Working in Serbia

Anja Meulenbelt

SUMMARY. This article describes the personal and professional experiences of the author while working as a mental health trainer in Serbia. In addition, various approaches to victims and perpetrators are reconsidered, along with the ethical implications of this work. The relationship between working with violence in a war zone and in a peaceful society is also explored. [Article copies available for a fee from *The Haworth Document Delivery Service*: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

Anja Meulenbelt has written many articles and several books on gender, sexuality, and other related subjects, combining psychology and sociology, and is also known for her novels. Her first book, *The Shame Is Over*, has become a feminist classic in Europe and was translated into 11 languages. Her latest book, *Chodorow and Beyond*, is about the dynamics in relationships between women and men, and between women. She is also the editor of a series of books called *Gender; Psychology and Mental Health Care* and is a writer and trainer for the Dutch organization, *Admira*.

The author is grateful to Sandra Visser for allowing her to use this title. It is from an old Rolling Stones song, but she has used it to refer to working with offenders. The author thanks *Admira*, the organization in Utrecht, that sent her and Gerda Aarnik to Serbia. She thanks them for their support and for this opportunity. Gerda Aarnik, the other trainer, is a friend and colleague and has been the author's main mentor in this work on violence.

Address correspondence to: Anja Meulenbelt, Tichelstraat 26hs, 1015 KT, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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KEYWORDS. Serbia, trauma, systemic approaches, feminist therapy, oppression, violence

Dusica doesn't want to eat rice anymore, ever again. During the worst year of the war, it was the only food she could get. Rice and flour. A friend from The Netherlands brought her a package of yeast so she could bake bread. A little embarrassed, she accepted it. Now in 1997, we are here and there is enough food again, but not much money with which to buy it. Dusica, who is a psychiatrist, earns about a hundred dollars a month. She does not complain. There has been no fighting in Serbia itself. No houses have been destroyed. There is water and electricity. But among the problems is a seemingly endless stream of ethnic Serbian refugees from Vukovar, Sarajevo, Mostar, and Krajina. They are farmers who have lost everything, old people who have been uprooted once before in the Second World War, "incomplete" families, usually missing a father, and some people who have professional training, but who do not get jobs.

Many live in crowded apartments with relatives. Those without relatives live in camps. I have visited a camp, one close to Smederevo, called Male Krsna. It is not the worst. There is simple food for everyone every day. The heaters work. Sometimes they get new shoes or sweaters. They have been living here for five years, five to six people in every room, in bunk beds, their few belongings kept in cartons. They have hung pictures of where they come from on the wall, pictures of the famous bridge of Mostar that doesn't exist anymore. They are ethnic Serbs who are not accepted by the Serbian population because they speak with funny accents and want to share in the scarce food, jobs and housing. But they can't go back. They have no idea what the future will bring or how long they will have to stay in the camp.

At the Institute for Mental Health in Belgrade, many of the patients are heavily traumatized. They are women who still wait for a husband who is probably dead. They are girls who have been raped in the war. They are children who have witnessed their mother being raped or their father being clubbed to death. They are young men, teenagers, who have been soldiers. Many families have been torn apart because the ethnic dividing line ran right through mixed marriages and children with a mixed heritage. There is a story about a Serbian girl who fled and asked for shelter at the house of an uncle. He didn't open the door because he was a Croat. Nobody knows what happened to the girl afterwards.

For us, the trainers from Admira, who are invited to give a course on sexual and domestic violence for the therapists from the Institute of Mental Health, it is not a surprise that violence within the family in any form, including sexual abuse of children and battering and abuse of women, has increased in the aftermath of the war. We have also worked in South Africa,

Albania and Palestine. We know that, in times of political turmoil, and especially after the worst seems to be over, violence in the family and between partners tends to increase.

We don't expect this first training in Belgrade to be an easy job. On the first evening, at an informal gathering, we see all the signs of vicarious traumatization, therapists and psychiatrists who are tired, overworked and burned out, who feel isolated, defeated and even cynical. It is a universal story that it is difficult to keep faith in humanity after being faced with so much senseless violence, so much cruelty. This first evening we long for South Africa, where life is also hard, but where we felt a sense of solidarity, togetherness that seems to be absent here.

When we start working we meet different layers of resistance. The first is the professional attitude of psychiatrists who are not used to sharing problems openly and showing their vulnerability to colleagues. The second is that we are women, feminists no less, who are not even trained psychiatrists. Who are we to tell them what to do? The third is that this is Serbia, an ex-communist country that has engendered a psychology of mutual distrust and fear of betrayal. We are representatives of the West, who has accused Serbia of being the main aggressor in the war in Yugoslavia and guilty of the worst war crimes, including the systematic rape of Bosnian and Croat women. They are furious about the international sanctions against Serbia which make it seem that they are the only perpetrators in this war. In *War and Sanctions*, edited by the Institute of Mental Health (Kalicanin, P., Lecic-Tosevski, D., Bukelic, J. and Ispanovic-Radojkovic, V., Eds., 1994), a comparison is made between their camps and Auschwitz. The Serbs were victims in the Second World War. They feel that they are being victimized again by this international condemnation. To me, their attitude bears a great similarity to that of the rapist who is not able to see himself as an offender, but feels that the whole world is one big conspiracy against him.

So we are tested. Do we really want to work with them? Will we listen to them without judgment? Can we be trusted? It is much the same way that a client tests a therapist. It lasts for a day before the first real problems are presented. In the first getting acquainted session, even asking someone's age seems too private, but the urge to talk about the difficulties they face in their work is stronger than their reluctance. "What do you do" asks one psychiatrist who has had classical psychoanalytical training, "when a man comes in who has lost his house, half his family, has no work and no money, who is desperate? Do I treat him for neuroses?" "What do you do" asks another, "when you see a young woman who wants a referral to a plastic surgeon to get rid of the scars on her face? She was mauled by a soldier with a knife, while she was forced to watch her mother being raped. Her father is missing. She wants to go abroad, but wants to get rid of the scars first because every

time she looks in the mirror she is reminded of what happened. I asked her, 'Don't you want to talk about the scars that are inside you?' She said 'No', and left. What did I do wrong?"

"My most difficult patient was a woman who traveled many miles to see me once a week. She was mixed Serb and Croat. Her husband was a Serb. She was raped by a group of Muslim soldiers, who forced her to fellate them. The first person she told, a mental health care worker, said she must have done it willingly. She had not told her husband because she feared that he would think the same thing and cast her out. She couldn't go back to her Croatian family because she had been married to a Serb. She came to my office several times, but after the first time she didn't say anything. She just sat there. I waited. After a few times, she didn't come back anymore. I don't know why."

"Maybe because you are a man," someone said. "Maybe because you are a Serb," someone else said. "Maybe because you should have shown more commitment and not waited passively, like we have learned, for her to start talking." Nothing in their training has prepared them for these kinds of problems.

Milan is a man who treats many women who were sexually abused. When we ask about his motives, he says that he thinks about his wife and daughters. It could have happened to them. Then he tells us the story of his most difficult patient—not a woman, but a man. He has sleeping disturbances, flashbacks, difficulties in concentrating, the classical symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. What happened? The patient's daughter turned sixteen. At that moment, he realized with shock that the girl he had participated in gangraping as a soldier had also been sixteen. He had kept her passport. "I listened to him," says Milan, "but I was paralyzed. I couldn't say anything. I didn't know what to do. After that first time, he didn't come back. Was there anything I could have done? What do you think I should have done?" he asks us, women, feminists from another country.

Victims and perpetrators. It would be so easy if we could divide the human race neatly into bad guys and good guys, into innocent victims and evil offenders. Black is o.k.; white is wrong. Women are victims; men are oppressors. A man in Soweto is the victim of apartheid, but what do we do when he sexually abuses children? Jews have been an extremely persecuted people, so we support Israel. But what do we do with the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land? Do we deny it or do we judge even more severely because they, especially they, should know better than to oppress others? "The Jews have learned nothing from the war," I overhear somebody saying. Were the death camps meant for education? The victim can become an offender; it happens. The mother, who, abused herself, mistreats her children; it can happen. The kid from the ghetto who beats up gay men; the shopkeeper who, while trying

to survive in a poor neighborhood, becomes racist; the Palestinian man who has been tortured in an Israeli prison who stabs his pregnant wife with a knife because he has been told she has been unfaithful: true stories. Has the rapist chosen to become a rapist? No. Does that make him less responsible for his acts? No again.

When I return from Serbia, I am faced with two different attitudes. The first is, "All those Yugoslavians are equally bad. That's how people are. It will never change. There will always be war somewhere." The other is even more cynical. "Why do you bother? Let them kill each other." The language of powerlessness and resignation, dissociation and indifference. Why should we care? Nothing we do will change anything anyway. Born of the same sense of powerlessness, the simple accusing of one party, the creation of black and white images of who is the real enemy.

Milan is a man. He is ashamed of his own gender, of what men are capable of doing to women. It is very important to him to show that he is a different sort of man, to dissociate himself from perpetrators. He asks for a lot of our attention. He wants us, foreign women, to acknowledge that he is a good man. Like there were good Germans during the war. It is one of his motivations to work with women, with victims of sexual violence. If he doesn't watch out he will turn into one of those knights in shining armor, a man who needs to rescue poor girls to be able to feel better about himself. A newer and softer sort of abuse of women, although it is well meant. "What would you have done with that man if he hadn't been your patient?" I ask Milan. "I would have hanged him by the balls in the middle of the city so everybody could have seen what he had done," Milan says heatedly. "But he was my patient, so I said nothing." "You don't think that he could see by your face what you were thinking?" "Maybe, I don't know. Well, probably. Yes, but what would you have done if you had been in my place?"

What I would have done? What can I do now? My own reaction to this question surprises me. A few years ago I would not even have been able to think these words. As a survivor of violence myself, as a feminist and as one of the women who was part of the Women's Mental Health Care Movement from the beginning, I saw myself on the side of female victims, and that did not leave me much space or even willingness to think about men, to think about offenders. It was us against them. What I would have done, had that man been my patient, was to praise him for the courage he had to admit that he had committed a serious crime. Is that not the biggest problem in working with offenders, their unwillingness to see themselves as responsible for their deeds? This man, in his despair, had already made that first step. It means that part of him, the part that wants to be a caring father of a sixteen-year-old daughter, has not yet been destroyed. Just praising him for his courage would not have been enough. I would have also let him know that what he did was

absolutely unacceptable. Did he have guilt feelings? He had reasons for them that I would not want to take away. Maybe, if I had been able to adopt this dual attitude of acceptance and nonacceptance, and if he had stayed and worked through this painful material, there might have come a time when he could have been able to ask for forgiveness sincerely. Maybe then he could have done something to make amends-not to the girl that he raped; that would have been using her again, but at least to the community that she came from. He might have been an example to other men. Maybe he should have to stand trial. Punishment is not our job as therapists and we should leave it to the judges and the police. Yet we also know that punishment alone seldom changes an offender for the better.

Working with offenders asks something different from us than does working with victims and survivors. I am not saying that working with victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse is easy, but at least we know where we stand: on their side. In working with offenders, there is an inherent complexity. **If** we offer only understanding and acceptance, they will have no reason to change. **If** we offer only rejection and judgment, they will have no reason to change. In The Netherlands for a long time, we could afford the "luxury" of working only with victims and survivors. Or so we thought. We were blind to the fact that caring for the victims did not change the offenders, and so, did not change the extent of violence against women. We could only help individual women after the battering or abuse had already occurred. Working in countries where people have not had the opportunity to build a separate women's mental health system or where women, for various reasons (no job, no money, no welfare system, losing their children, being separated from their whole network of kinship), could not leave their violent husbands made me more aware of different therapeutic options than trying to separate victims from offenders. I became more interested in couples treatment when possible, systemic thinking combined with feminism, and with building a working relationship with men who work with perpetrators. I also became aware of my own fear of working with offenders, a fear that I seemed to share with many women, that trying to understand what makes a man into an offender would mean forgiving, forgetting and acceptance, just as many battered and abused women have tolerated their own abuse because they understood the hurt little boy, the vulnerable man hidden inside their persecutor. It was a fear that too much understanding would take away our strength and weaken our commitment.

Virginia Goldner (1997) gave words to this confusion by stating that violence is never acceptable, but can be understandable, and that forgiving is up to the victim. Rather than an either/or approach, it is an and/and one. Sharon Lamb (1996) cleared up another misunderstanding for me. My feeling once was that understanding offenders would put the blame back on

victims. Lamb says that this is not a zero sum game. It should be feasible for us to look at the way a victim has colluded in making her own victimization possible, for instance, by giving priority to keeping a marriage intact to her own safety, without taking any responsibility from the offender. It should also be possible to understand the dynamics in relationships, for instance, that many men resort to violence, not when they feel powerful, but when they feel powerless vis-a-vis their wives, without blaming the woman for his anger and without forgetting that he is still the one who has raised his fist against her.

Once I thought systemic thinking and feminist therapy were mutually exclusive. I saw too many examples of hidden victim blaming in a too-orthodox concept that within relationships or families everyone is equally responsible for whatever problems there may be. Yet I also saw the shortcomings of a too-orthodox feminist viewpoint that could see women only as passive victims, men as offenders without any explanation of how they became that way. It is women like Virginia Goldner, among others, who have inspired me to a synthesis: feminist systemic thinking, including contradictions and creative tensions, a fierce combination of commitment to combat oppression, inside and outside of personal relationships (when we really think systemically the world is bigger than just the family), and a deep compassion not only for victims, but also for victims-turned-oppressor.

Working in Serbia has been a rich and challenging experience. It has made me aware of a complexity around the issue of violence that I had not realized as long as I stayed in a relatively peaceful and prosperous country. It gave me more insight into the mechanisms that combine war and oppression, violence in intimate relationships, trauma and gender. It is no coincidence, I think now, that no matter how big the cultural differences in countries like Gaza, Serbia, Albania and South Africa, there are similarities in the rise of violence just at the moment that people expect life to become less difficult. It has a lot to do with the aftermath of severe traumatization. It always has to do with gender. It is the men who have lost many of their traditional ways of proving themselves to be masculine, when they can no longer be providers, and have not been able to protect their families from poverty and the consequences of war, occupation, racial oppression and decline of state systems, who run the risk of becoming more violent in their relationships, while the women, who have somehow survived extremely difficult times without doubting their worth as mothers and wives, endure.

When dealing with violence within families and relations we are not only talking about methods of treatment and intervention, but also about ethics, about finding a way to stop the cycle of violence, about a balance between help and justice, about seeing an offender who has once been a victim himself, perhaps at the hard hands of his father, of the fear of showing weakness or not wanting to join in games and jokes that were denigrating to women, of

the pressure of his internalized myths about masculinity. In the case of the Serbian man who raped a sixteen-year-old Muslim girl, the fear of what his fellow soldiers would do to him if he refused to join them. Something happened to this man that made it possible for him to see the body of a sixteen-year-old girl as enemy territory that needed to be destroyed. We have to be able to see the human part in somebody who behaves in an inhuman way, to fight the illness, not the patient, as a Chinese proverb says. I am sure that years ago, if I were faced with Milan's patient, I could not have kept the contempt and revulsion from showing in my face just as it showed in his. ■ probably would have found it easier to kill than to understand. ■ probably would have chosen to have nothing to do with the case, to avoid my own contradictory feelings.

When we said goodbye, after that first training in Serbia (there were many to follow), we were tired and happy. So were the participants. Dusica had tears in her eyes when she embraced us and so did I. We promised to come back. At that moment, ■ realized that our discussion about victims and perpetrators had been a metaphor for the war we had only talked about indirectly. What we said about offenders, we said, between the lines, about Serbia. Working as therapists and trainers in countries with such a complicated political situation does not allow us to divide problems into neat categories of work with battered women, with abused children, with family therapy, but forces us to see the connections between political systems and personal suffering, challenges our way of thinking about women and men, about victims and offenders. It challenges not only our thinking about methods, but also about ethics. That, in itself, is our reward.

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Some Pitfalls for Effective Caregiving in a War Region

Edita Ostodic

SUMMARY. This article presents an overview of issues and concerns which can negatively impact the effectiveness of caregiving in a war zone by traumatization of caregivers, conflicting agendas and prejudice of foreign mental health organizers and trainers. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-342-9678. E-mail address: getinfo@haworthpressinc.com]

KEYWORDS. Caregivers, war zone, war victims, trauma

From the perspective of a mental health professional, I would like to share my experiences of organizing psychosocial programs and trauma recovery training in a war region. I would also like to stress some of the pitfalls of effective caregiving arising from the psychological state of both local and foreign caregivers/professionals working in such an environment.

The central assumption of this paper is that the professionals working in a war region are more or less traumatized by the war. Being part of a traumatized community as well as mental health professionals, local caregivers suffer both primary and secondary trauma. Playing the role of mental health caregiver, frequently approached by friends, relatives and team members who would like to discuss their own mental health problems, they feel re-

Edita Ostodic is affiliated with Medica in Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Address correspondence to: Edita Ostodic, WTC Medica, Mokosnice 10, 72000 Zenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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sponsible and somehow obliged to demonstrate their psychological fitness to help. In trying to overcome their own problems with a range of coping styles, they often suppress or deny signs of their own traumatization. A sense of their professional dignity often persuades them not to show, or even accept the idea of, their own traumatization. Even when local professionals do not obviously suffer from traumatic signs and symptoms, they may be characterized by invisible forms of traumatization that are capable of influencing relationships and communication with foreign caregivers, undermining the effectiveness of caregiving in mental health projects. I would like to touch upon several signs that are not easily visible or recognizable, particularly in comparison with the symptoms of heavily traumatized people in a war region. These include the following:

Feelings of shame and helplessness. They suffer from a lack of hygiene, clothes and food and are unable to change their material status.

Mistrust: expressed in relation to the real motives of foreign caregivers in offering help, the goodwill of colleagues, or the stories of clients.

Increased vulnerability directly related to decreased self-esteem and confidence.

Foreign caregivers are also involved in organizing mental health projects and training in war regions. In all too many cases, they bring with them attitudes and motivations which prove detrimental to the cause of effective caregiving. These might include (inter alia): different motivations for coming to the war region; they expect acknowledgment and appreciation for helping people in need, while seeking to acquire experience (or wages) without adequate commitment to the human beings who are suffering; prejudice concerning the country and the people who live there; superficial statements and generalizations about the beliefs, lifestyle and culture of the people with whom they work; a more or less colonial outlook, given concrete form in such statements as: "They are basically different from us"; "They don't have the needs we have"; "They are not as skilled as we are"; "I know better anyway"; and so on.

The following model illustrates, in concise form, the relationship dynamics that might develop between foreign and local caregivers. Of course, my purpose here is not so much to develop a universal model, but rather to provide a means of sharing experiences for consideration.

1. Feelings of shame and helplessness which, from a foreigner's perspective, offer evidence that appears to validate their colonial way of thinking about local professionals.
2. In turn, this colonial way of thinking exacerbates local professionals' feelings of shame and helplessness. In order to cope with these feel-

ings, they try to present a better picture of themselves and conceal what they feel they lack, whether material possessions or professional competency. Alternatively, they overcompensate with pride or even by putting down the foreigners, saying, for example, that "They could never cope with such a situation, we are better, we are special . . . "

3. Different types of motivation among foreign professionals foster mistrust on the part of local caregivers, who are often left wondering, "What hidden interest do they have in doing that?" or "Do they use us and our situation for their own ends?"
4. Increased mistrust by locals, again from a foreigner's perspective, supplies evidence to justify prejudices already held about local people: "They are different. We cannot understand each other"; or "It is in their culture to be suspicious."
5. Prejudices and colonial ways of thinking serve to heighten local professionals' sense of vulnerability, manifested in statements like "They don't see us as human beings"; and "They have no confidence in our professional abilities."

In this way, communication between local and foreign caregivers who work together on projects becomes saturated with mutual hurt, sapping the energy and morale of both groups in the process.

I worked in a project that was developed and supported by feminist groups from Germany and around the world. Endeavoring to put into practice principles derived from feminist theory, we always sought to ensure that there was an open door for discussing power issues and problems that might arise within the organization. However, power issues themselves determined who appeared in that open doorway.

An analogy could be made here to the kind of interactions that manifest themselves within trauma work between therapist and client as a result of an unbalanced power dynamic. A traumatized local professional, engaging in transference, might expect some kind of omnipotent rescuer and idealize the foreign caregiver/professional. However, this is inevitably followed by disappointment and fury when the reality fails to live up to such unrealistic expectations. The foreign caregiver (engaging in countertransference), faced with so much pain and need, might feel obliged to deal with more problems than is really feasible, thereby building unrealistic expectations among beneficiaries, and ultimately provoking negative reactions. In turn, this leads to feelings of disappointment and resentment towards those with whom s/he is working. Of course, the negative impact of unconscious attitudes and untreated traumatic signs is multi-faceted. In the first instance, this may be seen in foreign caregivers' sense that they are being neglected or have only gained superficial acceptance, leading to resentment and disappointment. In this way, they lose an opportunity to use the crisis situation for learning, development and

growth. Meanwhile, local professionals may find themselves caught between identification with their community on the one hand, and their role as mental health professionals on the other. Not allowing themselves to express their real emotions and vulnerability so as to remain professional, they may very well develop problems of dissociation, and have to invest more and more energy into trying to compensate for this gap between their two roles. However, having done so, they run the risk of burning out that much faster.

As for the project's client population, they receive precisely what they do not need or want: false care, overprotection, neglect, misuse, creation of unrealistic expectations and a tendency to become stuck in the role of victims. Needless to say, this process serves to undermine the effectiveness of local professionals, who lose their capacity to meet the real emotional needs of beneficiaries. They may also offer clients inappropriate coping techniques for their trauma symptoms, or discourage them from expressing their authentic emotions.

Along somewhat different lines, foreign caregivers, because of their prejudices and colonial attitudes, may offer false support or not meet the real needs of beneficiaries. Their unacknowledged personal motivations might lead them to build unrealistic expectations among beneficiaries, offering overprotection instead of support and strength. Meanwhile, the temptation of professional self-promotion may cause them to misuse the traumatic stories of beneficiaries.

What can be done to avoid these pitfalls in similar future war situations? There is a need for individuals to assess carefully the roles and goals of all parties, and to sensitize themselves to power issues inherent in the relationship between local and foreign care-providers. Thus, counseling of foreign caregivers/professionals should be provided, and include issues related to their own motivations, expectations, prejudices and colonial attitudes. It is also important that all parties develop a basic knowledge of transference and countertransference issues involved in working with traumatized people, as well as a thorough understanding of trauma issues more generally, including symptoms, relationship dynamics and forms of communication that might be indicative of traumatization in local people and team members.

Training for local mental health professionals should offer them a chance to get in touch with signs of their own trauma. It should provide a space and an opportunity for vocalizing their own fears and concerns. While such an approach would not necessarily entail therapy, it would provide professionals with an awareness of and sensitivity towards their own emotional problems. At the same time, it would create an opening within which local professionals could receive acknowledgment and acceptance from foreign colleagues and others.

It would be possible to combine this approach with theoretical issues

associated with trauma, legitimating caregivers' traumatization without damaging their professional dignity, and encourage them to accept themselves and their vulnerability. Needless to say, it could also serve as an important means of preventing burnout among local mental health professionals.

If these requirements are to be met, the training should be regular, organized as early as possible, and involve stable groups. It should be a combination of self-experience and educational interventions. Exercises and workshops used during the training would also provide professionals with a tool they could subsequently use in their own work with clients.

Index

- Abortions 80,95
ADMIRA 6,94,97-98,103-104,154
Afghanistan 49
African Americans, treatment of
 in Europe 29-30,60
 in U.S. 25,27-29,30,59,73-74,77
Agger, Inger 10-11
Akayesu trials 75
Alcohol abuse 98
Algeria 49
Amistad (film) 59
Amnesty International 140
Anglo-Saxon law 48
Angola 14-16,64-65,75
APA Division of Peace Psychology 16
Apologies for atrocities 3,5,28,30,73-74
Arbour, Judge 55
Art therapy 117,142
Asylum; asylum countries 10,12,13,
 40,119,124
Austria 124,125
Autonomous Women's Center Against
 Sexual Violence 83-89
- Belgrade 83-89,92,94,155
Belgrade Institute for Mental Health
 103-104,154,155
Blewitt, Graham 54
Bosnia-Herzegovina 79,84,107-120,
 122,123,140
Bremer, Liv 123
Bribes 113
Bungalow indictment 74
- Care providers in war regions. *See*
 also Training issues; *related*
 subjects
- boundary issues 96,101,118,
 161-162
coping mechanisms 96-97,104-106,
 114-115,118
organizational support needs 97,98
pitfalls to effectiveness of 3-5,
 161-165
relationship dynamics between
 local and foreign 113-115,
 128-128,162-164
transference issues 5,118,163-164
trauma effects
 primary trauma of local
 caregivers 105,128,
 161-162,164
 secondary traumatization 4,5,
 105,114,118,161-162
- Caritas Leverkusen 123
Cellebici case 65
Center for Women War Victims
 (Zagreb) 94
Child soldiers 15,16
Children
 abused by traumatized parents 85,
 112,117,154-155
 conceived by rape 80,95,96
 as war crime/rape victims 95-96
 war events' and trauma effects on
 18,93,117,141,142
 in Angola, and responses to
 15-16
 psychotherapeutic support
 program for Bosnian women
 and 109-120
- Christian Children's Fund 15
Civil law 63,65,66
Civil rights. *See also* Human rights;
 Women's rights
 U.S. movement 28,35-36

- war zone interventions toward strengthening 86
- Clinton, Bill 28,73
- Common law 63,65,66
- Community-level trauma and interventions 3,4-5,14-16, 18,57
- Continental law 48
- The Coordination of Women's Advocacy (CWA) 12-13
- Costa Rica 40,45,46,49,52
- Crimes against humanity 45,50, 54,56,68,81
- Croatia; Croats 80,85,93,121-138
- Cultural issues. *See also* Western perspectives
 - in alternative therapeutic activities 117
 - in community-based interventions 14-16
 - in medical exams 101-102
 - of patriarchal social order 116-117, 128-129,136-137
 - in peace-building programs 13-14
 - in training programs 130,136-137, 138
- Culture, war's destruction of 45. *See also* Genocide

- Danish Refugee Council (DRC) 143
- Dayton peace agreement 97,115
- de la Rey, Cheryl 13
- Derzic, Lejla 123
- Detention centers; concentration camps 27,44,56,74,84,87, 95-96,145-146
- DHH 108
- Domestic violence; peacetime violence. *See* Families; Violence against women
- Drug abuse 112

- Eisenhower, Dwight 38

- Enslavement of women in wartime 36-37,79,80,81
- Ethical issues in war-context therapies 4,10
 - and with other violence perpetrators 156-160
- Ethnic cleansing. *See* Genocide
- European Parliament 13
- Evil, nature and prevalence of 4,5, 27-28,50-51

- Families
 - counseling services for 141,142
 - cultural emphasis on patriarchal order and 116,128,136-137
 - ethnic/ideological divisions in 95, 99-100,154,156
 - mother-daughter relationships 95-96,98
 - of rape/torture victims 32,50
 - trauma-related violence in 85,92, 95,115-116,154-155,159-160
- Fantasy exercises; dream work 99,105, 117,127,133
- Feminist therapy; counseling interventions. *See also* Psychotherapy
 - anti-violence work, premises of 125
 - Belgrade feminists' experiences with female war survivors 83-89
 - feminist principles and 8
 - global awareness in feminist views and 1-5,8,9-19,64-65, 66-67,102
 - human rights action agenda for 17,18-19
 - peace psychology intervention project 8-19
 - systemic approaches integrated 158-160
 - theory and activism integrated 2
 - toward reconciliation and social memory 10-11

- Feminist training program for Croatian psychotherapy professionals 121-138. *See also* Training issues
- organization and financing 123
- project design
- assumptions 123-125
 - challenges 127-129
 - concept 125-126
 - evaluation principles and strategies 126-130
 - and coping mechanisms assessment 131-132
 - and group-centered work 127,130-131, 132-134
 - and language use 134-137
 - project development history 122
- First National Women's Political Caucus 32
- Foca indictment 37,45,67-69,74,79-81
- Ford Foundation 54
- Forgiveness
- granting of, by victims 11, 158-159
 - sought by perpetrators 3,5,28,30, 73-74
- Fritz Perls Institute 123
- Gavovic, Dragan 80
- Gemeinschaft für Frieden und Hilfe (GFH) 143
- Gender
- relationship of violence, traumatization, and 159
 - women's acknowledgment of race and 31-32,35-36
- Gender issues. *See also* Women's rights
- of human rights 10,40-41
 - in perceptions of war crimes and victims 12-13,30-31,32, 36-37
- Genocide; ethnic cleansing
- 40,45,50,84
 - prosecution probability for 48-49
 - sexual violence as strategy of 41,44,45,59-60,75-76,87
 - U.S. African American treatment compared with 28
 - U.S. response to events of 35,48-49
- German Evangelical Church 110
- German People's Aid 123
- Global awareness in feminist views and interventions 1-5,8,9-19, 64-65,66-67,102
- Golden Notebook* (Lessing) 61
- Goldner, Virginia 158,159
- Goldstone, Richard (former ICTY Chief Prosecutor) 12-13, 31,41,44,54-55
- Grave Breaches 81
- Group work
- in caregiver training programs 115,127,130-131,132-134
 - PTSD treatment 146-150
 - refugees/trauma victim interventions 110,141-142
- Guatemala 3,58,64-65
- Guilt
- collective guilt 47
 - of local care professionals 96,102
 - perpetrators' acknowledgment/apologies 3,28,30,73-74
 - of war survivors 118,119
 - hierarchy of pain and 87
- Handicraft activities 10,142. *See also* Art therapy; Occupational activities
- Hatred
- internalized by victims 118-119
 - perpetuated by nationalism 86-87
 - and prevention of 102,105
- Healing and recovery from trauma
- community-level 3-4,5,15-16
 - cultural issues 15-16
 - and justice, connection of 3-5, 23-24,47
 - by bearing witness to victim testimonials 3,10-11,86-87,

- 92,96,118,123-125,128. *See also* Testimony, legal
 by confrontation of perpetrators 3,5,12
- Helsinki Watch 140
- Herweg, Friedel 123
- Herman, Judith 124
- Hitler, Adolf 104
- Holocaust 37,40,73,74
- Human rights. *See also* Civil rights
 environmental preservation as 52
 feminist professionals' action agenda for 18-19
 hierarchy of, in wartime 88
 internationalization of 40,41,42-43
 women's rights as 10,40-41
- Human Rights Watch 32
- Humiliation of women in wartime 86,112,124,128
- Humor, use of 96
- Hungarian Crisis (1956) 122
- "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children" (UN report) 18
- Impunity 2,3,47
- Incest 67,92,95,97
- Interdisciplinary interventions
 cultural issues 101-102
 political interferences in 85. *See also* Nationalism
- International Conference on Human Rights (1992 Vienna) 42-43,44
- International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). *See also specific war crimes and cases*
 creation and purpose 49,64
 gender policy development 55
 investigative policies 55,67
 and witness protection issues 12-13,65,119-120
 members and staff. *See also specific persons*
 experiences of stress and coping 5,26-28,37,49-52,57-59, 60-61
 interviews with 23-38,39-52, 53-78
 men-to-women ratio 44-45
 sexual violence prosecution experience among 55
 proceedings of 71
 comparisons with Rwanda tribunal 12-13,74-76
 vigilance of women's organizations toward 45,81
 statutes of 33,50,54,81
 Crimes Against Humanity 50, 54,56,68,61
- International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda 12-13,65,68,74-75
- International criminal tribunals 1,2,3
 World War II trials 68
- International Declaration of Human Rights 40
- International Humanitarian Law 80
- Internationalism: colonialism progression to 62-63
- Japanese American 73
- Jews 28,73,74
- Justice. *See also* International Criminal Tribunal *subjects; specific crimes; related subjects*
 individual accountability toward 2, 33,47
 international community demands for 10,64-65,66 therapeutic role of. *See under* Healing and recovery from trauma
- Karadzic 36,44. *See also* Foca indictment
- Kelley, Nancy 2
- Kleiverda, Gunilla 93

- Kosovo 84,88
 Kozarac 87
 Krajina 123,154
- Lamb, Sharon 158-159
 Latin America 54,58. *See also specific countries*
 Lessing, Doris 61
 Little Rock, Arkansas, school desegregation (1957) 29,37-38
- Machel, Grace 18
 Male Krsna refugee camp 154
 Male violence. *See* Violence against women
 McDonald, Gabrielle Kirk 41,44,45
 interview with 23-38
 McKay, Susan 13-14
 Media
 entertainment
 U.S. courtroom-theme shows 63
 violent content in 28,57,59
 attention to war events and atrocities 41,87,124,140 and exploitation of victims by 84,94-95
 and post-TV news violence syndrome 85
 and to women's support efforts 122
 Medica Mundiale 6
 Medica Zenica 102
 Mental Health Institute for Refugees (Pharos) 97
 Mental health providers. *See* Care providers
 Milosovitch [Milosevic, Slobodan] 46
 Mladic 36,44. *See also* Foca indictment
 Monteiro, Carlinda 15
 Monuments to violence survivors 5, 30,31,74
 Morality, social and legal, discussed 62-63
- Mostar 154
 Miichele, Agnes 123
 Muslims 27,45,79,80-81,85,93-94
 Mutpicic, Atifa 145
Myths About the Powerless: Contesting Social Inequalities (Lykes et al.) 18
- Nationalism
 hatred-arousing propaganda of 85
 and feminist transnationalism responses 86-87,94,97-98, 102,103-104,105
 ideology conflicts
 in families 99-100
 with health care 85,94-95
 implications of 93-95
 and "mirroring" phenomenon of outsiders 105
 morals of 62-63
 women's suffering under patriarchal system and 123-124
- Native (Indigenous) Americans 59
 Netherlands: program sponsorship by 92-93,97-98,103-104
 Nikolic case 44
 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) 12,14,16-17,45,86, 93,97. *See also specific organizations and programs*
 Northern Ireland 75
 Norway Council of Mental Health 145
 Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) 123
 refugee project 139-150
 Nuremberg trials 68
- Occupational activities support program (Zenica) 141-143,144-148,150
 Odio Benito, Elizabeth 27
 interview with 39-52
 Omarska 27,74,87

- Oppression, internalized, and mechanisms of 102-103
- OSCE Democratization Branch (Sarajevo) 10
- Pasagic, Dr. Irfanka 143
- Patriarchy; patriarchal systems 87,116
women's victimization
 compounded within 59-60,
 123,124,125
- Peace, means toward achieving 2,47
- Peace building, women's roles in 2,51
and project for 13-16
- Peace psychology 8
and feminist intervention projects
9-19
- Perpetrators of violence/atrocities
chance and politics of actions of
45-46
collective guilt of innocents and 47
individual accountability sought
toward 2,33,47
legal rights of 70
redemption through apology by
3,5,28,30,73-74
victim confrontation of 3,5,12
- Physicians; medical personnel 85,101-102,
125
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),
war-related 57,92
in children 15
evaluation and interventions for
145-150
as misnomer in former Yugoslavia
105
of torture victims 51
of war crime perpetrators 156
- President's Interagency Council for
Women 17
- Psychologists; psychiatrists. *See* Care
providers
- Psychologists for Social
Responsibility (PsySR) 5,6,
8-9,12,13,16-17
- Psycho-Social Projects of the
European Community Task
Force 10
- Psychosocial reconstruction, and
women's peace-building role
13-14
- Psychosocial services; supports
feminist interventions in Belgrade
83-89
refugee programs in Zenica and
Tuzla 139-151
- Psychotherapy 114. *See also* Feminist
therapy; *related subjects*
client self-discovery approach
24-25
relationship of justice and 1-5,
23-24,47. *See also under*
Healing and recovery from
trauma
- Punishment 2,158. *See also*
International Criminal
Tribunal *subjects*; Justice
and impunity 2,3,47
and stigmatization of perpetrators
4,5
and of victims instead of 2,
47-48,65-66,73 violence
victims' internalized
self-blame and 3,117-118,119
- Quakers 58-59,63-64
- Race, women's attention to issues of
gender and 31-32,35-36
- Racism
allegations toward Rwanda tribunal
74-75
toward African Americans, in U.S.
27-29,30,37-38
in Europe 29-30,36,60
- Rape. *See also* Violence against
women
power dynamics of aggression and
76-77

- war-related sexual violence and
 - as continuum of male violence 1,3,4,41,43,50-51,56,67,84-86, 88,115-116,122,124
 - military sanctions of 30,36-37
 - as political asylum basis 124
 - as strategy of genocide 41,44, 45,87
 - as torture 44,50,81,87
 - as war crime 32,44,66,68,87
 - defined 56
 - indictment/prosecution of 12, 30-31,32,41,44,50, 54,56,68,79-81
 - as weapon of war 32,87,124, 140,156,160
- Rape victims. *See also* Trauma, war-related; Violence against women
 - adolescents and children as 95-96
 - disclosure issues
 - in counseling approaches 9-10, 93,95-96,112,142
 - legal testimony and witness protection 12,30-31,32,48, 65,70 73
 - social and family persecution from 9-10,73,80-81,93
 - incidence of, in Yugoslavian war 31
 - men as 80
 - monument to 5,30,31,74
 - political exploitation of 85,94-95, 101
 - rape impregnation 80,95,96
- Recreational activities 117,142,143
- Refugees
 - avoidance of feminist agencies 104
 - displacement locations 140,141
 - asylum countries 10,12,40,119
 - camp/centers, and conditions in 93,109,113,141,143,154,155
 - interventions and programs for 10, 12,93,97,110-111,139-150
 - population incidence 112-113, 115,140,141
- Reinhardt, Angela 123
- Roe vs. Wade 32
- Rwanda 12-13,49,54,65,68,74-75,76
- Sarajevo 10,154
- Sarovic, Irena 9
- Scheffler, Sabine 123
- Schiller, Karin 123
- Self-help groups 110
- Self-help psychoeducational brochure 9-10
- Sellers, Patricia. *See* Viseur-Sellers, Patricia
- Serbia 30,93,154,155,159,160
- Serbian feminist organizations 94
- Serbian regime 83-89. *See also* Nationalism
- Serbs 79,80,85
- Sexual dysfunction of men 98
- Sexual violence. *See* Rape; Rape victims; Violence against women
- Slavery. *See* African Americans; Enslavement
- Smederevo 154
- Social memory 10-11
- Social values, inception and flourishing of 64
- SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence (Belgrade) 84-85,88,92,99
- South Africa 3,14-16,54,154,155,159. *See also specific countries*
- Split (Croatia) 94,122,123
- Srebrenica 113,115
- Tadic, Dusko [Dusan J], and trial of 24, 26,27,29,33-35,37,41-42,65
- Testimonials of trauma victims, and bearing witness to 10-11, 86-87,92,96,118,123-125,128
- Testimony, legal, of war crime victims/witnesses 30-31,42-43

- witness support and protection
 - issues 3,12-13,47-48,65-66, 119-120
- Tokyo trials 68
- Torture, and victims of 9,37,40,44, 50,79,81,112
- Training issues for war-region caregivers. *See also* Care providers; Feminist training; *related subjects*
 - boundary issues 96,101,118, 161-162
 - communication training 100-101
 - coping strategies 99-100,105-106
 - cultural considerations 101-102, 130,136-137,138
 - evaluation for program
 - development 96-98
 - experience-based knowledge
 - development 98-99
 - interdisciplinary cooperation 101-102
 - organizational and management skills 100-101,125
 - for refugee counseling 141,143
 - social power differential
 - recognition 102-103
 - for war-affected children's care 15-16
- Transference and countertransference
 - issues 5,118,163-164
- Trauma, war-related, and victims of. *See also* Families; Healing and recovery; Post-traumatic stress disorder; Rape victims; Refugees; Training issues; Violence against women
 - community-level, and interventions 3,4-5,14-16,18,57
 - counseling approaches
 - crisis intervention focus 118
 - cultural considerations 15-16, 113-114,116-117
 - safe environments 110-111,114
 - social context approach 9-10
 - therapeutic model for 111
 - professionals, effects on
 - local caregivers'primary trauma 99,105,128,161-162,164
 - secondary trauma of foreign caregivers and 4,5, 105,114,118, 161-162
 - on war crime tribunal personnel 5,26-28,37,49-52,57-59, 60-61
 - psychological and physical effects
 - and coping mechanisms 92, 118-119
 - pathological reactions 92
 - repression and denial 92,96, 115,162
- Tuzla 107-120,129,143-144,148-150
- Tyson, Mike 33

- UNICEF 143
- United Nations 12,18,40,46,93-94
- United Nations Fourth World
 - Conference on Women (1995 Beijing), Platform for Action 14,16-17
- United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 108,140
- United States 17,125. *See also*
 - Western perspectives
 - apologies for atrocities 73-74
 - attention to events of wars and genocides 35,48-49
 - legalistic values in 63
 - witness cross-examination practices 32,33,47,48
 - military vs. social priorities 17
 - racial issues 27-29,30,37-38,59

- Vatican, the 73,74
- Vengeance; revenge sentiments
 - of Balkans 30,92
 - diffusing through justice 4
 - violence fueled by 47

- Violence
- dynamics of aggression and victimization 156-157, 158-159
 - ethics of social and war-related 58-59
 - military spending rationale and 17
 - vengeance as 47
- Violence against women; sexual violence. *See also* Rape; Rape victims
- social legacies from 59-60,77
 - war-related
 - as continuum of peacetime male aggression 1,3,4,41,43, 50-51,56,67,84-86,88, 115-116,122,124
 - and of everyday sexuality 76-77
 - and feminist systemic approach to cycle of 158-160
 - marginalized by war crime tribunals 1-2,30-31,49,68
 - sociopolitical context of 79-81, 86,124
 - therapy models' reorientation toward 4-5
- Viseur-Sellers, Patricia 41
- interview with 53-78
- Vukovar 154
- Walker, Alice 35
- War crime tribunals. *See* International Criminal Tribunal *subjects*
- War crimes. *See* International Criminal Tribunal *subjects*; Rape; Violence against women
- War and Sanctions* 155
- War victims/survivors. *See also* Trauma, war-related; *related subjects*
- aggressors/war crime perpetrators as 155-160
 - dynamics of victimization 156-157, 158-159
 - hierarchies of violations and effects of 87-88
- Weddington, Sarah 32
- Wessells, Michael 15
- Western perspectives; values 102, 104-105,116
- cultural and political sensitivity issues 15-16,18,95,101-102, 104-105,116
 - intra-psychic recovery focus of 4-5
 - relationship dynamics with local care providers 128-129, 162-163,164
 - resistance/resentment toward 95, 97,155
- Woman-centered programs for peace building 14
- Woman-centered training. *See* Feminist training
- Women in Black Against War 83-89,92
- Women for Meaningful Summits 16
- Women for Women 10
- Women's Association of Bosnia-Herzegovina 94
- Women's Association of Split (Croatia) 123
- Women's Autonomous Center (Belgrade) 5
- Women's rights; Women's issues. *See also* Gender issues
- Foca indictment relevance toward justice and 79-81
 - human rights focus on 10,40-41
 - power structure representations for 46,49
- Women's solidarity
- toward peace building 2,51
 - in wartime 84,88-89,128-129. *See also specific programs*
- World Council of Churches 140
- World War II 30,36,40,41,68,97, 108,122,124,154,155. *See also* Holocaust

Yugoslavia, former, conflict in 54,
59-60,64,75,83-84,140. *See*
also specific regions; cities

Zenica 84,102,110
 psychosocial services project in
 141-143,145-148,150
Zepa 115

Zagreb 84,93,94,122

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