It is impossible for me to evade the place that the Israeli has occupied in my identity . . . Israelis changed the Palestinians and vice versa. The Israelis are not the same people that came, and the Palestinians are not the same people that once were. In the one, there is the other. . . . The other is a responsibility and
a test. Together we are doing something new in history. . . . Will a third way emerge from these two?

MAHMOUD DARWISH

All real living is meeting.

MARTIN BUBER

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Preface

Four decades ago I went to Israel with a backpack and a question: Is it possible for Arabs and Jews to work together in mutual respect? The Vietnam War had just ended, but the Arab-Israeli wars continued. I was one of those Americans reared on the Civil Rights movement, arrested for protesting Vietnam, and empowered by second-wave feminism. At that moment in history, age-old injustices like racism and imperialism seemed tractable.

Israel turned out to be an epiphany for a young woman who had lived her entire life as a minority and was suddenly experiencing the safety and spaciousness of belonging to the majority. My personal religious holidays were suddenly national holidays. I shed some of my internalized stereotypes of Jews as I witnessed the diversity of my people: blond-haired or black-skinned, truck driver or president. I listened to tales of courage and survival, of exile and holocaust that brought this rainbow people home to their ancestral lands.

Yet the dark side of dominance tempered this relief and pride. I listened to Palestinians' heart-wrenching stories of exile and destroyed villages, of second-class citizenship in Israel, crushed dreams for independence, and daily dangers under Israeli military occupation. Palestinians' unprecedented hospitality and welcome into their communities moved me. My admiration for the Palestinian people was born in the same soil as my love for Israel. I couldn't accept that one people's political and cultural renaissance was another's devastation, that each people saw the other as the obstacle to freedom. The near-absolute segregation between Jews and Arabs seemed a terrible loss to both of them. A daily disregard for the human dignity of the other contradicted the deep compassion expressed in each people's heritage and way of life.

In an effort to make sense of it all, I talked to Israelis and Palestinians and read everything I could on the subject. Forty years ago, the only writings available told two totally different stories. It was outrageous to read Zionist accounts of history that either omitted Arabs or included them only as obstacles or murderers. It was painful to read Arab accounts of Jews as monsters and imperialists, and of Zionism, the Jewish national dream of political freedom, as racist. This initiation bred in me a suspicion of facile dichotomies between villains and heroes, victors and vanquished, as well as skepticism about the incessant cycles of blame that sanctified victimization. It taught me that the ways we tell our stories have life-and-death consequences.

My stereotypes of Arabs and Jews were not the only ones to be challenged. Through my newly opened feminist eyes, I looked for other women to continue the radical explorations of the realities of being female and ended up founding the first feminist group in Jerusalem. The myth of gun-toting, liberated farmer/soldier Israeli women dissolved into a more nuanced reality of inequalities in a militarized society. The myth of oppressed Arab women gave way to a more complex understanding of their different kinds of power that are invisible to Westerners. The exhilaration of starting this group gave me a paradoxical sense of both the dynamic democracy of Israeli society, with its deeply rooted Jewish imperative for social change, and the entrenched ignorance that undergirded Israeli institutionalized inequalities for women, Palestinian Arabs, and the half of the Jewish population of Israel who were from

Middle Eastern and North African countries.

I later returned to Jerusalem to apply what I had learned in an undergrad sociology course with Professor Maury Stein on intergroup work on inequality. Co-counseling theory and practice allowed people from both sides of a power imbalance, oppressor and oppressed, to work on racism, sexism, classism, and anti-Semitism. People who had been targets of injustice communicated to members of the dominant group that perpetuated injustice. I led classes and workshops for Palestinians and Israelis who for the first time directly witnessed the other's suffering and dignity. They whispered, cried, and shouted details of their lives that exposed the one-way nature of oppression, as well as the insidious internalization of oppression that causes people in the same group to turn against each other. Israelis heard Palestinians' personal tales of upheaval and exile, which shattered the myth that stories of these hardships were merely propaganda aimed at Israel's destruction. Israelis began to understand their part in Palestinian suffering. Arabs listened to the struggles of Jews who were minorities under Arab regimes, in European societies, and in the Holocaust, and began to understand their part in Jewish suffering.

Israelis and Palestinians awakened to the daily consequences of orientalist racism that institutionalized anti-Arab attitudes in Israeli society. They began to see the hidden two-part nature of anti-Semitism that first allowed some Jews to attain visible power as agents of an oppressor and, second, isolated them and blamed them for other peoples' suffering. Oppressed people who expressed their rage at Jews were diverted and defeated, while the real power causing oppression remained intact. Together we untangled intertwined, multiple, one-way oppressions to learn who was responsible for standing up against what in order to end harm and become allies.

Co-counseling was one of a handful of initiatives in the 1970s that created opportunities for encounters that challenged the status quo. New possibilities for alliances arose with Partnership, Oasis of Peace, Interns for Peace, and some elements of Peace Now. No one had much funding, but each group built bridges across a bloody chasm. This handful of taboo-breaking initiatives multiplied after the first war with Lebanon in 1982, the first intifada in 1988–1992, and the Oslo accords in the 1990s, as hundreds of Palestinian-Israeli joint nonviolent initiatives attracted thousands of participants.

Meanwhile, I returned to the United States in the 1980s to study more formally what I'd learned on the street, when Harvard generously funded my study for a doctorate in Middle East history. When it came time to choose a dissertation topic, the Arab-Jewish work was hardly history and was still a mostly hidden, fragile presence. In fact, Israel had just passed a law making it illegal for Israelis to meet certain Palestinians. So instead, I investigated how the changing construction of gender roles helped form early Palestinian and Jewish nationalism and the conflict between them. I completed my doctoral thesis within moments of the 1993 handshake of Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn that launched the Oslo Accords. By the time I finally published the results of my research in my book Women and Gender in

Early Jewish and Palestinian Nationalism,[1] Oslo had collapsed into an orgy of blood in the second intifada.

I wondered why the work I'd experienced with Arabs and Jews in the 1970s, and watched blossom in the '80s and '90s, seemed so alive and vital while most people ignored or dismissed it. Why was there such a persistent gap between the dramatic changes experienced in our lived encounters with the so-called enemy and the marginalization of this work by pundits and even participants? Why were these alternatives to violence not even known by most people living there or elsewhere? The epitome of this syndrome occurred on the White House lawn in September 1993 when Clinton said that the historical handshake of Arafat and Rabin was an example of "the leaders leading the people." He dismissed the thousands of Palestinians and Israelis who had taken enormous risks for decades to nurture constituencies that demanded change, in a striking case of the people leading their leaders.

As the second intifada raged, I began to search for answers to these questions. I started with a narrow focus on why the groups I had founded in the 1970s with Palestinians and Israelis had been so successful and had attracted so many people who were willing to risk fears of facing each other for the first time, and to shatter presumptions about themselves, each other, and their histories. It was soon clear that this initiative was one of many Arab-Jewish nonviolent initiatives that dated back to the beginning of the conflict itself and stretched forward into the present.

There was no comprehensive account of the history of joint nonviolent initiatives. Most of the related literature focused on neither joint work nor history. Pieces of the puzzle were nestled in accounts of Palestinian and Israeli anthropology, social psychology, politics, activism, ethics, theology, and conflict resolution. Fragments existed in articles, flyers, and leaflets from my own informal archive collected over decades. There were clues in manifestos, treatises, and polemical pleas. The abundant books on the official "peace process" made passing references to grassroots joint interactions, as did writings by scholars and activists on peace and protest movements, advocacy, human rights, and social change, but these were mostly focused on separate Palestinian and Israeli societies.

Accounts that did concentrate on joint work employed a variety of disciplinary lenses that were valuable though not historical, or if they were historical, they focused on one particular time period. Social scientists and psychologists produced detailed analyses and critiques of the work. Monographs about single initiatives offered particulars about specific groups. Memoirs of individual Palestinians and Israelis revealed partnerships. There was an edited compendium detailing the work of over forty joint initiatives by over forty writers, and a directory of hundreds of initiatives up to 1992. My sources extended from the late 19th century through 2010.

I worried that publicizing some initiatives would out a person or organization and expose them to the condemnation rampant in both societies, so I resolved to include only those that were already visible in print, digital, or other media. Fortunately, their public presence expanded exponentially during the first decade of

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[1] Sheila H. Katz, Women and Gender in Early Jewish and Palestinian Nationalism

(Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

the new millennium, with an explosion of websites created by the groups themselves, as well as online lists of links and articles. By 2012, an internet search turned up well over a thousand groups. The quality and quantity of information varied greatly, but it was not difficult to distinguish between organizations that were actually engaged in what they claimed as their purpose and those that hoped to attract funds to implement dreams.

An abiding challenge for the research was an imbalance of sources that reflects the imbalance of power between the two peoples. Jewish sources predominated, in part because the Israeli state is organized and supports writings about itself. Palestinian sources get "lost, destroyed, and incorporated" into Israeli archives.[2] Before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, Arabs had fewer reasons to record the joint work. They were a dominant, established culture with their own political aims, and they experienced the Jews as a minority serving Arab society in useful ways. Like any minority, Jews had to learn more about the dominant society in order to survive. Arabs were less concerned about getting along with this growing minority and more concerned with opposing Zionists' political goals, which threatened their own expectations for sovereignty. Most Zionists did not care about joint work either, except to validate their vision of liberating Arabs along with Jews. Yet some Jews and Arabs recognized the necessity of reaching for their neighbors as allies in a mutual quest for refuge in ancestral lands.

Scholar and activist Mohammed Abu-Nimer pointed out some of the historiographical pitfalls related to the dominance of Jewish sources:

> During the first phase of historical development of the coexistence field, all of the documentation was written by Israeli Jews affiliated with the major political parties or Histadrut. They wrote reports to illustrate the Arab minority acceptance of a Jewish state and to describe a manufactured reality of peaceful Arab-Jewish relations. Only during the second and third phases of the field's development were more serious . . . reports produced.[3]

Shany Payes further contends that the "limited and unequal nature of the encounter between Jews and Palestinians" shaped joint activism and, I would add, access to its evidence.[4] At certain points in history, Arabs faced higher risks for participating in joint encounters and were less likely to record them. So, for example, I

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[2] Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 89.

[3] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Dialogue, Conflict Resolution, and Change: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Israel *(*Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), *44*.

[4] Shany Payes, Palestinian NGOs in Israel: The Politics of Civil Society (Taurus Academic, 2005) 191.

discovered the existence of a Palestinian-Israeli theater performance at the Ramallah Summer Festival from an Israeli website, but I could find no mention of it on the Ramallah Festival website. Palestinians' anti-normalization concerns made participants fear being seen as collaborators with the enemy while the occupation continued.

This book includes resources intended to shepherd the reader through the enormous volume of information and to give spatial and temporal guideposts to hundreds of initiatives over a hundred years. Historical and current maps locate almost all places mentioned in the text. Maps 1–4 locate places in chapters of the same number, including some towns and villages that no longer exist. Map 5 locates places in chapters 5–10 and shows Arab and Jewish towns that are not often found together in a single map. A chronology of Palestinian and Israeli history provides a timeline and definitions of events. An appended list divides the initiatives by categories (arts activism, dialogue, political activism, women, youth, and so on) references chapter numbers to locate initiatives both in time and by field of endeavor. That list alone provides a powerful snapshot of the tremendous efforts of thousands of people to touch painful aspects of their lives during protracted conflict, war, and occupation, with the very enemy who caused the pain. Together that suffering suddenly ceased to be a source of revenge and turned into a chance to live, if for only a few moments, the reality of their profound interconnection as just allies.