To my Scott, my life, who spurred in me the drive for this book

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Introduction

> My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks.
>
> And a temple for idols and pilgrims [Kaaba] and the [tablets of the Torah] and the book of the Koran.
>
> I follow the religion of love: Whatever way Love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith.[1]

Shoah through Muslim Eyes is a journey that I began many years ago. This book and my scholarly interest in Jews, the *Shoah*, and Judaism were sparked by my desire to understand the "other." I decided to write this book as I began to interview survivors because I wanted not only to tell their stories, but also to join their stories with my experiences of antisemitism today. This book is written for everyone to read: it lies between a trade and a scholarly book purposely, and I hope my Muslim brothers and sisters will take my general criticism of Muslims as an act of being Muslim. As Muslims, we are taught to accept justice, truth, and equality. It is time that people of all faiths, and even the faithless, start listening to the voices that speak up for the "other"—those with a message to all of shared humanity. An example is the universal message that came to Muslims as believers of Abraham and his family, which is similar to that of Jews and Christians. As Muslims recite the following *durud shareef*:[2]

> O Allah, let your blessings come upon Muhammad as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim.

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1 Ibn al-Arabi, *The Tarjuman al-Ashwaq*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (sacred-texts.com: 1911), 67 [Islam World's Greatest Religion, Durood–e-ibrahim], retrieved May 1, 2016, https://islamgreatreligion.wordpress.com/2009/04/12/durood-e-ibrahim/.

2 The *durud shareef* is an invocation that Muslims recite while mentioning prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and it is always complimentary.

> Truly You are the Praiseworthy and Glorious.
>
> O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Truly You are the Praiseworthy and Glorious.[3]

Contrary to its public perception in the contemporary world, the message of Islam has always been a universal one to me—encouraging tolerance, egalitarianism, and acceptance of other faiths and cultures. Growing up in many cultures opened up my eyes to the vast differences that can arise because of ignorance and generational intolerance, and how these very differences have been divisive. I can only say that if different people begin to see the suffering and injustice visited on others as their own, there may be some hope for the future of Jewish–Muslim relations.

Following the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, many Muslims—I among them—faced discrimination and were seen as believers in a violent religion and participants in terrorist groups. It was an unbearable time for some Muslims, who were attacked because of how they looked or what they wore. We became targets in the United States and Europe. This was a time of reflection and despair for many Muslims; I believe we are still very much, in a sense, seen as either apologetic or defensive. Many Islamic scholars and leaders spoke out, but their voices were buried under the louder and stronger extremists magnified by media sensationalism. Unfortunately, not much has changed. We still witness attacks both verbally and physically by those who believe that we do not belong in the United States. As a Muslim, when you live anywhere as a minority and watch the media talk about your faith and person as extremist and violent, it is deeply impactful. At times, I admittedly begin to wonder if Islam is buried under an oriental carpet with such diverse colors and divided patterns. However, I am surrounded by courageous people who have shown me that self-examination and justice are the path to peace in cooperation with others and living with oneself.

Almost five years ago, Manhattan College (where I teach and work) courageously appointed me to direct the Holocaust, Genocide, and

3 Ghulam Sarwar, *The Children's Book of Salah* (London: The Muslim Educational Trust, 1998), 36.

Interfaith Education Center. The college, a Catholic Lasallian institution, had enough confidence in me, my work, and my faith as a Muslim—and their own institutional values—to defy many people in New York and elsewhere who accused the college of hiring a "neo-nazi," "Palestinian lover," "terrorist," and "Jew-hater." For example, a child of *Shoah* survivors, law professor and writer Thane Rosenbaum, director of Fordham University's law school Forum on Law, Culture and Society, and moderator of an annual series of discussions on Jewish culture and politics at the 92nd Street Y[MHA], was puzzled by the center's decision to broaden its focus. "The moral travesty that was the Final Solution was not based on faith, and interfaith dialogue this [sic] would have made no difference to the Nazis," he said. He felt that while "Afridi's sensitivity to the Holocaust may be genuine, it would be better to allow a Jew to be guardian for this particular history. Jews have a right to be proprietary in this," he continued. "In a world of multiculturalism and identity politics, everyone owns everyone else's tragedy."[4]

The controversy over my position was understandable, yet I was very sad to learn that some Jews believed that no Muslim, no matter how well credentialed or committed, could be trusted. As a guardian of *Shoah* memory and my commitment to survivors, criticism stings, yet it also triggers self-examination. I delved deeply into my soul and asked myself what business I actually had teaching students about the *Shoah*. But all I could think of was how important the lessons of the *Shoah* had been to me and how many survivors had trusted me by sharing their own memories of pain and humiliation. Their act of sharing imposed a responsibility on me.

More important, I was frustrated at the appalling lack of understanding of the *Shoah* in Muslim communities and the growing contemporary antisemitism that I had witnessed. Perhaps I could serve as a bridge between the abyss that separates contemporary Jews and Muslims. Furthermore, Islam has taught me to be brave in matters of difference and justice; through the power of difference and acceptance, the Qur'an has opened up my being to all humanity as equal in the eyes of God. The following verse 5:48 comes to my mind as I think of the "other" in this case, the Jew.

4 Jonathan Mark, "Muslim Woman to Lead Holocaust Center," *Jewish Week*, accessed January 2014, http://bovinabloviator.blogspot.com/2011/03/manhattan-college-gets-religionsort-of.html.

> We have revealed to you [Mohammad] the scripture in truth, confirming the scriptures that came before it and as a guardian over them: so judge between them according to what God has sent down. Do not follow whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you. We have assigned a law [*shir'a*] and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will return to God and He will make clear to you the matters about which you differed.[5]

The very concept of difference in the Qur'an has beckoned me to seek others in community, whether "People of the Book" or others as part of the world in universal equality. The Qur'an has inspired me to think through the vulnerabilities of my own community (Muslims), and recognize weaknesses and failures. It is every person's business to stand up for justice and truth, to eradicate the hatred of one people, whether it is because of race, religion, or gender. Islam came with the message of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH [Peace be upon him]) containing the concepts of equality for minorities and women at a time when these concepts were not even in the vernacular in Mecca and Medina. I hope to revive these messages in light of the context of the *Shoah* and recognizing the suffering of the "other."

This book is a simple act of remembering who we are as human beings and how we should not and cannot intensify the hatred of others through the spreading of false rumors and lies about the other. Self-examination is essential in Islam; it is with this hope that I write this book. *Tazkiya* is a term in the Qur'an that is very important within Islam. It is the purification of the soul or examination of the self in various forms that involve both intellectual and physical exercises and contemplation. This is the way to remind oneself of one's reactions and hostilities against others, and work on the self, especially the ego.

> *Tazkiya* literally means growth, one example of which can be seen as a tree. The tree is the result of the growth of a seed. When a seed

5 Muhammad Assad, trans., *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dal-al-Andalus Publishers, 1980), 5:48.

> finds a favorable environment, it starts growing till it becomes [a] green, verdant tree. The same is true of the purification of man. In this sense *Tazkiya* also conveys intellectual growth.[6]

My own intellectual growth stemmed from many supporters: Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others who whispered to me words of comfort and love as I took on a job so many deemed unsuited for a Muslim woman. The chances of a college seeking an Islamic *Shoah* scholar is in itself a message from God, a message that He sent so that I could put my work and love in a place of institutional value: Manhattan College.

The center that I direct, the Holocaust, Genocide, and Interfaith Education Center, is deeply committed to *Shoah* education. Through this commitment, I have been able to host many educational and emotionally moving events. The interfaith piece is flourishing, fostering new partnerships and social action with multifaith communities in New York. Interfaith work and studying the lessons of the *Shoah* are not unrelated: through both, we can hope to appreciate and respect difference and eradicate harmful differences through interpersonal contact and mutual understanding. The *Shoah* was undeniably most widely spread across Europe to Africa under the German government, Axis, and Vichy governments. We can neither deny the numbers of people murdered in the *Shoah* nor can we underestimate the enormous horror of this event and the suffering of Jews throughout this time. We must remember that we (humanity) must engage in challenging and painful memories to understand our present. I hope we will.

In the last few months of 2015 in the press, I have found some glimmers of hope in recognizing the *Shoah* and Jewish suffering within Muslim and Arab communities as significant. This article appeared in the *Jerusalem Post* most recently:

> At school I hadn't read a single line about the Holocaust. In the 12th grade there were lessons about World War II, but still no mention of the Holocaust. In fact, there is no "Holocaust" in Palestinian history

6 Saniyasnain Khan, ed., *Tazkiyah Made Simple* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2014), 1–2.

> books. I'm currently a law student at a Palestinian university, and still, the word "Holocaust" isn't mentioned anywhere. Yesterday, for the first time, I was privileged to meet a Holocaust survivor. She was standing with her daughter Suzi Nunes. An Israeli filmmaker called Yasmine Novak made a film about Suzi's mother's story called *The Lost Love Diaries*. It is the story of Suzi's mother, Elise, and a man called Bernie. They were torn apart by WWII, and 65 years later Elise decided to read Bernie's diaries and go on a journey to discover his fate. I don't usually watch romance films, but this one wasn't just a love story, or even just a movie. It documents the pain of the millions who suffered and died, and of those who survived. Even though my schools and university didn't teach me about the Holocaust, I read about it on the Internet, and checked some books. But I must admit that what I read wasn't good enough to give me a clear image. Holocaust education isn't only a Jewish issue, it is an issue for humanity.[7]

This article has, for perhaps the first time, examined the antisemitism (would like this as one word) that lurks in many Muslim communities, survivors who have spoken to a Muslim woman, and how the lack of education encourages an imbalanced perception of Jewish–Muslim relations—in this case, the suffering of Jews. My journey through Judaism—research on Muslims and the *Shoah* and its survivors—like that of many other scholars, intends to awaken a deep gulf between two faithful and important communities in the world: Jews and Muslims.

I have written this book in my mind a hundred times—imagining how I would word my thoughts, the horror of the *Shoah*, and grappling with the aftermath of writing such a book—I watched this book grow at different times and moments of my life. The past few years, I thought of how I could do a better job at communicating such a sensitive topic to Muslims and Jews, while maintaining my faith and belief in both communities. It has been quite a challenge; many times I hesitated to write, hesitating to think about the gaps between our cultures as I witnessed the brutal political and

7 Ahmed Maswadeh, "Why Should We, Palestinians, Learn about the Holocaust?," *Jerusalem Post*, retrieved November 9, 2015, http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Why-should-we-Palestinians-learn-about-the-Holocaust-399168.

social polarization that I believe is exaggerated by leaders in power and armies with ammunition. So, years passed and I felt even more compelled to add a strong voice to the study of the *Shoah* and Islam that was not mutually exclusive.

The first two chapters of the book address the challenges that I face as a Muslim who wants to continue to address the issues of antisemitism and, more important, bring the *Shoah* to the Muslim world as a lesson for all humanity. The beginnings of the book examine many aspects of my own frustration with the dismissive nature of human beings in light of antisemitism and the relativism of the *Shoah*. The *Shoah* has brought me more knowledge about the world, intermingling of identities, displaced people, persecuted Jews, and Muslims during this period and the intimate connections of two Abrahamic faiths through rescue and common suffering.

My journey is threefold. The first part of this journey is the interest of such a study and passion because of my own unique upbringing, my own understanding of Islam as a religion of peace, justice, and acceptance. I have distinct memories of sharing sacred holidays as well as racism with my peers in many schools. As well, I was the one who experienced anti-Semitism in my own Muslim community and academic circles. The second part of this journey is my undertaking of the study of the *Shoah* and the interviews with survivors that I will hold deeply in my heart and mind. This led to the discovery of new stories, histories, and courage of survival that resonate to this day in this field of work. My visits with survivors in their homes, in museums, and hosting them in my house fostered my deep connection to them and their experiences. I consider myself very fortunate to have been welcomed into their lives. My new friend, Gisela Glaser, who is a survivor of Auschwitz and lives in the Bronx, New York, calls me from time to time to discuss the unending pain of losing her whole family, and tells me the same story as if it were the first time. "Mehnaz, my friend Ella and I were on the train, the wind was blowing and it was cold, Ella had a severe fever and she was sick with thirst. I had an idea, I took a small handkerchief and put my own urine on it and gave it to her so she should live. . . ." These are the stories that I live with and reflect on as I have written this book.

In Chapter One, I make the connections between the importance of accepting each other's narratives in creating dialogue and reconciliation.

I show how Muslim acknowledgment of the *Shoah* is connected to dismantling stereotypes of Jews and confronting antisemitism. I discuss the connections of Muslims to the *Shoah* through the metaphor of *Muselmann*, the stark reality of how, if Muslims were to acknowledge the history of the *Shoah*, I argue that there could be a deeper understanding of Jews, Jewish history, and Israel. Alongside this, I discuss how the *Naqba* is and was a pivotal moment in history for Palestinians and Muslims all around the world. These pages become a challenge to me as I reexamine my personal journey as a child (throughout) but also the frustrations I have held toward antisemitism within the Muslim context. In the opening of this book, I stressed how the testimony of a Muslim woman sheds light on the complexity of Jewish–Muslim relations. Islamic principles of justice and self-examination compelled me to write this book; I thus focus on the core meanings of Islamic justice and truth as the cornerstone of my thinking, both ethically and spiritually.

In Chapter Two, I examine how academia treats the issue of the *Shoah* in direct connection to Israel, problematizing the relationship of other genocides and the *Shoah*. These issues are current as we witness many scholars who are enveloped in the Israeli–Palestinian political conflict, which undermines the import of the *Shoah*. I deal with this issue and describe the Jewish experience in the United States and Israel post–*Shoah*. Delving into my experience while I was in Israel in 1995 and then at Dachau in 2007, I explore the parallels and similarities of the displacement of Jews and Muslims. The first two chapters are not chronologically coherent in terms of my life; rather, they are an interweaving of my experience from childhood to adulthood regarding Jews, Judaism, and Islam. This structure was more real for me and carries with it a weight that brings the reader back and forth from academic facts to personal nuances and experiences that speak to a general audience.

In Chapter Three, *Why Is the Shoah Unprecedented?*, a challenging subject, I make a case for why and how the *Shoah* is unprecedented without focusing on its uniqueness, for fear of offending millions of genocide victims, because this too has been an issue within academia. I argue that the *Shoah* was unprecedented in several ways: (1) Jews were sought worldwide by the Nazis, their allies, and collaborators, and killed. (2) Jews

were seen as a danger to society both as human beings and as economic barriers. Their elimination was regarded as redemptive to German society. (3) Jews were massacred in a more process-oriented, technological, and mechanical manner than was the case with any other genocide. (4) Jews were easy targets of hatred because of their long-standing mythical history of having committed deicide against Christians, not to mention many myths of blood libel that are still discussed in many parts of the world, Christian and non-Christian. (5) Jews were not from one nation or country, where they could fight or take up arms; Jews had no single country in which to establish a stronghold to defend themselves against the Nazis. (6) Jews had been living in Europe as assimilated citizens for, in some cases, hundreds of years, and the *Shoah* was a war against a minority within several countries in which the minority itself had citizenship. (7) The event occurred in the heart of Europe, with vast implications for Western culture and civilization. (8) It was perpetrated by the most advanced, technologically sophisticated, scientifically developed country in the world. (9) It involved two of the great monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism and Christianity. (10) It used the full power of the state and its resources and involved 22 countries across the globe. All of these aspects are explained in this chapter, and I discuss why they are significant to our current perception of Jews, Judaism, Israel, and Zionism.

Chapter Four, the most poignant in terms of my first experiences of interviewing *Shoah* survivors, is transcribed with snippets about the feelings I had or descriptions of certain moments I felt with the survivor. This chapter explores the engagement—and, at times, tension—between survivors as Jews and me as a Muslim. The interviews are all varied because of their experiences and gender; however, I maintained the same format and questions for all of them so that I could understand whether they could identify any fact or experience about Muslims and the *Shoah*. This chapter is accidental in many ways; I was there to interview survivors because I just wanted to tell their stories as a Muslim woman. They inspired me to write this book by their presence and their own ignorance of Islam. I was surprised to learn how many of the survivors were skewed in their knowledge of Islam or Muslim culture. I discuss this perception in this chapter to examine how

victims can also have deep prejudice and fear of the other at different historical moments and times.

Chapter Five, on antisemitism and Islam, discusses the history of antisemitism from Christianity to Islam. I discuss the ways in which Arabs and Muslims became antisemitic and were influenced by the propaganda of the Nazi Party. This chapter discusses the Qur'anic verses and scriptures that have been used to incite hatred against Jews. I address these verses and discuss the problems of interpretation. I examine the ways in which Muslims need to reexamine the motives and interpretations of the Qur'an. I analyze how Muslims view Jews and vice versa. I further make some parallels between how Muslims and Jews have been perceived and misunderstood at different moments and times in history. "Antisemitism is often discussed through the lens of propaganda literature in the context of the recent growth of European-style antisemitism in the Arab world, which derives in the main thrust from a need to ascribe to the Jews a role very different from their traditional role in Arab folklore, and much closer to that of European antisemitic prototypes."[8] Zionism is also discussed in detail to illustrate the misunderstandings about the movement and the unfair depiction of Zionists as Nazis or colonists, which has been a recent issue in Jewish–Muslim relations. I examine the deep anti-Muslim sentiment around the world today, but also resentment toward the Jewish community and some of the propaganda that creates fear and distance between these communities.

In my last chapter, Chapter Six, I examine the role that Muslims played during the *Shoah*. It explores historical and religious antisemitism in the Arab world and the consequences that led to the denial and relativism of the *Shoah*. The chapter contends that Muslims were also rescuers and victims with Jews in Arab countries under the Vichy government and shows how entrenched the colonial forces were in Arab/Muslim lands during World War II. The conclusion of the chapter points to literature and scholarly works that might bridge an understanding between Jews and Muslims through *Shoah* and postcolonial understanding. This book was a journey of

8 Bernard Lewis, "The New Anti-Semitism: First Religion, Then Race, Then What?" *The American Scholar* Dec. 1, 2005. Retrieved October 23, 2016 https://theamericanscholar.org/the-new-anti-semitism/#.WA0O5uArLIU

education; learning from museums, memoirs, history books, interviews, my trip to Dachau, and my own teaching; and work at Manhattan College. I grew through the years that this book has been gestating in my mind.

Finally, my last and ongoing journey is to speak out against antisemitism and anti-Muslim sentiment, to advocate for speaking out for another, to continue my work in the field of Jewish–Muslim relations in both issues of memory and contemporary life, and to be an integral part of the outreach programs and initiatives that are crucial to bringing all Abrahamic faiths together.

Chapter One

Why The *Shoah*?

"Idiots!" she exclaimed. "How can anyone deny the Holocaust in their mind, I am here, I am the living document."
Elisabeth Mann[1]

The language of awaiting—perhaps it is silent, but it does not separate speaking and silence; it makes of silence already a kind of speaking; already it says in silence the speaking that silence is. For mortal silence does not keep still.
Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*[2]

Maurice Blanchot challenges his readers with the following question: How can we write after a disaster like the *Shoah?* His was one of the first books I read about the *Shoah*; he compelled me to examine how we cannot fully express the horror of the event in writing or in speech. However, this became a metaphor for me as I began to think about my own work and the silence about the *Shoah* in Muslim communities. "The language of awaiting—perhaps it is silent," as Blanchot writes, describes the expectation that I hold for many Muslims to speak up against the antisemitism in my religious community. He goes on to write: "it does not separate speaking and silence." This to me expresses how, even though humanity can be silent,

1 My interview with Elisabeth Mann, 2009.
2 Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 59.

I must speak out. To write about a disaster when by its very nature it is not spoken of in my community cannot be kept waiting, as he says, "For mortal silence does not keep still." In other words, the horror of the *Shoah* and its silence or relativism within Muslim communities screams out at me. The silence implores me to write, talk, and take responsibility. As Blanchot writes: "The disaster—experience none can undergo—obliterates (while leaving perfectly intact) our relation to the world as presence or absence; it does not thereby free us, however, from this obsession with which it burdens us: Others."[3]

How can one deny the genocide and silent screams of so many lives lost during the *Shoah*? Do political differences make us inclined to separate ourselves from others to the point of denial and repression of one another's suffering? The denial of the *Shoah* is a crime against humanity. What is it about humans that becomes undeniably repulsive when they deny the deaths of millions, knowingly avoid the evidence, and remain painfully silent? The silence that I refer to is the tacit silence and casual acknowledgments within Muslim communities and countries that the *Shoah* is a subject that is not discussed, and if discussed must be seen as relative to other discussions of suffering. To deny the suffering and loss of another human being is a failure on the part of humanity. What lessons can we learn from the denial and the acknowledgment of the *Shoah?* To deny the *Shoah* is to deny the millions of lives their narratives of life, breath, and imprints on the world. God created these lives and others destroyed them; is it not our duty to preserve their memory and remember that millions were created to die at the hands of murderers because they were seen as subhuman?

> The Holocaust is not Europeans killing off "their Jews" (a calamity restricted to Europe, as is often heard), but a horrific event that must engage all humanity precisely because it is a crime against humanity. Perhaps it is the feebleness of this concept in Arab culture and thought which has precluded broad Arab understanding of the Holocaust's centrality to Western culture and thought, and which may account for our continued puzzlement at

3 Ibid., 120.

> the "exorbitant" attention it gets in the Western media, [academia], and politics. In short, we fail to grasp the significance of the Holocaust to Western modernity because we still have difficulties engaging the issues raised by modernity, namely the ethical, juridical and political issue of human rights.[4]

This quotation by Anwar Chemseddine (a pseudonym used by a professor of English at a university in North Africa) illustrates that there is a need not only to recognize the *Shoah* in the Arab/Muslim context, but also to understand that it stands out as the archetype of a crime against humanity. The game of denial and relativism of others' suffering can lead to historical relativism and dangerous identification that separates groups and religious identities from one another. Another example of an intellectual speaking out for the recognition of the *Shoah* is Mohammed Dajani, the Palestinian professor who was forced out of his job at Al-Quds University. He received death threats and his car was set on fire after he took students to visit Auschwitz. The controversy escalated due to an educational trip and because the *Shoah* was read as an event of the past that was comparable to the *Naqba*.

> The visit to the concentration camp was part of a project to study the Holocaust and teach tolerance and empathy. "It is about understanding the other," Dajani told *the Guardian* during a conference in the Qatari capital, Doha. "You need to understand the other because reconciliation is the only option we have. And the sooner we do it the better. Empathizing with your enemy does not mean you sanction what your enemy is doing to you."[5]

4 Anwar Chemseddine, "The Arabs View of the Holocaust is Indeed Troubled," *Legacy Project*, accessed July 12, 2010, http://www.legacyproject.org/index.php?commentID=1&page=comment_detail&sympID=1. This article is not longer available on the Internet. However, a discussion of the article can be found in Robert Satloff's *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands* (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 186.

5 "Palestinian Professor: No Regrets over Taking Students to Auschwitz," *The Guardian*, accessed July15,2014,http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/13/palestinian-professor-resigns-students-auschwitz.

Dajani here explains that to empathize or acknowledge others' suffering even if they are seen as an "enemy" today has nothing to do with historical fact and the continual memory and history of their suffering. The way in which we conceive of genocide and others' suffering influences the way in which we view history. We may challenge ourselves and others at times by asking the following question: Who were the oppressors and who were the victims? Which community destroyed others, and which abstained? Memory of the oppressor stays with us for generations and, over time, the memory of war and genocide is refreshed. This memory is important to all communities; however, in this case, Dajani pressures us by recalling, respecting, and acknowledging the suffering of the Jews during the *Shoah.* Dajani is exemplary in bringing an important moral lesson to us: if we accept your suffering, does that mean we suffer less? The Olympics of suffering is, in itself, the denial of other people's humanity. Dajani in no manner was denying the suffering of Palestinians, nor the *Naqba*, yet he wanted to engage through a deep understanding that we all suffer and we are victims at one time or another.

We have witnessed so many genocides (Armenia, the *Shoah*, Cambodia, Rwanda, Congo, Bosnia, and Darfur) in historical documents and journalistic accounts on television and radio, as well as Internet coverage and social media, yet we distance ourselves and focus on the ordinary events of the world. Genocide awareness seems to have little if no effect on present-day genocides occurring in Congo, Darfur, and Syria, even after all the overwhelming historical, journalistic, and media evidence. My students ask the following in my classes: What is the point of *Shoah* and genocide education? We can learn about them, but how can we stop this? To me, the educational purpose is to stop the prejudice and intolerance today so that people will speak out as agents of change in the future. I have encouraged many students to share their stories about their own witnessing of antisemitism and Islamophobia on a daily basis and how education has pressured them to intervene or educate their own peers, family members, and people on the street.

My students are always horrified by how fellow humans commit these horrendous crimes through repeated acts of genocide. They pressure me to explain why these atrocities occur, and surmise that the perpetrators must be psychotic, mentally ill, or under duress. However, when they discover that the