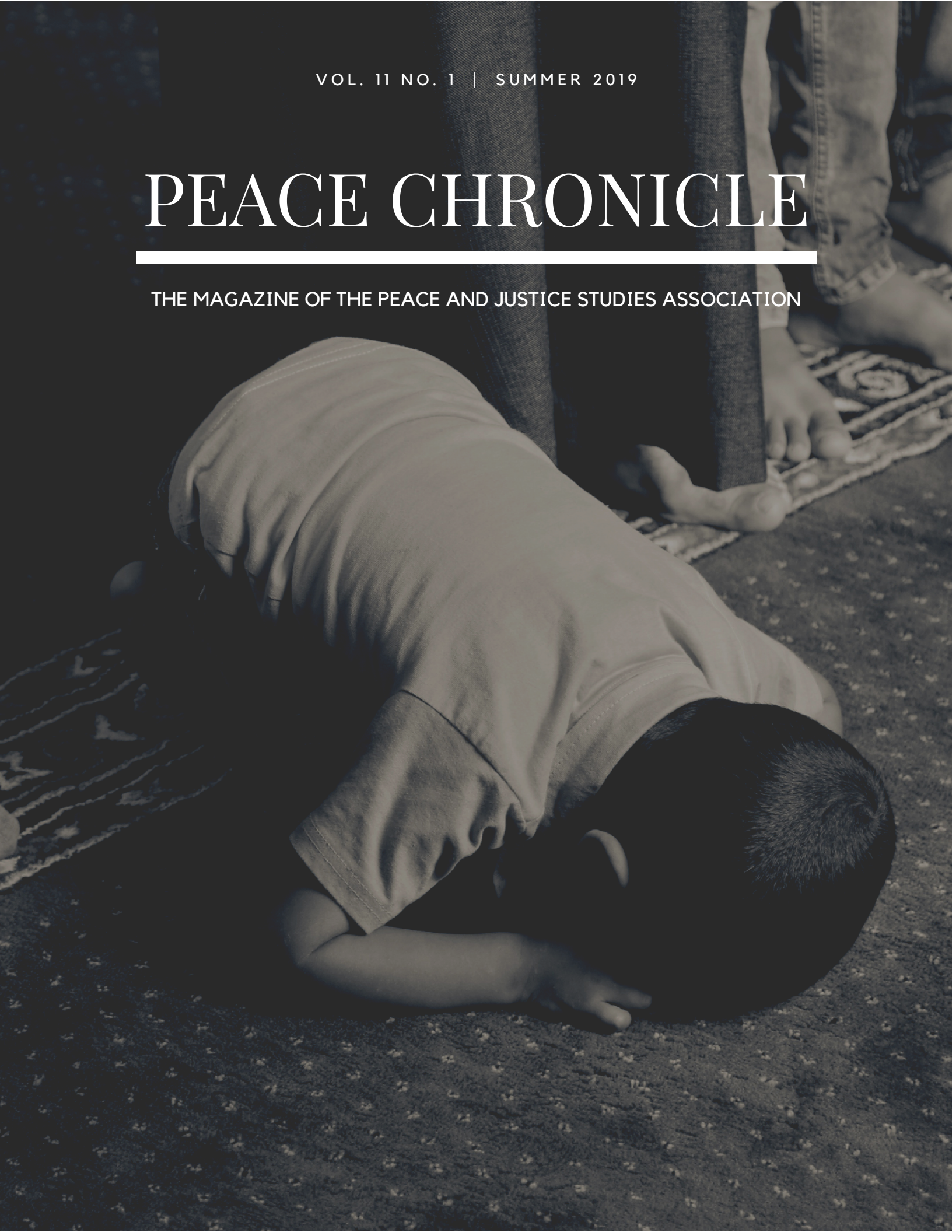


VOL. 11 NO. 1 | SUMMER 2019

# PEACE CHRONICLE

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE AND JUSTICE STUDIES ASSOCIATION

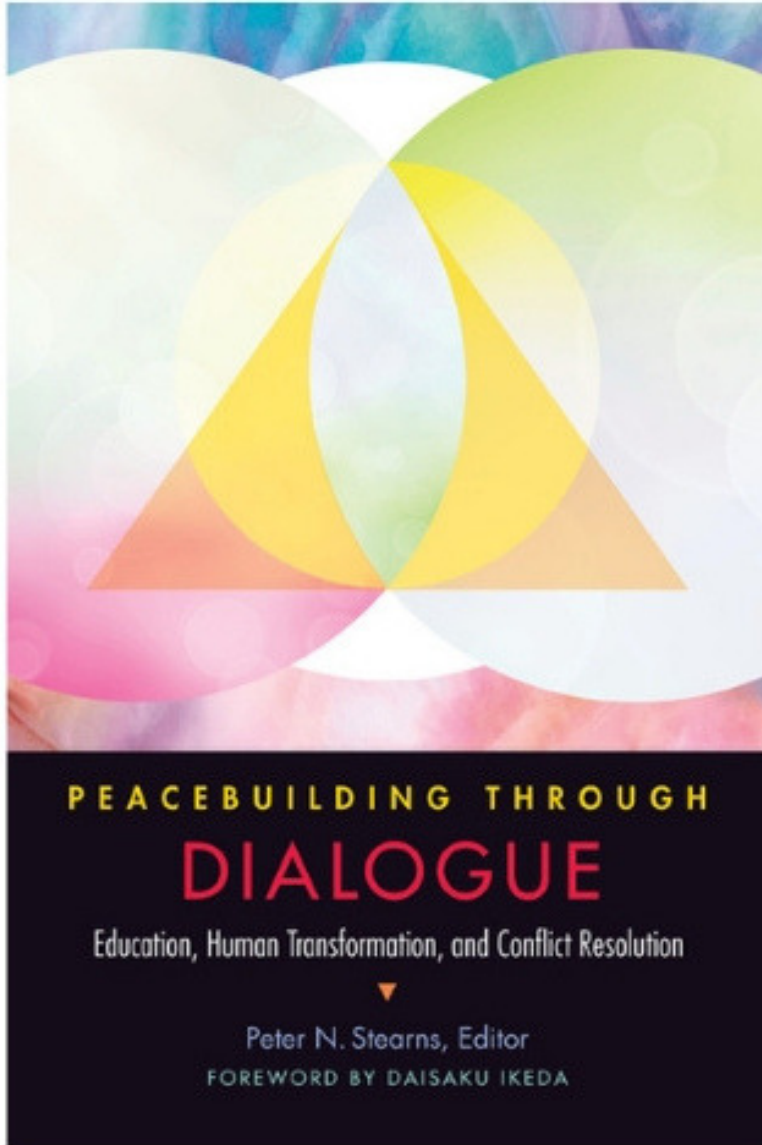




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**19** REFLECTIONS ON THE EASTER SUNDAY ATTACKS IN SRI LANKA



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# PEACE CHRONICLE

The magazine of the Peace and Justice Studies Association

Executive Director **Michael Loadenthal**

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Editor in Chief	<b>Shatha Almutawa</b>
Activism Section Editor	<b>Gabriel Ertsgaard</b>
Pedagogy Section Editor	<b>Matthew Johnson</b>
Research Section Editor	<b>Wim Laven</b>
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Research Chair	<b>Amanda Byron</b>

The Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA) serves as a professional association for scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies. PJSA is dedicated to bringing together academics, educators, and activists to explore alternatives to violence and share visions and strategies for peacebuilding, social justice, and social change.

We host an annual meeting and conference, support research and public scholarship, and serve as a network hub for a diverse and growing academic and professional field. As a relatively new and interdisciplinary field, PJSA serves to represent individuals who hold a variety of degree types such as Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Peace Studies, Social Justice Studies, Restorative Justice, Alternative Dispute Resolution, etc.

The cover photo was taken by Samer Chidiac.

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# FROM THE EDITORS

The summer 2019 issue is the first issue of the new Peace Chronicle magazine. The transformation of this publication from a newsletter to a magazine has been a massive undertaking that involved a team of dedicated volunteer editors, an intern, the PJSA's executive director Michael Loadenthal, the PJSA publications chair Michael Minch and research chair Amanda Byron, and Lea Rekow, who designed the new PJSA and Peace Chronicle website.

In the last three months we have had multiple conversations about what we want this magazine to be, what issues we want to cover, and how we want to do the work we're doing. We've come up with many ideas and ideals. We're excited for our membership to take part in our new vision and mission, and help us craft a publication that can excite, entice, stimulate, create conversations, and spur collaborations.

We want this publication to cover rigorous research as well as activism and art that deals with social justice and peacebuilding. We want to amplify the voices of people from different backgrounds and walks of life. As a volunteer-based publication, we faced challenges creating a first issue that is as diverse as we hoped it would be, but we hope to keep making progress in this arena as we get to know the PJSA membership better and as our readers become more involved in the publication.

When we first began talking about a theme for this summer issue, the New Zealand mosque shootings

had just happened. We wanted an issue that looks at white supremacy in a productive way. While work on that issue was underway other events of extremist violence took place, this included the Sri Lanka massacres and the shooting at the Chabad synagogue in Roway California. We saw similarities between the March events and the April events, and felt that we could not talk about one without the other.

The themes for the upcoming issues are dignity (winter 2020) and decolonization (spring 2020). Please send us your articles, your poems, your art, and your photography. Our submission guidelines can be found [here](#). As we work on topics that are outside our own areas of expertise, we would be grateful for the expertise of PJSA membership. We will be calling on you to help us make decisions, be more inclusive, and answer questions.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this issue and seeing your contributions for future issues!

**Shatha Almutawa** is the Editor in Chief of the *Peace Chronicle*. **Gabriel Erstgaard** is the Activism Section Editor. **Matthew Johnson** is the Pedagogy Section Editor. **Wim Laven** is the Research Section Editor.

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# Contributors



**Michael Loadenthal, Ph.D.**, is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology and Social Justice Studies at Miami University of Oxford, Ohio where he also serves as the founding Director of the Prosecution Project, a long-term data science collaborative examining how political violence, terrorism and extremism are prosecuted in US courts. Michael also serves as the Executive Director of the Peace and Justice Studies Association. Outside the classroom Michael organizes with a variety of local, national, and international networks to support liberatory social movements, and to investigate and disrupt against the far-right. His latest books include *The Politics of Attack* (Manchester University Press, 2017), *The Routledge History of World Peace Since 1750* (2018), and *From Environmental Loss to Resistance* (UMass Press, 2020).



**Dr. Laura Finley, Ph.D.**, is Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminology at Barry University in Miami, Florida. She is also author, co-author or editor of seventeen books and numerous book chapters and journal articles. In addition, Dr. Finley is actively involved in a number of peace, justice and human rights groups. She serves as Board Chair for No More Tears, a non-profit organization that serves victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, and is a board member of The Humanity Project and Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Prior to being elected co-chair, Dr. Finley was Publications Chair for PJSA. She also coordinates PJSA's Speaker's Bureau.



**Sanjana Hattotuwa** is a PhD student at the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (NCPACS), University of Otago in New Zealand. An Ashoka, Rotary World Peace, and TED Fellow, he has explored and advocated for the use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to strengthen peace, reconciliation, human rights & democratic governance since 2002. In 2006 he founded and for eleven years curated the award-winning Groundviews, Sri Lanka's first citizen journalism website.



**Cleo Barnett** is a New Zealand American curator, artist, and creative director. Currently based in Seattle, Washington (Duwamish/Coast Salish land), her practice explores the relationship between public space, storytelling, and human rights. Since 2016 Cleo has been a core member of the Amplifier team, a non-profit design lab that builds art and media experiments to amplify the most important movements of our time. As the Deputy Director, Cleo co-produces and co-creative directs the organization's campaigns including the iconic We The People campaign and the education initiative We The Future. The result has been millions of iconic artworks distributed in streets and classrooms across the United States in collaboration with hundreds of renowned artists and thousands of movements. The nonprofit has been growing into a globally recognized art and social justice organization. Cleo holds an M.A. in art and public policy from New York University, and a B.A. in political science and international business from the University of Auckland. Alongside her curatorial practice, she is an active working artist. You can learn more about Cleo's work at [cleobarnett.com](http://cleobarnett.com).





**Ibrahim Nasrallah** is the winner of the Arabic Booker Prize (2018), was born in 1954 to Palestinian parents who were evicted from their land in Palestine in 1948. He spent his childhood and youth in a refugee camp in Jordan, and began his career as a teacher in Saudi Arabia. After returning to Amman, he worked in the media and cultural sectors till 2006 when he dedicated his life to writing. To date, he has published 15 poetry collections, 21 novels, and several other books. In 1985, he started writing the Palestinian Tragicomedy covering 250 years of modern Palestinian history in a series of novels in which each novel is an independent one; to date 12 novels were published in the framework of this project. Five of his novels and a volume of poetry have been published in English, four works in Italian, and one novel in Danish, Turkish, and Persian. Nasrallah is also an artist and photographer and has had four solo exhibitions of his photography.



**Dr. Omnia Amin** joined New York University Abu Dhabi in Fall 2017, as a Senior Humanities Research Fellow. Prior to this, Omnia Amin was a professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Zayed University (ZU) in Dubai, UAE, from 2005 to 2017. Amin served as academic consultant for the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature and was appointed as cultural and academic advisor for the Fujairah Media and Culture Authority to promote their Monodrama Festival; She is a member of the judging committee for the monodrama competition and has been the official translator of the winning monodrama texts from Arabic into English since 2010.



**Michael Minch, Ph.D.**, is professor of Peace and Justice Studies Program at Utah Valley University and Director of Summit: The Sustainable Development and Conflict Transformation Global Knowledge and Action Network. He is author of numerous books, book chapters, and scholarly articles and is a regular presenter at local, state, and national conferences. Additionally, Minch helps lead international study trips and is currently working with colleagues to build The Conflict and Peace Research Center in the Balkans. Minch is also the Publications Chair for the Board of Directors of the Peace and Justice Studies Association.



**Wim Laven** is the editor of the research section of the Peace Chronicle. He holds a PhD in International Conflict Management, and worked on conflict sensitive reconstruction in Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami. He teaches courses in conflict resolution and his articles are syndicated by PeaceVoice.



**Kenneth S. Stern**, the director of the Bard Center for the Study of Hate, is an attorney and award-winning author. For 25 years he was the American Jewish Committee's expert on antisemitism. He has argued before the U.S. Supreme Court, testified before Congress, and was an invited presenter at the White House Conference on Hate Crimes. His forthcoming book has the working title *The Conflict over The Conflict: How The Israel/Palestine Campus Debate Is Eviscerating Academic Freedom*.



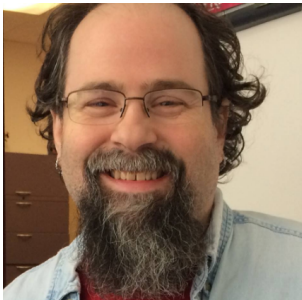
**Randy Blazak's** scholarship on hate crimes and hate groups has made him a regular commentator in media outlets from NPR and CNN to BBC and Al Jazeera. Blazak earned his PhD at Emory University in 1995 after completing an extensive field study of racist skinheads that included undercover observations and interviews across the world. He became a tenured sociology professor at Portland State University and taught criminology at the University of Oregon. His work has taken him from classrooms to criminal trials. His research has been published in academic journals, books and in the mainstream press. His co-authored book, *Teenage Renegades, Suburban Outlaws* (Wadsworth, 2001) and his edited volume, *Hate Offenders* (Praeger, 2009) have been widely adopted. Since 2002, he has been the chair of the Coalition Against Hate Crimes. He works with the National Institute of Justice and the Southern Poverty Law Center on hate crime research issues. Blazak regularly speaks at conferences and leads workshops on the topics of hate and bias and has traveled the globe to discuss preventing violent extremism.



**Wendy Kroeker** specializes in community conflict transformation processes as an instructor in the Canadian School of Peacebuilding's peace and conflict transformation studies department and in locations around the globe. She has over 15 years of experience as a community mediator, conflict transformation trainer, peace program consultant, program manager for international development projects and university instructor. The Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, and Palestine are some of the locations in which she has worked over the past two decades with indigenous groups, NGO staff, community and religious leaders, and various educators.



**Dr. Jeremy Rinker** is the Institutional Liaison on the Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA) Board. He is an Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina Greensboro's Department of Peace and Conflict Studies where he is currently engaged in research that explores the intersections between marginalization, collective trauma, and systems of oppression. Dr. Rinker's research and writings have long focused on South Asian communities, untouchability, human rights, narrative meaning making, and identity in social justice movements. His first book entitled *Identity, Right, and Awareness: Anti-Caste Activism in India and the Awakening of Justice through Discursive Practices* came out from Lexington Press in 2018. With expertise in restorative justice conferencing, peace circle facilitation, program development, and social movement organization, Dr. Rinker's work aims to integrate the theory and practice of peace and conflict to achieve social justice outcomes.



**Dr. Dean J. Johnson** is the PJSA's US Membership Chair. Dr. Johnson is director of Peace and Conflict Studies and associate professor of philosophy at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. An interdisciplinary activist scholar, Johnson teaches courses in peace studies and religious studies. His research interests include religion and social change, race critical theory, critical whiteness studies, gender critical theory, nonviolent activism, community organizing, conflict transformation, and critical pedagogies. As an activist and scholar, Dr. Johnson is a consultant for nonviolent campaigns and initiatives. He provides workshops and training in the areas of nonviolent direct action, community organizing, and (with his partner Melissa Bennett) anti-oppression, queer solidarity, and anti-racism. He is founding board member of the Peace and Justice Studies Association and a member of the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties. Dr. Johnson is an advisory board member and former chair of the SpiritHouse Project of Washington, DC.





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# THE CHRISTCHURCH MANIFESTO AND THE IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES OF AN ANTI-FASCIST RESEARCHER

MICHAEL LOADENTHAL

As I sit in my office today, I am surrounded by reminders of hate, violence, and the politics of eradication. A few minutes ago, I finished an interview with our student paper to contextualize the recent surge in on-campus outreach efforts by neo-fascist and white nationalist groups.

Before the interview began, I opened my office window on the third floor of our aged building to get some air, and was further reminded of the unsettled [SA1] nature of these past crimes. Today, only a few hundred feet from me, a lone student stands under a tarp reading our thousands upon thousands of names; the names and ages of victims of the Nazi Holocaust for Yom HaShoah. As the list of names drones on and the interview about campus fascists continues, I consider the litany of events which all feel so similar.

I think of the 2012 Wisconsin Sikh temple shooting, the 2015 shooting at a South Carolina Black church, the 2017 shooting at a Quebec City mosque, or the 2018 shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue a few hours from my community. I think of the murder of 50 Muslims in Christchurch, or the shooting at a California synagogue just last week. If I keep wandering, I quickly get to the suicide attacks in Sri

Lankan churches which occurred the same month. In my job as a professor focused on political violence, these events amass like scars to my psyche, each one remembered for its particular horrors, images, and death tolls. Some I have even learned about, taught, and since forgotten as their details are replaced by new tragedies which collect like a scrap book and blur together.

In thinking about the shooting at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, the incident is both alarmingly unique and regrettably similar. The night of the shooting, I was asked by a journalist assigned a "terrorism beat" to provide my analysis of the shooter's manifesto. The reporter sent me the text and the social media materials through a secure channel, and I was able to quickly locate the shooter's video by observing far-right communication networks I routinely monitor.

After assembling the ephemera and digging into it, what struck me most was how uniquely American this particular text was, despite being authored by an Australian striking in New Zealand. The text was an amalgamation of American white power, (eco)fascist, and "traditional" racist, anti-Semitic, xenophobia.

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1936 poster produced by the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist trade union the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) National Committee of the Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores' (AIT) Office of Information and Propaganda, entitled "Fascism."

In the shooter's text I could hear the works of Americans such as the eugenicist Madison Grant, American Nazi party leader George Lincoln Rockwell, and contemporary individuals such as William Pierce, David Lane, and Tom Metzger. Mix in Internet-8chan-meme culture humor, and a nod to contemporary international fascist movements, and we have yet another diatribe from a fascist who committed murder. In the shooter's writings I heard the refrain, popularized in the Turner Diaries, and repeated by white power strategists—provoke social conflict and reap the rewards of the race war. The

Christchurch shooting reinvigorated the debate about if, when, and how we should circulate, read, and discuss the writings by individuals who voice their dissent with lethal violence. We were told by well-meaning people that we should not share the killer's writings lest we fuel further attacks. 'It's just what he wants you to do' becomes the refrain as individuals want to ensure that they are not complicit in institutional white supremacy, disguised anti-Semitic tropes, and nativist dystopias. While I understand the argument advocating limiting exposure to murders' manifestos, it denies a central point, namely that political violence contains its own rationality, cost-benefit calculations, and strategy. These attacks are not inherently the acts of 'crazy' or senseless people, and while we should be sure to not amplify their voices (as they speak for a tiny portion of people), we must engage them on an ideological and rhetorical level.

In the classroom I work with my students to read texts which make us uncomfortable or even fearful. I make it my business to read what radical socio-political movements write, and would encourage others to do the same. There is a value in understanding the motivations of political violence for developing counter-narratives and community-based empowerment. Violence, including terroristic violence, aims to be communicative, and denying that message an audience does not address its underlying motivation, nor does it serve to prevent future violence. The sooner we realize this, and can move past the 'do we share or not share the manifesto' debate, the better prepared we can be to understand, disrupt, and organize against far-right violence, and to build a movement of solidarity and defense which is resilient, diverse, and focused on winning.

¡No pasarán!

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# SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING WHITE NATIONALISM

LAURA FINLEY

White nationalist groups espouse white supremacist or white separatist ideologies. That is, they believe that whites are superior and emphasize the alleged inferiority of nonwhites. White supremacy is not about race (which is a social construction) but about power.

## **White Nationalism: Definitions and History**

The Southern Poverty Law Center explains, "White supremacy governs through authoritarianism, establishing a racial hierarchy where whites always sit on top, paragons of scientific and cultural superiority." Further, white supremacy defines whiteness in very narrow terms—really, only individuals who are straight, middle class or wealthy, well educated, pro-patriarchy and Christian are welcome.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center: "Adherents of white nationalist groups believe that white identity should be the organizing principle of the countries that make up Western civilization. White nationalists advocate for policies to reverse changing demographics and the loss of an absolute, white majority. Ending non-white immigration, both legal and illegal—frequently elevated over other racist projects, such as ending multiculturalism and miscegenation—for white nationalists seeking to preserve white, racial hegemony."

The idea is to return America to the so-called "good days"—pre-Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, as both are viewed as harming whites to the degree of "white genocide."

White nationalists often craft their argument as one of love for their own race rather than hating others, although it is clear that the latter is really the case. Many use dubious statistics to emphasize problems like "Black-on-white crime," although this makes up a very small percentage of all crime and most crime is intraracial. White nationalists also ascribe behaviors that have no genetic basis as being due to race. Followers frequently cite Pat Buchanan's (2001) *The Death of the West*, which warned of declining white birth rates and a forthcoming "immigrant invasion" that would turn the U.S into a third world nation.

Many white nationalists are also anti-semitic, blaming Jews for social, cultural and political problems. Further, many align with paleoconservatists who, like libertarians, seek to limit government, reverse multiculturalism, and restrict immigration. Strategies used by white nationalists vary. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, some are mainstreamers who seek to convert adherents and to encourage believers to seek political and other influential positions.

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To do so, these individuals sometimes have to disguise their most racist or problematic beliefs and instead argue that their policies are about solving social problems in a cost-effective fashion.

In contrast, vanguardists believe that revolution is the only real path to a white state. They do not soften their rhetoric and often engage in public demonstrations and online activism, some of which has turned violent.

White nationalism and white supremacy have been far too common in the U.S. and have resulted in various forms of violence. For instance, between 1888 and 1918, approximately 2,500 Black men and women were killed by lynch mobs. White supremacy resulted in segregated spaces—sometimes due to overt policies or laws, such as Jim Crow and redlining. The belief that people of color cannot possibly raise children appropriately saw the enactment of eugenics programs that forced women of color to be sterilized. Between 1970 and 1976, the Indian Health Service estimates that one-quarter to one-half of Native American women were sterilized. This is clearly not an exhaustive list.

### **Recent White Nationalist Activity**

One of the most recent manifestations is the so-called “alt-right,” which emerged in the second half of 2015. Many neo-Nazi organizations considered themselves to be part of the alt-right. The position of alt-righters is that the nation suffers from political correctness and that tough policies on immigration and related topics are essential. Donald Trump was the candidate of choice for the alt-right in the 2016 election, and his hateful rhetoric, often referring to immigrants as “animals” and other countries as “shitholes,” clearly resonated. White nationalists

and the alt-right also rallied against the removal of Confederate monuments.

In August 2017, white nationalists gathered for the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Chanting racist and anti-semitic slogans and songs, wearing an array of Nazi and neo-Nazi symbols, and carrying rifles, hundreds marched in protest of the removal of Confederate monuments. They attacked counter-protesters, leaving one person dead and more than 38 injured. Heather Heyer was killed when white nationalist James Alex Fields, Jr. deliberately rammed his car into a crowd of counter-protesters. President Trump made a series of statements about the deadly protests, even at one point saying there were “very fine people on both sides” and that both sides were responsible for the violence. Yet reports showed that almost all the counter-protesters were unarmed. Although these groups went somewhat quiet after Charlottesville riot, and some splintered, they refocused their energies for “Unite the Right 2” in August 2018 and continued to recruit new adherents via social media. This rally was poorly attended, however. More white nationalist violence followed in 2018, however: the massacre of 17 students in February by self-proclaimed white nationalist Nickolas Cruz, the murder of 11 people worshipping at a Pittsburgh synagogue in October, and other incidents resulted in the death of at least 40 people by white nationalists in the U.S. alone.

The U.S. response to tragedies like these has been generally slow and minimal at best. In contrast, when a white nationalist in Christchurch, New Zealand shot and killed 50 Muslims during Friday prayers and wounded 50 more, the perpetrator was immediately arrested, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced new gun control laws within ten days.

## Teaching White Nationalism

One of my favorite ways to teach white nationalism is to first address white privilege. White privilege underlies beliefs in white superiority, yet we are often not taught to recognize it. Peggy Macintosh's essay "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" offers an interesting examination of white privilege in a way that is user-friendly and thought-provoking. Macintosh argues that white people living in the U.S. enjoy a number of unearned privileges that they can call upon on a daily basis. Because these are taken for granted, Macintosh asserts that we need to reflect on white privilege in order to "unpack" that invisible knapsack. Her emphasis is not that white people should feel guilty or should lose these daily advantages but rather that others should have them as well. Macintosh lists dozens of these privileges including such things as "I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed," "I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race," "I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection," "I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group," and "I can easily find hair and skin products that are appropriate." I have found that many of these privileges resonate with the people of color in my classes, and they often feel compelled to share experiences that white students have typically not had. Last fall, a Black male talked about being constantly asked for identification in the shopping complex where he works at an upscale store. When I taught in a more rural area, Black students often commented that they had to drive some distance to find appropriate skin and haircare products.

We have also debated the removal of Confederate statues and monuments, looking at both the pro and con arguments. In addition, we discuss creation of monuments, exhibits, and museums to honor victims of white nationalist violence, such as the Equal Justice Initiative's recent establishment of the

National Monument for Peace and Justice, which, according to the organization's website, "is the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved Black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence." The website features a short but compelling video discussing why a lynching memorial is necessary, along with reports on how many lynchings occurred and other important documents students can review. A link to the website is in the references.

Most students, I have found, are quite unaware of the extent of this kind of horror and are saddened but grateful to know this part of U.S. history. Similarly, they are typically surprised to learn that other countries have taken far greater measures to remove symbols of hate and to prohibit them from being created. Germany, for instance, removed all Nazi flags, and most relics of the regime are not available for public view. Not that this was enough; the process of reconciling the country's history took decades but has, for the most part, been a success—as Germany today is a vibrant democracy with notably less racism and extremism, according to J. Zeitz.

The Southern Poverty Law Center's website has a number of great teaching tools related to white nationalism. Its hate map offers a compendium of where such groups are located around the U.S. and its Extremist Files provide thorough reviews of white nationalist groups and extremist individuals. Students can research and share these profiles with one another to gain a better sense of which groups are operating and what they advocate. A link to SPLC's web material on hate and extremism is included in the references.

Facebook's recent decision to ban white supremacy, white nationalism, and white separatism was controversial and thus another great classroom conversation starter. In class, we listened

to NPR's three-minute discussion of the ban and debated whether free expression was more important than banning hate, along with whether Facebook or other social media can make a difference in curtailing white nationalism. A link to this coverage is in the references. Likewise, that the Christchurch, New Zealand shooter was able to broadcast his actions live on Twitter and other fora generates important discussion on what should be prohibited on various social media platforms. President Trump's use of hateful rhetoric to describe immigrants also offers a useful point of analysis. Several groups keep in databases his tweets and other comments that can then be reviewed by students for accuracy and discussed in terms of their inflammatory nature. One such source is the Trump Twitter Archive. The link to it is available in the references.

The Charlottesville riot also provides fuel for discussing the right to assemble and nonviolent versus violent protest. White nationalists in this case were predominately responsible for the violence, but other protest groups like Antifa have not disavowed violence as a tool for making change. White nationalists' use of weapons to commit violent crime provides an ideal opportunity for educators to share facts about gun ownership, gun crime, and gun control—as well as current efforts to criminalize protest.

Finally, there are many great multimedia ways to address these issues. Although not specifically about white nationalism, Verna Myers's TED talk offers critical steps for creating a society that is not colorblind but that sees color for all its beauty and not as inferior. Christian Piccioli's TED talk describes his descent into white supremacy and how he became the leader of the first neo-Nazi skinhead gang in the U.S. His words powerfully address the pull for young, disaffected white men and the challenge and courage it takes to denounce those beliefs and that lifestyle. The music video for Prophets of Rage's "Unfuck the World" is a powerful

indictment of white nationalism, police brutality, and capitalist greed.

While I use the aforementioned materials in my sociology classes, where the topic of white nationalism is part of the curriculum, they certainly could be used in other disciplines. Political science, psychology, race and ethnic studies, peace studies and more seem to be logical fits for addressing white nationalism in this sort of critical, multimedia fashion. While some of the resources mentioned above, such as the Prophets of Rage song, are a little intense and disturbing, I have never faced any complaints by students, as they seem able to understand the point the band is trying to make. As such, it is my belief that the teaching materials I have mentioned could be used by junior faculty as well as tenured faculty.

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Write whatever makes sense to you, I was told. Though I understood the instruction, I struggled with its execution. The suicide bombings on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka massacred over 250 people. This included 45 children, or about the same number as those killed by the awful terrorism in Christchurch, New Zealand, a month earlier. Many hundreds more were injured, some severely. News reports on children who survived the attacks—too scared to speak and many scarred for life—I admit I glossed over.

The content was just too hard to read, much less comprehend. While international media attention covered the terrorism on Easter Sunday and the days immediately following, then moved on to other world events, the violence, instability, confusion and chaos on the ground and across the country continued for over a fortnight. Struggling for words to capture what unfolded on the 21st of April, those of a certain age were reminded of and reverted to a time in the late 1980's, when Sri Lanka was dealing

with open war in the North-East, a brutal radical Marxist uprising in the South and a government of the day that was equally vicious in response and reaction.

After the awful terrorism in Christchurch a month prior, I was asked to respond to the violence by those in my University and beyond who harboured the assumption that I was used to that level of violence. I didn't know quite what to say to my interlocutors, many of whom had had the envious privilege of mostly studying violent conflict in a library. The assumption was partly true. Many born to protracted conflict, faced with systemic discrimination or living in violence normalize the abnormal, the exceptional and chronic instability.

Once normalised, ordinary life is conducted in frames that consider a day at a time. My parents, for example, when my sister and I were growing up, never came to any event in public together. Their logic, which I learnt as an adult, was that if one were

to be killed by a suicide bomb—a common occurrence in the country of my childhood and youth—we would not be orphaned. This is not an equation I had to make with my son, who is now 12. Growing up in Sri Lanka, he has for almost all his life, never experienced the violence his mother and I grew up with and learned to negotiate.

These old considerations are now real and reborn. You don't ever get used to this violence. It takes its toll in what is often not documented. The pauses, silences, shuttering of doors, closing of windows, darkening of rooms, cancellations, closures and concerns that grow within, but aren't ever fully vocalized. You don't get used to the loss of life. You don't get used to seeing children die. You don't get used to the constant anxiety. You learn to live, laugh and love despite the violence. But you never get used to it.

How then to make sense of what happened? I took recourse to my doctoral research, which looks at the role, reach and relevance of social media in Sri Lanka. I look at Facebook and Twitter in particular, but my focus extends to other platforms as well. Various called networked gatekeeping or complex media ecologies, at its simplest, this area of research involves looking at how content produced or promoted digitally impacts public opinion as well as kinetic, physical reactions and responses. This is not as simple as positing a causal relationship between what's posted online and what happens in the real world. And yet, Western scholarship and writing, very evident in the media framing and responses to the Easter Sunday violence, tends to

simplistically project social media as an accelerant to violence on the ground. Contributing to this perspective, the Sri Lankan government blocked

social media on Easter Sunday for nine days, ostensibly to protect citizens from misinformation seeded and spread on social media. It was Sri Lanka's longest social media disruption. A few from outside the country and from Western countries supported this. However, many in Sri Lanka and I pushed back. Lived experience, context, culture and hard data, amongst other pulse points, very clearly indicated that blocks initiated by the government were entirely ineffective in their stated aims and counter-productive to boot.

Faced with the catastrophic failure of government to act on intelligence reports provided well in advance of the attacks, the near total collapse of crisis communications by the President and Prime Minister, the insensitivity of MPs who laughed and joked at a press conference held a day after the attacks, the shifting of blame, incredible denials, jostling for parochial or partisan advantage and in general, a complete lack of contrition and unity in responding to the massacre, tens of thousands expressed their frustration on social media. Data collected during the week saw unprecedented levels of grief on the 21st. By the 28th, this had transformed to very high levels of anger across more than 1,000 web pages dealing with politics, news, information, gossip, memes, entertainment and religion that I closely monitor. There was also, statistically, a lot of love on Facebook. More qualitative analysis indicated the emotion was closely pegged to criticism of the government. Violent rhetoric against the Muslim community grew apace, despite the social media block. Refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan in the country suffered the brunt of the pushback, with many forced out of their shelters and housing.

Seven million of the country's 22 million are on Facebook.

There are around 23 million SIM cards registered in the country. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Instagram are used by millions, daily, for everything from business and commerce to family chats and news. In just a week, some of the videos on Facebook uploaded by prominent news channels or politicians, even with a social media block in place, were viewed more times than the population of the country. Especially in the aftermath of a disaster, citizens turn to social media for news and information. Facebook is inextricably entwined into the country's socio-political, economic and communications DNA. In this context, the blocking of social media added to the anger. It also weaponized grief, fear and anxiety by creating the space for content that whipped up emotions or incited hate. Importantly, this hate and violent othering have festered for decades in the country. Aside from ethno-political conflict, the country has, even after the end of war ten years ago, witnessed sustained violence against the Muslim community, condoned and even openly architected by sections of the Buddhist clergy. The terrorism on Easter Sunday was intentionally aimed at exacerbating these tensions.

Sri Lanka is already a tragic example of a new kind of transnational terrorism. For those of us who call it home, much of the commentary and framing in the media is a blur at best. We remain paralysed, not just by the magnitude of the events on Easter Sunday, but what is essentially a reset for the country's post-war trajectory. With presidential elections due later this year revolving around populist incumbents and candidates, this terrorism plays into deeply problematic framing and responses. Comments by President Maithripala Sirisena, other politicians, and the army, blaming human rights activists and "too much of peace" for the violence, indicates the contours of a hostile terrain for peace and reconciliation which is both distressingly familiar and disturbingly novel.

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I was asked to make sense of the violence on Easter Sunday. The reader, I hope, will forgive me for my failure to do so. Writing five op-eds published in New Zealand, studying and responding to the violence in Christchurch, I thought, would somehow prepare me better to capture what Sri Lanka experienced. The challenge for many of us in peacebuilding is to intellectually engage when emotionally overwhelmed. I am not alone in this and join many others in New Zealand, Sri Lanka and beyond who seem destined to find new meaning or take refuge in the pregnant lines of Robert Frost,

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*

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# BIFROST



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# A NEW FACE OF TERROR IN SRI LANKA

WIM LAVEN

**When I arrived in Sri Lanka in 2005 I saw why Marco Polo had called it the most beautiful island in the world; I immediately fell in love. It took about six months to understand the paradox of the country's history of violence at a superficial level.**

I keep returning, and each time I'm required to relearn the context. The terrorist attacks on Easter Sunday appear different from prior episodes of violence. The suicide bombings killed 321 people (at last count, and the number is still growing), many of whom were tourists.

There are great parallels to be made between 2005 and 2019. In 2005 the country was rebuilding from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami amidst a fragile ceasefire. In 2019 Sri Lanka is responding to a manmade disaster that showcases failure in achieving reconciliation—peace remains fragile—following decades of violent conflict.

One account of the history of the ethnic conflict is that Sri Lanka was always a divided island, but the act of the United Nations to ratify all existing borders washed the historic divisions away. Another account

insists that the conflict was a direct result of centuries of colonial rule. The truth is that each of the explanations offer important information about the decades of violent conflict between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL). Another truth is that there is no consensus about the conflict in Sri Lanka.

The LTTE were so great (for lack of another word) in their campaigns of violence that some outlets in Sri Lanka reported their responsibility for the September 11 attacks. But how do you write in past tense about an organization you experienced during a negotiated peace—arguably prolonged by the tsunami—which returns to war and is ultimately annihilated? The LTTE, a terrorist organization, were in charge of significant portions of the conflict sensitive reconstruction projects I was a part of, because nothing happened in the areas they controlled without their permission. When the highway from Vavunya to Jaffna opened, there were GOSL and LTTE checkpoints at both ends. It was not open for long back then; December 2005 was the bloody month that made it clear there was no peace agreement.

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My understanding of events came from the same journalism that claimed the LTTE's responsibility for September 11. Was the barber in Jaffna actually killed by accident? Were the Christmas Day hartals (a kind of strike or curfew that causes everything to shut down) really the result of the Tamil National Alliance member of parliament being assassinated in front of his family while attending mass on Christmas Eve? For the record, Joseph Pararajasingham was assassinated at mass, but I was never able to identify the real story in Jaffna (if there was one).

Through that period, however, there was a truth all the aid workers I knew were aware of: no foreigner had ever been killed or targeted by the LTTE.

Fast forward to Easter Sunday 2019. I am watching updates come out of Sri Lanka. It is grim and uncertain, as I remember. Vinya Ariyaratne lets people know about services available through Sarvodaya (Sri Lanka's largest NGO, founded by his father A.T. Ariyaratne in 1958). He cautions "Don't share images of victims," and "Verify first" before sharing.

The moment I learn of the hotels that have been targeted I know there is a new problem, but I know so much of the context is the same. Research on peace and conflict can provide important information for monitoring and evaluating events in Sri Lanka, but it fails to make helpful predictions. Why the asymmetry?

There are key gaps between the research and its application. The first is economic, in the case of the Easter Sunday attacks, officials were afraid to cause a panic. But it is not just the economics of tourism. Sri Lanka and Haiti have battled for the unfortunate title of poorest country in the Northern hemisphere more years than not in recent decades.

While their economies have become somewhat bloated by post-disaster inflation, their infrastructure and systems have not. There is well developed research on responding to crisis and disaster. It points to "R's" which explain the likelihood of experiencing resistance, resilience, or vulnerability. My preferred, simple, theory looks at Resources, Response, Redundancy, and Robustness. Essentially the theory tells us what we see: what you have, your back-up plans, and how quickly you use them, are great for making predictions about responses to disasters.

Sri Lanka does not have much material wealth (measured in GDP), plan B's are rare, and response is delayed, hence Sri Lanka is vulnerable. Most of Sri Lanka's strength comes from the grassroots and community levels, where the GOSL fails the people innovate and find ways to survive. This grassroots strength is good for recovery, but it is no true defense.

The second gap is much more interesting from an academic standpoint, and it is harder to label. There is an information gap in understanding Easter Sunday. It is a new face of terror, it is extremist violence, and it has either been imported from abroad or created as a mutation from global events. Please do not get me wrong, asking "Could this have been prevented?" is important, but we have really good explanations for the failure to prevent this episode of terrorism. What I am alleging here is that the much more important questions relate to relationships between global events and the violence in Sri Lanka.

Much like Bangladesh suffers from torrential rains and flooding as a result of global warming, which they have an extremely limited role in causing; Sri Lanka's recent experience of violence appears to have been catalyzed by events like the mosque shootings in Christchurch, and inspired by ISIS

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(depending on whether you trust their claims; the GOSL sees their hand in it). This suggests that it can be fairly claimed that the global community has some responsibility for both causing and responding to the recent terrorism. But just as New Zealand has little course for action in addressing President Donald Trump's reckless statements which have been used as inspiration for alt-right and white supremacist violence and terrorism, Sri Lanka can do little to guard against Sri Lankan militants who travel to Turkey and Syria and are trained by the Islamic State.

The first gap explains why the warnings provided by moderate Muslims were essentially ignored. Eleven dossiers on local Islamist extremists, including Zaharan Hashim, "leader of the ISIS team in Sri Lanka," were provided by early 2017, yet they were unsuccessful in their efforts in catalyzing a police response. The lack of response and mobilization of resources is clearly to blame. But the second gap is more crucial, because Sri Lanka will never be able to

police the world for the terrorists that return home, or the events that inspire reactions. In fairness to Sri Lanka, experts who track the Islamic State's social media admit there were few—if any—credible indications that Sri Lanka would be targeted.

The National Thowheeth Jama'ath's (NJT) acts of terrorism are a clear departure from Sri Lanka's history of violence. They appear to have been motivated by the recent March 2019 attack on Muslims at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. It presents an alarming trajectory for reactionary extremism and places the whole globe in proximity for retaliatory violence and revenge. The levels of complexity are hard to decipher; many of those killed in Christchurch were refugees who had been forced to flee violence in their home countries, and many were innocent children. We're seeing violence beget violence in ways that require new solutions. I hope scholars rise to this challenge.



Installation of solar powered lighting systems (donated by Light Up The World-Canada) in Point Pedro, Jaffna, Sri Lanka December 2005.





Amplifier's *We The People* campaign projected alongside the new members of Congress after the historic 2018 midterm elections. Projection by AE Marling.



Amplifier's *We The People* campaign featuring artwork by Shepard Fairey captured in the streets of New York in 2017.

# RECLAIMING AND REBUILDING AMERICAN IDENTITY THROUGH ART

## HOW ONE NON-PROFIT USES IMAGES TO FIGHT HATE, FEAR, AND MISOGYNY

CLEO BARNETT

In January 2017, after a presidential election fight that surfaced hate, fear, misogyny, and open racism, our non-profit organization, Amplifier, launched a nonpartisan campaign dedicated to exploring and reclaiming the American identity.

*We The People* raised \$1.36 million in eight days on Kickstarter, a record for an art project, and was backed by 22,840 supporters. On inauguration day, with the support of crowdfunding efforts, Amplifier took out three full-page ads in national newspapers, hacking their existing distribution networks in order to reach every corner of the nation and to sneak messages of hope past the barricades in Washington, DC. We also distributed

the images as tens of thousands of large placards throughout the city and its Metro stops, handing out the free posters from the back of moving vans and at drop sites coordinated over social media. More than a million people in 195 countries downloaded *We The People* prints for free from Amplifier's website, and they turned them into everything from protest signs and murals to t-shirts and dresses.

In the next chapter of this project, *We The Future*, we are moving from our streets to our schools.

Kids in the United States spend an average of 1,200 hours a year in school. In today's climate of unprecedented fear and division, what students see—



or don't see—on their classroom walls matters more than ever. With the help of 20,000 educators across the United States, we are covering classroom walls with new icons, images of ten young leaders representing ten diverse movements, each carrying the hopes of their generation, each already building us a better world.

*We The Future* are youth leaders at the forefront of change who are building organizations and movements all across the country. They carry the energy of countless communities from every background and are providing clear paths to action and to healing. Their work is not partisan. It will be the basis for a new era of human and environmental rights in the 21st century. We invite educators around the world to join us in our campaign to support these young leaders as they draft and pass new legislation, fight for voting rights, and lead efforts on criminal justice reform, immigration justice and immigrant rights, gun violence prevention, disability justice, queer rights, youth literacy, and climate justice.

Through grassroots community organizing, portraits of these young leaders are currently hanging on the walls of over 300,000 classrooms in every state across the United States, and come with teaching tools built in collaboration with thousands of educators and hundreds of nonprofits. These images will be a constant reminder to students of who they themselves can be.

We believe that in times of uncertainty—in times like these, when your students are growing up surrounded by disinformation and division—art is more than beauty or decoration: It is a weapon and a shield. Art has the power to wake people up and serve as a catalyst for real change. It is a megaphone for important but unheard voices that need amplifying. It is a bridge that can unite



*Amplifier distributing thousands of posters in the streets of Washington DC during the Women's March in 2017.*

movements with shared values in ways other mediums cannot. Art gives us symbols to gather around, builds community, and helps us feel like we are not alone. But for all the tools art can be in this fight, for Amplifier it is a compass. It points to the future we want to live in, and that we want our children to live in.

If we hold this art and carry it in front of us, if we hang it on our walls or in our windows every day for our family and neighbors and students to see, then we remind ourselves of what we are building, and we find strength when we become tired.

Our goal is to reclaim and rebuild an American identity rooted in equality, dignity, diversity, truth, and beauty. For young people who are not used to seeing themselves in history books or on the walls of classrooms, what Amplifier and its partners are distributing is more than art. These simple, yet urgent messages will be carried with them for the rest of their lives. Our hope is that these images will help young people feel represented, spoken for, and listened to, making it easier to feel empowered to make the change they want to see in the world.

# THEIR BLOOD

IBRAHIM NASRALLAH  
TRANSLATED BY DR. OMNIA AMIN

Their blood is their good morning  
Their blood is their good evening  
It is their greeting,  
Their message to us,  
It is their story,  
and their fear for us.  
Their blood is their mosques,  
their churches,  
their windows,  
their love and anger  
Their blood is a painful reproach,  
A space of exposure,  
A mother's story to her children.  
Their blood is the rose's message to its fragrance,  
The birds and wind of their homeland,  
Their battles and truces,  
Their jokes as invaders attack.  
Their blood embodies their prayer,  
Their blood is prayer.

They left no trees reproaching them,  
No moon on their balconies,  
No song of thirst for their rivers.  
They disappointed neither the wish in the eyes of  
their young,  
nor the desire of the olives on the hills.

They are the friends of the sea  
The friends of the river  
They are the eyes of the olives  
The flower of the compassionate

دمهم صباح الخيز  
دمهم مساء الخير  
دمهم تحيتهم .. رسالتهم إلينا  
دمهم حكايتهم .. وخوفهمو علينا  
دمهم مساجدهم .. كنائسهم  
نوافذ دورهم  
دمهم محبتهم وغضبهم  
دمهم عتاب جارح  
دمهم فضاء فاضح  
دمهم حكاية أمهم لصغارها  
دمهم رسالة وردة لرحيقها  
دمهم طيور بلادهم ورياحها  
دمهم معاركهم .. وهدنتهم  
وطرفتهم إذا اندفع الغزاة  
دمهم ذراع صلاتهم  
دمهم صلاة

لم يتركوا شجراً يعاتبهم  
ولا قمراً على شرفات منزلهم  
ولا أغنيّة عطشى لأنهرهم  
لم يكسروا أمنيّة سكنت عيون  
صغارهم  
أو خاطر الزيتون فوق تلالهم

هم أصدقاء البحر  
هم أصدقاء النهز  
هم أعين الزيتون  
هم زهرة الحنون



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They are the green of the trees  
The childhood of the rivers  
They are the compass of the poets  
The provisions of the poor  
They are a street at dawn  
A laugh in the stone  
And the clarification of this secret:

Their blood is their good morning  
Their blood is their good evening

هم خُضرةُ الأشجار  
وطفولةُ الأنهار  
هم قِبلةُ الشعراء  
وذخيرةُ الفقراء  
هم شارعٌ في الفجر  
هم ضحكةٌ في الصخر  
ووضوحٌ هذا السر  
دمهم صباحُ الخير  
دمهم مساءُ الخير

# PREVENTING VIOLENCE IS A TASK FOR EVERYONE

## AN INTERVIEW WITH AMIRA ABOHUSSEIN

BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD



**Amira Abohussein** is a Program Officer (Conflict Resolution Liaison) for the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy in Washington, DC. Gabriel Ertsgaard, a contributing editor for the *Peace Chronicle*, interviewed Amira for the summer 2019 issue.

***How did you first become involved with interfaith peacebuilding efforts in your home country of Egypt?***

In 2007, I started my work in the Library of Alexandria in Egypt, and it had a partnership with the United Nations mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica. This partnership gave me the opportunity to start attending courses in conflict resolution—in transformation, mediation, and negotiation—to develop my personal skills. And I found these basic skills were really helpful, and helped me not just in my personal conflicts, but also helped me to mediate and solve conflict in my work between my other colleagues. I felt our community had an urgent need to get these kinds of skills and knowledge in an affordable way. This need inspired me to co-found a

new NGO that aimed to enhance social peace in our communities and reduce violence.

During that time, back in 2011, there was a terrible bombing at a church in Alexandria. In daily life, things are usually peaceful between Christians and Muslims in Egypt, but this brought to the surface tensions that had been underneath. After the attack, there was a blood drive, and some friends and I went to donate. When they saw that I'm Muslim, though, a woman told me they didn't want anything from us—not our help, not our blood, nothing.

Some of my colleagues and I decided to start a new project called "Neighborhood Coexistence" to build better relations between Christians and Muslims in Egypt. We established early warning networks and a

violence prevention team made up of Muslims and Christians.

We would bring together people from different walks of life—students, professors, police officers, Muslim and Christian religious leaders—and we trained them in what to watch for. This network is to watch for early warning signs of violence. Of course, every situation is different, so it's not one size fits all. People in the community would bring their own local knowledge to the process and design their local indicators.

We also had Muslims with long beards who would visit Christian prayer services, and Christians who would volunteer at mosque cleaning campaigns. This challenged the stereotype about the relationship between Christians and Muslims.

***What brought you to the United States, and how have your experiences been here?***

In 2015, I got the Civil Society Leadership Award from the Open Society Foundation, which gave me the opportunity to study for a master's degree for two years. But I was undecided on whether to pursue studies in economic development or conflict resolution. Fortunately, Brandeis University in Boston had a dual-degree program that let me study both in an accelerated track to finish the two master's degrees in two years. It was a great opportunity to meet peace builders and development professionals from everywhere around the world.

My work at the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy in Washington, DC, builds on that prior training and experience. I work on our Yemen project, but there are some important

differences between the situations in Yemen and Egypt. Yemen is in the middle of a war right now, which was not the case in Egypt. Also, there is not this Christian versus Muslim dimension in Yemen. The conflicts are not primarily between different religious groups, but between rival gangs and militias. Even so, there's the same need to build community networks to prevent violence. We're bringing together religious leaders, educators, and representatives of civil society to enhance their capacity and build a collaborative relationship to solve their local conflict and address their community needs.

***We've recently seen deadly attacks on both Muslim and Christian places of worship in Christchurch, New Zealand and Sri Lanka. What are the roots of such attacks, and what can be done to prevent them?***

These sort of attacks don't come out of nowhere. There are warning signs. If you look at the New Zealand attack, the shooter had been saying a lot of hateful things about Muslims and immigrants—needing to protect "his people" from Muslims and immigrants, that sort of thing. No one did anything about it, though. No one reported him. There's this whole issue of free speech versus hate speech. Our words, I think, should not harm someone else. When I was in Europe after the Charlie Hebdo attack in 2015, people were asking me what I thought about the attack and my answer was this:

With no doubt, I'm against such a horrible attack. In general, I'm against any violence including the violence that Charlie Hebdo was practicing. Charlie Hebdo's campaign of mocking and insulting the Prophet of Islam was a kind violence that hurts millions of Muslims around the world more than physical violence.

Many people were totally fine with this and justify it as freedom of speech, but we shouldn't be tolerant of hate speech any more. Now we see how hate speech leads to violent action and it starts this closed circle of violence. Therefore, the media can escalate conflict and violence, while it can play a very significant role to peacebuilding, too. Again, you look at New Zealand, and hate speech led to violent actions.

The attacks in New Zealand and Sri Lanka, they're part of that closed cycle of violence. One of the ringleaders of the Sri Lanka attacks was the son of one of the country's wealthiest men. This wasn't about poverty or economic deprivation. This was like the New Zealand terrorist. He got radicalized and believed in the ideology of these terrorist groups. The issue is: radicalization is a process, too, and it has many early warning signs. We need, as family and community, to be alerted to that, and to know when we can intervene to prevent violence.

My favorite saying is by Martin Luther King, Jr: "Those who love peace must organize as effectively as those who love war."\* Peacebuilders need to have the same level of cooperation and organizing. It is also not enough for just a few NGOs or other groups to build understanding and watch for early warning signs. Preventing violence is a daily task for everyone.

*\*Editor's note: The original appears to be: "Those of us who love peace must organize as effectively as the war hawks." The Atlantic has published the February 25, 1967 speech online under the title "Martin Luther King Jr. on the Vietnam War." As is common with sayings, the more versatile variant has circulated widely since that time.*

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# ANTI-SEMITISM THROUGH A HATE STUDIES LENS

KENNETH S. STERN

**My 2019 Yom HaShoah talks, focusing on the intersection of hate and antisemitism, were largely written when, on the last day of Passover, John Earnest walked into the Chabad synagogue in Roway, California, saw Jews, and opened fire. But for the bravery of those who put themselves at risk to try and stop him, and the jamming of his rifle, the carnage would have been worse.**

Earnest posted a manifesto a few minutes before he started shooting. Like most anti-semites who commit acts of terror, he justified his actions as noble self-defense. I opened my Holocaust Remembrance remarks at both commemorations with snippets from Earnest's screed:

*What value does my life have compared to the entirety of the European race? Is it worth it for me to live a comfortable life at the cost of international Jewry sealing the doom of my race. . . . Every Jew is responsible for the meticulously planned genocide of the European race. . . . Every Jew young and old. . . . For these crimes they deserve nothing but hell.*

This statement could have been written by Adolf Hitler.

Before I spoke at the Poughkeepsie commemoration, Jewish students were called up. They had spent weeks learning about the Nazi period, and one by one they read out loud news clippings from the 1930s, 1940s, and today. They spoke about Kristallnacht and more recent cemetery desecrations. About terror then, and the carnage at the Tree of Life Synagogue and the Chabad synagogue now. The flyer for the Buffalo commemoration had two pictures on the cover: a synagogue burning during Kristallnacht, and the Tree of Life Synagogue surrounded by crime tape.

I couldn't tell, as an outsider, whether the students were learning that today's events were like the Nazi period, or different, but I thought it important to stress the obvious—the difference. The Nazi atrocities were committed by a state, the Pittsburgh and Roway shootings by a single person, motivated by hate. One person, animated by hate, can commit great damage, as we have seen too often, and Jews are not the only targets, as we witnessed at

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Christchurch, Sri Lanka, Mother Emmanuel Church, the Orlando Nightclub, and elsewhere.

My keynote at the Buffalo commemoration followed a short film from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, on hatred and antisemitism. What's the relationship between the two?

Jewish organizations frequently insist we single out anti-semitism after such a horrid attack, for good reason. I worked for 25 years as the anti-semitism expert at the American Jewish Committee, and too often, particularly in Europe, officials tried to pass off attacks on Jews or Jewish-liked property as a generalized hatred. "Hooligans!" I recall a French official describing those who were throwing Molotov cocktails at synagogues in the early 2000s. Why, then, was it only synagogues, but not mosques or churches, that were being "hooliganized?" When antisemitism is homogenized into a non-specific racism or hatred, it is disguised, made to disappear, and that too frequently is the intent.

But the flip side is the more important. It is not as if only Jews are targeted with hate, and to see anti-semitism as outside this human capacity is to put on blinders. As I've written elsewhere, hate is as old as humans. Regardless of when or where, which political or economic system, major religion, or any other variable, people have always defined, and frequently dehumanized, an "other." We may need help figuring out whom to hate, but to hate is part of who we are. New studies in neuroscience and neurobiology, supplementing those in social psychology and other fields, confirm that we are hardwired, or at least pre-wired, to see an "us" and a "them." As Henri Tajfel demonstrated, one can flip a coin and divide a room full of people in half, group A and group B.

Everyone knows their assignment to a group is arbitrary, yet after a group identity is formed, each group sees itself as better than the other group. Ethnocentrism and tribal thinking is a strong part of our makeup, even though there are impulses, moral values, and theologies and ideologies which emphasize a human thirst for universalism. In this tug of war, and despite Martin Luther King's observation that the arc of history bends toward justice, there is extensive evidence that the pull of tribalism, especially when properly stoked, is stronger than that of universalism. We might like to think that love is stronger than hate, but history shows that too often hate is stronger than its closest opposite, which isn't love, but empathy.

Our hardwired minds are more likely to see a "them" threatening an "us" when their theology or ideology tells them that truth, God, or the combination identifies the "them" as a danger. On this us/them plane, anti-semitism plays out spectacularly. Whether from the early days of Christianity when Jews were ghettoized as an example of what happens when the "them" doesn't recognize "our truth" (in this case that Jesus is God), to the targeting of Jews during the black death for "poisoning wells," to the blood libel—blaming Jews for ritual sacrifice when Christian children disappeared—to its more modern manifestations, including Nazism and the world view of John Earnest, anti-semitism defines Jews as conspiring to harm non-Jews, and provides an explanation for what goes wrong in the world.

We also know from social psychology that hatred can be fueled by people in authority. They help define if a particular manifestation of hate is on the extremes (where hate will always have a home), or in the mainstream, where it is much more dangerous.

Anti-semitism today, despite these recent acts and

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other incidents on the political right and left, is still much less of an issue than in prior generations. Not too many decades ago there was overt discrimination, including in college admissions and real estate sales. Twenty years ago the organized Jewish community effectively declared anti-semitism dead, which was obviously wrong even then, but recall that Joe Lieberman ran for Vice President in 2000 without any significant pushback, and the biggest threat to the Jewish community was intermarriage. Jews were being loved to death, and they still are.

Anti-semitic terror attacks are not new. White supremacist Buford Furrow shot up an LA area Jewish Community Center in 1999, white supremacist James Wenneker von Brunn killed a guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and white supremacist Frazier Glenn Miller Jr. killed non-Jews when he targeted people near Jewish institutions in the Kansas City area. It's a mistake to gauge too much about the level of anti-semitism based on whether a lone shooter decides to act or not.

That said, there are reasons to worry about a potential rise of antisemitism. During the heyday of the militia movement in the 1990s (which was driven by white supremacists), the head of the Montana Human Rights Network described the militias as "a funnel moving through space." He meant that at the wide end of the funnel, people were being sucked in by mainstream issues (in the militias' case, gun control, federal intrusiveness, etc.). Further into the funnel they were exposed to us/them conspiratorial thinking. Further down, the antisemitic conspiracy theories. And, at the small end, warriors who gave their entire identity to militia ideology and committed acts of terror—like Timothy McVeigh—popped out. The beauty of this metaphor is the suggestion that the more pressure there is to move

people into the lip of the funnel, the more will pop out the short end.

I believe we are in an historical moment when there is increased pressure to push people into the funnel. When us/them thinking is mainstreamed, when a binary world view is promoted by leaders, this is the culture in which anti-semitism can most easily grow. This is one of the dangers associated with the Trump presidency.

Donald Trump came down the escalator at Trump Tower, and announced his campaign, calling Mexicans rapists. Later he said it might be a good idea to register all Muslims. Imagine what we would be saying about the level of antisemitism if a presidential candidate called Jews rapists, or suggested they register?

Then, after Charlottesville, he said there were some "very fine people" among those with tiki torches, confederate flags, and Nazi symbols. No wonder white supremacists felt empowered.

Why, at Charlottesville, which was ostensibly a protest about preserving a Confederate statue, did some of these "very fine people" chant "Jews shall not replace us?" These are white supremacists, who believe they are biologically superior to non-whites. They know non-whites will constitute a majority of Americans in just a few decades. How can it possibly be that people who are inferior are having the upper hand? Someone must be putting their thumb on the scale. That would be the conspiratorial Jews, who, recall in the words of John Earnest, are responsible for a genocide against white people. Robert Bowers—the Pittsburgh shooter—was reportedly concerned about the caravan of non-whites approaching our Southern border, which President Trump kept describing as an "invasion." But Bowers didn't seek out Ecuadorians

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and Guatemalans to kill. He shot Jews, whom he clearly believed were responsible.

Hate has always worked in politics—otherwise politicians wouldn't use it. But the current administration is stoking hate and us/them thinking in profound ways, exploiting the blue/red bubbles already growing because of cable news and social media. And it is doing something else that is linked to the likelihood of hate and antisemitism growing: attacking democratic institutions, attacking the judiciary, calling people with whom you have policy disagreements "traitors," and attacking the press as the "enemy of the people." Democratic institutions are precious and fragile; they are the infrastructure of our society, and like infrastructure, corrosion may not be immediately apparent. But hate-including anti-semitism—is more likely to grow where democratic institutions are under threat.

Jewish groups are also making a mistake. I understand why it is important for mainstream Jewish organizations to keep good connections with government leaders, even those with whom you might have fundamental disagreements. But acts and statements that empower hate and anti-semitism should never be overlooked. Yet, if you are seen as a supporter of Israel, too often you get a free pass. The Zionist Organization of America feted Steve Bannon as a friend of the Jews and of Israel. Bannon's work helped propel the alt-right, the hateful community that is an important component of today's anti-semitism and white supremacy. The left is sometimes blind to anti-semitism in its midst too, usually around Israel issues. If any of us turns a blind eye to hate and anti-semitism among our political friends, we are empowering hate.



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# HE MURDERED MY CHILD

## MEDITATIONS ON CHRISTCHURCH AND THE SOCIOPATHY OF WHITE SUPREMACY

BY RANDY BLAZAK

A little over thirty years ago I began studying right-wing extremists after a gang of racist skinheads in Atlanta set my Vespa scooter on fire. I was a graduate student at Emory University exploring macro-economic theory and the skinheads were routinely attacking the social justice rallies that were occurring during the Reagan administration. It seemed like the best revenge for their arson would be to go undercover to find out what made this new hate group tick. Little did I know my research would help explain the rise of white nationalism in the twenty-first century.

After nearly six years in the field interviewing racist skinheads in the United States and Europe (including some particularly nasty neo-Nazis in a beer hall in Berlin), some key findings became clear. These young men were experiencing what founding sociologist Emile Durkheim called anomie—the sense of normlessness. The world was changing socially, demographically, and economically. The authority of straight white men was no longer assumed in the new globalized landscape. Manipulated by sociopathic “leaders” in the “movement,” they were prepared to fight a race war to make their world great again. My findings were reflected in the

research of other sociologists’ work, including Barbara Perry and Pete Simi. We should have seen it coming.

When the wave of white nationalism surrounding the Trump election began to make its mark, I felt like I was right back in the field. Events like the alt-right march and killing that happened in Charlottesville, Virginia and the synagogue shooting that happened in Pittsburg put my scholarship front and center. There I was on national and international news outlets, from CNN to Al Jazeera, trying to make sense of this emboldened fascism, looking for context to frame the new extremism.

The double mosque attack in Christchurch in March that killed 51 worshipers felt different. Not just because it happened in the violence-averse island nation of New Zealand. Maybe it was that I had just been to a meeting at the Muslim Education Trust (MET), a local Muslim school and mosque where we were planning a community event on the issue of Islamophobia. Maybe it was because I have two Muslim students in my Friday sociology class, from Libya and Iraq. It certainly wasn’t because there was anything unique about the attacker; research is clear:

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he was cut right from the white nationalist playbook, half Dylan Roof, half Timothy McVeigh.

I think it was the news about the victims that made these attacks feel different. Many of the victims were refugees who had come to New Zealand to escape the horrors of endless wars. Children were among them—Three- and four-year-olds, including a boy my daughter's age, a refugee from Somalia named Abdullahi Dirie. He was shot in the head by the killer, who, according to reports, was on his way to a Muslim school to kill more children when police stopped him. It is next to impossible not to put your child in Abdullahi's little shoes. But what do you do with that emotion?

The reports of the attack were relatively fresh when a community gathering was called at MET, attended by local mayors and police officials who dutifully reassured the Portland-area Muslim community that their safety was a priority. Members of many faiths led us in prayer, but I don't think the reality of the horror on the other side of the planet had sunk in.

I got called into media rotation on CNN, where there were, of course, questions about Trump's role in the rise of right-wing extremism around the globe. It did not help that Trump said that white nationalism was not a rising threat (Fact: It is). I managed to get this gem on a global broadcast: "Either Trump is knowingly inflaming white supremacists, a Manchurian Candidate for the alt-right, or he is completely clueless to the real threat level and growing body count from right-wing extremists. I'll let your viewers decide which it is."

By the third sit-down with CNN, I didn't want to talk about Trump or guns or the looming Aryan revolution. I just wanted to talk about Abdullahi Dirie and the slaughter of innocents. That Saturday

afternoon I was on with Ana Cabrera, who wanted to discuss the rambling 70-page "manifesto" of the shooter. I just wanted to talk about how it takes a sociopath to shoot children my daughter's age in the head. And how the world of right-wing extremism is a magnet for sociopaths. If you get your kicks from cruelty, who better to idolize than Hitler? The shooter referenced various fascists (and Trump) in his rambling declaration of war on non-whites.

I've had a foot in this world long before I began my field work on Nazi skinheads in the eighties. I grew up around Klan members in Stone Mountain, Georgia. I know exactly what kind of bullies gravitate to that darkness. They think the earth (or America or New Zealand) belongs to them, and everyone else is an "invader." Invaders from Mexico, from Turkey, or like four-year-old Abdullahi Dirie, from Somalia. This is "their land" and the invaders must be vanquished by any means necessary.

On that Sunday, I was a guest on a radio show in New Zealand and begged them not to let the divisive rhetoric of the United States infect their small country. Keep the focus on what unites people.

We don't know enough about sociopathy to cure it or prevent it, but we know plenty about the world that magnifies it. Unlike our intentionally ignorant president, the counterculture of white nationalism is growing at an alarming rate. There will be more victims. Timothy McVeigh ended the lives of 19 children in a daycare facility when he ignited his truck bomb in front of a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995. Like the Christchurch terrorist, he did time in the sick world of white supremacy and believed the white race was "endangered."

There is no white race, only a human race. But there is a race war and our children are being slaughtered.

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# MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: SURVEY NEWS

JEREMY RINKER AND  
DEAN J. JOHNSON

In early February of this year we solicited responses to a membership survey. Thanks to all of those who responded, we received 72 responses in total. Most of the information we hear as a board comes at the yearly members meeting which takes place during the annual conference. The information collected as a result of the survey allowed for more members to share their opinions about what they get out of their PJSA membership. Your responses will help the board do some strategic planning and growing of our membership base. The board hopes to be able to grow the organization in order to help maintain financial stability and professional presence. We all want peace, so encourage your friends and colleagues to join PJSA and help us build it!

The good news is that overall members seem to be happy with the organization. Members find value in the annual conference as a place to reconnect, to learn about new pedagogical approaches, and to catch up on social justice initiatives. Members also value the listserv as a place to stay connected and to post important news and/or questions. Finally, members shared an appreciation for the publications offered by the organization. All of these responses will assist the board in making good fiduciary decisions for the whole PJSA membership.

As you might expect there are also a few growing edges around which further planning becomes necessary. In the survey and at the annual membership meeting, members expressed a great need and desire to add to the diversity of the organization as well as a need to make it more accessible. Members expressed

ongoing concerns about the divide between the language of academics versus non-academic practitioners in meeting spaces and on the listserv. Members also shared concerns about the costs of the annual conference and membership for those who do not have access to professional funding. The survey uncovered that institutional memberships are underutilized and provided some information about other groups and institutions that could be brought into the organization. Finally, the survey provided some very useful information about ways to create a larger, more diverse network of peace and justice studies professionals. All of these findings, plus other ideas, will be discussed by the full board.

Finally, the announcement you have all been waiting for... The winners of the random drawing of survey participants who will either get a year's free membership or a \$100 gift certificate from PM Press. The winners are: Susan Cushman, Janet Gerson, Anna Hamling, and Damon Lynch. Congratulations to you all! Thank you again to those who responded to the survey. We hope to provide a further update during the PJSA membership meeting in Winnipeg.

Please feel free to reach out to us at [membership@peacejusticestudies.org](mailto:membership@peacejusticestudies.org) if you have any needs, questions, or concerns regarding membership. For more information about membership, please visit the membership page on the PJSA website. May the coming year be one of justice and peace.

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## LOCAL ALIGNMENTS, GLOBAL UPHEAVALS

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# NOTE FROM THE CONFERENCE CO-CHAIR

WENDY KROEKER

Dear PJSA members and friends,

We are so excited to host this year's PJSA conference at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. We have worked hard to incorporate your reflections and feedback from past experiences to build a conference that brings people together to have meaningful conversations: fewer competing sessions, more space between time slots so conversations can continue even after the session ends, plenty of coffee breaks, and an approach to food that focusses on sourcing both locally and sustainably. Please bring your own travel mug, if possible, to reduce our use of disposable cups.

We are also taking advantage of Winnipeg as a site of people's movements: from the 1919 General Strike (yes, you're coming at the centennial!) and indigenous movements such as Idle No More.

Pre-conference options include a full day tour to a

sacred site for indigenous petroforms, walking the route of the 1919 General Strike locale and finishing off with a pint of the Little Brown Jug brewery's 1919 beer, or a tour of the national Canadian Museum for Human Rights. Winnipeg is also a city of fantastic breweries and restaurants.

Finally, we can't wait to be inspired by our fantastic and thought-provoking line up of speakers including: Margo Tamez, Niigaan Sinclair, Gramma S hingoose, Sadie Phoenix-Lavoie, and some of our own PJSA friends and mentors. As we see panel proposals roll in, it is the voices of our membership that we are most excited about. We hope you can join us October 4-6 for what will undoubtedly be an incredible conference.

See you then,

Wendy Kroeker, on behalf of the 2019 conference planning team



# LETTER FROM THE PJSA BOARD CO-CHAIR

LAURA FINLEY

Greetings from the PJSA Board!

I am excited that we now have someone serving in an interim capacity as Co-Chair. This was necessitated when Stephen Schroeder, whom we thank for his efforts, was required to step down. I'd like to introduce everyone to Evelyn Voight. Below is a brief biography of Evelyn:

Evelyn Voigt was born a prisoner of war in Africa. This has shaped her career in international development and elevated her respect for those active in the peace field. Evelyn is the co-founder of the Civilian Peace Service Canada, which focuses primarily on the accreditation of peace professionals. CPSC, where Evelyn is also a researcher, pioneered and piloted the first values- and competency-based methodology to assess and accredit peace professionals. Evelyn serves on the board of the Peace and Conflict Studies Association of Canada, and is the recipient of a Queen's Golden Jubilee medal for her contribution to international development (2002). A poet and spoken word artist, she has, amongst others, co-compiled 150 Canadian Stories of Peace, an anthology; and authored Flying Snakes and Green Turtles: Tanzania Up Close.

Additionally, the Board is enthusiastic about the new Peace Chronicle. We are very grateful to Shatha Almutawa, Wim Laven, Gabriel Erstsgaard and Matthew Johnson, with tremendous support (as always!) from Executive Director Michael Loadenthal, for their work in overhauling this publication. Persons interested in contributing can contact Shatha at [salmutawa@willamette.edu](mailto:salmutawa@willamette.edu).

Finally, we look forward to seeing everyone in Winnipeg for the annual conference in October! Stay tuned for the schedule and other details on the PJSA's website.

Peace,  
Laura Finley, Co-Chair

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