WOMEN WEREN’T WRITTEN OUT OF HISTORY—
THEY WERE NEVER WRITTEN IN.
UNTIL NOW.

DISCUSSION GUIDE
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION
- Letter from Series Creators: 1

## FOR FACILITATORS AND EVENT ORGANIZERS
- Facilitation Tips: 5
- From Discussion To Action: 9

## DISCUSSION
- Discussion Questions for Women, War & Peace II: 12
- A Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers: 13
- Wave Goodbye To Dinosaurs: 15
- Naila and the Uprising: 18
- The Trials of Spring: 25

## LEARN MORE
- Women & Peace Process in Northern Ireland: 34
- Background on the First Intifada: 35
- Egypt and the Arab Spring: 38
- Women in Peacekeeping: 41
- Delve Deeper: 45
CREDITS
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ABOUT PEACE IS LOUD
Peace is Loud uses storytelling to advance social justice movement building, with a focus on women’s rights and gender justice.

To request a screening for your community, organization, or classroom, visit:
pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/screenings

For more information on all four films featured, visit:
pbs.org/womenwarandpeace

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INTRODUCTION
LETTER FROM SERIES CREATORS

When we originally produced the mini-series Women War & Peace, the idea that women were essential to global peace and security was a radical concept. War was considered exclusively a man’s domain. Even we, executive producers of the project, thought of it that way—up until we went to Liberia and stood face to face with the women who participated in the Mass Action for Peace led by Leymah Gbowee. These women crusaded for the interests of traumatized civilians caught between corrupt factions warring for power as a means to personal enrichment. Their story became the cornerstone of Women War & Peace, documented in Pray the Devil Back to Hell. After we finished the film, we looked around and realized that, unrecognized and unheralded, women were playing key roles in conflict zones around the globe. We filmed stories in Afghanistan, Colombia, and at the International Criminal Court as the fight played out to get rape recognized as a war crime. By the time Women War & Peace aired, Gbowee had just been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and the world’s idea about women’s role in war had begun to shift.

Our lives had changed profoundly, also. We realized there were so many similar stories, both past and present, that were untold. Bernadette Devlin, Northern Irish civil rights leader and former member of Parliament, once said, “Women hadn’t just been written out of history, they were never written in.” This has always stayed with us.

We became committed to writing women into history. Fortunately, some of the leading women documentary filmmakers in the world were also busy making films to correct that omission. Academy award-winning director Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Emmy award-winning Geeta Gandbhir were capturing Bangladeshi women peacekeepers on a year-long mission to Haiti; the renowned Julia Bacha was recounting the remarkable unknown story of the Palestinian...
women at the heart of a non-violent struggle for freedom; emerging Irish filmmaker Eimhear O’Neill was keen to spotlight the all-female political party in Northern Ireland that had braved death threats and relentless bullying to make their mark on the Good Friday Agreement. And we wanted to ensure that women’s voices of the Arab Spring in Egypt didn’t go unheard. It was time for a new series.

The resulting four films comprising *Women War & Peace II* are *Wave Goodbye to Dinosaurs*, *The Trials of Spring*, *Naila and the Uprising* and *A Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers*. Collectively they demonstrate how some of the biggest international stories of recent memory have been shaped by women. At a time when women around the world are winning elections, marching in the streets, and loudly declaring that the future is female, *Women War & Peace II* proves that history, in fact, is too.

**Abigail E. Disney and Gini Reticker**

Executive Producers, *Women, War & Peace*
WHY WOMEN?
On Women, Peace And Security

Traditional approaches to resolving conflict are falling short in the face of surging levels of war, terrorism, and displacement over the past decade. But mounting evidence suggests that including women in peace and security processes could significantly reduce violence and advance peace.

From Northern Ireland to Liberia and beyond, where women influence peace negotiations, peace prevails against the odds. A peace agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years when women participate in its creation. When women sign peace agreements, the provisions are more robust and more likely to be implemented.

And yet, women still struggle to get a seat at the peace table, where the future of their societies is decided. Since 1990, 92% of peace negotiators have been men.

Women—like men—play myriad roles in war and peace: from soldiers and politicians to peace activists and bystanders. But they are typically under-represented among the warring parties and disproportionately affected by conflicts they rarely begin.

As such, when women mobilize for peace, they frequently bring perspectives and priorities that may otherwise be lacking in the halls of power. In Northern Ireland, for example, the Women’s Coalition expanded the peace negotiations beyond narrow sectarian agendas to include reconciliation and victims’ rights—helping to address the root causes of the conflict.

Women also repeatedly build broad coalitions to push for peace across divides. In Liberia, Christian and Muslim women successfully united to demand an end to decades of war through a strategic sequence of protests, petitions, and a Lysistrata-inspired sex strike.

“Women are 52% of the population...We have a right to be at the talks table. It’s our future that’s being talked about.”

—May Blood
Wave Goodbye to Dinosaurs

War affects men and women differently. Even though most men do not join armed groups, the vast majority of war’s perpetrators—and direct victims of violence—are men. Women are more likely to die from war’s indirect effects and experience conflict-related sexual violence. Unpacking gender’s influence helps us to uncover the causes and consequences of conflict.

Moreover, the goals of gender equality and peace go hand in hand. Using the largest dataset on the welfare of women in the world, American scholars have shown that gender equality is a greater predictor of peace than a country’s wealth, religion, or level of democracy. Yet, just 2% of funding dedicated to peace and security goes to gender equality or women’s empowerment.

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed the landmark Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, creating a global framework for increasing women’s inclusion in peace and security processes. In 2017, the United States passed its own Women, Peace, and Security Act. This bipartisan legislation acknowledges how much progress has yet to be made, seeking to ensure that US personnel advance women’s meaningful participation in the prevention, mitigation, and resolution of conflict.

**WOMEN REMAIN UNDER-REPRESENTED IN PEACE TALKS.**

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FOR FACILITATORS AND EVENT ORGANIZERS
BEFORE YOUR SCREENING

PLANNING YOUR EVENT

FIND PARTNERS
Passionate partners will strengthen your publicity and outreach capabilities and create a more powerful community screening. Consider collaborating with:

- Local affiliates of the film’s partners
- Feminist organizations
- University departments (women’s or gender studies, political science, law, Middle and Near East studies, journalism)
- High schools
- Student organizations and youth groups
- Faith-based groups
- Social justice and human rights organizations (including anyone who provides training workshops for activists)
- Professional organizations (e.g., lawyers, journalists)
- Civic and fraternal organizations
- Libraries

DATE AND TIME
Ask partners which days and times work best for their members. Then check community, school, and religious holiday calendars to ensure that your selected date doesn’t conflict with other events likely to draw the same audience.

EVENT LENGTH
You'll probably want to schedule approximately 2 hours. That will leave time for introductions, screening the film, a substantive post-screening discussion, and planning for action.
LOCATION
When choosing a venue, consider:

- **Accessibility**
  Make sure the venue is accessible to people with disabilities and that the location is accessible by public transportation or within walking distance for your intended audience.

- **Size**
  The screening room should fit everyone comfortably without being so large that it inhibits interaction.

- **Neutrality**
  Choose a venue that is welcoming. For example, houses of worship might be comfortable for congregants but not for people of other faiths. A university campus might feel right for students but intimidate community members. Examples of neutral spaces might include a public library, community center, or movie theater.

- **Auxiliary Spaces**
  If you plan to break your audience into smaller groups after the screening, be sure the facility can accommodate this. If you plan to provide childcare, be sure the site includes a safe space for children.

- **Internet Access**
  If you want to your audience to participate in online backchats or share tweets or Facebook posts about the film, be sure your venue has an open Wi-Fi network.

- **Access to Projection Equipment**
  Be sure the equipment is reliable and that you (or your designated tech specialist) know how to use it. Don’t forget to test the sound quality as well as the picture quality.

PUBLICITY
In addition to spreading the word via every social media outlet you can access, plastering your community with flyers, and announcing the event through partner newsletters and email blasts, consider issuing a press release to your local news outlets and community calendars. To increase chances of the story being picked up, create a local angle that links the film to things happening in your town. If possible, offer interviews with locals who can provide some expertise or share their personal experience. You can also refer reporters to the film’s press kit.
AT THE EVENT

- **Set Up**
  Arrange the room (if seats are movable) to ensure that everyone can see the screen and to facilitate follow-up conversation. Arrive early enough to test the tech, making sure that you have both sound and picture. Have back-ups for everything: copies of the film, batteries, cables, extension cords, etc. Don’t forget to check equipment you need for the discussion as well as the screening (e.g., mics).

- **Refreshments**
  Everybody likes free food. Including “free food” on your invitation can improve turnout. If your event is hosted by a nonprofit, local grocery stores or restaurants are often happy to donate refreshments. Be sure to respect the dietary needs of your audience (e.g., does the food need to be halal, kosher, or vegetarian?).

- **Signage**
  Post signs in and around the venue so people know they are in the right place and can easily find the room you are using.

- **Registration**
  Set up a registration desk by the door so attendees can easily sign in. Invite guests to provide their email addresses so they can be notified of follow-up events, actions, or online evaluations. Be clear about what you and your partners will (and won’t) do with the information collected.

- **Time Management**
  Make the most of your allotted time. Introduce partners, thank funders, and let people know how the event will proceed (encouraging people to stay for the discussion following the film) but do it in “headline” format. Nothing brings down the energy level of a room more than a series of introductions that are too long. And be sure to leave time at the end of the event to plan action steps and/or set up a follow-up meeting.

- **Discussion**
  Taking a break between the film and discussion puts you at risk for losing a large part of your audience, so begin the discussion as soon as the film ends.

FOLLOW-UP

- **Thank Yous**
  Send a thank-you email or text to everyone who registered. Encourage them to stay informed by including links to local organizations as well as the Women, War & Peace II website.
FACILITATION TIPS
As you facilitate the discussion, your method can model the goal of empowering participants, or it can do the opposite.

Because *Women, War & Peace II* is about honoring women’s voices, you’ll want to show participants that their opinions have value. Be careful not to let your beliefs overshadow theirs by unintentionally implying that they should agree with everything you say. This is especially important when working with girls or women who have been silenced in their families or communities.

Unlike the job of a teacher, a facilitator’s role is not to interpret the film for your audience. Your job is to help people probe so they can learn from the film and from one another.

- **Focus the conversation on learning rather than judging.**
  Reinforce that approach with the language you use: Instead of “What did you think of a decision or action taken by that woman?” ask, “What did you learn from that woman’s actions or choices?” And, of course, avoid leading questions (e.g., “Didn’t you think she made the wrong choice?”).

- **Be clear about the difference between debate and dialogue.**
  A debate is about staking out a position and trying to convince everyone else that you are right and they are wrong. A dialogue is about exchanging ideas in order to learn from one another. That means actively listening as well as talking.

- **Select discussion prompts that match the goals, interests, and experience of your group.**
  There is no need to work through every prompt in this guide and no benefit to doing so. Typically you’ll only need one or two prompts to get the conversation going and a single closing prompt to wrap things up and transition to planning action steps.

- **Invite participants to share their honest opinions and not just say what they think you (or others) want to hear.**

- **If needed, help participants distinguish between disagreement (which can be interesting and productive) and disrespect (which shuts down productive dialogue).**
  Make slurs off limits and stop speakers who use them. Revoke the privilege to speak for anyone who persists in using them.

- **Review the film before your event and leave yourself time to reflect on its content.**
  That way you won’t be processing your own raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

- **Structure parts of the conversation to ensure that everyone who wants to speak**
has a chance to be heard.
Strategies might include using go-rounds (where each person takes a turn speaking), limiting opportunities to speak for a second or third time until everyone has had a first chance, or dividing into small groups or pairs.

- Differentiate between comprehension questions and discussion prompts. Comprehension questions test for understanding and typically have a clear, correct answer. Such questions can be integrated into a discussion by doing occasional “check-ins” to make sure everyone has a common understanding of events or critical concepts. In contrast, discussion questions are always open-ended. These are questions for which multiple valid answers are possible.

- Encourage people to speak only for themselves and not generalize or presume to know how others feel.

- Follow the lead of your participants, allowing their interests to guide where the discussion goes. If comments stray too far afield, gently remind speakers of the purpose of your event and use a discussion prompt to refocus the group.

- Leave time at the end of your gathering to brainstorm possible actions — or to provide a call to action — and be prepared to help facilitate the action(s) that participants choose.
FROM DISCUSSION TO ACTION

The stories that viewers see in *Women, War, & Peace II* can elicit feelings of anger, cynicism, frustration, helplessness, or even hopelessness. They can also inspire viewers to take action, by continuing to write women back into history and ensuring they are part of future peace initiatives.

You can support and elevate the role of women in conflict in different ways:

- Encourage participants to see the women in the film as role models. The women show strength, not resignation. If the women actually experiencing the events can hold out hope, certainly others can, too.

- Help participants think about the value of what they do locally and talk about the importance of preserving strong democracies that value gender equity where women like those featured in these films can find refuge and continue their work.

- Stay up to date with the initiatives happening in the Women, Peace and Security space—read more in our “Delve Deeper” section to learn more.

- Help participants plan next steps. Let them know about existing *Women, War & Peace II* initiatives and also brainstorm actions specific to their own community needs. The more you can guide people to be concrete and set dates for future meetings or actions, the more likely they are to follow through. **Text WWP to 555888 to learn more about becoming involved.**
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These prompts can be used with any (or all) of the films:

OPENING QUESTIONS
• Imagine telling a friend or family member about the film. What would you say?
• If you could spend a day with one person from the films, whom would you choose, and what would you want to talk about?
• What single word best describes how the films made you feel?
• Describe a moment from the films that you found particularly inspiring or distressing. What aspect of that moment moved you?

PERSONAL TAKEAWAYS
• Choose one of the women featured in the films and complete these sentences:
  – Your story is important to me because . . .
  – I identified with your story when . . .
  – I was angry that you had to . . . and impressed when you . . .
• Did you see anything familiar in the experiences of the women? How are their lives similar to and different from the lives of women you know?
• Did the women say anything that “spoke truth” to you?

POLITICS, SOCIAL JUSTICE, & CHANGE
• In a sentence, summarize what the women in each film were fighting for. In a second sentence, summarize what the women in each film were fighting against. Discuss how these two may relate.
• What strategies did the women use to achieve their goals? In your view, what were the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy?
• What did you learn from the films about effective leadership or activism?
GENDER ANALYSIS

• Did you see any ways in which women and men approach these things differently:
  – Leadership?
  – Activism?
  – Revolution?

• Scholars often debate whether differences between men and women are the result of biology (nature), learned behaviors/cultural expectations (nurture), or some combination of the two. If you identified differences between men and women’s behavior in the films, how would you explain them?

• What did you learn from the film about the role of men as allies? How can men participate without silencing women?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

• What is one lesson you learned from the films that you wish everyone knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it?

• What questions about the intersection of women, war, and peace did you have when you walked into the room? Did watching the film provide answers or generate new questions? How or where will you find answers?

• How did these films address your beliefs on women’s involvement in peacekeeping, civil resistance, peace negotiations?

• Complete this sentence: I am inspired by the women in this film to . . .
UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED INEQUITY

- As police officers and soldiers, the Bangladeshi women in the film are able to assert their authority. However, why does this sense of authority not necessarily help them achieve gender equality in their communities, country, or families?

- Farida recalls, “My father used to say it would have been better if I had been a boy.” Have you ever heard something similar? What might a child learn about themselves and their culture from this sort of message?

- Farida’s father wanted her to marry rather than become a police officer. Why might he have seen the two things as mutually exclusive?

CHALLENGING PATRIARCHAL NORMS

- The film notes that “Women officers in Bangladesh are mostly assigned administrative jobs. When they do investigate violent crimes, they are most often crimes against women.” How does this practice impact sexism?

- Farida admits, “When I think about the children, and how they will cry and suffer when I leave, I feel weak at heart, then I control myself. I am a police officer, not just a mother. I must have it all - the love and affection of a mother and the firm resolve of a soldier. I think about that and it hardens me right up.” How might motherhood impact her experience of being a police officer?

- The late poet and activist Audre Lorde famously wrote, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” How might this apply to women serving in the military or as police officers? How do you think the women featured in the film might respond to Lorde? In your view, can increasing women’s representation within these institutions transform them? What steps can women take to avoid perpetuating unjust systems even while working within structurally unjust institutions?

ROLE MODELS

- Mousumi says, “As Bangladeshi women, we are proving to those back home that we can serve the public. We will return home and encourage others.” When women serve in jobs traditionally reserved for men, how can this impact a society? What are the limits of this strategy?
• Mousumi says, “For my children, I dream of a better society. Being a woman from a largely Muslim country, I feel really proud that we have come this far. We are hoping that the girls from our country will go even further...” What do you think “further” looks like? How might Mousumi’s actions and attitudes help dispel stereotypes about Muslim women?

• Do you think that Farida or Mousumi would identify as feminist? Why or why not? In terms of improving Bangladeshi women’s lives, does it matter if they identify as feminist? Why or why not?

WORK / FAMILY CONFLICTS

• On deployment, the women struggle leaving their families. At the same time, they go on the mission to provide a better future for their children. What sort of tensions between work and family priorities have you experienced or witnessed in your own life? How did they impact each other in the long run? What sort of work/family conflicts have you experienced or witnessed? What was the outcome?

• Babul comments, “A father in a mother’s role. Only he who has done it will know. You can’t really explain it in words.” How would you describe your perspective on gender and parenting roles? What has informed your ideas?

• Farida’s husband objects to her decision to serve in Haiti because, “I’ll be trapped, I’ll have to make time for the children. The guardian of a household is the wife.” How are women’s economic prospects affected by the belief that caring for home and children is the sole (and natural) responsibility of women?

• Mousumi’s husband says, “My wife and I both work for the police, and we have a very good understanding between us. In every household, the husband and the wife should both work. It is better for a happy family. The children are better off and have more opportunities for higher education. It is better for everyone’s future.” Contrast this to Farida’s husband, who thinks women’s employment is in conflict with the responsibilities of motherhood. What do you think? Are working mothers serving their children’s best interest or abandoning their parental responsibilities? Are there alternative ways to frame the issue beyond the polar opposites we see in the film?

• Farida explains that, “The extra money from the mission will secure my son’s future. And that’s why I want to go.” But when Farida returns home, instead of welcoming her, her husband kicks her out explaining, “You all won’t let me maintain any respectability.” Why does her husband interpret the situation as an issue of respect?

• Mousumi jokes that because of her deployment, her husband now “gets it for real! He understands how hard it is to manage the children alone.” If their father gained empathy for his wife, what do you think Mousumi’s children learned from their mother’s absence?
DISCUSSION

17 WOMEN, WAR & PEACE II

• Farida’s son, ten-year-old Rithom, says, “After mom left, I used to cry a lot, but I stopped myself. I kept all the hurt inside, from the day she left. Since then it has gotten easier.” If a community or country wants to encourage women to pursue careers, what sorts of support would it need to provide for children like Rithom?

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

• Most legal systems assign individual blame for individual crimes, but Mousumi describes gender-based violence as “a failure of humanity.” What makes violence against women a societal failure and not just an individual crime? What are the policy implications of this insight?

• According to the film, “The peacekeepers patrol a camp at night. Haitian women say they feel safer with female officers on duty.” Why would protection offered by female soldiers be viewed differently than protection offered by male soldiers?

• Mousumi says that she became a police officer to combat the domestic abuse she witnessed as a child. Why might Mousumi view police work as an effective way to reduce gender-based violence? How might the inclusion of women in law enforcement change the dynamic for victims of gender-based violence?

PEACEKEEPING

• Mousumi observes, “The anger the Haitian people feel is logical! They don’t have proper housing or food.” What does her insight suggest about effective peacekeeping strategies?

• How does the military nature of UN Peacekeeping influence the women’s interactions with the people they are assigned to protect? What other possible strategies could be used to enhance security?

• At no time during their training were the women warned about Haitian resentment towards UN peacekeeping forces. If you were in charge of training, what would you require troops (or NGO staff) to know about the community/country they are going to, and why is that information essential to a successful deployment?

• Farida says, “From what we learned, the Haitian Police, if something happens, they fire at people directly. And so they are very scared of Haitian Police. And they think we will shoot them as well.” Mousumi observes that “if the people are afraid of us, then it’s dangerous [for us], quite dangerous.” Does violence by authorities increase, rather than suppress, violence against authorities? If so, how.

• In the film’s title, A Journey of a Thousand Miles: Peacekeepers, what are the possible interpretations of the words “Journey” and “Peacekeepers”? 
WAVE GOODBYE TO DINOSAURS
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

POLITICS AS CAUSE & CURE

• Anne Carr declares, “Politics is everything.” Given her recognition of all the other important work that women do for their families, communities, and country, why do you think she insists that women also must participate in politics?

• Avila Kilmurray explains, “Politics has become the captive of the elite, of a political elite, almost like it’s been professionalized. And it doesn’t have to be.” Bronagh Hinds adds, “Politicians would like you to think its rocket science, it is not.” Whose interests are served by the belief that politicians need special skills that “ordinary” citizens don’t have? What skills do you think are most important for a politician to possess?

• On the founding of the Women’s Coalition, Monica McWilliams reflected, “We knew that there was a huge network of women out there who found themselves politically homeless and who certainly wanted a different voice…” What causes “political homelessness,” and why would it be a threat to democracy?

• On achieving the peace agreement, Monica McWilliams says, “Today we have done it. We have interrupted the culture of failure in Northern Ireland.” What do you think contributed to the “culture of failure” in the first place? How did the political solution embodied in the peace agreement shift that culture?

PATTERNS OF ACTIVISM

• Bronagh Hinds explains that they only decided to form a separate women’s party after getting no response from their entreaties “to the political parties, and the British and Irish governments, asking them that if there were going to be talks that women should be included.” Where else have you seen this pattern: A group seeks inclusion, are refused, and only then form their own organization?

• Monica McWilliams recalls joining the civil rights movement and believing wholeheartedly “that the laws of the land would be changed. And that discrimination would be challenged and tackled. And everything would settle down. How wrong we were.” As the civil rights campaign gained momentum, tensions between Catholics
and Protestants escalated into violence. Was it naive not to expect a significant backlash? Can you think of other successful anti-discrimination struggles that were followed by a backlash? Was the backlash strong enough to reverse the gains?

- What did you learn from Bernadette Devlin’s insight that, “The first women who helped me to understand gender and feminism were black women, because they shared my class. They shared my national oppression. Sectarianism and racism are a bred of the same disease. So it was easier for me then to see, yeah I know what these women are talking about. We’re speaking the same language.” What connections (or disconnects) do you see between Northern Ireland’s civil rights struggle and the Civil Rights movement in the U.S.?

- Jane Morrice talks about volunteering to run on the Women’s Coalition ticket not because she wanted to be in politics, but because “It was peace that I wanted.” How does motive influence the way a political representative does their job?

- Bronagh Hinds believes that women are often inspired to get involved in politics because, “They see an injustice and they are moved to actually make a difference and change the situation.” Is this true of the politicians you know? Why might the motives differ for people from marginalized groups than for people accustomed to seeing their peers in positions of power?

- The film takes its title from the slogan on the Women’s Coalition posters: “Wave Goodbye to Dinosaurs.” As Avila Kilmurray describes, “it was a cartoon dinosaur superimposed on the women’s suffragette colors, the green and the white and the violet: Give women the vote. But a lot of the male politicians came back and said, well, you know, we’re really annoyed, they’re calling us dinosaurs. Well, we didn’t call you a dinosaur, but if you want to self identify, please don’t let us stand in your way.” What was effective about the women’s slogans and posters?
• When the Women’s Coalition was forced to choose between two central demands or risk unsettling an already fragile agreement, they opted to forgo electoral system reform that would ensure inclusion of small parties. Bronagh Hinds wondered, “Will people look back on us as women and say, we faltered? Because we did not stand out for this at the end? And then we’re saying, how could you not sign a peace agreement for your country? We have to have the peace. It’s always a difficult choice.” Why might some people see the women’s compromise as failure? Why might others see it as heroic? How do you see it?

• Bernadette Devlin says, “I think the demise of the Women’s Coalition was fundamentally because the coalition was a peace party made up entirely of women. It was not a political party for the advancement of women’s rights. So when peace was negotiated, it was difficult for women in the broader community to see what the role of the Women’s Coalition was.” Do you think gender identity is enough to sustain a political party, organization, or movement? Why or why not? If you could vote for a women’s party, would you?

• May Blood describes living through the escalation of conflict:

“The area I lived in was mixed. Protestants and Catholics lived side by side. And through that time, we all stayed together. We all tried to work together. But gradually the area just absolutely disintegrated. People got fear, you could touch the fear. And people began to move out.

And on one particular night, some of the Protestant Bully Boys came to burn our Catholic neighbors out. And my dad went out and said, “Come on now boys, this woman isn’t doing any harm. She’s just rearing her family.” They went away. And they came back a fortnight later and burnt us out.

And that was the biggest change of my life, from living in a mixed area, where religion wasn’t a factor. It was poverty. It was work. And moved from that end to a Loyalist ghetto, because it was the only place we could get a home, my Mum, Dad, and I.

And then of course we had the shootings, and the bombings, and the killings. And that was real fear.”

What insights does her story offer about how violence is used to separate people from one another and prioritize group identity over the common welfare of a community?

• Avila Kilmurray shares the Women’s Coalition’s three principles: “equality, human rights, and inclusion.” At the time, what was radical about these principles? Would they be viewed as radical in your community today?
CONSTRUCTS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION

• Annie Campbell observes that women “were at the bottom of all the ladders, of all the agendas. So their needs were never even being asked about, never mind being met.” Given women’s centrality to families and communities, why are their needs so often viewed as being wholly different from men’s needs? Why did the women have to prove that they weren’t just talking about women’s issues but, as May Blood put it, they were raising “basic human rights issues for the whole of Northern Ireland?”

• Jane Wilde recalls that “many women didn’t want to put themselves forward” for a spot on the Women’s Coalition ticket. For some it was fear of “having to expose your own identity,” when that exposure could make one a target of violence. How did gender and socioeconomic class identity also discourage women stepping into public leadership roles?

• Consider this list of the specific forms of hostility faced by the Women’s Coalition leaders:
  - Death threats
  - Moral indignation – “How dare you?”
  - Being dismissive – “Just sit down and be quiet.” “Stop wasting time.”
  - Derisive name-calling – the “Hen Party”
  - Defining women as outsiders who don’t belong – “go back to your kitchen”
  - Calling the women “girls” rather than “women”
  - Implying that women are not smart enough to do political work – “you girls just don’t understand politics”

How would you explain the specific types of resistance that the women faced?

• The film shares the story of the Women’s Coalition meeting with U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton, an encounter that they found emboldening. However the genesis of the meeting was that President Bill Clinton “had met separately with all the political parties’ representatives at his office in the Oval room and somehow they forgot about the Women’s Coalition.” How do you think you would have interpreted this slight? How would you have responded?

• One of the objections raised to women’s participation in the peace negotiations was that they had no prior political experience. They had no experience because they had been excluded from the previous negotiations. What examples have you seen of past exclusion being used to justify current exclusion?
AT THE NEGOTIATING TABLE

• Do you think that if there were only men involved in the negotiations they would have succeeded? Why or why not? What did the leaders of the Women’s Coalition bring to the table that their male colleagues lacked? What did the male leaders offer that the women lacked?

• Bronagh Hinds describes some of the agenda items that the Women’s Coalition brought to the table: “We need to recognize communities and community development, so we wrote that in. We wanted to get references in to integrated education, because we wanted to talk about a holistic community which is not divided but which is living and learning together.” When the women formed their party, they called for support for victims of violence, equal pay, child care, and education for women about politics and political participation. Why do you think these were priorities for the Women’s Coalition, and why might they not have been priorities for the other groups? How, specifically, would each of these items contribute to creating a lasting peace?

• When men defend the dysfunction of the negotiations by claiming that “this is politics,” Bronagh Hinds responds, “This is not politics. This is abnormal politics. This is unacceptable politics.” What is the role of language and labels in facilitating or obstructing the process of reconciliation?

• George Mitchell recognized that “the Women’s Coalition in particular was focused on reaching an agreement, as opposed to focused on ‘Can I get this for my community? Can I get that?’” Why was that important? What happens to negotiations when everyone focuses on the narrow interests of one’s particular community and no one is focused on the big picture goal?
RESOLUTION & RECONCILIATION

• Why was it important to the women that their party be jointly led by one Catholic and one Protestant? Why was it important to the women that one leader was middle class and the other was working class? Why did others criticize this cross-community approach rather than see it as a model for their own work?

• Pearl Sagar remembers being drawn to the women who showed up at the organizing meeting because “they all spoke from their hearts, with a passion that hit home.” How can a willingness to open up about one’s personal pain or joy help create bridges between perceived enemies?

• Anne Carr worked for an organization that brought Protestant and Catholic women “together to try and address some of the fear amongst women in communities. And they started bringing buses. And even in the most difficult times when bombs were going off in Belfast, the buses used to weave in and out of Catholic and Protestant areas. And for some of the women that was the only time they ever saw any of these areas because they were behind “peace” walls, but they all came together to have a conversation together about the difficult times they were experiencing.” Why was it important for women to bridge the physical gap between communities? Where are the neutral spaces in your community where people can come together across differences to create political common ground?

• Pearl’s struggle to sit through a meeting with representatives from Sinn Fein is a microcosm of the conflict and of the Women’s Coalition’s extraordinary commitment to finding a path to peace:

“I sat down in this room with people that I hated, and I mean hated. I hated them because I did marry a British soldier. My husband was in that Army that they hated. Plus in the interim I had a cousin who was a police officer who was gunned down in front of his children. They were representing the people that killed them(...) And I remember talking to my husband, and my husband saying...at the end of the day, Pearl, if you want everybody involved, everybody has to be involved. There’s always going to be people you don't like in the world, but you do have to work with them. Nobody’s asking you to sleep with them. I mean that’s as blunt as he put it.”

• Imagine yourself in a situation like Pearl’s. To what lengths would you go to demonstrate a commitment to the idea that “if you want everybody involved, everybody has to be involved?”

• Monica McWilliams recalls making a point of inviting opponents into the women’s homes for dinner “because we didn’t know them very well. If you’re going to be in peace talks, you need to build strong relationships with the people. You need
to look them in the eye. You need to see the humanity in the person. You need to
give them some legitimacy, even if you disagree with them.” Have you ever shared
a meal with someone you perceived as an enemy, only to find common ground as
you got to know them? What happened?

• Monica McWilliams says, “We often said at the table, there’s no single party has
created this problem. We all have. And therefore we all have a reason to resolve it.”
In the case of Northern Ireland, how does assigning blame to everyone facilitate
resolution? Can you think of other circumstances where holding everyone equally
responsible would be an obstacle to reconciliation?

LESSONS FOR TODAY’S CONFLICTS

• What did you learn from the film about the skills, experiences, and dispositions
needed to resolve serious political or ethnic conflicts?

• Pearl Sagar says, “I always assumed that all these politicians worked to make sure I
had a better life, and that they sat down and they done it wisely.” Pearl’s experience
at the negotiating table caused her to re-think her assumptions about her political
representatives. What do you believe to be true about your elected officials, and
what’s your evidence for those beliefs?

• Anne Carr describes the first days of peace negotiations as difficult: “People
wouldn’t talk to one another. And you know if somebody said something then
somebody would leave because they weren’t open to hearing one another either.”
How might political discourse shift if excellent listening skills were viewed as being
essential to effective advocacy?

HISTORY & LEGACY

• In your view, why is it important to remember what these women did? To whom
could it make a difference?

• Annie Campbell suggests that rather than individual “hero” activists, positive
change comes from working together as “part of a big group. And then together,
do the collective thing…” Why is it more common for historical accounts to focus on
individual champions rather than collective accomplishments? Why does success
depend on working collectively?

• Bernadette Devlin says, “The story of the Women’s Coalition is largely not visible.
Not because women get written out of history; they never get written in.” As you
look around your community today, who is being “written in” to the history that
will be accessible to future generations? Whose stories are documented and how?
**Whose stories are left unspoken and why?**
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

IMAGE & REPRESENTATION

• The First Intifada is variously described as a popular uprising, an insurrection, a riot, etc. What difference does a label make?

• What did you know about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict prior to viewing? What were the primary sources of your information? Were the sources credible (and how do you know)? How did the film affirm, contradict, or add to your ideas?

• What images of the First Intifada, if any, do you recall seeing in the media? Who shared/disseminated those images? What forms of resistance and response were featured and which were left out?

• How did coverage of the First Intifada as a series of clashes and riots overshadow its economic and social facets, thereby sidelining women’s contributions to the struggle? Why would news reports leave out grassroots organizing and community-building activities in favor of reporting on instances of violence?

• Naila recalls that for her, “It all started in 1967. That was the beginning of the war and the Israeli occupation,” reflecting on an event that sparked her political awakening. When might others mark the start of the conflict? How do we determine starting points of complex disputes and why does this matter?

• Compare/contrast Naila’s story to the experiences of other social justice activists you know (or know about)? What do they have in common and what is unique to the lives of Palestinians?

REPRESSION

• Naila remembers, “It was 1969 and I was eight years old, we were at school. We heard the sound of large explosions. I walked home from school with my four sisters. And we saw that our house had been demolished by the Israelis. I remember how sad my father’s eyes were. The experience planted in me a hostility towards the occupation.” Given her experience, how would you evaluate the likelihood that military tactics designed to impose collective punishment – such as home demolitions – would succeed in diminishing resistance rather than stoking anger?
Among the strategies used by Israel to control resistance in occupied territory was the deportation of community leaders and activists (like Jamal). Why did the strategy fail to quell opposition?

Covering the First Intifada, American journalist Bob Simon reported that “The Israelis are targeting every Palestinian effort to create parallel institutions in the Occupied Territories. Anything which could circumvent Israeli authority. Anything which could prove to be so much as a seedling for an independent Palestinian state.” Any Palestinian who attended a committee meeting was risking imprisonment for up to ten years. Why might such a policy succeed in suppressing violence in the short term, but fail in the long-term goal of ending the conflict?

When Naila is first arrested, she is pregnant, yet the Israeli prison guards ignore her repeated requests for medical attention. But when she miscarries and journalist Oren Cohen publicizes her situation, Naila is released soon thereafter. Why are authorities vulnerable to widespread publicity? Why might public ire be more aroused by a single pregnant woman than by the detention of dozens of other political prisoners?

Naila is arrested for a second time while she is still nursing Majd. Eventually the Israelis bring the baby to the prison to be with her. How does the presence of a child humanize a situation that is designed to de-humanize?

Israeli leader, Yitzhak Rabin says, “I hope that the people of the Gaza strip will realize that the longer the disturbances will be continued, the greater will be their suffering.” Who do you think the target audience is for this statement? How do you know?

At beginning of film, Naila and her son Majd look at pictures from prison. Naila remarks, “A lifetime ago and we still talk about the past.” Why might it be painful to revisit this past, in the context of the ongoing conflict? Why is it significant to look at this history, 30 years later?

Naila recalls the dilemma of reuniting in exile with Jamal, “Majd turned two and we still couldn’t travel. My lawyer told me that the only way I’d be allowed to travel is if I accepted to stay away for two years. They wanted me to consent to a two-year exile...We knew that Israel wanted to empty our land of its people. It wasn’t easy for me, because the principle was so objectionable. But we ran out of options and I painfully agreed.” Oppression often forces impossible choices. How would you prioritize, especially when the choice is between the personal and the political?

RESISTANCE

Activist Zahira Kamal concludes that the First Intifada led directly to “American efforts to hold an international conference for peace between the Palestinians and Israelis.” In your view, what lessons does the First Intifada offer to others who want to achieve liberation, peace, or justice?
• What was your reaction to a small group of activists, including Naima and Jamal, writing and circulating a communiqué from the “Unified National Leadership” when, at the time, there was no such thing? What are the potential risks and rewards of such a strategy?

• Majd says, “The First Intifada wasn’t just an uprising against the occupation. Society was changing in an exceptional way.” In addition to resisting occupation, what issues or changes were central to the women in the film? How did their activism help them advance those interests, if at all?

• Activist Naima Al-Sheikh Ali resolves, “We won’t be quiet, and neither will our children or the generation after our children. We are a people, who will pass the banner of struggle from one generation to the next until we get our rights.” Do you relate to this statement? What essential messages might you pass along to the next generation?

• Naila says, “I will never forget the time I spent in prison, but I was driven to forge ahead. The occupation won’t end if we’re afraid and stay at home.” What do you see as the sources of Naila’s (and the others’) courage? Are any of those sources also present in your life? What issues are important enough for you to risk imprisonment, deportation, injury, or death?

• In addition to public demonstrations, the First Intifada included boycotts of Israeli goods, non-violent strikes, convening underground schools, organizing medical services, and more. As activist Azza Qassem described, “Every problem that came up at the governmental level, we set up local committees to address them.

“I will never forget the time I spent in prison, but I was driven to forge ahead. The occupation won’t end if we’re afraid and stay at home.”

Naila Ayesh, production still of Naila and the Uprising
The women’s organizations and unions worked in lieu of a full government that organized people’s lives. All of it. We were on the road to freedom.” How did this diversity of tactics help prepare communities for self-governance? How did it effect the efficacy of a military response by Israel?

• Naila remembers, “My son was the only child in prison. I saw so much pain in the eyes of the other female prisoners. They all had children.” How did the women turn what might have been a painful situation into a source of unity?

GENDER ISSUES

• What did you learn from the film about liberation movements, and the impact of including – and excluding – women, from the genesis of civil resistance to negotiations?

• Fatah activist Rabeha Diab recounts, “I’m proud that for a year and a half or so, I led the Intifada. People would come from Ramallah saying they needed this or that and asking for advice. We’d say to them - give us a couple of hours while we ask the brothers in the organization. But there were no brothers.” Why did they have to pretend that there were “brothers”?

• Palestinian leader Zahira Kamal says that women’s involvement in the struggle for national liberation was limited because “In Palestinian society, authority lies in the hands of men and elders.” How is this like or unlike your community or country? How might living under occupation affect women’s ability to challenge their own community’s patriarchal customs?

• Zahira notes that, “The arrest of a number of men opened the door for women to step into leadership positions.” Later, when deportation orders were rescinded and men returned to the community, “women had achieved a lot in their positions, but the expectation was that men would slot straight back into their position and women would have to step aside.” How do people reconcile appreciating women’s leadership during difficult times (when men are absent), but then asking those same women to step aside when men return?

• Naima says, “[Though women had been instrumental in the struggle] women were left out of all preparations for the formation of the Palestinian Authority. We represent 50% of society, sometimes more. So if 50% of the population isn’t participating in the decisions, that means society is half-paralyzed.” What does a community lose when women aren’t involved in decision-making?

• Naima says, “Publicly the women’s committees were known for their social work. But in reality and covertly it was all political organizing. Nurseries, sewing workshops, teaching women how to knit, cook, etc. That was all window dressing.” How might the...
use of traditional women’s activities as a cover for subversive political activity further women’s participation? On the other hand, how might it reinforce gender norms?

- Activist, Terry Boullata, recalls, “When the Palestinian Authority took charge in 1994, we were shocked that women were required to have a guardian to get a passport. Women were part of the struggle, prisoners and martyrs, and in the end they require her to have a guardian?” How would you have responded to this betrayal given the tenuous new powers of self-rule that Palestinians had won?

- Naila reports that, “Nearly every political activity was punishable. Men were the main targets, and we felt women would face less scrutiny. So women took on more significant roles.” Why do you think men were the main targets? How does this compare to other historical or contemporary examples you know about of women revolutionaries going “under the radar” because authorities assumed that only men were threats?

- The Palestinian women describe convening joint events with Israeli women who supported their cause, like the Women in Black, a group of Israeli women protestors who “mourn justice, which has been violated by the occupation.” In your view, is there something unique about women’s experiences that foster alliances, even across differences? How might power imbalances between Israeli and Palestinian women challenge those alliances?

- The activists describe women’s essential roles in the economic and social side of the First Intifada, running schools, farming coops, and developing alternative sources for Israeli-made goods. The tasks of daily life were intertwined with political resistance. How might this have helped women who were not previously active in politics see themselves differently?
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE THEY FIGHTING FOR?

• According to the women, the goals of the revolution were “bread, freedom, and social justice.” What do those words/goals mean to you? What do you think they meant to the Arab Spring revolutionaries?

• The film opens with Hend saying, “In the small village where I was raised, they think a girl should stay home and raise the children. But I think girls have a right to their freedom.” What’s so revolutionary about this idea?

• Mama K states that “freedom and social justice do not differentiate between men or women.” Has this been your experience?

• Hend, a practicing Muslim, says, “I want to liberate minds from ignorance, from outdated customs and traditions.” What specific traditions and customs do you see both in the film and in your community that prevent women from fulfilling their full potential? How does one “liberate minds” while still honoring one’s heritage?

“Freedom and social justice do not differentiate between men or women.”

DISSENT AND SUPPRESSION

• What did you learn from the film about activism and the tactics used by people in power to disempower or discredit dissenters?

• In addition to the women who were arrested, the film notes the crackdown on “civil society” organizations, including the imprisonment of people involved in human rights work and the head of the Arab Network for Human Rights Information’s newspaper. Why would the government target these particular people? What’s the threat they represent and to whom?

• Mariam says, “In the moment, we weren’t thinking about what would come next.” And Hend acknowledges that, “The revolution doesn’t have a roadmap.” Is it possible to create such a map, or is protest and response unpredictable by nature? If it is possible, what would a roadmap for revolution look like?
• Despite significant differences between the Mubarak, Morsi, and Al-Sisi governments, each uses similar tactics against their opposition including assaulting, killing, and imprisoning protesters; charging victims with inciting the crimes committed against them; endlessly postponing trials, etc. What are the political benefits of these tactics? What sorts of governments or leaders fear their own people, and do these tactics help solidify their power both in the long run and the short run?

• Despite her deep opposition to the Morsi government, after the attacks at Rabaa, Hend acknowledges that she and the country will suffer for years “because of the way the security forces dealt with the Muslim Brotherhood.” How does the military’s treatment of those she opposes affect her own hopes for freedom and security? What are the benefits of upholding the human rights of people you oppose? If you could be guaranteed security in exchange for giving up your civil rights, would you take the deal? Why or why not?

**ACTIVISM AND GENDER**

• How was women’s experience of protest (including risks, strategies, and goals) different than men’s? As you look at the images of the crowds, what do you notice about who is present and their actions?

• Mama K reports that, “Women were at least 50 percent of the revolution, maybe more.” Was this reflected in the coverage of events that you remember seeing or hearing? Who was interviewed? What do you know about the Arab Spring from listening to the women in the film that you wouldn’t know from reports that only told men’s stories?

• Mariam gets her information about the protests from Facebook. How have digital technologies (the Internet, cell phones, social media, etc.) changed political protest? How have they provided women with access to public spaces that had previously been off limits?
• After the defeat of Mubarak, Mariam remembers “seeing a guy in the square, holding a sign that said: ‘I used to be afraid. Now I’m Egyptian.’” What would have to happen for a woman to confidently hold that sign up?

WOMEN’S BODIES AS POLITICAL BATTLEFIELD
• Mariam says that, after initial victories, “women’s bodies became a political battlefield.” What do you think she meant?
• Consider this (partial) list of intimidation tactics:
  - Calling protesters “prostitutes”
  - Pulling off women’s veils / tearing off clothing / forcing women to expose their naked bodies
  - “Virginity tests”
  - Groping / molestation
• Why do you think the authorities choose to use or permit these particular tactics? How did the discrediting of women protestors divide and undermine the movement for bread, freedom, and social justice?
• The army admits to subjecting female protesters to “virginity tests,” claiming that they were just defending themselves against accusations of rape. To whom would the army’s explanation be credible? What, if any, impact did the virginity tests have on the direction of the protest movement?
• Hend believes that “the regime was trying to break down the people by assaulting the women.” Why would the government assume that humiliating women would weaken men’s resolve to resist? How, if at all, does the regime’s strategy reflect and reinforce a patriarchal worldview?
• Mariam says that every Egyptian woman “knows that she can be assaulted at any time” with impunity. How does acceptance of sexual harassment undermine the possibility of a free society? Can men in a society be free if women are routinely subject to sexual harassment?

POLITICAL REALITIES
• Hend explains, “My whole family is military and pro-regime, regardless of which regime is in power.” Why would her family feel this way? How does this sentiment undermine democracy?
• What is the relationship between protesters and the military (and police)? How and why does it change over time? What aspects of military culture lead soldiers to protect women and also to violate them? What’s the likely long-term outcome when significant segments of a population lose trust in society’s designated protectors?
• What did you learn from the film about the importance of accountability and an independent judiciary to guaranteeing women’s freedom?

RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

• What is the meaning of the film’s title? What were the “trials”?

• In the face of physical risk and grievous injustices, what gives activists like Hend hope and strength? What were her options?

• Why did protesters take up the chant: “Banat Masr mataat a’raysh (The daughters of Egypt will never be stripped)?”

• Held captive in her family’s home, Hend starts writing statements such as “I am not shameful.” and “I am not a scandal.” What statements would you write?

• When the Muslim Brotherhood came to power, Mama K stopped wearing her headscarf, explaining, “I didn’t want to be like them. So I took off the veil.” What would you do if, like Mama K, your personal faith including wearing a veil, but the public interpretation of that act now aligned you with beliefs that you oppose? Is it possible to separate the veil from its political meaning?

• Hend says, “I was planning to complete my studies abroad. But after what happened to me, I will not leave Egypt until it is the best country on Earth.” How do you account for her continued allegiance to her nation despite her opposition to its recent governments?

• When the activists do not succeed at the goal they initially set out to do, they pivot and create a new approach. For example, when Hend and others were prosecuted while those who tortured them received promotions, they founded Nation Without Torture. Hend explains, “Even if we never achieve justice, at least we are helping others through the same trauma we experienced.” Similarly, when no one else was protecting female protesters, Mariam and others step in to form Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment. How does this ability to focus on “small victories” keep the revolution going even in the face of failures? In your community, where do you see examples of “pivoting,” and what are the results?

• The women talk about being welcomed in the initial protests against Mubarak, but unity disintegrated when women specifically demanded women’s rights. Why would it be vital to include women in plans to rebuild the nation? What were/are the consequences of excluding women from those efforts?
WOMEN & PEACE PROCESS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What started as a movement for civil rights in Northern Ireland in 1968 descended into a violent conflict that lasted three decades. As Catholics demanded the same rights as their Protestant neighbors, vicious cycles of police brutality, riots, armed clashes, and bombings ensued.

The Troubles, as the war became known, opened long-festering wounds: with most Catholics and nationalists wishing to reunify with the Republic of Ireland, the majority of Protestant and unionists wished for Northern Ireland to remain as part of the United Kingdom.

Paramilitary groups emerged on both sides, and the British army was deployed. Until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the Troubles claimed some 3,600 lives.

While women were vigorously engaged in the civil rights movement and labor activism in Northern Ireland, they were far less likely than men to participate in formal politics to address their grievances. Only nine women had served in the Parliament of Northern Ireland in its half-century of existence before the British government suspended the body to exercise direct rule from 1972 to 1998. Community divisions and violence plagued politics in Northern Ireland. Activist Cathy Harkin described the culture as “armed patriarchy.”

But during the Troubles, women’s civic engagement blossomed in community-based nongovernmental organizations on both sides of the conflict divide. In 1977, Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work organizing cross-community peace groups. By the time a window opened in the 1990s for a new political process to establish peace, many women who had previously felt excluded from conventional politics stood ready to demand a seat at the table.

Following paramilitary ceasefires and diplomatic advances in the early 1990s, the British and Irish governments announced multi-party talks on the future of Northern Ireland would begin in 1996.

Peace talks typically prioritize the participation of governments, armed groups, and political parties, which all tend to be dominated by men. But the unusual design of public elections to the talks in Northern Ireland created an opening for women in civil society. A group of Catholic and Protestant women from working and middle class backgrounds came together to form the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition and gain representation at the negotiation table.
The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition laid out a policy platform focused on achieving human rights, equality, and inclusion—to help make all voices heard in determining Northern Ireland’s future.

In light of this commitment to inclusivity, the coalition became trusted intermediaries once elected to the peace talks. They were able to build strong relationships with parties on each side of the conflict divide and helped the mediator and other officials gauge different parties’ positions on a given issue through backchannel communications. As such, they promoted dialogue and built trust to advance the peace process, even as progress stalled and some parties were excluded from the talks.

In addition, the Women’s Coalition had an agenda of its own for the peace agreement. It succeeded in ensuring the accord addressed issues vital to social cohesion in the post-conflict period, with provisions addressing reconciliation, victims’ recognition, integrated education, mixed housing, and a stronger voice for community leaders in the legislative process.

After 26 months of negotiations, eight Northern Irish political parties and the British and Irish governments signed the Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement. The Women’s Coalition leveraged its relationships with civic organizations to mount a dynamic campaign that significantly influenced public support for the accord. An overwhelming 71% of the electorate voted in favor of the agreement in a public referendum.

The Good Friday Agreement paved the way for a transition to democratic politics, providing for a nationalist and unionist power-sharing government in Northern Ireland. It laid the foundation for demilitarization and a decommissioning of paramilitary weapons.

Unionists were assured that Northern Ireland would remain in the United Kingdom as long as this represented the will of the majority of residents. Nationalists were promised closer cooperation with the Republic of Ireland’s government, greater equality, police reform, and both communities would see prisoner releases.

In the 20 years since this landmark accord, Northern Ireland has made significant progress on the uncertain path toward long-term peace. Nonetheless, the delicate power-sharing arrangement has also experienced crises, most recently leading to the suspension of Northern Ireland’s government in January 2017.

Although women’s participation in politics has increased, women remain virtually absent from the bodies created to monitor the peace process’ implementation.
With the specter of Brexit threatening to reintroduce border controls on the island of Ireland, the country’s landmark peace agreement may be in jeopardy. But committed women and men are continuing their work to sustain peace for generations to come.
BACKGROUND ON THE FIRST INTIFADA

Courtesy of Just Vision

In December of 1987, the Palestinian population rose up in a spontaneous uprising that came to be known as the Intifada - literally, “the shaking off” in Arabic. The movement was a response to Israel’s military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, which began after the 1967 war, as well as decades of dispossession and displacement that preceded and followed the 1948 war. The mass mobilization was led by a loose coalition of organizing bodies called popular committees, established in the early 1980s. While the media at the time paid close attention to stone-throwing youth facing off against Israeli soldiers, much more was happening behind the headlines.

The uprising mobilized hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from every walk of life: laborers, teachers, police officers, students, nurses, and farmers. They took to the streets using all the hallmarks of nonviolent civil resistance, including labor strikes, mass rallies, refusal to pay taxes and self-sufficiency efforts that included the boycott of Israeli products. Palestinians employed unique forms of civil resistance as a response to Israel’s military occupation, including underground classrooms to educate students when the Israeli army imposed curfews or closed schools, “victory gardens” to grow local produce and build economic independence, and citizen-run mobile clinics to treat the sick and injured. According to the Israeli Army Spokesperson’s Unit, less than 1% of all recorded incidents during the First Intifada involved arms.6 Nevertheless,

armed incidents did occur, particularly toward the end of the uprising.

The First Intifada stood out in the history of Palestinian civil resistance for the high degree of national unity and collective purpose it held. The Palestinian national movement, like similar ones around the globe, was made up of several competing political factions, and they didn’t always agree on tactics or a political program. But in 1987, the four major factions with membership in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – Fatah, the PFLP, the DFLP and the Communist Party—united under one political program and set of strategies. Within months, they had formed the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), a clandestine guiding body.

Their unity came in response to calls from underground popular committees associated with each faction which realized that the need for a shared political program – outlining the Palestinian right to self-determination, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, East Jerusalem as the future capital of a Palestinian state, and an end to the occupation – outweighed their political differences.

Another remarkable feature of the Intifada was the means of communicating goals, strategies and tactics. Because the leadership was underground, they communicated via photocopied leaflets, distributed across the Occupied Palestinian Territories. These leaflets became a sort of constitution for the Palestinian people: they outlined the political aims of the uprising, made calls for unity among factions, declared strike days, specified which Israeli products to boycott and generally served to motivate the population and build cultural pride, among other things. Faction leaders in Gaza got together weeks into the uprising and drafted a political program that became the basis for the first few leaflets and informed dozens of leaflets that followed, including the most prominent leaflets issued by the UNLU. Leaflets were written, printed and distributed secretly to shield the leadership from Israeli authorities. Individual factions, including those that were not part of the UNLU, also issued their own leaflets, though their influence was not as widespread.

The Intifada also saw the birth of Hamas, formed in late 1987 as an Islamist movement and political faction, in opposition to the more established secular nationalist and leftist factions. Hamas, which formed a loose coalition with Islamic Jihad, issued its own leaflets, emphasizing adherence to Islamic moral codes. While they supported the UNLU’s tactics toward the beginning of the uprising, Hamas diverged in both message and means in later years.

Women’s leadership blossomed during the First Intifada, shaping the trajectory and
outcome of the uprising. Within months of the uprising, dozens of male leaders had been imprisoned, killed or deported, creating a leadership vacuum that threatened to derail the movement. But a network of women activists—many who had been heading up civil society organizations like labor unions and community centers—stepped in to fill the void. Rabeha Diab, for example, served as the de-facto leader of Fatah, the largest Palestinian faction, for 18 months. Zahira Kamal was one of the most senior on-the-ground leaders of the DFLP. Several other women became instrumental leaders, guiding nonviolent tactics and strategies and working alongside their male colleagues to sustain and grow the uprising.

The Intifada drew the attention of the international community and put pressure on Israel to recognize the Palestinians as a people with the right to self-determination. Upon the urging of President George H.W. Bush and his Secretary of State, George Baker, Israel entered into negotiations with the Palestinians for the first time. When negotiations began in 1991 in Madrid, women made up a central core of the Palestinian delegation. The women leaders of the Intifada carried the torch of a national struggle for self-determination and an end to the occupation while simultaneously demanding gender equality in their own society.

The legacy of these women is long and pervasive today. But their efforts were nearly erased when the leadership of the then exiled PLO and the State of Israel signed the Oslo Accords in 1993, marking the official end of the First Intifada. The internationally-mediated Oslo Accords stripped women and others at the grassroots of their influential roles and replaced them with men tied to the PLO as they returned from exile. Their quick dismissal after years of service and leadership serves as a cautionary tale.

Today, a new generation of women leaders are carrying the torch, inspired by their forbearers and drawing from a long legacy of Palestinian-led and Israeli-supported civil resistance.
EGYPT AND THE ARAB SPRING

When Tunisians chanted, “The people want the fall of the regime,” in January 2011, Egyptians were glued to TV screens in coffee shops around the country, watching what had never seemed possible in the Arab world: the overthrow of an Arab dictator through mass protest.

Hosni Mubarak had ruled Egypt under a state of emergency since 1981. His extensive secret police service monitored political activity and used mass arrests and systematic torture to deter opposition to his rule. Protests were banned, but networks of small groups still organized demonstrations against inequality, poverty, and corruption around the country.

Women were actively engaged in these movements, often leading demonstrations. They were also frequently targeted for sexual assault when protests convened.

In 2008, when labor conditions at state-run factories had deteriorated drastically, women at the textile factory in the Egyptian city of Mahalla initiated a walkout that led to a general strike in the city. The violence of the police response gave birth to the April 6 Youth Movement, which organized annual protests on subsequent anniversaries of the event.

When the Arab Spring dawned in Tunisia, Egyptian political activist Asmaa Mahfouz from the April 6 Youth Group uploaded a video calling on people to demonstrate against corruption and injustice; the clip went viral. On January 25, 2011, tens of thousands gathered to protest in Cairo, Alexandria, and Suez and echoed the Tunisian chant: “The people demand the fall of the regime.”
Over the next eighteen days, more than 800 protestors were killed and more than 1,000 arrested. But as the number of protesters increased to hundreds of thousands, the police were overwhelmed. The military declared that it would not use force against the protesters, which many protesters interpreted as support. It then announced it would replace Hosni Mubarak. Massive celebrations broke out in Cairo’s central Tahrir Square, and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) suspended the constitution.

As demonstrations in Tahrir Square went on, women calling for the recognition of their rights in Egypt’s future continued to face verbal and physical assaults. As the military violently broke up a sit-in of protesters who had returned to Tahrir Square in March, and went on to torture many, all of the single women arrested were subjected to virginity tests. General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who at the time was head of military intelligence, told Amnesty International this was necessary to ensure that “the women would not accuse the army of rape later on.”

Seventy-seven percent of Egyptians voted in favor of the military’s proposed amendments to the constitution. But the military, uncomfortable with a result that also strengthened the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood party, maneuvered to control the new constitution’s drafting. Anti-military protests then broke out near Tahrir Square, calling for an end to military rule and an immediate transfer of power to civilians. Riot police killed more than fifty protesters. The military set a date for presidential elections in June 2012.

In the interim, as the military crackdown continued, seventeen anti-military protesters demonstrating in front of the cabinet building were killed in December 2011. Military
officers arrested, beat, and sexually assaulted a number of women, including Hend Nafea. Images of soldiers beating and exposing a woman wearing a blue bra went viral. In response, women and men marched through central Cairo chanting, “The women of Egypt are a red line,” in the largest protest focused exclusively on women’s rights ever in the country’s history.

In June 2012, the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohammed Morsi narrowly defeated former general Ahmed Shafik to become both the first democratically elected, as well as the first Islamist, president of Egypt. But the power struggle between Morsi and the military continued. After behind-the-scenes negotiations, Morsi appointed General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to be Minister of Defense.

Egypt became irrevocably polarized as 2012 drew to a close. In a move that was widely seen as a power grab, Morsi then issued a constitutional declaration granting himself the power to issue decrees without judicial review. The Islamists who now dominated the committee drafting the constitution displayed little interest in ensuring inclusion of the views of minority liberal groups. They attempted to push through language to ensure Sharia law. In protest, liberal party leaders walked out. The Islamist drafters then rushed through their draft, and Morsi put it to referendum on November 30.

Morsi’s consolidation of power provoked days of anti-Morsi protests outside the presidential palace, during which many women were sexually assaulted by mobs. Security forces failed to intervene. Young activists organized to protect themselves, forming Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault.

As opposition to Morsi continued to grow, in June 2013 Cairo and Alexandria saw their largest protests ever, with some estimates indicating millions of people in the streets. These protests culminated in General Abdel Fattah El-Sisi announcing on July 3 that he had arrested President Morsi and appointed former Supreme Constitutional Judge Adly Mansour as interim president.

In response, tens of thousands of Morsi supporters set up protest camps in Cairo. Tensions mounted, and the military and police killed 161 Muslim Brotherhood protesters throughout the city. On August 14, the police moved in to disperse the encampments and killed more than a thousand protesters in what Human Rights Watch qualified as a crime against humanity.

Interim president Mansour proceeded to ban protests that did not have prior approval and gave the police broad powers to disperse or arrest peaceful demonstrators. In the weeks that followed, scores of youth protest leaders were arrested. The interim prime minister then declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization and outlawed it.

In January 2014, thousands defied the new law in an attempt to reach Tahrir Square to commemorate the third anniversary of the revolution. The streets were sharply divided between pro- and anti-military demonstrators. Police violently dispersed
the anti-military protesters, killing at least sixty-four and arresting more than 1,000. Pro-military demonstrators were allowed to continue.

In the same month, the new constitution was approved by 98 percent in a referendum. The text included stronger protections for women’s rights than any previous constitution. The following year, Field Marshal Abdel Fattah El-Sisi was elected president with 97 percent of the vote.

Human rights in Egypt have continued to deteriorate drastically. Protests are banned, and the police forcibly break up any unauthorized protest, often using live ammunition and killing protesters. Torture is rampant, and death in custody cases regularly takes place. At least twenty-two journalists are in prison. Courts issue mass death penalty sentences after trials without due process. Civilians are frequently tried before unfair military courts.

The military and police are facing a full-blown insurgency in Sinai against local ISIS-affiliate Ansar Beit el Maqdas. Bombs and assassinations have spread to Cairo and other cities, feeding a general sense of insecurity that the regime uses to justify its repressive measures.

As price inflation of basic goods spirals, the majority of Egyptians who were suffering economically in early 2011 frequently say that what they want most right now are assurances of an end to chaos, an improvement in their economic situation, and security. Many women who were active in the uprising continue their struggle for a peaceful, democratic society that respects that dignity of all its people.
WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING

When war ends, the United Nations often helps countries navigate the difficult transition to peace by sending blue-helmeted peacekeepers. These troops, police, and civilian experts from around the world protect civilians, disarm combatants, and promote human rights and the rule of law. Currently, fourteen peacekeeping missions on four continents are attempting to secure pathways to peace.

Since the UN Security Council passed a resolution on Women, Peace, and Security in 2000, the world body has been attempting to improve gender equality in peacekeeping missions. But women’s participation still lags dramatically.

Women make up just 4% of soldiers and 10% of police deployed to UN peacekeeping missions around the world.¹ Seven in ten civilian peacekeepers are women.²

Some countries have responded to the UN’s call for greater gender equality in peacekeeping missions by putting forward all-female police units to serve in UN missions abroad. In 2015, Bangladesh created one of three all-female units to serve in UN Peacekeeping worldwide. The Bangladeshi unit deployed to the UN’s mission in Haiti from 2015 to 2017.

Research shows that women’s participation in peacekeeping helps to advance peace and security in myriad ways.³

Local populations perceive female soldiers and police to be more trustworthy. A survey of locals who had interacted with peacekeepers in Namibia, South Africa, and Rwanda found that in each country, “women peacekeepers were seen by locals as less threatening, more willing to listen, and better able to defuse potentially violent situations.”⁴ This helps these foreign peacekeepers to win hearts and minds—a critical step toward implementing their mission.

Beyond perceptions, studies also suggest that female police are more likely than their male colleagues to de-escalate tensions without resorting to force—a crucial skill in operations designed to keep the peace.⁵

Women also tend to have access to people and places that men do not, particularly in conservative societies. This helps peacekeeping missions to collect more information from a greater variety of sources, deepening its understanding of security risks and safeguards.

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³ Jamille Bigio and Rachel Vogelstein, “Increasing Female Participation in Peacekeeping Operations,”
Typically, only women screen and search other women. Violent extremists exploit this gender dynamic, knowing that women are more likely to sail through all-male security checkpoints. For example, the majority of the Nigerian militant group Boko Haram’s suicide bombers are women and girls. But security forces have yet to fully recognize and address their own gender gap to address this threat.

Where women do serve in peacekeeping missions, they often inspire local women and girls to pursue greater gender equality and participation in public service. During the period when all-female UN police units deployed to Liberia, the proportion of women in that country’s national security forces increased from 6% to 17%. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and others attributed the increase to the female peacekeepers’ influence.12

The presence of female peacekeepers also matters for the protection of women and children. Sexual violence frequently increases in the aftermath of war, and women are more likely to report gender-based violence to women in uniform than men.13

In fact, male peacekeepers themselves often sexually exploit and abuse women and children they are meant to protect—a problem that is endemic in peacekeeping and one that has been documented in Haiti. But improving the gender balance in peacekeeping forces could help to reduce sexual violence: across missions, when the proportion of female military peacekeepers increases from 0% to 5%, abuse allegations decrease by half.14

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This is in part because military and police forces in the countries contributing troops to UN peacekeeping do not reflect the populations they serve. Worldwide, women make up an estimated 10% of military and 18% of police forces.\textsuperscript{15}

But the challenge goes far beyond statistics and representation. Gender stereotypes also hurt women who do participate in peacekeeping. The entrenched notion that men are protectors and women need protection frequently limits women’s roles to “safe spaces” within peacekeeping missions.\textsuperscript{16} This diminishes women’s contributions to peace and security, and further hurts prospects for women’s recruitment, retention, and advancement to leadership positions.

Ultimately, peacekeeping missions are composed of military and police institutions that tend to privilege men and certain forms of masculinity. Women’s participation in peacekeeping is an important end in itself. But as scholars Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley suggest, women and men will not receive equal opportunities in peacekeeping until these institutions value non-dominant forms of masculinities and femininities, and develop a more holistic understanding of the kind of peace they seek to keep.\textsuperscript{17}


DELVE DEEPER

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Women in Nonviolent Movements, by Marie Principe / United States Institute of Peace usip.org/publications/2016/12/women-nonviolent-movements

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Seeking Peace giwps.georgetown.edu/seekingpeace

Her Story Made History by Lyse Doucet bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09lym4z

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Women, War & Peace I pbs.org/show/women-war-and-peace

The Trials of Spring [shorts] nytimes.com/video/trials-of-spring

ORGANIZATIONS

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New America
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