

Aug-2019

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## Recommended Citation

Afzal-Khan, Fawzia (2019). Traveling Feminista: A Blog about traveling as a Pakistani/American/Muslim/Feminist Scholar-art-ivist. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(7), 448-449.  
Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol20/iss7/30>

## Traveling Feminista: A Blog about traveling as a Pakistani/American/Muslim/Feminist Scholar-art-ivist

By Fawzia Afzal-Khan<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

At the heart of my blogging lies the desire to be a traveler moving through the world in a body marked as female, a wo/man whose evolving feminism can help heal herself and in so doing, inspire others to do the same. Journeying without and within, allows for the self to turn toward its other, to recognize the other in oneself; in so doing, one can learn to connect across the divides that threaten to engulf us, dissolving boundaries that keep us from loving our multiple selves.

*Keywords:* Travel, Feminism, Mothers and Daughters, Erotic life

### Introduction

Going through some writings I've published over the last couple of years, I came across this piece <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/waves-of-culture-in-lahore/> that I'd written for one of Pakistan's best-known English-language weeklies called *The Friday Times*, a publication from my birth city of Lahore. It encapsulates the spirit of my blog, some of whose entries I am sharing with you at the links provided below, dear readers of *JWS*; these musings can all be viewed as instantiating the methodological prism I'm calling "traveling feminista," the title of my ongoing blog at Wordpress: <https://travelingfeminista.com>

Such a methodology blurs subjects and objects into a heuristic whole; travelingfeminista is no longer just "me", it's a diagnostic of an "us" that could be the better parts of *youmeitthemherethere* knit together, moving toward a more hopeful, fluid, futurity *sans frontieres*.

As my description of the Pakistani women's march, workers' struggles, and Lahore's first art biennale in 2018 attest in the article from *The Friday Times*, the spaces we inhabit are riven with class and gender divides and many other forms of hierarchical differentiation, which some of us inhabit uneasily, but inhabit these spatio-temporalities we all do to varying degrees.

What seems to be required, then, given this recognition of our complicities in systems of difference held in place through access (or lack thereof) to power- what I'm suggesting (to myself perhaps most of all)-is to make of privileged habitation an *unheimlich* space. And in so doing, lend my powers of witness (yes, witnessing is also a form of power)--to an attempt at stitching together the

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unraveled and unravelling edges of our social fabric, in order that we might glimpse what co-habitation—or perhaps, just traveling part of the road together-- could look like.

“...to create an opportunity for building bridges across the conventional divides of scholarship and activism; “western” and “third world” feminisms; professionals and students; men and women”—indeed, JIWS’ mission is what I aim, what I hope—will be both affect and effect of the kind of writing I am attempting in my blog. I hope in the selections that follow, you’ll find examples of my affective labor that is freer in style than the professional demands of so-called scholarly writing, yet infused with citational references to my cross-cultural mother figures, mentors, sisters in solidarity across the various scholarly/activist/artistic divides of my life, whose words I summon up to give myself courage to carry on traveling.

The blog entries I’m providing links to below, range from observations of loss and lessons learnt from writers I admire like the late Toni Morrison and Nawal el Saadawi, to becoming a grandmother in my “glamma travels” blogpost, which in turn connects to an earlier musing on the challenges that shape mother/daughter relationships; the fierce poetic musing of Audre Lorde unleashes my own thoughts on meaningful travel with a girlfriend I’ve known for four decades (who like me, is an immigrant to the USA from Lahore, Pakistan), which resonates with an earlier entry recapping my personal, professional and intellectual travels last year (2018) starting with a trip to visit my dear friend, the aging (and ailing, but still going strong!) Egyptian feminist writer and physician, Nawal el Saadawi, in Cairo; a sixth blogpost ruminates on moments of learning and teaching in a class I led on Transnational Feminisms last fall when I was Visiting Professor at NYU Abu Dhabi; and a final entry that brings me back to the political importance of bearing witness-- and thus participating in-- a rally organized by Women in Black in Belgrade, Serbia, last summer in the company of another feminist traveling pal and colleague I’d invited to join me on this Balkan journey.

I share these particular posts, because they connect the dots between theorizing and living feministically, through the thematic of female friendships and the ethical demands they place on us. Such demands are sites of pleasure first and foremost, but they also require the hard work of thinking through our differences, including the different spatio-temporalities inhabited simultaneously by mothers and daughters, our first model for what we like, dislike, aspire to, in other modes, times and spaces of friendship, even as we continue to figure out what feminist journeys signify to us.

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2019/08/07/woke-travels/>

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2019/07/13/glamma-travels/>

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2018/08/26/journeying-to-mother/>

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2019/06/11/lake-chAMPLAIN-erotica/>

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2019/02/07/2018-travel-highlights/>

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2018/10/16/world-traveling-and-transnational-feminism/>

<https://travelingfeminista.com/2018/07/15/women-in-black-in-belgrade/>