Abadian offers a new lens by insisting that we go beyond the individuals to the collective, particularly in dealing with intractable conflicts.” As the former executive director of the KSG’s Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East and founder of PeaceBeat, whose motto is “Some good news, some of the time,” she is working to reshape the polarized public conversations among Muslims, Jews, and Christians, primarily in the Middle East. Miller is on the board of the Alliance for Middle East Peace, a growing coalition of 50 citizen-diplomacy organizations in Israel and the Palestinian territories. “People-to-people peace building offers the opportunity for relationships that engender hope in a despairing region,” she says. “Hope is a fundamental requirement of healing collective trauma.

“At the end of each political, sociological, or economic analysis [of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict], inevitably there’s a sentence that reads, ‘And both peoples are traumatized,’” Miller continues. “There is never a second sentence after that. No one knows what collective trauma really means, what it does to groups and nations, or how to intervene to heal it. Sousan offers a crucial part of that road map.”

In 2003, Miller and the Institute for Middle East Peace and Development, a New York-based nonprofit, organized an interfaith summit that convened a group of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders and theologians from Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United States to reflect on the challenges of religious leadership. The KSG’s Center for Public Leadership hosted the gathering, which included some of the highest-level clerics in Egypt and Jordan. Abadian told the group about the Native American experience of colonization and trauma, distinguishing between individual and collective traumas. “Everyone seemed to identify with [that] experience of oppression and trauma,” says Miller. “Sousan was so compassionate and clear; people understood—but more important, felt—that the pain and violence in the Middle East are not a deficiency in themselves, their nations, or their religions, but in part a universal human response to collective trauma.” Abadian recalls, “In the middle of the talk, one Muslim theologian banged on the table and said, ‘We must heal our children! We must heal our children!’

But collective healing involves much more than healing individuals and relationships, Abadian says. She also advocates a selective revival of traditions and cultural elements, and the generation of new ones. “Cultural renewal isn't about bringing back wholesale everything from the past,” she cautions. “Some practices may have to be adjusted, or jettisoned altogether. In the context of native peoples, some Pacific Coast tribes practiced slavery and polygamy, for example. And communities may adopt cultural elements from outside that they find meaningful. Communities that didn't traditionally practice sweat lodges and sun dances have adopted them.” Furthermore, new or revived life-affirming ceremonies can take the place of dysfunctional coping mechanisms like drinking binges. Traditional dances, drumming and singing circles, quilting groups, and even weaving porcupine-quill baskets may occupy the social space formerly held by drug use or violence.

Cultural revival can spur controversy. When the Eastern Pacific gray whale went off the endangered-species list in 1994, young people of the Makah tribe in