

FOCUS 2017
SUMMER

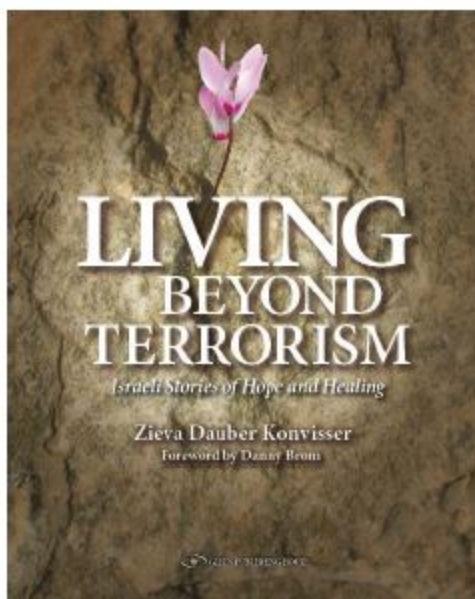
social justice



OUR ALUMNI PUT
THEIR DEGREES,
AND COMPASSION,
TO WORK

 **FIELDING**
Graduate University

Nurturing Survivors



Zieva Konvisser with her family at Fielding graduation, 2006

For most of her career, Zieva Konvisser had to keep her nurturing side under wraps. Educated as a pharmaceutical chemist, she spent 25 years as a manager and executive with Chrysler's Mopar parts division, where she was the first woman to occupy most of her positions.

"I still have scars from the glass ceiling," she says.

When she retired in 2001, she had no idea what would come next. "I wasn't looking for a PhD program," she says. "I didn't know I wanted one."

But while attending a focus group with Fielding alumni who wanted to learn about the automotive industry, she was immediately enthralled.

"They started talking about Fielding's values and mission, social justice, transformative learning, and the importance of people," she said. "By the first break, I said, 'This is what I want to do and this is where I want to do it. I want to go for a PhD in human development at Fielding.' It just spoke to everything about me that I didn't know what to do with—all the things that had been floating around in my head and my heart."

Now Dr. Konvisser's inner nurturer—and her outer scholar—are thriving. At Fielding, inspired by the few members of her own

family who survived the Holocaust, she began interviewing survivors of terrorism in Israel and helping them tell their stories. Since she graduated in 2006, **Dr. Konvisser has documented the oral histories of more than 100 survivors of terrorism, the Holocaust, and combat**, as well as 30 stories of innocent people who have been exonerated after wrongful convictions.

Her book *Living Beyond Terrorism: Israeli Stories of Hope and Healing* is a collection of stories from ordinary people whose lives were torn apart by acts of terror—and who found the strength and courage to live next to their feelings of grief, pain, and helplessness, overcome suffering, and move forward with new purpose and insight.

"I didn't know that I could listen empathically in a way that people would benefit from. I didn't know until the first interview I did in Israel. And then I knew who I was," Dr. Konvisser says. "It's my passion to give them voice, to let them tell their stories. It's magical just to be there and listen. Once you meet these people, your life is changed."

Telling their stories, she says, helps the victims re-identify as survivors and create meaning from their experiences. It also brings public awareness to the issues themselves, and helps the world humanize these tragedies.

"Fielding gave me the ability to create a transformative journey for both myself and

the people I work with. I didn't have those skills before," says Dr. Konvisser, who is now a Fellow at Fielding's Institute for Social Innovation and an adjunct assistant professor of criminal justice at Wayne State University.

"I'm fulfilled. I feel like I'm contributing to the health of individuals and to the betterment of society," she says—and that's unlikely to change anytime soon. "I'm 74, I'm not looking to stop anything that I'm doing." •



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