

INDIGENEITY, RESISTANCE, AND IMAGINATION: PALESTINIAN LIBERATION AS DECOLONIAL PRAXIS

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Introduction

The Zionist movement that led to the colonization of Palestinian lands cannot be delinked from modernity, racism, capitalism, patriarchy and most importantly, colonialism.¹ These oppressive structures operate together and are central to the enterprise of settler colonialism in Palestine and elsewhere, which requires the creation of the “Indigenous” category and their dispossession, alienation and genocide from their own lands. As Fayeze Sayegh has argued, Zionist settler colonialism is “incompatible with the continued existence of the ‘native population.’”² This cannot be possible without a narrative shift of belongingness, ownership, and displacement — all of which are functions of power. Decolonization, in this context, is not a simple removal of the coloniser but a restructuring of the world that ruptures the co-constitutive forms of oppression that are central to Palestinian colonization and opens up the space to imagine the world anew.

In this paper, we do not give a historical overview of Palestinian colonization but analyse Palestinian response to this with reference to the two critical terms: “resistance” and “liberation”. We suggest that, in the context of Palestine, liberation is a form of decolonial praxis which gives us a sense of a world ordered on a different socio-political axis, derives on indigenous knowledge, and aspires to push against elements of patriarchy, capitalism and racism. In this manner, it is premised upon the resistance of such global forms of oppression and has remained in consistent dialogue with international resistance movements. In short, we aim to study Palestinian resistance with reference to other forms of oppression and in their liberation, imaginations of other forms of being.

The first part of the paper investigates how Palestinian resistance is also resistance to other forms of oppression. It embeds resistance in the framework of Sumud and argues how quotidian acts work to destabilise Zionist settler-colonialism. The second half analyses how liberation from these is closely linked to an alternative imagination of the world. In doing so, we offer an analysis of resistance and liberation from objects of oppression through the idea of “returning” to dispossessed lands and

¹ Chandni Desai and Linda Tabar, “Decolonization is a global project: From Palestine to the Americas,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 6, no. 1 (2017): vii, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/28899>.

² Fayeze A. Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut: Research Center, Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965), 5.

investigate how Palestinians use indigenous ways to offer a truly “decolonial” vision of the world.

Forms of Oppression

It has often been argued that the goal of Palestinian liberation is not simply to “replace the colonial state and racial economy,” but in deriving from indigenous land, memory and body, is to reconstitute their relationship to the political and hence, re-envision the organisation of society.³ To be able to understand this vision, we must first understand how settler colonialism is linked to capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and other forms of oppression.

Glen Coulthard draws on Karl Marx’s ideas of primitive accumulation to argue that colonial dispossession of Indigenous people from their lands was central to the reproduction of the capitalist relations of productions.⁴ While his argument is centred around North America, we can see the same processes play out in Palestine through the works of Johanna Fernandez. For Fernandez, the expropriation of Indigenous land for capitalist needs is central to the “emergence of industrial capitalism” and settler-colonialism in both Palestine and the United States.⁵ She marks a difference in the exploitation of labour in both countries — while the American capitalist project relied on the labour of “racially oppressed groups,” the Palestinians received the same treatment as Native Americans who were alienated from the economy.⁶ Alongside this, Chandni Desai demonstrates how the “capitalist demand for labor in the development of settler-capitalist economies intersects with the logic of elimination” and in that sense, capitalism is embedded in processes of violence, slavery, imperialism and genocide.⁷ Racial capitalism, then, profits from reinforcing racist ideologies and patriarchal formations that are foundational to settler-colonialism in Palestine.⁸ These accounts present to us how racial capitalism and settler colonialism are co-constitutive projects.

Simultaneously, gendered narratives have also been central to the colonization of Palestine. David Lloyd has argued how Israel’s propaganda campaign of “feminist-washing” has treated the Israeli state as an agent of emancipation for Arab women because of the “incompatibility of Arab and Muslim societies with women’s

³ Desai and Tabar, “Decolonization is a global project,” xi.

⁴ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 7.

⁵ Johanna Fernandez, “Structures of settler colonial domination in Israel and in the United States,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 6, no. 1, (2017): 32, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/28901>.

⁶ Fernandez, “Structures of settler colonial domination,” 32.

⁷ Chandni Desai, “Disrupting Settler-Colonial Capitalism: Indigenous Intifadas and Resurgent Solidarity from Turtle Island to Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 50, no. 2, (2021): 52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2021.1909376>.

⁸ Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadah, “Acts and Omissions: Framing Settler Colonialism in Palestine Studies,” *Jadaliyya*, 14 January 2016, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32857/Acts-and-Omissions-Framing-Settler-Colonialism-in-Palestine-Studies>.

emancipation.”⁹ This is accompanied by an active assault on Palestinian life and its capacity to reproduce, which unevenly targets women both in Occupied Palestine and in the West Bank and Gaza.¹⁰ In doing so, this ‘necropolitical state’ attacks all Palestinians. Yet, in the demolition of the private sphere, denial of medical treatment to pregnant women, and reducing populations in East Jerusalem, Israel unequally attacks women.¹¹ Consequently, it is women’s capacity to reproduce—both biologically and socio-culturally—which is a source of deep distress to the Zionist project premised upon the erasure of Palestinian populations that makes them a more significant target of their policies.

A final aspect of oppression that we would like to explore pertains to racism and apartheid. In a recent report by Amnesty International, they write that “Israel has established and maintained an institutionalized regime of oppression and domination of the Palestinian population for the benefit of Jewish Israelis—a system of apartheid.”¹² Amnesty International suggests that in its segregation of Palestinians, Israel treats them as an “inferior non-Jewish racial group.”¹³ In using eugenics, Zionists also demanded racial purity and the unification of the Jewish race for the “service of Jewish nationalism.”¹⁴ Eugenics has been central to the claim of Zionists in Palestine from the very beginning, as is clear from the works of Arthur Ruppin, one of the founding fathers of Zionism. He writes that the most important work in Palestinian colonization is of “the selection of the human material”, which “in terms of upbringing, occupation and character, come close to the goals we are striving for.”¹⁵ Ruppin adds that to develop what is “Jewish in us in Palestine”, it would be preferable if “only ‘racial Jews’ came to Palestine,” thereby creating racial boundaries of admission to the newly-founded country.¹⁶ Creating a selective policy to “safeguard the racial fitness” of Jews in Palestine, alongside the use of terms such as “human material” shows the clear eugenicist bend of Zionists.¹⁷ This corroborates Sayegh’s account of how racism is “congenital, essential, and permanent” to Zionist settler colonialism and relies on their sense of “racial exclusiveness, and racial supremacy.”¹⁸

⁹ David Lloyd, “It is our belief that Palestine is a feminist issue...”, *feminists@law* 4, no. 1 (2014): 4, <https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/03/fal.107>.

¹⁰ Lloyd, “It is our belief that Palestine is a feminist issue....,” 10.

¹¹ Lloyd, “It is our belief that Palestine is a feminist issue....,” 12-13.

¹² Amnesty International, “Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity,” February 1, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>.

¹³ Amnesty International, “Israel’s apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity,” February 1, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>.

¹⁴ Ronit Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 93.

¹⁵ Arthur Ruppin, “Die Auslese des Menschenmaterials für Palästina,” *Der Jude: eine Monatsschrift* 3 (1918): 373-374, <https://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/titleinfo/3103702>.

¹⁶ Ruppin, “Die Auslese des Menschenmaterials für Palästina,” 381.

¹⁷ Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception*, 93.

¹⁸ Sayegh, *Zionist Settler Colonialism in Palestine*, 21; Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception*, 77.

Keeping with the fact that Israeli settler-colonialism is premised on a combination of these tools of racism, patriarchy, and capitalism, it becomes easier to fathom resistance to these forms of intersecting oppressions as a key aspect of Palestinian liberation. The Palestinian response, among other things, has depended on Sumud, an idea that can be translated to “steadfastness”¹⁹. In the next section, we analyse how liberation aims to resist these forms of oppression that are manifest not just in Palestine, but across the world.

Resistance

Having demonstrated the multifaceted forms of oppression faced by Palestinians, we now turn to their resistance to colonialism, Zionism, apartheid, racism and capitalism. We understand resistance to these forms of oppression as synonymous with ‘decolonization’ as they are closely linked with colonialism and that the colonial fashioning of the world depends on these co-constitutive projects. These processes have been seen as acting together not just in Palestine but also in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, spanning the entire colonised world. As a result, to decolonise means to rupture all these interoperating systems that create the hierarchical world that we occupy today.

Palestinians’ resistance is premised upon the idea of Sumud, which represents a “resilient resistance,” and is a tactic to resist Israeli colonization which “relies upon adaptation to the difficulties of life under occupation, staying in the territories despite hardship, and asserting Palestinian culture and identity in response to Zionist claims which posit Israelis as the sole legitimate inhabitants of the land”²⁰. It has also been suggested that Sumud demonstrates resistance “against the politics of erasure exercised by Israel.”²¹ In short, while Sumud is about active resistance, even small acts of defiance, such as staying on their lands, standing up to soldiers and the agency of everyday acts that ruptures the relationship of occupiers and the occupied represent a form of Sumud.²²

Such quotidian resistance is significantly linked with solidarity. Toine van Teeffelen notes how following attacks by the Israeli army, Palestinians used Facebook to offer accommodations to people who dared not go out in the evenings out of the fear of being stoned.²³ Many fictitious stories also recount these solidarities that are created in the daily. In a story titled “The Box,” a Muslim neighbour helps her

¹⁹ Alexandra Rijke and Toine van Teeffelen, “To Exist Is To Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday”, *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 59, (2014): 86, <https://www.palestine-studies.org/en/node/165375/en%20>.

²⁰ Caitlin Ryan, “Everyday Resilience as Resistance: Palestinian Women Practicing Sumud”, *International Political Sociology*, 9, (2015): 299, <https://academic.oup.com/ips/article-abstract/9/4/299/1792573>.

²¹ Rijke and Teeffelen, “To Exist Is To Resist”, 91.

²² Rijke and Teeffelen, “To Exist Is To Resist”, 92.

²³ Toine van Teeffelen, “Ancient time, ordinary time, disrupted time,” *Palestine-Family*, 19 December 2018, <https://palestine-family.net/ancient-time-ordinary-time-disrupted-time/>.

Christian friend by gifting her a box of gold bracelets. The story ends with the remark — “No wall could separate them.”²⁴ Such works both demonstrate how Zionist colonialism targets *all* Palestinians (although it unjustly targets Arab Muslims) and the centrality of solidarity to understanding the different forms of oppression and resisting them.

Quotidian resistance is most significantly seen in Iqrit, a village that was destroyed during the Nakba. Over the last decade, they have tried to rebuild their village by making shelters and settlements in the area. As one resident notes, “until we moved in, the only way back to our village was in a coffin.”²⁵ Tiina Järvi refers to this as the “performative implementation of the right to return”, which converts “return” from an abstract principle to a lived reality.²⁶ By organising summer camps and religious festivals, they aim to not only reclaim their space, but also teach their future generations about the village and its past.²⁷ In doing so, they transfer their claim of belongingness from the “inanimate presence of remains” to the active presence of corporeal bodies²⁸. Their return to the village has relied on a continued “connection” to it, which the Israeli authorities have tried to rupture through constant demolitions out of the fear that it will present a precedent for other refugees.²⁹ However, in making such claims to the land, Palestinians have nurtured a particular relationship with the land that is based on “their inclusion to the process of world-building.”³⁰

Return here makes claims on territory using memory, using that as a tool to destabilise Zionist space-making, central to which is the removal and erasure of not just physical spaces but also knowledge about them. Reclamation of space is based on memory, memory is based on lived experiences and at the core of these lived experiences is the Nakba. In doing so, opposition to the coloniser is registered through the persistent existence of knowledge that they had deemed erased, that is, despite “official” erasure, knowledge of spaces exists in the memories and bodies of Palestinians — a key aspect of Sumud. Not only does this persistence itself represent a form of resistance, but it also justifies the ethnic cleansing of people who hold on to this knowledge. In short, the existence and promotion of memories about “Israeli” territory as once belonging to the colonised through oral traditions, folklore and stories becomes the basis through which resistance can be materialised. In destabilising the colonial nexus of knowledge and space production and taking the agency of producing

²⁴ Arab Educational Institute, “Fifty youth stories from Bethlehem and Ramallah,” Palestine-Family, 25 October 2013, <https://palestine-family.net/fifty-youth-stories-from-bethlehem-and-ramallah/>.

²⁵ Jonathan Cook, “The return to Iqrit,” Al Jazeera, 9 June 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2013/6/9/the-return-to-iqrit>.

²⁶ Tiina Järvi, “Demonstrating the desired future: performative dimensions of internally displaced Palestinians’ return activities,” *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 103, no. 4, (2021): 386, 391, <https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2021.1876524>.

²⁷ Cook, “The Return to Iqrit,” Al Jazeera.

²⁸ Järvi, “Demonstrating the desired future”, 391.

²⁹ Yara Hawari, “Radical Futures: When Palestinians Imagine,” Al Shabaka, 24 March 2020, <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/radical-futures-when-palestinians-imagine/>.

³⁰ Järvi, “Demonstrating the desired future”, 392.

knowledge, memories, at the most fundamental level, become a tool of decolonization. Further, by making livelihoods that are not based on any racial exploitation, Palestinians also oppose the enterprise of racial capitalism that is at the core of settler-colonialism.

The premise of settler colonialism is to disrupt livelihoods, lifestyles and create ‘things’ of the colonised, robbing them of their agency and nurturing a world that is far from ‘normal’; it is closely embroiled in the creation of a new, oppressive regime. Carrying out quotidian tasks in such a climate becomes an act of resistance. It is the fruit of the “collective production” of the Palestinians whose lands and livelihoods have been despoiled³¹. While resistance comes in many shapes and forms, and much has been written about Palestinian resistance, we emphasise resistance through the quotidian. It is a world that criminalises life, where living becomes resistance. As Tabar and Desai put it, “it is for this reason that Palestinian embodied practices, living ties to place and presence on the land are such powerful forms of resistance. They invoke the anxieties of the settler colonizers and destabilize their mythologies and claims to land”³². Consequently, it is the non-material, imagined, memory-inspired narratives that become such strong forms of resistance.

International Resistance

To shift our attention to other movements of resistance that Palestine interacts with, we can focus on anti-colonial struggles in North America. Given how the settler-colonial project in the USA has remained a historical precedent for Israel, our understanding of oppression in Palestine must be informed by that against Native Americans. Mahmood Mamdani explains how the state of Palestinians today is very similar to that of Indigenous peoples in the United States. He argues that not only are Indigenous peoples concentrated in territories precluded from development, but also, despite belonging to the land, excluded from the political community and made “aliens at home”³³. Further, as Johanna Fernandez has argued, they have similar origin histories. Fernandez writes: “both are colonial-settler apartheid states, justifying their projects through the racialized dehumanization of the Indigenous people they displaced from their lands”³⁴. As noted earlier, industrial capitalism in both these countries would not have materialised without the land grabs and exploitation of indigenous labour that accompanied settler-colonialism.³⁵ Taking the case of Indigenous peoples in the Americas, it is very clear that any form of settler-colonialism would be impossible without the exploitation and appropriation of the ‘native’s’ land and labor, and on close analysis, we see this play out in Palestine as well. Therefore,

³¹ Rijke and Teeffelen, “To Exist Is To Resist”, 92.

³² Desai and Tabar, “Decolonization is a global project”, xii.

³³ Mamdani, *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*, (Harvard University Press, 2020), 28.

³⁴ Fernandez, “Structures of settler colonial domination in Israel and in the United States,” 31.

³⁵ Fernandez, “Structures of settler colonial domination in Israel and in the United States,” 32.

the *fact* of this interoperation teaches us of their close ties and represents forms of oppression that existed in the structural and institutional, not the personal and individual.³⁶

In that respect, it is natural that there has been consistent dialogue between Indigenous peoples in North America and Palestinians for at least a few decades.³⁷ This dialogue began during the prime of the American Indian Movement, when “Native activists, like their Black Panther peers, looked to global liberation struggles for inspiration and solidarity, proffering both to anti-colonial movements in return.”³⁸ Similarly, poetry has also acted as a mode of struggle through which native American and Palestinian poets have not only tried to affect “social change through resistance” but have also interacted with one another.³⁹

This interoperating relationship between anti-colonial struggles of these spatially divided, yet experientially united movements is central to the concept of ‘Inter/nationalism.’ Steven Salaita explains that this conjoins anti-colonial struggles across the world and demands “commitment to mutual liberation” across national borders.⁴⁰ Although talk of such mutual liberation may seem hyperbolic, he points out that the same power structures maintain the people’s dispossession.⁴¹ Decolonial narratives and struggles aim to disorient these self-same global structures that co-constitute their people’s oppression. This is not to suggest that their struggles or experiences are in any way similar, but that the same logics underscore them. To be able to entirely understand and hence dismantle one, we must do the same for the other.

Liberation

In this context, liberation is understood as emancipation from all these oppressive structures and an imagination for something new. This imagination itself must depend on newer ways of thinking, which derive from indigenous approaches and combine memory, land, and body. Imagination, as Arjun Appadurai puts it, “can become the fuel for action,” implying the radical rethinking of the world that can flow from renewed imaginations of being.⁴²

³⁶ Ramón A. Gutiérrez, “Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race”, *Du Bois Review*, 1, No. 2, (2004): 282, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1742058X04042043>.

³⁷ Steven Salaita, “Zionism and Native American Studies”, *Abolition Journal*, June 6, 2017, <https://abolitionjournal.org/zionism-native-american-studies-steven-salaita/>.

³⁸ Salaita, “Zionism and Native American Studies”.

³⁹ Saddik M. Gohar, “The Intersections between Native American and Anti-Colonial Palestinian Poetry”, *Global Journal of Current Research*, 6, No. 3, (2018): 91, <http://www.crdeepjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Vol-6-3-3-GJCR.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Steven Salaita, *Inter/ Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), ix.

⁴¹ Salaita, *Inter/ Nationalism*, xv.

⁴² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 7.

Indigeneity offers an indispensable frame through which the dual processes of emancipation and new imaginations can be developed. As a framework, it draws upon the lived experiences of Palestinians and connects them to a single experience of settler colonialism (while being aware of the divergences of experience).⁴³ By placing alternative forms of knowledge which do not align with the Eurocentric understandings of the social, political, economic, or historical, it also offers a radical reconceptualization of the world.

This process permits Palestinians to imagine a world that speaks to the problems that came with their colonization, and in that sense, pushed them to an “Indigenous” status. It must be understood that the “indigenous” comes into existence with the arrival of a settler that pushes them to the margins of society and makes them aliens in their own land. Subsequently, this status is not a pre-given but is constructed in the process of their colonization and in fact, is central to it. The transformation, then, of the political reality of Palestinians arises with decolonization.⁴⁴

Within this frame of reference, liberation is a manifestation of indigeneity and imagination, and connects the Palestinian struggle to the larger struggle against oppression. It brings together the issues arising out of their experiences of Zionist colonialism and thinks of them with reference to other resistance movements. It ruptures the isolation and alienation that their colonisers try to force them into and crafts global solidarities. These are solidarities of common experiences, common resistance and, often, common imaginations. Such imaginations are bound together not by similar structural features of what the future will entail, but by the placement of indigenous ideas and principles that draw from their lived experiences and cultures at the center of the imagination. As a result, indigeneity, liberation, and imagination become co-constitutive parts of the decolonial project.

Counter-mapping emerges as a prominent tool which combines these strands of decolonial thought and converts them to practise. It aims to rethink existing geographies based on lived experiences and memories.⁴⁵ Given how maps are crucial to the colonization of territories, decolonising maps places Zionist expansionist claims at peril by destabilising their claims to territory. Combined with this is the centrality of the right to return for Palestinians who were evicted from their homes in 1948. To be able to think of liberation then is to be able to think of returning and what it entails. Multiple projects have taken to responding to these concerns.

One such project is “Counter-Mapping Return” which is a Participatory Action Research (PAR) mapping project that aims to examine the spatial implications

⁴³ Ahmad Amara and Yara Hawari, “Using Indigeneity in the Struggle for Palestinian Liberation”, Al Shabaka, 8 August 2019, <https://al-shabaka.org/commentaries/using-indigeneity-in-the-struggle-for-palestinian-liberation/>.

⁴⁴ Ahmad Amara and Yara Hawari, “Using Indigeneity in the Struggle for Palestinian Liberation”.

⁴⁵ Zena Agha, “Maps, Technology, and Decolonial Spatial Practices in Palestine,” Al Shabaka, 14 January 2020, <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/maps-technology-and-decolonial-spatial-practices-in-palestine/>.

for planning the return of Palestinian refugees.⁴⁶ As the name suggests, PAR requires the active participation of key stakeholders, including Israeli Jews, Palestinians, and members of Zochrot, an organisation that seeks to transition advance discussions on Palestinian refugees' right to return from "principle to practice."⁴⁷ According to Counter-Mapping Return, return can also be denied due to an inability to practically imagine it, a fact that has propelled them to study return with reference to Miska, a village that was destroyed and ethnically cleansed of Palestinians. Researchers associated with this project place memory at the core of reimagining spaces, especially those that have been rendered physically inaccessible to generations following the *Nakba*. They use environmental biographies—a method through which objects and memories are used to relate to a common space—to construct solidarities and an "affective community" among Miskaweens.⁴⁸

However, this holds the risk of reifying colonial representations of space, private ownership and Israel's exclusionary schemes. This contradiction opens up a "dialectical space" in which decolonization functions through the "dialectic tensions between colonizing and resistance" and works as a "reflective mirror to protest [the] existing order."⁴⁹ Liberation through imagining 'return' using memory and indigenous epistemologies thus acts as a key way of thinking the decolonial. Oppression here is not simply a system imposed upon people, but determines the very frames that they use, think about, and reject. The rejection of colonial frames that emerges upon reflecting on them significantly shows us the dynamism embedded in decolonial thinking.

To bring together the assertion made in this section, we notice how counter-mapping combines the frames of indigeneity and oppression to re-envision the world. While it is embedded in returning to dispossessed lands, it also nudges Palestinians to not reify the self-same territorial boundaries of exclusion imposed by the colonisers. Thinking about the limitations of these frames and reconstituting them opens spaces for critical inquiry and alternative geographies that are sensitive to the exclusionary politics of maps. As Einat Manoff recounts from their work with Counter-Mapping Return, via a dialectical relationship with colonialist spaces, Palestinians were able to "think beyond the readily available set of colonialist codes and toward a complex set of ideas of inclusion and distributive justice, and worked creatively towards resolution."⁵⁰ Consequently, the notion of liberation, through its close interactions with indigeneity and oppression offers reimaginings of space, temporality and social

⁴⁶ Puleng Segalo, Einat Manoff and Michelle Fine, "Working With Embroideries and Counter-Maps: Engaging Memory and Imagination Within Decolonizing Frameworks," *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 3, no. 1, (2015): 351, doi:10.5964/jspp.v3i1.145.

⁴⁷ Zochrot, "Return," Accessed: 16 April 2022, https://www.zochrot.org/sections/view/19/en?Return_Vision.

⁴⁸ Segalo, Manoff and Fine, "Working with Embroideries and Counter-Maps," 351-352.

⁴⁹ Segalo, Manoff and Fine, "Working with Embroideries and Counter-Maps," 356.

⁵⁰ Segalo, Manoff and Fine, "Working with Embroideries and Counter-Maps," 358.

relations that centres but also opposes their colonial experience, hence representing decolonial praxis.

Decolonization functions through the critical reflections on these interoperating forms of oppression and employs lived experiences as a means to rupture them. In that sense, it is embedded in the processes of rethinking and reconstituting a world that has been built on regimes of oppression. Its universality does not draw from *what* it reimagines, but *how* it does so. While the critique and the manner of critique of the oppressive order — given its international preponderance — may be universalizable, the structures of a decolonial world are hyperlocal and in that sense, are not. Nonetheless, they do go a long way in showing us the extent to which our imagination can be stretched to imagine a new world.

Conclusion

Frantz Fanon explains decolonization as a “program of complete disorder.”⁵¹ This requires a violent wrenching of dispossessed lands by indigenous peoples from the colonisers. Subsequently, much like colonization, decolonization becomes a violent process. Decolonial violence is not just the violence of armed conflict but is more so the violence of rupturing colonial hierarchies and disordering the colonial world and its associated forms of control and oppression. It is a fundamental restructuring of the world based on indigenous ways of thinking and knowing.

Palestinian liberation does precisely this. It resists global oppressive structures that have seen their manifestation elsewhere but are central to Palestinian colonization. It does this not by imagining a return to the status quo (a serious failure of many decolonising countries) but by rethinking the world and its underlying features as a whole. Since there is a recognition that these oppressive systems are co-constitutive, an understanding that nothing short of emancipation from all accounts for ‘liberation’ persists. It structures our understanding differently, nudging us to inquire about the presence of these oppressive systems everywhere—be it in the struggle of Kashmiris or the native and Black populations in North America. It also emphasises the intersectional approach to resistance that we then require to liberate. As stated earlier, liberation here refers to liberation from all modes of oppression, alienation, and displacement. Naturally, ‘resistance’ and ‘liberation’ are deeply complex terms with variegated meanings for all. Our focus in this paper has been on connections to the land embodied in the question of return. Given the practical precedence that returning to dispossessed lands has in all discourses on ‘liberation,’ we focus on its relationship to decolonization.

It is in recognising this that Palestinian liberation constitutes a form of decolonization. This is a decolonization aware of the interoperation of these structures, of the suffocating result of their use on people, one that places intersectionality at its core and is receptive to the fundamentally different yet common

⁵¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 36.

experiences that all face under Occupation. It embodies a vision of the world grounded in an alternative reality for which memory is as important as the material, the body is as important as the land, and the lived experiences as important as official knowledge. It is this vision of decolonization that is central to their reordering of the world and constitutes a vision that is truly global in its scope. It is this vision that we must reckon with as we envision a new world.

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