

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

On the Pedagogy of “Boomerangs”: Exposing Occupation Through Co-Implication

by Mary Jo Klinker and Heidi Morrison



"WINTER SOLDIER ON THE HILL" BY BECKY NASADOWSKI & HEATH SCHULTZ. THIS IMAGE IS FROM CELEBRATE PEOPLE'S HISTORY/IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR: TEN YEARS OF FIGHTING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE, A PORTFOLIO THAT CELEBRATED IVAW'S FIRST TEN YEARS AND WAS PRODUCED BY JUSTSEEDS, IVAW, BOOKLYN, REPETITIVE PRESS, AND THE CIVILIAN SOLDIER ALLIANCE. WINTER SOLDIER ON THE HILL WAS VISUALIZED AS A DISRUPTION OF THE DOMINANT AND NATIONALIST NARRATIVE REGARDING THE U.S. INVASION OF IRAQ. THE PENTAGON PATTERN ACTS AS A STAND-IN FOR AN OFFICIAL NARRATIVE OF THE STATE, WHAT MIGHT TYPICALLY BE SAID "ON THE HILL."

Prior to participation in a study abroad program, most universities request that students and faculty subscribe to the US State Department's Travel Alerts and Warning system. As we prepared to take five students from a mid-sized Midwestern public university to teach about Israel/Palestine, we received the following alert:

Palestinians have called for a strike and protest action throughout the West Bank and Gaza, June 24-25....Demonstrations are likely to continue for the duration of the "Peace to Prosperity" conference in Bahrain...According to protest organizers, demonstrations will take place at "friction points" outside Palestinian cities, presumably at Israel Defense Forces (IDF) security checkpoints, Israeli settlements, border crossings, along the separation barrier between the West Bank and Israel, and in East Jerusalem, particularly near the Old City. Protesters could attempt to cross the separation wall into Israel... Authorities could use water cannon, tear gas, rubber bullets, or live ammunition to disperse unruly crowds or enforce no-go zones. Clashes are possible.

- TravelAlert, June 17, 2019

Unintentionally, US State Department travel alerts and warnings themselves served as interesting rhetorical devices for exploring militarism and empire, and in this study abroad context, they also offered a critical pedagogical opportunity to interrogate the framing of militarism and occupation. We turned the text of the travel alert into a pedagogical opportunity: Whose safety does the travel alert prioritize? How does ahistoricism construct the meaning of "clashes"? We used the travel alert to expose the dialectic opposition between witnessing human rights violations firsthand and contending with a U.S. hegemonic narrative of military support for Israel, and U.S.-made live ammunition, tear gas, and rubber bullets utilized against Palestinians. Undoubtedly, these "friction points" had been exacerbated under the imperial reach of the U.S. and Trump's 2017 announcement to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In fact, during the study abroad course discussed in this article, Netanyahu unveiled Trump Heights in the stolen land of Golan Heights.

While traveling with American students in Israel-Palestine, we, as professors, sought to seize every critical pedagogical moment in the field. If we had brought American students to the region to better understand militarization and the lived experience of settler colonialism, then it was integral to engage the students with the popular uprisings standing up for justice. Our students were what a Palestinian tour guide later would refer to as "boomerangs to the world," returning to their communities and amplifying the realities of Palestinians living under occupation. "Boomerang pedagogy," or the calculated deployment of students outside the classroom with the intent of their returning home as community educators and agents of change. Boomerang pedagogy requires bearing witness in order to proliferate awareness of the injustice of occupation and to foster a critical consciousness.

This essay explores the pedagogical takeaways of a travel study program with U.S. university students in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In short, Palestine is the quintessential lens through which to teach about the intersections of war, capitalism, and empire. We encourage more professors to integrate material on Palestine into their coursework, especially as a comparative analysis of settler colonialism and State-sanctioned violence, even if they cannot organize a travel study course. Additionally, for those who can find ways to take learning outside the confines of the classroom walls, we found that bearing witness can encourage students to take part in transnational solidarity work.

In this essay, we begin by complicating the very idea of our course. Who are we (two white, feminist, American professors) to bring them to bear witness to oppression which our government plays a major role in sustaining? We examine the challenges and critique of travel and voyeurism, while subverting the neoliberal academic paradigm of "service learning" as a neocolonial pedagogy indebted to globalizing the white-savior industrial complex. We then articulate how the course sought to help students connect the dots between settler colonialism, militarism, and racialization.

In the summer of 2019, we travelled to Palestine for a three-week course centered around political and humanitarian organizing. Students maintained regular journals and processed their day-to-day experiences in guided discussions framed around preassigned theoretical readings. Their final course assignment was to design a project that could contribute to making a more socially just world. The academic work referenced in this essay figured largely into the course discussions and reading material. This essay references student coursework and anonymous pre- and post-test survey results. Palestinian truth-telling about the impacts of the occupation were central to students' learning; however, due to the constraints of space, this essay only examines U.S. student perspectives on militarism and co-implication.

Applying Theories of Co-implication

As faculty, we had both taught several courses including curriculum on Palestine and had previously travelled to the West Bank. In preparation for teaching the course, we had many personal discussions about our motives and outcomes for teaching. Those discussions have continued, but throughout this essay, we have honed in specifically on student analysis. Two guiding practices of our shared pedagogical methods were social justice and critical analysis of power.

Since Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critical 2003 essay, "Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," much has been theorized about the role of the gaze in curriculum. As she points out about women's studies' traditionally Eurocentric lens, there has been a tendency to use support pedagogy like the "*Feminist-as-tourist model*". This curricular perspective could also be called the *feminist as international consumer* or, in less charitable terms, the *white women's burden or colonial*

discourse model...In other words, the 'add women as global victims or powerful women and stir' perspective" (518). She contends that the *feminist solidarity or comparative feminist studies model* offers a pedagogy that focuses "on mutuality and co-implication, which suggests attentiveness to the interweaving of the histories of these communities... the focus is simultaneously on individual and collective experiences of oppression and exploitation and of struggle and resistance" (522).

Mohanty has gone on to write about her 2011 travel to Palestinian territories as part of an Indigenous and Women of Color Solidarity Delegation, examining the limitations of solidarity. Reflecting on that experience, she stated: "Learning about colonial technologies of occupation, about the intricate gendered and racialized exercises of power by the Israeli state, I was more convinced than ever of the need for theory to address fundamental questions of systemic power and inequities and to develop feminist, antiracist analyses of neoliberalism, militarism, and heterosexism as nation-state-building projects" (968). Similarly, we shared fears about the purpose of studying occupation and the neoliberal role travel studies and service-learning play in U.S. higher education, as it privileges student emotions over the experiences of marginalized people. For this reason, co-implication and understanding the comparative ways that U.S. racialization and militarism impact communities both domestically and abroad were entry points for student discussion, analysis, and final projects which were grounded in localizing a response to the militarized logics of occupation.

In order to ground student understanding of geopolitical power dynamics, we required students to read Teju Cole's analysis of the "white-savior industrial complex." In this work, he states:

Let us begin our activism right here: with the money-driven villainy at the heart of American foreign policy. To do this would be to give up the illusion that the sentimental need to "make a difference" trumps all other considerations. What innocent heroes don't always understand is that they play a useful role for people who have much more cynical motives. The White Savior Industrial Complex is a valve for releasing the unbearable pressures that build in a system built on pillage. We can participate in the economic destruction of Haiti over long years, but when the earthquake strikes it feels good to send \$10 each to the rescue fund. I have no opposition, in principle, to such donations (I frequently make them myself), but we must do such things only with awareness of what else is involved. If we are going to interfere in the lives of others, a little due diligence is a minimum requirement. (Cole, "The White-Savior Industrial Complex")

This reading is one that can be utilized in any course focused on solidarity work and refuting a "student as tourist" model in addressing national differences. Most importantly, Cole offers an application of what Mohanty calls for, an understanding of "co-implication." How do we benefit from and are we implicated in the militarized machinery and occupation of Palestine? We encourage students to use intellectual judgment, and not ungrounded bias, to navigate

this difficult terrain. For instance, when students saw teargas canisters reading "Made in the USA" and met with families who suffered from this violence, it was impossible to disregard our co-implication in the violence we witnessed.

In a prior issue of *Radical Teacher*, Donna Nevel writes about her and Jewish Voice for Peace's (JVP) curriculum, which crucially approaches the conflict from its historical roots. The Nakba-- "the expulsion and dispossession of approximately 750,000 Palestinians, and the destruction of more than 400 villages, by the Zionist movement and then Israel from 1947-1949"-- is useful for those "studying what is happening in the Middle East; U.S. foreign policy; Jewish history and Zionism; Palestinian history; the relationships between Islamophobia and Israel politics; settler colonialism; and/or indigenous struggles" (46). Nevel and JVP's curriculum was inspired by Zochrot, an Israeli organization that seeks to educate Jewish Israelis' understanding of the creation of the State of Israel and "to promote acknowledgment and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba." Similarly, we began our travel study by meeting with Zochrot in Lifta, a Palestinian village outside of Jerusalem demolished following the Nakba. The tour guide asked the students to think about their work of accountability to Palestinians as being "boomerangs to the world" about what they witness. The metaphor of a boomerang is an apt description of what we outline here and of the role of the study abroad classroom as a site to engage and reflect on co-implication. In the following sections, we examine several examples from the course that expose deep connections among settler colonialism, militarism, and racialized capitalism.

During our trip, we visited museums, historic sites, and universities, as well as met with government and non-government officials, tour guides, students, professors, and activists. We also completed 14 hours of service learning. Students journaled near daily on their observations of human rights abuses in Occupied Palestinian Territories. We encouraged them to draw historical linkages to colonization and racialization, through works such as Teju Cole's and Noura Erakat's *Justice for Some*. Some students used terms like "guilt," "shame," and "anger" upon realizing their co-implication in the experiences of Palestinians as U.S. taxpayers. However, moving through those feelings and thinking critically about the power differential to feel "shame," one student pointed out the need to create "solidarity not charity" by stating: "External interference or charity may disrupt the agency of the Palestinian people and may unintentionally contribute to the removal of self-determination the Israeli government has imposed...". Interrogating charity shows the required self-reflection of interrogating the power differential as a tourist and "external interference." External interference is one form of colonial mentality the students studied in preparation for examining their relationship to power, as they read in Teju Cole's tweet: "The White Savior Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege." Following a visit to the small Palestinian village of Nabi Salih, noted for its weekly marches to protest the Israeli occupation, one student wrote, "One quote that stuck out at the end to me [from today's visit] was, 'We don't like to talk about suffering

because we don't need your tears.'" While in many ways the geopolitics of privilege were unavoidable, student acknowledgement of the relationship of power to emotionality provides evidence of the reflection necessary to draw transnational parallels.

Comparative Analyses of Settler Colonialism



IMAGE: DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE TO THE VILLAGE OF LIFTA IN HEBREW, ARABIC, AND ENGLISH. ARABIC IS ENTIRELY ERASED BY VANDALISM. (PHOTO BY MARY JO KLINKER)

One of the first issues this course sought to explore was the lived experience of settler colonialism. As mentioned, the first day of the travel study began with a tour of Lifta by Zochrot. As we waited together looking out onto the ruined village, largely overgrown, many locals passed us to head down to the natural springs for a summer outing. We looked over a map of the total number of erased communities in Israel (now available for all classrooms globally as an [iNakba](#) app). One student who had conducted research on Native American curriculum in Wisconsin asked: "Do Israelis know to ask questions like who lived here before, based on the education system?"

The answer was a simple "no." The systemic erasure of the Nakba in Israeli curriculum is a requirement of the national imaginary of settler colonialism; Lorenzo Veracini has theorized the Israeli settler colonial project as "...successful only when it extinguishes itself—that is, when the settlers cease to be defined as such and become 'natives,' and their position becomes normalized" (28). So normalized, as we witnessed, that a group of Israeli men approached the Zochrot guide yelling: "You lie, you lie, you lie." The students quickly asked if there was potential danger to Palestinians for even being seen with us. Would telling their story to us in public space expose Palestinians to vitriolic comments from the onlooking colonizer? The experience made students more cognizant of their co-implication as non-Palestinians in Palestine. Their concern both acknowledged the potential of harm due to our presence and made them more self-reflective of the

comparative framework of settler colonialism in the United States and Israel.

Another student drew a direct parallel to the settler colonial state of the United States reflecting on the modern settlements that now surrounded the post-Nakba landscape: "My thoughts kept going back to our country and how the ruins of our Indigenous populations aren't as evident so it's easy to forget that the cities we love and live in are built on top of stolen land." This comparison provided us an opportunity to discuss transnational models of solidarity and introduce students to the work of American Studies scholar Steven Salaita. As Salaita has written, "Palestine scholars and activists increasingly use the language of Indigeneity and geocultural relationships...Sa'ed Adel Atshan speaks of 'our shared history as Indigenous peoples who have faced ethnic cleansing by European colonists'"(3). Not only could students draw comparisons to living as settlers in the U.S., but they could understand how settler colonialism and Indigenous identity become languages of commonality for shared struggle currently.

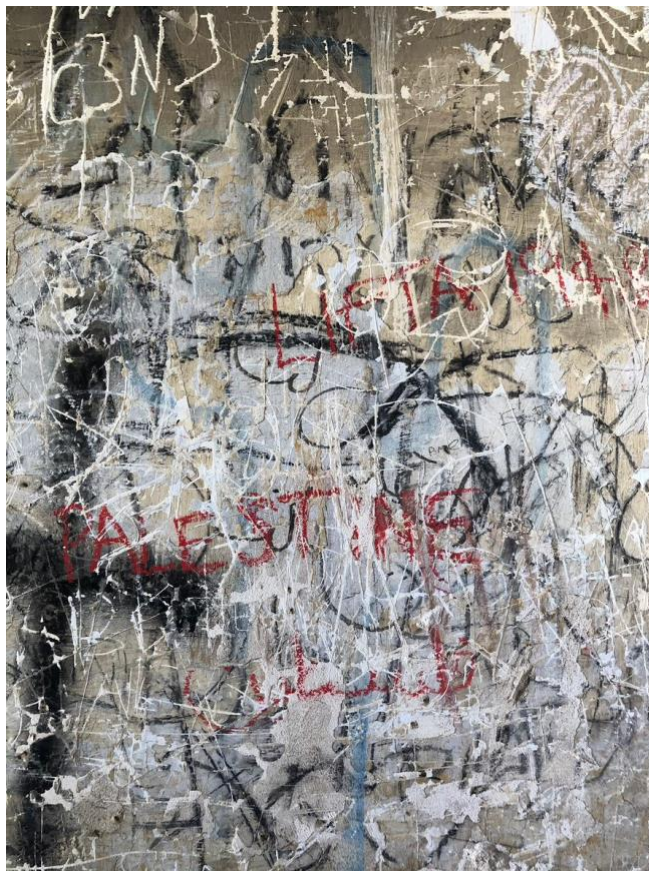


IMAGE: "LIFTA 1948 PALESTINE" TAGGED ON THE RUINS OF THE VILLAGE OF LIFTA. (PHOTO BY MARY JO KLINKER)

One student expressed a similar sentiment, perhaps incorrectly upholding American exceptionalism of settler colonialism stating, "America is the original settler project. Israel is learning from the best. Israel may not be using reservations as the US did with First People, but they instead rely on refugee camps, walls, and permits/checkpoints to control the indigenous populations." However, as another peer examined in their journal following their first view of the apartheid and annexation wall, the United States has

indeed also gleaned tools of State violence from Israel, referring to Trump's proposed border wall. Or as one student expressed it, "Where the regimes of Trump and Netanyahu converge is in exchange programs that bring together police, ICE, border patrol, and FBI from the US with soldiers, police, border agents, etc. from Israel." As Kelly points out, part of seeing Palestine is asking oneself what one is "already doing that makes possible the freedom of movement they are embodying and the containment under occupation they are witnessing" (738). Learning about Palestine is in fact a way of learning about the colonial violence one is already implicated in at home; for this reason, in future iterations of our course, we will start on the ground with Indigenous organizers struggling for sovereignty and communities of color resisting policing violence in the Midwest. This is especially true and critical for teaching comparative frameworks of State-sanctioned violence in regard to anti-Black racism and police brutality in the United States. We pointed students to useful resources such as [Palestine is Here](#) and the [Deadly Exchange Project](#), which help Americans connect US-Israeli violence in Palestine and policing in their hometowns.

Settler colonialism is based on an ideology of Othering, that is to say there is an "us" who deserve rights and "others" who do not. Witnessing the Othering in Israel aided students in drawing similar parallels in the US. While in Area C of the West Bank, which is under Israeli control and comprises a large amount of the agricultural region, we learned of Palestinian child labor exploitation and the danger in such jobs. This lesson offered further comparative frameworks for students' final projects, as one student analyzed in their final work:

I am very interested in agriculture work and how it affects minoritized populations because they are the only ones willing to do the work. There needs to be a bigger awareness around worker's rights in all aspect [sic] of our life. Food is a source of life for all. When we truly question where it comes from and make connections to its impact on the individuals doing the work to produce the food, the system will need to change. We must build a connection to where the food we eat comes from to fully understand the negative impacts it has on people and the environment.

Since we live in the rural Midwest surrounded by agricultural industry and migrant workers, this project further draws from a comparative analysis of oppression under settler colonialism, and the potential for commonality

of struggle and solidarity. Students learned from ways that Palestinians are using the language of international solidarity as a form of resistance. One student observed about the Israeli separation wall:

I loved seeing the art on the walls being used as a form of resistance against the occupation. There was one piece of art that drew a transnational boundary to the US and Mexico by saying "Next stop Mexico..." This seems to be trying to bring solidarity...many people inside the United States are vehemently against the wall being built between the US and Mexico, but they do not know about all the walls that are built around the Palestinians. So, it is also a way of spreading knowledge of the conflict to Americans who can then draw a direct parallel. [sic]

Racialization and the White Supremacist Logics of Terrorism

The second major theme of this course was racism, which students observed on a daily basis as the following anecdote illustrates. "Do I look like a terrorist?" asked the Palestinian tour guide to a group of American study-abroad students visiting the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem. He explained that he had spent years in an Israeli prison for protecting his Palestinian neighborhood near the Old City, and he, like all of the students, was born in the Midwest of the United States. In close proximity, heavily armed Israeli soldiers monitored the holy site. This was a critical pedagogical moment. We did not fear the tour guide, who in casual cap and jeans engagingly and eruditely spoke about the history and significance of Islam's second most important religious site. This was juxtaposed to the nearby young Israeli soldiers carrying assault rifles, offering a stark contrast.

In the class discussion later that night, we pushed the students to unpack the tour guide's question. According to the American national imaginary after September 11, 2001, the students stood face-to-face with a terrorist. The guide carried the dually condemning identity of being both Palestinian and Muslim. But, what did you see today with your very own eyes, we asked the students? The students saw weapons pointed in their direction by Israeli

young men who by international law are unambiguously participating in Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine. We restated the tour guide's question, and as a class discussed the racialized definitions of "terrorism," asking: "Who today looked like a 'person using unlawful violence and



(PHOTO BY MARY JO KLINKER)

intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims?" As Daniel A. Segal writes in "Teaching Palestine-Israel: A Pedagogy of Delay and Suspension," teaching about Palestine is less about filling a void than teaching against the grain of what students already know.

This question exposed the racist and Islamophobic rhetorical framing of "terrorism" in the United States. Students' immediate response to the tour guide was "no, not at all." The immediacy of their response seemed steeped in shame about the reality compared to what some friends and family had warned of about their travels and studies. Allowing students the space to both feel discomfort and to reflect later that evening was one way to untangle racialization, militarism, and transnational Islamophobia. Unlike the confines of the classroom and pedagogy of critical analysis through reading, the role of witnessing and evolving through this discomfort is the site of student learning in a travel course. This pedagogical method also poses the possibility of further privileging the tourist student experience over the material pain of racism mapped on people of color as "terrorists." Indeed, as Saidya Hartman's work has questioned concerning literature and teaching slavery, "Why is pain the conduit of identification?" (20). Similarly, Sara Ahmed has argued of racism and academia, the insistence that every moment of classroom discomfort is one of a "learning opportunity" itself recenters the classroom as existing solely for white students (Ahmed 2012).

Upon leaving Haram el-Sharif, we observed a group of heavily armed police escorting settlers. The students pointed this out and asked why. The guide explained that settlers were allowed access to the site as it is also the location of the Temple Mount. The most violent conflict occurred in September 2000; following Jumu'ah prayers Israeli riot police opened fire killing four and wounding nearly 200 people. This history provides evidence of brutal police violence against Muslim worshippers and an important moment to explain the performativity of racializing and vilifying Muslims as dangerous. As we explained through the works of Judith Butler, the action of performing protection also codifies the hierarchy of "bodies that matter" through the power of racialized violence (Butler 2004).

The complexity of examining nationalism and racism in relation to Israel/Palestine was also present in discussing national and racial identities of Palestinians and Israelis. These are not monolithic ethnic or religious categories, despite the predominant U.S. narrative surrounding the region being one solely of religious strife rather than militarized colonization. In one example, a student could more fully comprehend racial stratification by comparatively framing racial hierarchies in Israel as colorism. They stated of Haifa:

...old Palestinian houses...went from being Palestinian homes to being Jewish homes after the Nakba. What Israel did was take the large homes and divide them up so incoming Mizrahi Jewish immigrants could stay at the homes, but they only got one room out of the original homes. But Jews that came from Europe would get super nice homes. So, it was very obvious and clear Israeli discriminates against Palestinians, but it's even wilder to know that they even do it against other Israeli

Jews. I'm not quite sure why I am so surprised that colorism is happening...

Similar to Segal's strategy, allowing students to be exposed to something against the grain of their understanding offered the student the ability to attach their understanding of US colorism to the history of Haifa post-1948 (84).

Privatizing the Occupation: Connecting the Dots of Militarism and Neoliberalism

The third issue students learned about in this course was privatized security. One opportunity for this arose on a very personal level. While travelling with students, we were detained at a checkpoint. Jennifer Kelly's article "Asymmetrical Itineraries: Militarism, Tourism, and Solidarity in Occupied Palestine" prepared the students for this experience of "asymmetrical freedom and mobility," which became very visible. Upon arriving, the armed guard requested our passports and directed all of us to get off of the bus, separating the students and faculty from our Palestinian driver and tour guide. This detainment required that our personal belongings went through multiple checks, including the confiscation of one student's Yasser Arafat Museum tote-- which featured a poem in Arabic-- from their luggage. While being held in a small area, one student became angry and stated: "I'm calling [Congressman] Ron Kind and telling him about how my tax dollars treated me today." This moment of bearing witness served as an impetus to be a "boomerang" regarding hostilities at checkpoints. It also required the unpacking of empathy, as students discussed their own safety at checkpoints in relation to Palestinians. As Sherene H. Razack has examined of humanitarian responses in "Stealing the Pain of Others," "This makes empathy a double-edged sword: 'in making the other's suffering one's own, this suffering is occluded by the other's obliteration'" (Saidiya Hartman qtd in Razack 377). Perhaps the greatest dilemma of deploying a boomerang is constant awareness of the process of consuming pain and recentring the student perspective of it.

The same student reflected on the incident later in their journal, analyzing how neoliberal multiculturalism presents a guise of modernity performed in the gendered dynamics of empire. Women in the military are constructed as signs of progress and democracy, glossing over the violent realities of occupation. In a sardonic tone, they stated: "While we were waiting for the guards, both male and female because you have to remember that Israel is not only a premiere example of a democratic state but also an egalitarian state in regards to gender as well, I was able to examine just how much this checkpoint could negatively affect the lives of Palestinians."

Learning that the checkpoint was privatized further complicated our discussion of Israeli State violence against Palestinians. The same student continued on the violations of the privatized checkpoints:

Being an industrial checkpoint, workers from the West Bank would use it to pass through to do work in Israel proper. The only problem was that a lot of these

Palestinian workers had tools such as chainsaws, pliers, hammers, and nails, which could all conceivably be used as weapons. So, the private Israeli security could, and did, confiscate a lot of these tools at will, eliminating the ability of these Palestinians to do their jobs. And just as an added bonus for the state of Israel, those Palestinians who were finally let through the checkpoint were privileged enough to have to repurchase their tools... at Israeli stores, benefiting the Israeli economy.

As the 2016 Report "The Invisible Force: Privatization of War" by the International Institute for Nonviolent Action found, "Outsourcing began with the delegation of non-military services such as catering, transportation and other logistic services, then continued with the construction of military systems, including the separation Wall, and finally included the delegation of some of its functions of maintenance of public order and security in the [occupied Palestinian territories]." Ensuring the neoliberal aim of profit, privatization blurs the lines of State military and private security companies, making it difficult to determine who is responsible for violence and humiliation at checkpoints. It also insidiously disconnects State violence from the perpetrator, ensuring no recourse for actions outside of policy. These moments challenged us pedagogically; we asked if a course of this type challenged students to interrogate racialized, commodified militarism or solely made us spectators of Palestinian pain. In Kelly's observations of solidarity tourism, she describes asymmetrical freedom of mobility "as the moments that most resonated with them [tourists] and catalyzed their activism back home" (737).

We tried to connect lessons about neoliberalism not just to the inner workings of occupation and colonialism, but also to students' very pursuit of an education abroad in the first place. We intentionally made the course contain one credit of service learning in hopes of sending the message to the students that education should not be viewed as a commodity. Students take course work not simply to get degrees that lead to employment, but rather as a means of social justice. We had extensive discussions with the students about how volunteer work is not about "helping," but instead it is about being in solidarity and understanding your own relationship to power, privilege, and access. That work further entails amplifying their voices and continuing similar work at home. Unfortunately, there were moments when we found ourselves challenged by the risk of perpetuating neoliberal capitalism systems through our service-learning project. For example, before our trip began, we raised funds to support Palestinian families who had imprisoned parents, drawing parallels to the 2.7 million children in the U.S. with incarcerated parents. We planned to put the funds on the prison canteen (general store) accounts of the prisoners so they could purchase needed items. However, we revised our plan once we learned from Palestinian activists that all the items in the general store were produced in Israeli settlements, and that their support of families on the outside better served their community organizing model.

Another aspect of our volunteer work involved farming alongside a Palestinian family under threat of losing their land to unlawful Israeli confiscation. In conversations with

our students, the family emphasized that they had had the land deed since the Ottoman era. We were careful to point out to our students that private property land ownership – a hallmark of capitalism – should not be the only compelling reason for defending a person's right to exist and have a home, reminding them of the experiences of Bedouin farmers they had met. We used challenging moments such as these as teaching points about the insidious ways Western colonization continually occupies a rights-based discourse.

Boomerangs: Bringing Home the Work

Studying abroad in Occupied Palestinian Territories intensifies students' ability to become boomerangs because it cultivates a source of political mobilization via solidarity. Students witnessed the violence of occupation firsthand; for example, at the beginning of the trip, Israeli airport officials detained and questioned us as to the intent of our travels. After the group was released, one student asked: "Isn't Israel a democracy? Shouldn't we be able to go, see, and think for ourselves?" We reflected with the students about what it would feel like to be a Palestinian and experience such securitization on a daily basis.

This travel study was also a challenging educational experience for us as well. Our learning with U.S. university students in the Occupied Palestinian Territories taught us that future courses must begin at home. While much of our teaching drew from comparative studies of the rubrics of militarism and settler colonialism, lessons on human rights and transnational solidarity that begin in our home communities will further disrupt our concerns with the neocolonial mentality of "service-learning" and the white-savior industrial complex.

A month after returning from the travel study, two incidents further exposed the unequal access to mobility. First, US representatives Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib were denied entry to Israel, the only route to entering Palestine. Second, Ismail Ajjaw, a Palestinian student bound for Harvard University, was denied entry to the U.S. upon a search of his computer and the discovery of posts by Facebook friends critical of American foreign policy.

After pressure from Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Congresswomen's itinerary showed that "their intent is to hurt Israel," and he backed a decision by Israel's interior minister to block their entry. Omar and Tlaib urged their colleagues to go without them and that they should not "succeed in hiding the cruel reality of the occupation from us." Despite the contradictions of access to travel, the ability to witness the occupation, to become boomerangs, is necessary in order to shape public understanding of the occupation and the role of U.S.-Israeli Military collaboration.

Responses to these incidents prompted the prominent U.S. Twitter hashtag: "#BoycottIsrael." Much like our study abroad trip engendered, discussions surrounding injustice have the potential to expose large audiences to occupation and produce the direction for political mobilization. Since returning, the students have started a campus Students for Justice in Palestine and will be screening *Imprisoning a*

Generation on campus in order to build awareness and support of H.R. 2407, the "Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living under Israeli Military Occupation Act." The students who studied in the Occupied West Bank came home as boomerangs ready to disrupt the narratives of settler colonialism, militarism, neoliberalism, and racism -- lethal forces in which they are implicated both at home and abroad. They came home as boomerangs.

Note

We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, as well as Penelope Mitchell, Mahruq Khan, and Colette Hyman for their comments on earlier versions of this essay. We are particularly grateful to the students who shared this learning experience with us, as well as the organizers, tour guides, and university administrators who made this trip possible. Thank you, especially, to Lama Yahya and Joshua Stacher. A special thanks to all the Palestinians who shared their experiences, research, and critical labor for justice with us. The realization of this essay was a direct result of our individual participation in a Palestine Studies Faculty Development Seminar. Materials from the following sites are available and can be adapted in every classroom to discuss Palestine: [Palestine is Here](#), [Yasser Arafat Museum](#), [Deadly Exchange](#) and [iNakba](#).

Works Cited

Ahmed, Sara. *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2012.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004.

Cole, Teju. "The White-Savior Industrial Complex." *The Atlantic*. 21 March 2012. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

Erakat, Noura. *Justice for Some: Law and the Question of Palestine*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019.

Finkelstein, Maura. "What is a Classroom for? Teaching the Anthropology of Palestine." *Society for Cultural Anthropology*, May 1, 2019.

Hartman, Saidiya V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in 19th Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Kelly, Jennifer Lynn. "Asymmetrical Itineraries: Militarism, Tourism, and Solidarity in Occupied Palestine." *American Quarterly*, vol. 68, number 3, 2016, pp. 723-745.

International Institute for Nonviolent Action. "The Invisible Force. A comparative study of the use of private military and security companies in Iraq, Occupied Palestinian

Territories and Colombia. Lessons for international regulation." *Privatization of War Report Series*, 2016.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2003, pp. 499-535.

_____. "Transnational Feminist Crossings: On Neoliberalism and Radical Critique." *Signs Intersectionality: Theorizing Power, Empowering Theory*. Vol. 38, No. 4, 2013, pp. 967-991.

Nevel, Donna. "Facing the Nakba." *Radical Teacher*, vol. 109, 2017, pp. 45-53.

Razack, Sherene H. "Stealing the Pain of Others: Reflections on Canadian Humanitarian Responses." *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 29:4, 2007. pp. 375-394.

Salaita, Steven George. *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Segal, Daniel A. "Teaching Palestine-Israel: A Pedagogy of Delay and Suspension." *Review of Middle East Studies*, Vol.53, Issue 1, 2019, pp. 1-6.

Veracini, Lorenzo. "The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Israel, and the Occupation." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2013, pp. 26-42.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons](#) Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the [University Library System](#) of the [University of Pittsburgh](#) as part of its [D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program](#), and is cosponsored by the [University of Pittsburgh Press](#).