

RETELLING NARRATIVES OF ECO-MEMORY: SETTLER COLONIALISM
AND CARCERAL OCCUPATION OF THE JORDAN RIVER

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A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Social Science: Environment and Community

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December 2020

ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, I retell and reclaim stories that have been shared and passed down within my family and family history in relation to our homeland, Palestine, and more specifically to the Jordan River. I argue that the construction of the dam in the 1960s on the Jordan River, by a Zionist state, is an extension of both the settler colonial state and the treatment of the land/ivers as inherently linked with the treatment of Indigenous people. The carceral spaces and geographies settler states create are part of both the destruction of the land and the genocide Indigenous people experience. The Jordan River is a sacred site that was once a natural border and has now become a militarized border. As the colonization of the River takes place, the stories, and memories shift. The river becomes an important examination of settler colonialism and the expansion of a Zionist state and occupation of Palestine. Migration between Jordan and Palestine was a part of Indigenous Palestinians and Jordanians daily experiences prior to existences of modern states. However, with the rise of Zionism, the river becomes central to controlling the landscape and erasing the memory of both migration and the river itself leading to both ecological disasters and the Nakba (catastrophe) of the Palestine people. As a displaced

Palestinian the refusal to let go of the memory of river and the liberation of our homeland becomes central to the question of Palestine and return.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my committee. For supporting me through this program, especially when institutional racism and white supremacy made it feel impossible to stay. Thank you for all of your constant empathy, guidance, kindness and the time you have spent working with me. Thank you Cutch Risling Baldy for always providing us with a space to come talk to you, the empathy you showed us, for advocating for us, supporting us throughout every aspect of this master's program. Thank you, Janelle Adsit, for your kindness, for providing a reassuring and gentle space throughout my thesis process, and for always guiding me when I was stuck in my writing. Thank you, Nicholas Perdue, for supporting us, providing a space to talk about everything, and for your honesty throughout this master's program. Additionally, thank you to Sherine Hafez for guiding me throughout my undergraduate education, for teaching me about orientalism and colonialism. For always supporting me, providing a home a way from home, and the mentorship you have always offered. Additionally, I would like to thank my parents for always being there, pushing me, and believing in me. For my mother who continues to teach me what it means to be resilient and for being a constant inspiration regardless of what life has thrown at you. For my father who worked tirelessly to support us in a country that fear us. For my brother who is always there for me in my most difficult moments, who is my best friend, and the person I go to for all my annoying technological advice and help. To both my grandmothers, the amount of care you have shown, the amount of resistances you maintain in keep our Palestinian identity

alive even after being uprooted and displaced from your homes. Thank you. None of this would have happened without all the foundational support you have given me and taught me. Thank you to my friendships that have kept me sane the past two years. Thank you to Eman for always encouraging me, seeing me, and always believing in me. Thank you, Stefani, for our years of friendship, for being here for me at the hardest points. Thank you for the 14 years of friendship and ongoing. Thank you to Mel and Ness for always being there. For your remarkable ability to shine even after everything this program did. For your voices of inspiration, for speaking out against injustice and calling out racism. For the joy you brought throughout these two and half years. & of course, to Palestine, in hopes that one day we will see you liberated from the river to the sea. Inshallah one day our rivers will be filled once again. To our martyrs, to our political prisoners, and to the Palestinian refugees who will one day see the right to return.

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INTRODUCTION: INVADERS FEAR OF MEMORY: RETELLING AND RECLAIMING

“Since our history is forbidden, narratives are rare; the story of origins, of home, of nation is underground. When it appears it is broken, often wayward and meandering in the extreme, always coded...thus Palestinian life is scattered, discontinuous, marked by artificial imposed arrangements of interrupted or confined space, by the dislocations and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time”-Edward Said

In the summer of 2006, my family was attending a sacred traditional ceremony right next to the Jordan River. During this ceremony, I decided to sneak away, as I wanted to get closer to the river. However, when I made it to the river, I remember the feeling of extreme disappointment. The river was barely visible, it was a small stream of water trickling down and hardly audible. The river bend was covered in a type of long grass that had turned yellow due to the summer heat and scattered around were some trees. The beautiful sound and strength of rivers flowing that I have witnessed upon Turtle Island, especially on the land in which I am currently occupying, Wiyot homelands, was invisible within the Jordan River. I had a desire to step over this murky river and enter our homeland, but as I look up I saw a Zionist¹ soldier standing in what looked like a military fort, looking down at me with the Zionist blue and white flag over his head claiming our land as theirs. Out of fear of the large gun in his hand, I took a few steps back and decided that it was probably best to rejoin the rest of my family. This was

¹ I refer state occupying my homeland as the Zionist state. Zionism will be in reference to the ideology and the Zionist state as the physical occupation. The word “Israel” will only appear in citations from other people’s work. I do this as a way of reclaiming and resisting against our erasure. My homeland will only be known as Palestine.

my first interactions with one of our sacred sites within Jordan. It was also the first time I was able to see Palestine, so close yet it felt so impossible to reach, to feel, see or even smell.

This experience was unfortunately filled and engulfed within fear, anxiety, and violence, but also a glimpse of happiness to see the lands where my ancestors have roamed for time immemorial. The process of emotions that filled me when discussing my homeland is how Nick Montgomery and Carla Bergman redefine Joy as a “process of transformation [that] might involve happiness, but it tends to entail a whole range of feelings at once: it might feel overwhelming, painful, dramatic, and world-shaking, or subtle and uncanny” (Bergman 2018, 29). Joy is not defined as happiness, but as including the trauma embedded within my DNA, passed down from the Nakba, uprooting itself from within when I first laid eyes on the sadness of water or lack thereof, when the fear of looking at home could mean death, and the lack of water itself was a form of death.

Our sacred site, has unfortunately become a border, a site of violence and division, but also a site for tourists to now enjoy and a place for settlers to find pleasure in. My uncle remembers a time where the River was not a site of division, but rather a site of nourishment that provided us with water, food, spirituality, and migration. He tells of a time where the river was filled and roaring with water. There are other stories of fresh lemon trees and of tigers roaming around the banks of the river. These stories of the Jordan river are important to be remembered, narrated, and shared, especially since the

last 70 years the river has become a site of violence, of blood, of refugee, of degradation and marginalization. Furthermore, for many years our people were even prevented from



Figure 1 : Jordan River in the 1880 part of the library of congress prints and photographs.

being able to visit the east part of the river within Jordan, as it became a military base, occupied, and is now slowly being transformed into a tourist attraction, while many Palestinians within the balad (homeland) are unable to reach it and are currently trapped between check points, walls and a military occupation.

Our river is an important aspect of life. Water is life, it “is the matrix of culture, the basis of life” (Shiva 2016, 1). As Vandana Shiva argues water is “central to the material and cultural well-being of societies all over the world” (1). Water is necessary for everything and connects to everyone. Cutcha Risling Baldy discusses how:

“water runs through our human veins and connects us to everything. The water we drink is the water the salmon breathes, is the water the trees need, is the water where Bear bathes, is the water where the rocks settle. Many of our stories foreground relationship to water. These stories show us that water is theory; theory that is built from relationality to the land, the earth, everything” (Risling Baldy, 2018).

Our creation stories, my earliest memories are all about water, water is a way that I have been able to connect to the land. All the oceans connect, water moving within and between all five of the different ocean basins, through the tides, currents and waves, in the end water is connect to all the land. Connecting me back to my homeland. Water moves through space, migrates, moves beyond our understanding of space, flows graciously and furiously and is interconnected with “land, earth, and everything”. Therefore, looking at the stories surrounding water holds so much knowledge of the way

we live and our relationship with the land, water becomes theory. Our most sacred ceremony, baptism, takes place in the water when you are a baby. You are reborn from water, from the Jordan River. As an embryo you develop and form within water, within woman. After birth, baptism rebirths you into the world within water. Water is life, it creates life. Water throughout life continues to nourish the body and cleanses not only from dirt but brings us closer to Allah. Water, the Jordan River, is the first rite of our sacred traditions. For Indigenous peoples, as LaDonna Brave Bull Allard states, “we are the river, and the river is us” (Streeby 2018, 39). Even in displacement, we continue these practices. There is an attempt to return to the Jordan River to be reborn within its waters, but for many who cannot afford it we struggle to replicate this process in foreign occupied Indigenous lands.

Telling or retelling these stories of our history as Indigenous Palestinians, of my family and of my own life is a way of reclaiming our narratives, our lands, and our waters. Story telling is a way of maintaining our culture and our way of beginning in a world that constantly attempts to eradicate and silence us. It is refusal to give up, our existence is our resistance and is embodied in our stories in the same way that our traditional dress is embroidered with our stories, where we are from, and who we come from. This thesis is an attempt to remember the stories that have been passed down, to share, and to resist. This is an attempt at honoring my ancestors and ancestral knowledge they have attempted to pass down even through our Nakba (catastrophe). This is an act of “rewriting and righing our position in history” (Smith 1999, 29-30). Linda Tuhwai Smith explains “Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories write our own version, in

our own ways, for our own purpose...[retelling is] but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying” (Smith 1999, 29-30). And Deborah Miranda theorizes that we lose culture when “we stop telling the stories of who we are, where we have been, how we arrived here, what we once knew, what we wish we knew, when we stop our retelling of the past, our imagining of our future, and the long, long task of inventing an identity every single second of our lives” (Miranda 2013,). As a decolonial method, I am intentionally attempting to writing this thesis in a way to be accessible to my family, whose first language is Arabic, and for the family in balad who third language it is English. If my thesis is not accessible then we lose culture, and when “culture is lost when we neglect to tell our stories, when we forget the power and craft of storytelling” (Miranda 2013). We as Palestinians continue to share our stories due to the loss of our land; storytelling becomes a form our resistances, a way of remembering and honoring, and a way to maintain sovereignty over our own narratives. One of the main goals of settler colonialism is to control the narrative and the history written about the oppressor and the oppressed, to eradicate the native from the land and the story. Thus, when we use storytelling, we retain our claims to Palestine and our hopes to a one day liberated home/land.

Storytelling becomes a form of resistance to a settler state that has stolen and continues to steal our archival histories, more than “38,000 films, 2.7 million photographs, 96,000 audio recordings and 46,000 maps and aerial photos that have been gathered into the IDF Archive since 1948, by order of Israel’s first prime minister and defense minister,

David Ben-Gurion.” The theft of our archives in 1948, 1982, and in 2001 is a constant reminder of the importance of retelling our stories and another example of one of our many struggles and our resilience to continue to start over. Our own history is constantly being erased, taken and we are forbidden from accessing our past. We are also constantly silenced from telling our own stories within academia such as the firing in 2014 of Steven Salaita a Palestinian academic and public scholar. We are even banned from social media when applications like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter delete our videos, graphs, images, and stories from there sites. We are sometimes even forbidden from creating events in both the physical and virtual space, like the cancelling of the Leila Khaled panel on zoom in October of 2020. Leila Khaled known for being one of our resistances rebels and a part of Popular front for the liberation of Palestine in 1960s. She is best known for hijacking planes in an attempt to return to Palestine after being displaced at four years old. Her image became an iconic symbol of our movement for liberation. We cannot access a platform that lets us speak freely on our struggle. Our archives are also hidden away from us and our own documented history stolen. Therefore, as Ogburn shows, when looking at archival information is central to discuss power and to “to understand the context for the creation and preservation of the material that you are using and to feed that into your interpretation” (Ogburn, 20). What information do these settler state keep, how much of history is forever lost and destroyed, and who even gets the privilege of accessing our documents. Archival documents are vastly influenced by the writer and archival knowledge is not separate from subjectivity; in fact, the archival documents can reveal the legacies of colonial powers and state

formations. Thus, we threaten settler colonial nations when we retell our stories, when we document our histories and our family's stories, we threaten settler nations because their claims to our land are fragile. Settler nations are built on our stolen lands, waters, and our displaced bodies, they make up a history and attempt to connect to a land they do not belong to. Our stories (re)connect us. (Re)connect us to our land and rivers, since "story, like culture, is constantly moving. It is a river where no gallon of water is the same gallon it was one second ago. Yet it is still the same river. It exists as truth. As a whole" (Miranda 2013, xvi).

Our history on our land often begins with our destruction. We start our story of being Palestinian in 1948 with our Nakba. Although, we have thousands of years of history prior, it is often erased. Settler colonialism crafts our stories for us, it starts them when the settler attempts to destroy and replace us. Therefore, placing our lands and our waters into a cultural, historical, and sacred context is necessary in decolonizing and understanding the relationship Indigenous people have with place, as Indigenous Tongva scholar Charles Sepulveda states in order "to envision a decolonized future in which we are no longer the dispossessed" (Sepulveda 2018, 40). Settler colonialism differs from classic colonialism as it is a structure created that is meant to "come to stay." Colonialism is exploitative process to both the land and to Indigenous people, and a temporary structure. On the other hand, settler colonialism or settler societies are meant to be permanent structure with the intention to destroy in order to replace, while maintaining a power that is unchallenged by the settler state and the settler people (Wolfe 2006). Settler

colonialism not only exploits Indigenous peoples and their lands, but also occupies them through “all political, economic, and cultural processes...Settler colonialism directly informs past and present process of European colonization” (Morgensen 2011, 52). The intent of permanence by settler state becomes an ongoing structure, not an event that dispossess Indigenous people of their homelands and the maintenance of sovereignty over that land (Wolfe 2006). The settler state does not want to be challenged over its position and sovereignty over the conquest for land, thus the need to eliminate or erase the Indigenous people from the land whether metaphorically or literally through genocide becomes a tool. As a result, the settler society will need to create false narratives and structures of settler belonging that replace the Indigenous claims to the land. Settler societies need to what Lorenzo Veracini names “transfer” the right to the land to the settlers by making Indigenous people “*not native* to space (or idea) of the settler city. This scandalizing (dis)placement of Indigenous people...strengthens the settler position at the top of the social pecking order – was part of an extensive discursive repertoire that was racist and patronizing towards Indigenous people” (Cavanagh, 157). Furthermore, in order to construct the settler society there must be a form of taming of the ‘wilderness’ or land in order to establish a settler society that no longer reinforces the distinction between colony and mother country, but literally attempts to erase the fact that it is a settler society in order to establish its settler self as native or as the replacement. Settler colonization is a structure that not only attempts to physically eliminate and erase Indigenous people, but also attempts to destroy Indigenous people culturally either through assimilation or an erasure of existences. In addition, not only does settler

colonialism construct the settler as native, but must transform and replace the landscape as land that colonists can claim as recognizably theirs. Thus, settler colonialism becomes a structure that interrupts Indigenous ways of life and replaces them with the desire to conquer, extract and replace both the human and ecological systems upon that landscape. On the other hand, indigeneity as Kauanui Kēhaulani presents it is “itself enduring,” while settler colonialism is a “structure that endures indigeneity” (Kēhaulani 2016, 1). Zionist states formations are established as a structure that is meant to stay that is secured through Nakba, through the dispossession of Palestinians from their homeland. Zionism as a settler colonial state needs the dispossession of Indigenous Palestinians, since this would allow for the erasure, the elimination and secures the ability for settler to create and foster a sense of belonging. Dispossession of Palestinians is an a “spatial and ideological practice that operated in both urbanizing spaced the hinterlands. The settler colonial project sought to remove Indigenous peoples from the land, and concomitantly, to regulate the partition them in the streets” (Edmonds 2010, 202). The colonizer and the colonized endure one another through the structure created through the colonizer. Thus, rewriting becomes necessary.

My intention of storytelling allows me to rewrite the history that has been stolen from us as Indigenous people. As Palestinians our thousands of years of history is constantly being rewritten for us. For instances, on January 10, 2020 on the television show Jeopardy asked the following question to the contestants “Built in the 300s A.D. the Church of Nativity” one of the contestants answered, “what is Palestine” and the answer

was deemed incorrect. Our own history, our sacred sites like the birthplace of Jesus, and our names for places are constantly being erased. Our history is being rewritten right in front of us by the West. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that “history is also about power...it is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep their position” (Smith 1999, 35). Therefore, throughout the production of history Indigenous people, become on the outside. This production and control of knowledge is what Edward Said (1978) describes as orientalism. Orientalism is about the “western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” that “produce-the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” as inferior (Said 1978, 3). Orientalism is the production of knowledge and discourse created about the “orient” that becomes known as the ‘truth’ to dominate the ‘orient’ or the ‘other.’ It is through orientalist discourse that begins to portray and represent the orient or anyone else deemed as the ‘other’ as incapable. Orientalist discourse rewrites our histories and leaves us on the outside. Thus, history as Smith argues will not bring Indigenous people justice, rather using multiple forms to knowing and using our own stories contested “within genealogies, within the landscape, within the weaving and carvings, even within the personal names that many people carried” are important ways of transforming our own colonized versions of our own histories that the West has crafted for us (Smith 1999, 34). Forming these alternative histories, oral traditions and stories are “imperative of a powerful form of resistances” (Smith 1999, 36).

Throughout this thesis, I intent to tell my story, my family's story, the story of our land and water through memory, reminders of home/land, flashes of the past, and memories that may have been passed down. I want to interweave them between theory, history, archival documents, and news articles, while remembering the way my family tells tales and cooks our foods in displacement. Each memory, each meal, each story ends up holding a place in our history. Our stories interwoven in between to remind me of where we come from. To interweave the stories between history is to show how "our intelligence system is a series of interconnected and overlapping algorithms-stories, ceremonies, and the land itself are procedures for solving the problems of life. Networked because the modes of communication and interaction between beings occur in complex nonlinear forms, across time and space" (Simpson, 23). These stories I retell will not be told linearly, but as memories that reappear to me in flashes of pictures or words that reappear through this writing process. Our stories become a form of resistances and maintenance of our existences and "have a way of shaping what we remember" (Naguib, 2009, 140). Displacement from the homeland is a form of death, so retelling our histories and stories is a form of (re)connecting to home/land. Our displacement has interrupted our history, scattered our memory of the home/land, and relocated us to new unknown places while forbidding our narratives and our history. The stories shared in nonlinearly fashion, appearing to me in flashes of memory of history is a part our continued effects of our struggle and of the Palestinian cause. The memories sometimes sparked by a conversation, or reading something, or a memory hidden by the trauma we have experienced due to our continued displacement exposed through this writing process.

Therefore, memories of the past are stories for the current moment that can convey past experiences, events, descriptions, dreams, hopes images, landscapes and the interconnectedness of the world in which we live in.

At the center of this story, is my first memory of our home, the Jordan River. I start this thesis with that memory, the first time I was able to see the land of my ancestors. On the other side of the river bend. I yearned to go, to return, but fear accompanied me. To tell my families story is to start with water, the river, the place we are reborn into. Our river is sacred, so through this journey of (re)connecting with home/land, I will center the voices of my family as our archives and as our living history, but constantly return to tell the story of our water. Historically analysis of our water is central in understanding our situation currently as Indigenous people. Water is crucial for life and water has been a site of violence and control, especially in the landscape of the Middle East.

I hope to craft a space within this thesis that provides a voice for my family, for the river, and for my ancestors. Examining archival documents about the river, retelling the stories that have been passed down are difficult things to share, hear, and even sometimes harder to write out of fear of not bringing these stories justice. To have arrived at this point has already been a journey based in trauma, ancestral trauma but also trauma of existing and living within another settler colonial state has produced. In conclusion, my hopes in this journey of writing this, is to become “immersed in the presence of the makers of our ancestors in the lands and waters” (Whyte 2018, 163).

My grandmother was from a village called Ramle, she was one of six daughters. They had heard about what happened in Deir Yassin. The massacre that occurred. They heard the whispers of the dead. They heard the stories that haunted them. So, when they came for them, they hid in a church for three days out of fear of death and rape. They hid in a church to survive, to live, to resist. They witnessed violence. My grandmother and remaining villagers were rounded up, thrown in the middle of the desert. They walked, seeking refuge, and were denied. Denied by our own people. Told to fight, to return home. But where is home now?

The water crisis in the Middle East has been a point of contention between Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and the Zionist state¹, since the British mandate and the establishment of the Zionist state in 1948. The water crisis is a direct result on the settler colonial structure and occupation of Palestinian land and water ways. The Jordan River is central to region, a place that once provided much nourishment. Although, the Zionist state claims that since the establishment of the nation state, they have made the desert bloom. The narrative of making the desert bloom was one of the foundational myths through which early settlers justified their conquest and rationale of the drastic changes they imposed on the Palestinian landscape as a part of the settler colonial logics. Zionist environmental narrative has been innately dangerous, since making the “desert bloom” erases the existence of both Palestinians from the land and denies Palestine’s right to the land. Palestinian communities have existed on the land since time

immemorial and have fostered agricultural practices that worked in sustaining Palestinian communities and the environment itself. As Steven Salaita further points out

“A Palestinian would never destroy a healthy olive tree. This reality clarifies the so-called complexities of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Who is Indigenous, Jews or Palestinians? A Palestinian would never destroy a healthy olive tree. Who is the aggressor? A Palestinian would never destroy a healthy olive tree. Who has a deep history on the land? A Palestinian would never destroy a healthy olive tree. Who wrecks the environment with irresponsible human settlement? A Palestinian would never destroy a healthy olive tree” (Salaita 2015, 23).

Furthermore, the narrative of making the “Desert bloom” made Palestine out to be an empty, virgin, untouched land, for the Zionist state, “if a paradise exists in Palestine, it is a paradise they have to carve out of a desert wilderness. It is the labor of the pioneers to transform the land” (Hassoun 1998, 320). A land that the early Zionist claimed was “a land without a people for a people without a land.” This early slogan for the Zionist movement crafts a myth of place and land that erases the Indigenous people who have been there, like that of manifest destiny. This concept of the land being “unspoiled, raw, uninhabited nature-as wilderness-erased the Indigenous cultures and their histories from the land and dispossessed them of their enduring legacy of tremendous biological wealth” (Anderson 2013, 3). The idea that Palestine is a desert wilderness, ready to be conquered, labored upon, tamed, and transformed ignores the thousands of years of history of Palestinians cultivating the land. The imagery and “representations of the

Middle East nearly inevitably include desolate scenes of empty and parched deserts, punctuated, perhaps, with a lonely string of camels, a verdant but isolated oasis, or a beach with large dunes of golden sand” (Davis 2011, 14). The orientalist representation of Middle Eastern to the Western ecological constructed discourse “portrayed the Middle East and North Africa as being on edge of ecological viability or as a degraded landscape facing imminent disaster. Because the local inhabitants were most often blamed for the environmental degradation...[which] facilitated imperial goals in the name of ‘improvement’ and, later, of environmental ‘protection’” such as the Zionist narrative of attempting to make the desert bloom or the narrative that Palestine was an empty desert (Davis 2011, 15). However, Palestinians and people of the Middle East and North Africa have “lived and thrived for millennia, successfully coping with the common environmental conditions of high temperatures and low rainfall of their arid and semiarid environments” (Davis 2011, 14). Additionally, “generations of Palestinians speak about the abundance of produce, fruit, olives, and grain brought forth from their land. Stories of the land of Palestine producing oranges as large as grapefruits” (Hassoun 1998, 320). The myth of Palestine being a wilderness is essential to the Zionist narrative and to settler colonial logics, since “to protect wilderness [is] in a very real sense to protect the nation’s most sacred myth of origin” that it was not in fact a land without a people (Cronon 1996, 36).

Palestinians maintenance of the land was based in thousands of years of experience they encompassed and passed down this traditional ecological knowledge. Traditional ecological knowledge is the constant evolving of knowledge learned,

observed, acquired, passed down, by Indigenous people through thousands of years of scientific interactions with the land, water, and more than human world. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) “is based upon empirical observations resulting from patient observation of the natural world and its patterns. TEK is inherently multidisciplinary because it links the human and the nonhuman, and is not only the basis for indigenous concepts of nature but also for concepts of politics and ethics” (Perotti 2000, 1335). One of the major themes of TEK is the “realization that no single organism can exist without the web of other life forms that surround it and make its existence possible” (Perotti 2000, 1336). This is not to mean everything was perfect, but the traditional ecological knowledge and maintenance were forms of survival that was based in a science that had been mastered by the Indigenous people. For example, Palestinians had mastered “patterns of irrigation crop rotation and fallow, rock terracing, intercropping, and grazing” upon the arid landscape that considered the amount of water that was available for consumption and usages (Hassoun 1998, 324). There was scientific approach to how they tended the land and water. Furthermore, Palestinians have historically viewed and written about Palestine in the concept “of the motherland, as opposed to some cultures’ perception of a fatherland. Ingrained in this image of mother are concepts of fertility” (Hassoun 1998, 320). This concept of Palestine is seen through images, pictures, painting, literature, poetry about Palestine. The land to Palestinians is what gives them life. Palestinians “view Palestine as historically beautiful and fruitful land and see Israeli attempts to transform it as deforming and destructive” (Hassoun 1998, 320). On the other hand, taming the ‘wilderness’ becomes essential to Zionist

nationalism, since “European romantics idealized the ‘wilderness condition,’ and the primitivists among them fantasized about the purifying effect of uncultivated nature on civilized men and ‘noble savages alike” (Voyles 2018, 203). Afterall, “land is necessary for life. Thus, contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life” (Wolfe 2006, 387).

My father’s family is from the land. They were farmers in a small village called Rafidah. My father tells stories of their farm, of their orchards. Of the snakes that lived on the land. Of the water that flowed freely on their land. Of the trees they could climb and the trees that they were not allowed to climb due to the age of the olive tree. The tree was respected it has hundreds of years of wisdom of Palestine, especially the olive trees. Olive trees provided us with everything. They were a part of our family. He spent summers on his land to never return after the age of 16.

However, the Zionist states destruction and the “uprooting the ancient olive trees of al-Bassa to clear the ground for a banana grove” or avocado trees are examples of replacing Indigenous plants that do not need much water and fit into the surrounding landscape with plants that rely heavily on water usage. Furthermore, the destruction of Palestinian villages to replace them with Zionist settlements and pine trees from Europe to reflect a European landscape is essential to settler colonial ideologies of destruction and replacement” (Hassoun 1998, 320). Palestinian homes are resettled with settlers. Palestinian villages covered with European pine trees to cover the remains of the places we called home, turned into national parks to be ‘preserved’ from Palestinians. Finally, it

becomes the foundation of settler colonialism that the settler can use “the land better than” the Indigenous people; therefore, replacing and conquering the land becomes central to the nationhood of the settler colonial state (Wolfe 2006, 389). Why is it that the places of our death, places of our graves are turned into places of pleasure and preserved for the settler?

Why even in death can Indigenous people not rest? Why do the sites of our dead become sites of pleasure of the colonizer? Our death becomes a site to deform our lands, our bodies, and our waters. Not even death saves the colonized.

I am writing this by trying to bring a voice to the River, so often we talk about a return to our land, but we must also return to our water. We are birthed from water and reborn in water. Palestinians need sovereignty and the right of the return from the River to the Sea. The Jordan River is a sacred site that was once a natural border that has now become a militarized border. As the colonization of the River takes place, the stories, and memories shift. The river becomes an important examination of settler colonialism and the expansion of the Zionist state and occupation of Palestine. Migration between Jordan and Palestine was a part of Indigenous Palestinians and Jordanians daily experiences way prior to existences of modern states. However, with the rise of Zionism, the river becomes central to controlling the landscape and erasing the memory of both migration and the river itself leading to both ecological disasters and the Nakba (catastrophe) of the Palestine people. As a displaced Palestinian the refusal to let go of the memory of river and the liberation of our homeland becomes central to the question of Palestine and return.

This thesis examines the historical relationship that Jordanians and Palestinians once had with the river as a means of survival and how this relationship has shifted with the building of the dams in the 1960s, since then the river has and continues to decrease in size. I specifically argue that the colonization of the river/water is central to settler colonialism and constructs the river as carceral space, at the same time, the Zionist state crafts the myth around water scarcity is and security is central to its safety. How different would the world be if we centered the most oppressed voices, Indigenous voices, and people of color voices, instead of the ones in power? I will be reexamining and retelling the stories and narratives about the Jordan River that have been passed down within my family.

In chapter 2, I reexamine archival documents of a euro-american colonizer expedition through my homeland from the late 1800s to reexamine the river pre-occupation. I end this chapter with a look at how the Zionist state gained control of our river ways and the building of dam. Throughout this chapter I interweave the stories my father shared of his childhood and his memories of the water he once played in and tended to in their once thriving village. In chapter 3, I look at the ways in which settler colonialism as an ongoing project replicating itself through a carceral geography, both through the incarceration of the river, lands, and people. This chapter focuses on the ending results of the dam, but shows the way the rivers, land and people are interconnected in this complex web. In chapter 4, I look at the ways displacement from our lands has affected my family, myself, and our emotions. Settler colonialism continues to dispossess us from our ability to feel, while at the same physically displacing us from

our home/land. The settler state even after our physically dispossession still attempts to controls our process and range of emotions, while at the same time violently making our sacred river into a tourist attraction to continue the ongoing effects of displacement.

As I write the concluding chapters of this introduction, I am reminded again of importance of retelling our stories. As there continues to be an attempt as silencing and erasing Palestinian narratives from the media, schools and from history. At a time, when Arab studies is being threatened to be cut out of the Ethnic Studies curriculum in the Bay Area, it is now more than ever important to write our stories. To tell the memories of our families, to remember our rivers, waters, to imagine our landscape of our home/lands. It the same year that United Nations stated that Gaza would become unlivable due to the Zionist states occupation of our homeland. The continued destruction of our lands and water, military occupation, siege, and the imprisonment of our way of life. The future of our lands becomes even more uncertain under a settler occupation and climate change as Zionist state continues to extract more resources, more water out of our rivers, out of the sea, and out of the aquifers in the West Bank. Rather remember and recentering our lands, waters and indigenous knowledge is more crucial than ever before. ***Inshallah one day all Indigenous people will be freed, liberated, and given the right of return to their homelands.***

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CHAPTER 2: THE CATASTROPHE OF COLONIAL IMAGINATION

“The invaders’ fear of memories. We have on this land what makes life worth living: September’s ends, a woman leaving forty behind with all her apricots, the hour of sunlight in prison, a cloud reflecting a swarm of creatures. A people’s applause for those who face their own erasure with a smile, a tyrant’s fear of songs. We have on this land what makes life worth living, on this land. The lady of our land. The mother of all beginnings. Mother of all ends. She was called Palestine. Her name later became Palestine. My lady, because you are my lady, I have all of that makes life worth living.”
-Mahmoud Darwish

My father remembers returning to Palestine every summer as a child. He remembers the springs on their land that flowed below the walnut tree. The springs that nourished them with fresh, cold, delicious water. He says it was the best water he ever drank. The spring underground would lead into a canal that led into a larger pool of water. His grandfather had built this water system on their land. He told me stories of having his friends over and how they would swim in this five-foot-deep pool of water that would eventually irrigate their farm consisting of grapes, olive trees, orange, lemon, pears, plum, pomegranate, apricot, peach and almond trees. My great grandfather took care of these plants, while my great grandmother had a garden of her own. She planted zucchini, fava beans, potato, onions, eggplants, zafron, and artichoke. The spring of water would cool my father and his friends down under the hot desert sun after a long day of trying to catch birds. My father and his brother, Jamal, would set up a trap upon the canal, a grass patch that led into a tunnel that would trap the birds. If it were a quail, it would be dinner; however, if it were Hasoun they would keep the



Figure 2 Abdennabi Leilah. "Picture of a Spring in Ein Qiniya." 2019.

bird to mate it. The Hasoun's in Palestine were valued for their beautiful sound. My father would describe the sounds of these birds as a symphony of beautiful music playing in between the trees. The male birds my father said had a black streak on their wing, while the female had a brown streak. My father and his brother would mate the birds and sell the eggs. The springs nourished my family with water. The birds feed of the lands, while the lands fed my family. They took care of one another. On the other side of our family's land, there was another source of water that my family took care of. This pool of water, which also came from another spring, was for the village. My father remembers when they would release the water each day for a different farmer within the village; it would irrigate their orchards and farms as well. Everyone got water from this source to feed their lands. The water provided everyone with life and nourishment for their plants. The water that fed everyone in the village was not for playing, it was only used to provide. My father tells of a time where water did not run dry, where water was lasting, and where water continued to flow and provide even under the desert heat.

My father's story of water being central to their life in the village, the collective experience of sharing water within their village, is one that reflects the past experiences and memories of many Palestinian lives. Palestinian society foundation and structure was built upon the "the village, [and] the fundamental building block of the Palestinian village was family" (Gelvin 2014, 30). The villages consisted of four or five different and a shaykh (elder) was chosen from each to represent the family (Gelvin 2014, 30). Reminiscences of this structure is seen within my father's memories of home, since similarly, "each clan was entitled to cultivate a fixed proportion of land, and each family

of each clan received an allotment during a periodic redivision of land use rights” (Gelvin 2014, 31). The land was collectively worked on; in the same way the water was collectively shared. It was an everyday practice to go out and take care of the pools of water, to make sure that everyone in the village would have enough water to tend to their lands. Water marked social strategic boundaries that provided the villages with an “understanding of water and water use requires recognition of local events, relationships and networks in the village and also narratives and self-presentations through which people use water as a metaphor for different aspects of their lives. Water is thus a starting point for approaching the diversity, fluidity, and transformations of village life itself” (Naguib 2009, 4). Water crafted structures connected each villager to one another, it crafted a sense of belonging to one another, rather than belonging to a state. When there is a sense of community, sustainable practices are more practical since all resources must be shared, and an accountability process is more likely produced when you all depend on each other, rather than state formations. Therefore, water in a desert landscape then becomes more valuable, but also a space to organize oneself within the community or village life. These village that held values and way of life slowly are disrupted during the time of the Ottoman Empire and furthered diminished under the Zionist state.

Invaders beginnings

When the U.S. Navy commander W.F. Lynch with a crew of 14 men went on an expedition in 1849 of the Jordan River and traveled all the way to Jerusalem much of the narratives produced from his diaries ignore much of the traditional ecological knowledge

that has been passed down for generations. During the time Lynch travelled through Palestine the Ottoman Empire held control of the area. The Ottomans “divided their empire into providences. Each providence was ruled by a vazir” (Gelvin 2014, 48). However, much of Ottomans control “was weak all over Palestine’s petty chiefdoms, which were created to control revenues” until the occupation of Palestine by the Egyptian between the years of 1831-1841(Gelvin 2014, 48). During the 1800s there is much growth in cultural, intellectual, and political life within Palestine within the increase in schools, libraries, political organizations, and with the establishment of the press. Additionally, significant growth transformed different cities within Palestine and Jerusalem “which was a governmental and educational center, did not grow as fast as in the coastal ports. At the same time, the large numbers of tourists and pilgrims it attracted provided Jerusalem with a significant source of income” (Khalidi 1997, 47). Jerusalem was not the only flourishing city during this time period Jaffa and Haifa were both important port cities, “but also Nablus, Hebron, Nazareth, and Gaza among others, were important foci of Palestinian cultural and intellectual life, as well as being political administrative and economic centers” (Khalidi 1997, 36). However, at the same time Jerusalem became “a focus of the interests, aspirations and designs of foreign powers, and of their diplomates, spies, tourists, and businessmen, so that both the Ottoman authorities and the local inhabitants considered Palestine in general and Jerusalem in particular to be under threat from without” (Khalidi 1997, 36).

During the short time, Egypt ruled over Palestine, another major shift in the governmental practices occurs within Palestine. Ibrahim Pasha, son of the Egyptian ruler

Mehmet Ali, introduced “many of the institutions and structures associated with modern states. He disarmed the peasantry and introduced military conscription...he imposed direct taxation on the population...he encouraged the cultivation of cash crops that could be sold abroad” (Gelvin, 27 2014). This shift not only brought Palestine into the global market but opened Palestine for future Western visitors. The shift in the middle of nineteenth century brought Palestine into a new direction especially, after Ottomans and the British expel the Egyptian and enact the law of 1858. The law of 1858 essentially privatized land in order to make someone responsible for the payment of tax to the central government; thus, Palestinian land had to be bought, ownership was taken away from clan systems and placed within individual land ownership that could then be taxed and transferred to others. As a result, much of the land is bought and owned by individuals who are absentee “landowners who acquired land because it was a safe or lucrative investment frequently lived in cities distant from their holdings and had little attachment to them or the people who resided on them” (Gelvin, 32 2014). This dramatic shift brings about “new courts, administering laws based partly on Western models and staffed by personnel trained in Istanbul were set up, and took over many of the legal tasks of shari’a courts, which were gradually restricted to matters of personal status and inheritance” (Khalidi 1997, 37). Thus, the privatization of land occurring within in Palestine, shift in the courts, education system and the globalization of Palestinian economy creates shifts the balance to the central government.

Like my fathers’ story of our family’s land, Palestinians have lived upon our balad, that my ancestors tended upon and the land provided us with everything worth

living for. W.F Lynch embarks on ship formerly named the Crusader to retrace the steps of his ‘savior’ with much of his obsession surrounding the need to discover the holy land and witness the “wilderness of Judea; near this, God conversed with Abram...these verdureless hills and arid valleys have echoed the words of the Great Precursor.” Lynch leaves a detail account of his travels and during his time even records the temperature, depth and current of the Jordan River.

Colonial Imagination



Figure 3: “Ruined Bridge of Semakh”. Sketch from W.F. Lynch expedition of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea

W.F. Lynch when arriving to the Jordan River focused on how much more flourishing it was in 1849. As he journeyed further within the river, Lynch expressed that

“the river becoming wider, and deeper, with gravelly bottom. A solitary carob tree, resembling a large apple tree, on the right. At 5.40, the river about sixty yards wide” (Lynch 1850). Lynch even highlighted that one point that the “water now became clearer, --was eight feet deep; hard bottoms; small trees in thickets under the banks and advancing into the water –principally Turfa (tamarisk), the willow (sifsaf), and tangled vines beneath” (Lynch 1850). He notes that they “frequently saw fish in the transparent water; while ducks, storks and a multitude of other birds, rose from the reeds and osiers, or plunged into thickets of oleander and tamarisk which fringe the banks,--beyond them are frequent groves of wild pistachio” (Lynch 1850). He also discusses the numerous villages they see as they travel down the river, the “mud huts,” and the different foods and drinks that the “barbarians” offer them and how the “bowl of camel’s milk” was “extremely refreshing” (Lynch 1850).

Lynch sets up the view of Palestine as a the “most dreary country; calcined hills and barren valleys, furrowed by torrent beds, all without a tree or shrub, or sign of vegetation.” He claims that that “of death reigned on one side; the sea of death, calm and curtained in mist, lay upon the other; and yet this is the most interesting country in the world” (Lynch 1850) Lynch places Palestine as an empty landscape, void of any more than living human beings, while at the same time claims Palestinians to be “wild and savage looking inhabitants” (Lynch 1850) He places us as inferior and erases the vast history of our land management practices.

Lynch, at points within his writing, shows the usage of traditional ecological knowledge embedded within the Palestinian community, but blindly ignores it at the

same time. For example, he discusses that our “mountain sides were barren, there were vestiges of terraces on nearly all of them. On the slope of one there were twenty-four, which accounts for the redundant population this country once supported.” The terraces are one of the ways we continue to grow food, especially upon hillsides. A study done in 2000 through 2001, found that within Palestine terraced areas had “soil erosion [that] was significantly lower in terraced plots than in those that were nonterraced” (Hammad 1, 2004). Additionally, the runoff of rain for terraced plots “coefficient was 20% and 4% percent for nonterraced plots” (Hammad 1, 2004). These terraces that Lynch points out are still used by Palestinians, “60% of them are currently cultivated in the same way as they were in ancient times...these terraces were initially built thousands of years ago” (Hammad, 1, 2004). The terraces not only provide a place to grow food but also conserves water, protect the soil and allow for easier way of traveling and transporting. As Lynch travels further into Palestine, closer to Jerusalem, he finds that the “fields of yellow grain, orchards of olives and figs, and some apricot-trees, covered all the land in sight capable of cultivation; but not a tree, nor a bush on the barren hill-sides” (Lynch 1850) These plants that Lynch sees are not simply the ‘wilderness of Judea” or just magically appear there since the “savior saw a fig-tree in leaf, he had, humanly speaking, reason to expect to find fruit upon it.” Rather the cultivation of specific lands was part of outcome of a long history of land management practices (Lynch 1850). It does not cross Lynch’s mind that Palestinians purposefully cultivate specific lands as a form of conserving water and tending to the landscape, rather he claims that we grew “in patches,

continues to be as insecure as it is unproductive” (Lynch 1850). We did not carve out the lands, but rather embedded our knowledge within the land.

I read my father these archival documents. He reminisces about the land that they grew wheat on by the Jordan River. He remembers the yellow grain that they took care of, next to the river. Next to home.

Lynch, in between his orientalism, crafts an image of our land and river prior to the occupation by the Zionist state. He crafts an image of the lands that Palestinians once talked about, one that provided us everything worth living for. However, for Lynch what he witnessed was not enough. He believed that there could be more cultivation, and more production. He did not see that our way of life fit together alongside the land and water.

Similarly, many other westerns who visited Palestine claimed and held the same narratives. For example, Mark Twain visited Palestine in 1867 stated that:

“[Palestine is] a desolate country, whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds- a silent, mournful expanse...a desolation is here that not even imagination can grace with the pomp of life and action...we never saw a human being on the whole route...there was hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive and cactus, those fast friends of worthless soil, had almost deserted the country”

Both Twain and Lynch craft orientalist discourse about the Middle East that is far from reality, they craft their own colonial imagination of the Palestine. For example, when visiting one of the convents Lynch learns “there are seventy wells, and numerous cisterns, with abundance of rain-water” (Lynch 1850). Lynch also describes Olive trees in

the picture below as thousand-year-old trees. These are thousands of years of trees that possess the history and relationship between Indigenous Palestinians with the land they



Figure 4: Garden of Gethsemane. "Sketch from W.F. Lynch

expedition of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea

have been living on. Lynch and Twain attempt to set themselves as superior to Palestinians by producing knowledge about Palestine that claims we are unable to live upon our lands adequately. This sets the stage for Western occupation and dominance and as Lynch beautifully states for the "dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. It needs to be the destruction of that power which, for so many centuries have rested like an incubus upon the eastern world, to ensure the restoration of the Jews to Palestine" (Lynch 1850). The process of devouring our lands, while at the same time eliminating the diversity, allows for the dehumanization that begins to show "as the Ottoman era drew to a close,

the first signs of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict which was to consume the country for most of the twentieth century were already apparent, notably in the press and in those parts of the countryside where Zionist settlements founded...at the expense of the Indigenous peasantry” (Khalidi 1997, 60).

Zionism as an ideology forms out of Europe in a time where anti-Semitism is on the rise, while at the same time colonialism and settler colonialism is occurring around the world at the hand of European nations state. Zionism is the ideology for the creation of a Jewish only state, which did not necessarily need to be in Palestine at first. However, after the first Zionist congress meeting in Basle in 1897, the establishment of a Zionist state becomes necessary to be founded within the land that was historically known as Palestine. As Theodor Herzl, father of Zionism, further states

“Palestine is our unforgettable historic homeland. The very name would be a marvelously effective rallying cry...We should there form a part of a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence” (Herzl, 1896).

Herzl wants to establish a state upon Palestine to not be an expansion for Europe but as its own independent nation state. Furthermore, Zionism is founded during a time where colonialism and settler colonialism is occurring globally, as Vladimir Jabotinsky founder of the Revisionist Zionist movement and the Haganah (a Zionist military organization that later becomes the Israeli Defense Force) states,

“the first real pioneers of North America were people of the highest morality, who did not want to do harm to anyone, least of all to the Red Indians, and they honestly believed that there was room enough in the prairies both for the Paleface and the Redskin. Yet the native population fought with the same ferocity against the good colonists as against the bad. Every native population, civilised or not, regards its lands as its national home, of which it is the sole master, and it wants to retain that mastery always; it will refuse to admit not only new masters but, even new partners or collaborators.” (1923)

Jabotinsky compares Zionism and the establishment to the United States, another settler colonial state. Furthermore, he believes that colonization rationalizes colonialism as an inevitable and necessary “destiny” of the globe. Jabotinsky believes that violence or the process of eliminating native people is necessary, since no matter how ‘moral’ the colonizer is, the native population will resist. As a result, Zionism forms out of the global expansion of colonialism.

Zionists began to immigrate and settle within Palestine in the early 1900s. The first wave Jewish immigrants from Europe attempted to foster farming communities; however, they ended up depending on Palestinian labor and Palestinian agriculture practices, since the European agricultural practices did not convert well onto a different landscape. The second and third wave of immigrants “took place in the periods 1904-1914” (Gelvin 2014, 64). These immigrants with their agricultural settlements became a symbol for the Zionist movement (Gelvin 2014, 69). The agricultural settlements

consisted of two different practices: the kibbutzim, which consisted of “mixed farming...these settlements combined the cultivation of fruits and crops with animal husbandry and dairy farming. The kibbutzim were communal farms. They allowed no private property, no permanent hierarchy of position, no outside labor” (Gelvin 2014, 69). The second type of agricultural settlement was the “Moshavism- cooperative farms permitted individual landholdings and individual marketing of crops” (Gelvin 2014, 69). The settlers in the Kibbutzim became viewed by the Zionist state as the first pioneers and reinforced some of the first myths established by Zionism about Palestine, that Palestine was a “a land without a people, for a people without a land” and that it would be possible to make the desert bloom. The need to conquer and tame the land is deeply embedded in colonial structures and the foundation of Zionist state that is based in the carefully crafted image of Palestine being an empty land ready to be conquered; which is reinforced by a long history of European orientalism.

With the signing of Sykes Picot Agreement in 1916, the British and the French began to divide up the Middle East for their colonial powers. Additionally, in 1917 the Balfour Declaration came about which is when Arthur Balfour speaking on behalf of the British government stated support for the creation of a Zionist state within Palestine. And following world war I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Sykes Picot Agreement became more than just map but the physically carving up the Middle East. The British taking Palestine and Transjordan as the British mandate and the French taking Syria and Lebanon. Under the British, for a time being there is an increase of Jewish immigration in Palestine, which leads to more land lost.

The alteration of the land

The alteration of the landscape beginnings under the British Mandate of Palestine become apparent with Pinchas Rutenberg a Zionist who was total commitment “to building the homeland, and he envisaged a modern westernized Israel, with electricity, industry, and large-scale irrigation and land reclamation schemes” (Reguer, 692 1995). Rutenberg believed that in order to create this modern civilization electric power was necessary “for irrigation, industry, lighting, refrigeration and heating” and was proposition the British government to help make his dreams a reality in securing a Zionist state. (Reguer, 694 1995). His detailed plan was to build dams along the different rivers including the Jordan and Yarmouk rivers, while at the same time building a hydro-electric plant on the Jordan River and within Lake Tiberias. Rutenberg wanted all of this to build by only Jewish labor to provide jobs, but also increase immigration of European Jews to Palestine. However, to do this Rutenberg attempted to modify the “borders of Palestine” since he believed they were “delimited by Britain and France” (Reguer, 694 1995). Rutenberg wanted Yarmouk, Litania River and both sides of the Jordan River. He dedicated his life to setting up the future Zionist state with power. He even established the Palestinian Electric Company within the 1920s. His ability to do establish these structures and go through with the actual building of Dam on the Yarmouk River and the plant on the Jordan River was due to the fact that British Mandate of Trans-Jordan and Palestine was not allowing for Palestinian infrastructure to be created. Finally, in 1929, Rutenberg was able to establish the Yarmouk Dam “with a water catchment area of about

7,000 square kilometres and a depth of eight meters...the two kilometres canal to convey the waters of the Jordan through the Yarmuk reservoir to the Jisr al Mujamieh pressure reservoir had been excavated and filled” (Reguer, 720 1995).

The plant built on the Jordan River supplied power and worked until 1948. The fact that the occupation of resources, water and land started occurring before 1948, before the establishment of the Zionist state shows, how purposefully the occupation and genocide that is ongoing experience for Palestinians. Therefore, Rutenberg focus on the colonization of the water is a part of the Zionism and settler colonial establishment of power. Water is central in the region for securing control and attempting to establish a false sense of belonging. The colonization of the River is typical within the larger context of European colonization desire to find ways of controlling nature. The colonization of the land, water and the displacement of Palestine is all interconnected. For instances, around a similar time as the hydro-electric plant is starts operating, in 1931 “30 percent of Palestinians farmers had become totally landless. Another 75 to 80 percent did not have enough land to support themselves. The displacement of Palestinians begins prior to 1948 and the structure of the Zionist state was already beginning to form on the foundation of the displacement of these Palestinian farming families. As a result, the tensions build up throughout the 1920s and eventually led up to the 1936-1939 Arab revolt against both the British and the Hagenah. The Arab Revolt was unsuccessful and about 10 years later May 14, 1948, Zionist state declared independence and officially became a nation state with its acknowledgment from the United States.

The Catastrophe

“It whispered that death was wiping out whole villages mass graves were being filled blood was being shed so much that rivers ran upon the earth turning it crimson. Violence was making the ‘arrad’ arid land once fertile –wasted.”-Candy Royalle

The Nakba (Catastrophe) on May 15th, 1948, where over 70 percent of the Palestinian population was expelled from their homeland, many fled into other parts of Palestine, others were forcibly relocated into refugee camps in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon. Its estimated that about 500 villages were destroyed, over 30 massacres took place, and the slaughtering of thousands of Palestinians lives occurred. The Nakba “is not a singular event but is manifested today in the continuing subjection of Palestinians by israelis” (Salamanca, 2 2012). On the day of mourning for Palestinians, a day of devastation, a day of genocide the Zionist state is established as a settler colonial nation. Our lives forever uprooted, changed the course of our identity, our present and future.

My fathers’ mother, my grandmother, remembers and tells the stories of when the Zionist were coming. She would stand outside of their land, keep guard, warn my great-grandfather when the soldiers were on their way. My great-grandfather would hide our resistances fighters in their orchards. In our olive groves, within the olive trees. The olive trees protect us. Protect our resistances. Our olive trees are resistances. We will not be uprooted.

The genocide that begun in 1948 was the continuation of European attempts at invading and occupying the ‘holy land.’ The genocide, the nakba were ongoing and have

continued to this day. The genocidal massacres committed in 1948 are forever engraved into the memories of Palestinian lives. We learn the dates, taught to memorize them, remember the days they took place. Remember our martyrs, remember how our ancestor's lives taken too quickly. Lives lost, lives too young. But still I do not know all the villages names. I still do not remember the dates well. The number of villages destroyed still debated. Our history taken from us. Our ability to remember, to honor; stolen. Our villages were not depopulated, we were killed, displaced into the unknown, and our homes stolen.

Deir Yassin April 9, 1948. Massacred. I was told it was one of the worst ones to take place. Deir Yassin is the village that my grandmother had heard about living in Ramle. They heard the whispers of the dead. Haunted by stories they heard, so when they Zionist settlers came my grandmother knew to hide. An elder, who survived Deir Yassin massacre, shared the stories my grandmother heard. He witnessed the brutality, the death, the genocide, he survived by hiding. He saw children thrown in ovens. My grandmother heard these stories. In July, they came for them.

After the ethnic cleansing and displacement, our villages buried, names changed. Our language and stories behind the names hidden. The Zionists attempt to rename Palestinian villages by using either biblical names or the Judaization of Arabic words. The early state had to form a governmental naming committee to rename Palestine, so that map could be created. Crafting a map would be the “fullest possible expression of Israel's independence and of its national sovereignty in the homeland” (Benvenisti, 25 2002). Therefore, the name changes continued “on and on and on

thousands of names changed meaning, erasing an entire universe and replacing it with ‘similar sounds’” (Benvenisti, 39 2002). Additionally, the pressure to name places after ancient Hebrew biblical names created a “rightful claim to these places and to this land” (27). The new Zionist settler need to create the ties both historically and presently as both a claim to the land, but also craft their sense of belonging to Palestine. After all naming becomes a form of claiming that is reinforced by the changing of the landscape. The colonization and physical changes to the landscape, the name changes, and the remapping of Palestine are all from securing a land that is recognizable to the European settlers and continues the displacement of Indigenous Palestinians, physically from the land but also symbolically, since the land is no longer the same.

“More Zaatar (thyme) and a little bit of olive oil. I am not a traitor. The police pushed me up against the wall. I am not a traitor. The ninth child after the summer. I am not a traitor. I am not a traitor. I am not a traitor. My name is Arabic. I am not a traitor. They built a street over half of my land. I am not a traitor. Who are you to govern me? I am not a traitor. I am not a traitor. I am from Negev. I am from Jaffa. I am from Ein Hod. I am from Acre. I am from Jawareesh. I am from Nazareth. I am from Haifa, from Dir Hanoun. I am from Tira. I am from Dahmas. I am from Hale4essa, I am from Sneer. I am from Umm Fahm. I am from Beersheba. I am from Sakhnin. I am from Jisr az-Zarqa. I am from Majd al-Krum. I am from al-Mahatta. I don’t inherit. I’m still here. I am from Ramla, from Sepphoris. I am from Al-Birwa. I am from Rahat. I am from

Bargham. I am from Ajami. I am still here. I am from Lyd” -DAM Song I am not a traitor

One of the first laws established by the Zionist state was the Absentee Property Law which gave the right for the nation state to take any land they deemed as empty after the establishment of the state in 1948. The land was deemed empty or absent because of the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians. The Absentee Property Law is an example of terra nullius which is “the perception that lands in long-term use by Indigenous peoples are empty or unused- settler colonisation proceeds to carve up Indigenous-held lands into discrete packets of private property” (Barker 2015, Settler Colonialism). Furthermore, the myth of Palestine being a “a land without a people, for a people without a land” is enforced through the Absentee Property Law and another example of terra nullius.

Another example of extraction of land through the legal system is the creation of National Parks and reserves. National parks and reserves are spaces that have been intentionally crafted for preservation and conservation. However, national parks like in the United States have been sites of displacement, exclusion for Indigenous people and portray the settler’s ideals of what is deemed worthy of ‘preservation.’ The national parks within the Zionist state function in a similar way in which they are crafted through the theft and displacement of Palestinians. Furthermore, the idea of preservation of land typically has meant that the land is not being cared for through traditional ecological knowledge but is being left alone. Preservation creates a mirage that the land is being saved and taken care of. For example, after 1948 there were “hundreds of thousands of trees

[planted], many of them not only concealing destroyed Palestinian villages such as al-Tira in the Haifa region (which been transformed into Carmel National Park)” (Pellow, 122 2018). The usage of trees to literally hide and erase Palestinian existences and transformation into a space for settlers. The planting of these trees becomes “weapons of land grabbing and occupation” (Klein, 30 2017). A majority of these trees have been planted by the Jewish National Fund, which plants these trees under the slogan “turning the desert Green” and have “planted 250 million trees in Israel since 1901, many of them non-native to the region” (Klein, 31 2017).

Furthermore, the planting of the trees reinforces the narrative of ‘making the desert bloom’ as this changes the ‘Zionist collective memory the narrative that views the Zionist state as undertaking the important work of transforming the desolated desert of Palestine into the blooming terrain of European-inspired forests, which the previous Palestinians owners of the land are said to have neglected to do” (Pellow, 122 2018). As Said observed in *Culture and Imperialism*

“Wherever they went Europeans immediately began to change the local habitat; their conscious aim was to transform territories into images of what they had left behind. The process was never ending, as huge numbers of plants, animals and crops as well building methods gradually turned the colony into a new place, complete with new diseases, environmental imbalances, and traumatic dislocations for the overpowered natives. A changed ecology also introduced a changed political system.”

As a result, many of these European trees that have been planted are now having to be removed, because they are not fit for the arid landscape and in recent years have caught on fire. While at the same time settlers continue to burn and uproot olive trees that are fit for the arid landscape of Palestine. The destruction of these olive trees is also destruction of many Palestinian farmers livelihood. Thus, the destruction of the olive trees and the preservation of the land Zionist state deems worthy are both examples of the displacement and elimination of Palestinians from their land.

Olive trees; are an extension of our identity, our resistances, our homes, and members of our family. They are our survival, like our river they are sacred. They are trees that take time to produce food, but provide us with security, shelter, and nourishment. For generations we have taken care of olives trees. Thousands of years and just simply uprooted. We mourn their death, the way we mourn a mother's death, or a father, or a child. They are a part of us. Our land is our narrator, our history, our giver, our nurturer; it is a rich ecosystem, and the olives trees are a part of the process. Olive trees hold our stories, secrets, and emotions. They are deeply embedded in our lands as they are deeply rooted within our lives.

Taming the wilderness, comes with conquering the water ways, especially in area with less water than Europe. One of the first major environmental projects after the official establishment of the Zionist state was to “transform the Sea of Galilee into a reservoir by adding control works at its lower end. As a result, the Sea of Galilee is now Israel’s largest reservoir” (Hassoun, 328 1998). The Sea of Galilee flows into the Jordan River, Yarmouk River, and into the Dead Sea and formed marshes that encompassed

Lake Huleh. The marshes “lay within the migratory routes of African, Asian, and European wildlife; thus, the wetlands were populated with wildfowl from three continents. The marshes of Galilee region were one of the world’s most unusual wetlands” (Hassoun, 327 1998). However, 9 years after the establishment of the Zionist state the wetlands around the marshes and Lake Huleh had been drained and “reclaimed” for “cultivation and settlements,” while at the same time diverting the water into the Negev Desert known as the National Water carrier Project which involved building a giant pipeline to reach the desert (Hassoun, 327 1998). The draining of the Lake Hula was intended to “combat malaria, increase agricultural potential” (Hassoun, 255 1998). The Zionist state through the national water carrier project “in the 1950s and 1960s, used water not only in the battle to settle new immigrants in the Negev and elsewhere but also in the battle to achieve political legitimacy. Water was an issue in which Israeli identity took on a political and a geographic form” (Alatout, 76 2006). The national water carrier relates directly to the early Zionist slogan of “conquest of land and conquest of labor.” The ability to control and redirect the water is a production of settler colonial states believing that they can use the land in more productive ways than Indigenous people; thus, justifying the occupation of the people, land and water. Otherwise why would there be a need to pipe water from an area that has agriculture purposes to the part of the land that has historically not been used for agriculture. The open piping of water to the south of Palestine, is done as a form of expansion for the Zionist state but also growth for the capital. It establishes more settlements and more control over space. The national carrier

project is a symbol of that expansion as it physical occupies space. As David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of this Zionist state declared:

No square inch of land shall we neglect; not one source of water shall we fail to tap; not a swamp that we shall not drain; not a sand dune that we shall not fructify; not a barren hill that we shall not cover with trees; nothing shall we leave untouched. An intensive agriculture, planned in accordance with scientific and practical scheme worked out by the Government, operated by pioneering labor, and maintained by the full strength of the state...will be the fundamental basis of a national economy created by the state...under a Jewish government”

This provides a good example of the way that the environment is looked upon as something to exploit, dominate and appropriate. Additionally, Ben-Gurion's statement along with the two first environmental projects reinforces the narrative of attempting to make the desert bloom. Finally, the draining of Lake Hula has resulted in “decomposing peat soils released nutrients and ground pollutants into the Jordan River and the entropies of Lake Tiberias, creating crop-damaging black dust and making large tracts of land susceptible to damaging underground fires. The Hula Valley was left stagnant and largely depopulated” (Lorber, 5 2012). Finally, the construction of the water carrier project contributed to the reduction of water in the Jordan river (Smith, 268 2013). Both the action of draining Hula and the National Water Carrier project are examples of the ways in which the settler colonial state is attempting to transform the landscape. It exposes the fragility of their narrative, by needing to first remove Indigenous Palestinians from their land, the settler state must, therefore, change the landscape to confuse and recreate the

spatial geography into an extractive narrative. Both projects are designed to attempt to create zionist settlement and agricultural land in the Negev Desert, literally making the desert bloom, this “attempt to ‘green the desert’ pushing them in one direction or cyclical drought expanding the desert in the other” (Klein, 42 2017).

Lake Huleh drained. Dead. How do Indigenous people relate to the land if the land is no longer livable? How does our knowledge disappear with the Lake? Where do the birds seek water from now on their migratory route? Where does the wildlife go? We migrated back and forth, over the river. Where does our relationship with the land go when colonialism disrupts all aspects of our life? Winona LaDuke asked the question “How do we grieve for the death of a river?” (2016). How to grieve our way of life within the balad? How do we grieve in displacement?

Water laws have been constructed in a similar way of attempting to preserve, extracting and maintenance of the zionist state power. For example, in Memorandum No. 648 by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs to the Secretary of State on August 10, 1953 United states “Israel’s political boundaries were designed with a view to obtaining access to strategic points on the Jordan River in order to be able to divert a substantial volume of the waters of the river into Israel.” From the beginning it was made clear that securing control over the water way and control the path of the river was essential for the Zionist state. As a result, the first water law passed in 1959 that “establishes the framework for the control and



Figure 5: Picture of a map of water in Palestine

protection of Israel's water resources" (Hophmayer-Tokich, 1396 2013). The water law "defines the water sources (natural or manmade, including wastewater, and their ownership (public property, subject to the control of the state as well as creates Israel's water institution. (Hophmayer-Tokich ,396 2013). Furthermore, this law prescribed that "water sources must be protected by the prevention of their: a. depletion and b. pollution (defined as any action that makes the water less suitable for its intended use, including the degradation of its qualities)" (Hophmayer-Tokich , 1397 2013).The building of the dams on the Jordan River became another national environmental project for the Zionist state in the 1960s and functioned as an extension of settler colonialism. Control of the river is essential to the protection of the zionist state because it provides the settler state with a sense of unchallenged power in the region. At the same time, the Zionist state began to build the DAM as Jordan was afraid to lose access to the Jordan river began to build a dam as well. However, as Jordan began to build this dam, the Zionist Stated bombed it in 1964.

My mother was already displaced born in Amman, Jordan in 1964. Born in displacement. The year they bombed Jordan's attempting at getting water. At the age of 13 my mother and grandmother attempted to return to Ramle. To see the house that my great grandfather had built. The house my grandmother learned to walk, talk, cook in. the house they found was still there, but settlers moved in. My mother was strip searched that trip at the border. Never to return out of fear and shame. How does displacement continue to shape our lives?

This further escalated the tensions between Zionist state and the Arab countries around control over water. When the Zionist state eventually secured the Jordan River; this resulted in “Arab countries and the Palestinians [having] to sacrifice quality of life, agriculture improvements, and economic development to Israel’s current water utilization regime and security interests” (Hassoun, 336 1998). For instances in a letter from Eric Johnston to the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, he notes that whoever can build the dams “must assume the responsibility for instituting an international control system.” The control of the rivers will have international control, which could render Jordan unable of become “a self-supporting and viable state.” The control of the river was central to maintaining power and if Jordan did control or have access to the river Jordan would be less likely to support itself as a nation state. Thus, all these tensions eventually lead up to the 1967 Six-Day War.

The six-day war resulted in the “occupation of the West Bank and Golan Heights, and was in effect an occupation of freshwater resources from the Golan Heights, the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River and the West Bank” (Shiva, 73 2016). The fact is that most of the land taken in 1967 is tied to the control of water as a resource and the mountain aquifer as a means of gaining security over water rights. Furthermore, the lands occupied in 67 are the same territorial boundaries that Pinchas Rutenberg kept attempting to gain under the British mandate. For instance, “only 3 percent of the Jordan basin lies in Israel, the river provides for 60 percent of its water needs” (Shiva, 73 2016). As a result of the building of dams upon the Jordan River, the Jordan River is no longer reaching the Dead Sea in the amounts that it used to; thus, a “stable body of water for over 10,000 years, has

lost 21 percent of its area since completion of Israeli water networks in 1952. (Hassoun, 330 1998).

The building of dams showcases that they “are built with more than engineering equipment - their tools also include narratives, language rhetoric, and images that recast Indigenous waterways for settler audiences” (Griffith, 153 2018). Dams are not apolitical; they are politically designed to control water and withhold water. Dams are about power and whoever controls them. They are designed to enclose space that “further a settler colonial institution in that its projects enable non-Indigenous settlements” while at same time “requires Indigenous lands and waterways to operate” (Griffith, 131 2018). Dams become necessary to control space, to conquer and divert water's natural flow. It prevents travel of water, in the same way walls, military checkpoints, and the occupation do. The dam domesticates the river, which drastically changes his (river in Arabic has male pronouns) ecosystem in the same way that burning trees and displacing Indigenous peoples does. In other words, dams are an occupation of the natural world, of humans, of migration, of life itself. Thus, the draining of lake huleh, the national water carrier project and the dams operate to “produce authority and (dis)possession over the land/water. And ultimately, to domesticate the ‘wilderness’ (Sepulveda, 48 2018).

The memories my great-grandfather, grandfather, and father hold of our balad, the springs on the land are no longer possible in the same way under occupation. For instance, Amizur Boldo who worked in the Jordan Valley as an inspector says that at one point by the river “there were orchards here. We would grow oranges, lemons along the river. Bananas. Today there isn’t enough water for these kinds of crops, and we grow



Figure 6: Picture of the Jordan River that my cousin, Eliana Nassar, took in 2017.

other things. We can't use the river's water; it's too salty and polluted" (David, 2018).

Similarly, Abu Riad a Jordanian man who lives near the banks of the Jordan River, cannot live in the same way. Abu Riad recalls how

"until before they closed the water, the river was big and strong...it was wide and deep. It had clean water and we could drink. We would swim in the river, fish. Boy do I miss the taste of those fish. It was a place where couples in love would come and sit. We did everything in the river. But now the river is very sad. We once couldn't cross it because of the strong current; the river was some 50 meters wide. And today? It's barely five. Small children sometimes accidentally cross it over to the Israelis side. Sometimes my children say, are you sure there was once water in the river? (David, 2018).

The occupation of our homelands, of our waters has transformed the way we live. We cannot live without settler state intervention. Water is now piped, it costs money. They charge us to live upon our own land. Palestinians “cannot grow vegetables without worrying about the bill,” they now must purchase the vegetables in the market which also cost money (Naguib, 126 2009). My great grandmother used to plant her own vegetables, now Palestinians depend on the settler state. It displaces us within our homelands. The damming of the river, the piping of water, the draining of the lake all produce the same result; the expansion of the settler state but dependency of it at the same time. This dependency causes a shift in our traditional way of life. Before, Palestinian women could just look at water and “explain how ‘winter water’ or ‘rain water’ is ‘reddish,’ ‘yellow,’ ‘bitter,’ ‘frothy’ (Naguib, 128 2009). This extraction of water “is a form of violence because it does so much damage to the land and water that it brings about the end of way of life, a death of cultures that are inseparable from the land” (Klein, 38 2017).

My family cannot return to our waters and to our land. And that is a form of death itself. When your ancestors cannot live or walk on the land that we have for generations. The land that gave us everything worth living for.



Figure 7: Picture of Jordan and the Promised Land from the Heights of Moab,
Palestine 1901.

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CHAPTER 3: INCARCERATION OF THE JORDAN RIVER

“I was not surprised by its narrowness: the Jordan was always a very thin river. This how we knew it in childhood. The surprise was that after these long years it had become a river without water. Almost without water. Nature had colluded with Israel in stealing its water. It used to have a voice, now it was a silent river, a river like a parked car.” -Mourid Bargouti (1997)



Figure 8 Picture of my brother, mother and myself. This is the summer my brother got sick.

One of my earliest memories is my first trip to Jordan. I was four years old in the house that my father's family was displaced to. Once farmers, living off the land, now living in poverty across artificially made borders. They did not have enough water anymore. I remember we had to preserve it, could not use too much. I not understanding what was happening, was thrilled to take a shower in my bathing suit outside. I

remember my tata (grandmother) warming up the water in a bucket. Standing outside under the warmth of the sun, my tata and mother washed my brother and I outside in another bucket. Slowly they poured water on us. Making sure to use every drop. Why is that one of my first memories of life is of water? Does this memory stand out to my childhood self because I was raised between the west and the east? Is this the difference, I noticed one of living within the thievery of the west or within the oppression of the east? Do I remember this because I went from a bathtub with flowing water to a place where the resource are scarce? Is that why I remember this? That same summer, Jordan was running low on water. Jordanians did not have enough water for their crops let alone people. As a result, the Zionist state offered our own occupied waters to Jordan. However, what was not so clearly stated was the fact that the water was meant for the crops, the water was sewage water. The Zionist states offered gratefully its leftovers. The water that summer almost killed my brother. Being only a year and half his stomach was unable to handle the sewage water that Jordan in end gave to its people. Water what is meant to provide life, nourish life, almost took my brothers. The control of water and resources is unethical. No land should have to choose between nourishing food or its people. No life should be taken from the lack of clean water or access to water. Water itself should not be used as a tool, locked up, dammed up, occupied, and imprisoned from flowing freely.

Although water is a key resource the myth portrayed by the Zionist State is that in this region water is scarce and “scarcity cannot be solely about numbers, no matter how

compelling, surprising, or shocking they may be. In both Zionist State and the Settlements, water is flowing without limits” (Alatout 2006, 80). Water, however, only becomes scarce regarding Palestinians and Jordanians. Demystifying myths around notions of scarcity and population increase is essential, since nation-states in positions of power usually use at least as much if not more of the resources. The scarcity myth is designed to maintain state power and control over resources, while at the same time using up all of the resources. Water is a key resource for Palestinian sovereignty. As Alatout argues “water scarcity is discussed in order to reclaim it as a concept that is and should be grounded in daily, lived experiences rather than in technical rhetoric” (Alatout 2006, 60). At the same time, Dr. Rosalesmeza states that “scarcity is a colonial lie. You are worthy of abundance and liberation...scarcity keeps us in fear, keeps us in competition, keeps us under their thumb. Scarcity also makes us doubt those that are for us and instead go with what we think is safe.” Thus, narratives of scarcity and security results into the imprisonment of both the land and people to maintain that sense of state control and power over resources and wealth.

According to the World Wildlife Fund “two thirds of the longest rivers no longer flow freely-and it harms us.” This study is “the most comprehensive assessment of river connectivity that has ever been done, and it shows we are losing our longest, free-flowing rivers” (Lovegren 2019) Most of the disruptors to free-flowing rivers are dams and reservoirs. Dams not only disrupt the flow of the river, but it also causes “free-flowing rivers [to] suddenly becomes a stagnant reservoir, the natural habitat disappears, and with it the fish.” (Lovegren 2019) Free-flowing rivers provide “food for hundreds of millions

of people, deliver sediments crucial to agriculture, mitigate the impact of floods and droughts, and underpin a wealth of biodiversity” (Lovegren 2019).

The Jordan River should flow 320 miles through the mountains bordering between Lebanon and Syria through the Sea of Galilee and finally ending in the dead sea. The Jordan River once flowed freely across our natural landscape, prior to the actions of nation states and artificially made borders. It was once 60 yards wide and fed our people for thousands of years. However, now the Jordan River is dammed up, locked up and tied down to the made-up notions of nation state. The Jordan River has been made into a border as “borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (Anzaldua, 25 1987) The river now is a border and a place for the Zionist state to maintain control of security. The river has become a site of who is worthy enough to access and a site to extract. The Jordan River is now a resource that is fought over, sought over, and controlled by the Zionist state. The Jordan River is no longer able to reach the Dead Sea. The fragmentation of rivers causes the river to “lose function and no longer be able to support the huge diversity of wildlife and the millions of people who depend on it” (Lovegren 2019). As a result, of the fragmentation, division, and imprisonment of the Jordan River, the Dead Sea is shrinking roughly 3.3 feet per year. The Jordan River is become a stagnant river, and the natural habitats are disappearing.

When I was 12, I spent the summer in Jordan. My mom wanted to make sure we saw all different parts of the place she grew up. We went on a tour to Petra, one of the

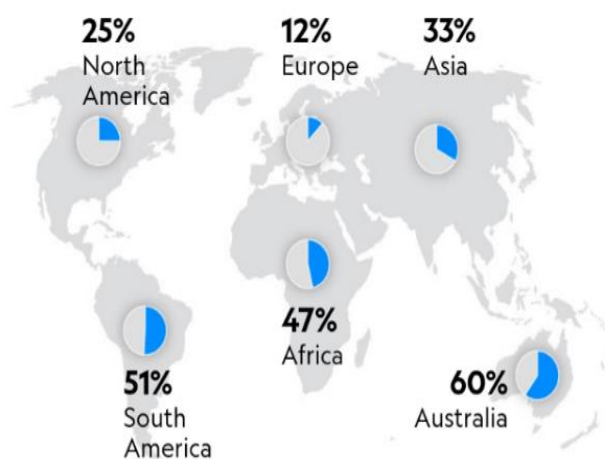
current 7 world wonders, a place that our people once called home. On our way to Petra, we stopped a spring. The spring was attached to a story in the bible. It was the place, that Moses struck a rock to provide water. The rock still stood, and underneath was some of the most delicious water I had tried. Fresh, clean, and cold in the middle of the desert. The biblical story was teaching us where and how to find water. The stories in the bible are place based of our homeland and how to survive. How beautiful our faith could have been if it had not been taken and continuously used for violence and genocide? How beautiful that these were our origin stories, our guidebook of the land, tales, and myths of our homeland.

The building of dams erupted in the 1900s as a way of asserting control over nature and a visible way of displaying power. The constructs of dams are tied to notions of taming or controlling nature and “dams were a particularly popular means of shifting water control from communities to central governments and colonizing rivers and people. For European colonizers who came to America, river colonization was a cultural obsession and an imperial imperative” (Shiva 2016, 53). President Theodore Roosevelt’s chief adviser, W.J. mcgee believed that “the single step remaining to be taken before man becomes master nature” was to control water. Thus, we see the beginning of the Euro-American construction of dams like the Hoover dam in the 1930s being the most

Free-flowing rivers

Only 37 percent of world's largest rivers are free of dams or other disruptions. Free-flowing rivers are found primarily in the Amazon and Congo Basins, and in the Arctic.

Percentage of very large rivers (longer than 1,000 km) that remain free-flowing, by continent



Distribution of very large rivers



THEODORE SICKLEY AND RYAN MORRIS, NG STAFF
SOURCE: NATURE

Figure 9: Picture of maps of the remaining free flowing rivers.

massive construction and the “beginning of the large dam era and the partnership between government and corporations in control over water” (Shiva 2016, 56). The need to transport, control, and move water became so central that in “1900, the California Development Company renamed the Colorado Desert “Imperial Valley” to attract settlers; however, they required water, and a dam supported by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)—a name promising a return to an Edenic paradise—was envisioned as the answer” (Griffith 2017, 30). 30 years later the Zionist state embarks upon this same journey of attempting to assert control over nature, specifically over the displacement and enclosure of the Jordan River, through both the National water carrier project and the dam built upon the Jordan river in an effort to ‘make the desert bloom’ and craft paradise in the desert.

The settler states are in a constant state of displacing, conquering, and enclosing/enslaving/imprisoning whether it be the land or Black, Indigenous, or People of color people. As 2/3 of rivers are dammed up, enclosed into a tight space constructed of either concrete or stone to block the flow of movement, people around the world are incarcerated. Over 10 million are locked up behind bars, within tight spaces constructed from concrete. The incarceration of people is directly tied and linked to critical environmental justice. The first form of displacing and imprisoning happened with both the displacement of Indigenous people from their lands and then through the mission systems, boarding school system, and the reservations. The dispossession of the land is a form of incarceration for Indigenous people. A form of death. To be taken and displaced

from the land, or to be enclosed in a smaller space. For example, “imprisoned cohorts, invoke a conception of the prison within a continuum of dying, or ‘being dead,” (Rodriguez 2007, 54). Disallowed from traveling or moving through natural migration patterns is imprisonment. The mission system and boarding school system in the united states both stole, incarcerated, and enslaved Indigenous peoples in the same way that enslavers enslaved Africans and stole Africans from their homelands. Displaced, dispossessed, enslaved, and imprisoned. The settler state treats the land and people as the same, “incarceration does incredible damage to both tribal sovereignty and Native peoples’ capacity to reproduce their land, cultures, and children” (Lumsden 2016, 43). Imprisonment removes one from civil society, settler colonialism removes indigenous peoples relationship from the land, and dams remove the river from the eco-system arounds them. Therefore, the mission system, boarding school system and racial chattel slavery are all inherently linked with both the building of the dams but also the prison industrial complex. After the conquering of the rivers, there becomes a focus yet again on incarcerating Black and Brown bodies within the united states.

Carceral space is the “embodied experiences of imprisonment, the architectures and geographies of carceral systems; and the disciplined mobility inherent in carceral settings” (Morin 2016, 1317). Morin expands carceral space to expand on incorporating nonhuman animals as “part of the everyday mass, industrialized violence that is considered as ‘normal’ part of American social life” (Morin 2016, 1318). I believe the carceral space should be expanded even more in understanding how the land and river experience carceral space, especially through the construction of dams, walls, barriers,

enclosure of space, streets, sidewalks, and freeways. The carceral space goes beyond nonhuman animals but should be expanded to more than human beings. As Dylan Rodriguez argues that “the prison regime, in other words, generates a technology of power that extends beyond and outside the institutional formality of prison” (Rodriguez 2007, 38). Additionally, Morin expands ‘the cage’ to argue that “maximum-security prisons and zoos and zoo-like structures illustrate a number of overlapping oppressions and structural inequalities that span species boundaries. These include shared geographies and disciplinary regimes of prison cage and zoo cage; the cultural sociological ‘mandates of caging; the associated psychological-behavioral experiences of being cages” (Morin 2016, 1318). I argue that the expansion of carceral geographies is directly tied to the treatment of oppressed people. Thus, the normalization of Prison industrial complex (PIC) allows for the continued dehumanization of people and allows for the continued dehumanization of more than human including nonhuman animals, the land, and water. The PIC “insists on understanding of the punishment process that take into account economic and political structures and ideologies” (Davis 2003, 85). Moreover, “the notion of prison industrial complex also insists that the racialization of prison populations-and this not only true of the United States, but of Europe, South America, and Australia” (Davis 2003, 85). The structure of prison industrial complex creates a racialized system of “prison labor by private corporation is one aspect among an array of relationships linking corporations, government, correctional communities and media. These relationships constitute what we now call a prison industrial complex” (Davis 2003, 84)

The oppressor sees the oppressed as disposable, to be tamed and conquered in the same way the oppressor views the land as extractable, conquered, and tamed. As a result, “one devastating outcome of land dispossession today is the disproportionate rates of incarceration of Native adults and children. For American Indians, U.S. correctional facilities are part of the violent colonial apparatus. These facilities commit human rights abuses on prisoners and exploit them for government and private profit” (Ogden 2019, 359). Therefore, I argue that the way the land and rivers are treated is mirrored in by the oppressor in the treatment of oppressed communities. The fact that we shift from the construction to dams to the prison industrial complex is tied to that. For example, within the united states there is “somewhere between 80,000 and two million dams. We as a nation have been building, on average, one dam per day since the signing of the declaration of independence” (Lieb 2015). While at the same time the united states “has the largest prison system of any nation on earth, the largest number of prisoners of any country, and one of the highest percentages of imprisoned persons of any nation...the united states holds fully 25 percent of the worlds prison population but has only 5 percent of the worlds people” (Pellow 2018). The relationship between oppressed people and land are clearly seen in the fact that US holds 25 percent of the worlds incarcerated population, while at the same time the diversion of rivers removes any agency from the river in the same way that the prison industrial complex removes agency from humans. The PIC system racialized that in some states “more than one-third of black men have been labeled felons” (Davis 2003, 38). Furthermore, in 1990 the Washington-based Sentencing project

“published a study of the U.S. populations in prison and jail, an on parole and probation, which concluded that one in four black men between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine were among these numbers. Five years later, a second study revealed that this percentage had soared to almost one in three. Moreover, more than one in ten Latino men in same age range were in jail or prison or on probation or parole” (Davis 2003, 19)

Furthermore, “native people are vastly overrepresented In the country’s federal and state prison” (Davis 2003, 73) as Luana Ross points out that “prisons, as employed by the Euro-American system, operates to keep native Americans in a colonial situation” (Ross 1998, 89). As Stephanie Lumsden argues “incarceration also physically removes Indian people from their land, which leaves it open for new waves of settler encroachment, exploitation, and theft. Finally, incarceration is a pernicious tool of colonization because, much like the early practices of genocide in California, it keeps Native people from reproducing Indian identity, culture, land, and children in a way that disproportionately affects Native women” (Lumsden 2016, 33). Similarly, the Zionist state originally dispossession during the nakba and continues to displace, conquer, and imprison both the land and Palestinians. For instances, “since 2000, an estimated 10,000 Palestinian children have been detained by Israeli forces from occupied west bank and held in the Israeli military detention system (Defense for children International Palestine). The PIC prevents Black and Indigenous people from having any agency over their lives and bodies; thus, more than humans will not be granted any agency either.

Settler colonialism as an ongoing process uses the PIC to continue the elimination of Native people from the land and the enslavement of Black people to increase access for white property (Griffin 2017, 31). Therefore, “prisons is one of the most important features of our image environment...the prison has become a key ingredient of our common sense. It is there, all around us. We do not question whether it should exist. It has become a part of our lives” (Davis 2003, 18). Prisons become a part of natural and social landscape. We do not question the ability for prisons to even exist, in the same way environmental projects become normalized for our safety and security, although “dam/ning encompasses the actual locatable theft and destruction of land to further white settlement-the dammed river; the mined mountain; the felled forest, the extracted oil; the fracked rock” (Griffith 2017, 31). Both dams and prisons “fundamentally alters the network of relationships (affective, economic, and otherwise) in civil society,” the logic of imprisonment not only disconnects the imprisoned from their relationships but from society as a whole, in the same way that Dams disconnects the river from the natural ecological environment around it (Rodriguez 2007, 54). Dams disrupt the flow of the river in the same that prisons disrupt a imprisoned life. The national water carrier project that the Zionist state finished in 1964 consisted of water being pumped from Northern Palestine to the South into the Negev Desert. The water is pumped through pressure pipes, transferred to an open canal, then a reservoir another pumping station and into a both open and enclosed concrete pipelines. However, this project did two things as Samer Alatur points out; it “1) to establish Israel’s sovereignty status over the Jordan River and the demilitarized zone, and (2) to facilitate Jewish immigration and settlement in the

Negev by providing water for irrigation.” (Alatout 2006, 613). The Negev settlements were like other settlements in the Zionist state meant to be exclusionary in the same way that the “Hoover Dam’s town site for laborers, Boulder City, was conceived as a Whites-only paradise (Rosenberg, 2001) built and run as a federal land reservation where union organizing was surveilled and punished” (Griffith 2017, 31). As a result, the national water carrier project in the treatment of Palestinians both the water and people are displaced, forced into concrete spaces, controlled through violence. The physical space that both prisons and environmental projects take up continue the further displacement of Indigenous people by occupying the land and waterways but “because the energy it produces enables further settlement in regions” (Griffith 2017, 30).

The construction of the Dam after the National water carrier project allows or the Zionist state ability to “divert water from natural drainage of rivers. Altering a river flow also modifies the distribution patterns of water in a basin, especially if interbasin transfers are involved” (Shiva 2016,69). Therefore, the newer environmental projects are not focused merely on economic and developmental process of the state, the projects have shifted to represent the different political climate and desire for Zionist state to represent itself to the international community as an environmentally sustainable state. As the Zionist state gains control over water, the increase of violence and militarization occurs. Dam/ning becomes a “tactic used to preserve white settler memory, history, and claims to land and water...damming stimulates the growth of some life and curtails others, all under a banner of harmless progress. But also embedded in the term is damming: the strategies used to thwart and undermine settler-colonial violence, dehumanization,

displacement, and land theft” (Griffith 2017, 31).

The physical construction of both dams and prisons also reflect one another. The appearance of both dams and prisons are made through the enclosure of space in concrete type structures. For instances, “the new of super maximum-security facilities also rely on ‘state-of-the-art’ technology for monitoring and controlling prisoner conduct and movement, utilizing for example, video monitors and remote-controlled electronic doors. ‘these prisons represent the application of sophisticated, modern technology dedicated entirely to the task of social control, and they isolate, regulate and surveil more effectively than anything that has preceded them” (Davis 2016, 50). Similarly, dams create a concert barrier that prevents the movement of water, or “or to prevent water from crossing established/safety threshold. Both are built to take up space, to steal more land, but to also control movement. Dam construction also maintains, monitors the amount of water allowed in. Technology has allowed for dam construction to assert more power over the land and further the occupation of Indigenous lands, like prisons dams and other environmental projects became a part of naturalized imagined landscape, not matter how artificial and disruptive they look and are to the natural eco-systems. Although dams become symbols of progress and idolized as forms to assert power, we must see it for



Figure 11 The
national water carrier
project from the
Zionist archives



Figure 10: Picture of the national water carrier project from
the Zionist archives.



Figure 13: Picture of the Pelican Bay State Supermax Prison



Figure 12: Picture of the Hoover Dam

what dams really are, continued displacement of Indigenous people. The relationship between land and nature is directly tied to the way settler states see Indigenous, Black and Brown folks. Environmental projects not only displace and dispossess but incarcerate Indigenous people. The ongoing water projects do not end in the 60s; in fact, the control over water is an ongoing process, since the environmental projects are an extension of the settler colonial state and settler colonialism is not an event but an ongoing structure.

After the 6-day war in 1967, the Zionist state occupied and maintained control over a majority of the rivers and the coastal and mountain aquifers. This resulted in the Zionist state using a majority of the “West Bank water supply 25 to 40 percent of Israel’s water; Israel consumes 82 percent of the West Bank’s water...Palestinians water use is controlled and restricted by the Israeli government” (Shiva 2016, 74). Thus, most of the water within the Jordan River never reaches Jordan and more than half of the West Bank water is used by the Zionist state. This further displaces Indigenous people from their land and further eliminates agency over oneself by causing more degradation to the river and further marginalizing Indigenous communities. The physical occupation of the West Bank not only took control over the land but continued the displacement of more Palestinians and increased the occupation.

7 summers ago, I was able to visit my homeland. It was joy. A mixed number of chaotic feels. It consists of discomfort and pain to the oppression and occupation. A bit of happiness to see the land of my ancestors and to walk upon it. It was a whole range of feelings and alcohol consumption. It was checkpoints, militarized

borders, military personal, interrogations. It was questions like where are you going? Is it any of your business when I am in my home? It was soldier attempting to speak and colonize my mother tongue. It was my refusal to speak Arabic to them. It was my refusal to make them struggle in English. Another colonizers language.

Right before the Oslo accords, with over twenty years of physical occupation of our water ways and land in the West Bank, the rise of resistance with the first Intifada (to struggle) happened from 1987-1993. The resistances; however, were quickly crushed during the Oslo Accords in 1993. The Oslo accords or the peace talks were lead between the colonizer and the colonized. Through these ‘talks’, it was agreed that water would be a part of the permanent and final negotiations at an attempt of showing Zionist states willingness to negotiate. One example of the Oslo accords was article 40 of the interim agreement between the Palestinians and the Zionist state which asserts that “Israel recognizes the Palestinian water rights in the West Bank. These will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations and settled in the Permanent Status Agreement relating to various water resources.” However, during the Oslo accords and the supposed withdrawal by Zionist state; the Zionist state “constructed 90,000 new housing units in the settlements and East Jerusalem” and started to replace Palestinian workers and “withholding employment while maintaining control over vital resources” (Gelvin 2014, 242). This was one of the biggest expansions for Zionist state, during the times labeled as peace talks. These actions eventually lead to a larger militarized occupation of Palestine. The Zionist state started building a wall in 2002, installing checkpoints, and enclosing the

Gaza strip. The Oslo Accords left us in a worsened state leading to the Second Intifada from 2000-2005. However, as the theft of more land and water continued, the Palestinian people within Gaza were placed in the largest prison in the world. Gaza strip is largest open-air prison with a population of 2 million people, completely blockaded between a wall, military presence and constant state of air strikes and bombing, with nothing but the sea on the other side. However, even the sea became a site of violence. Palestinians in the Gaza strip are only allowed 15 miles out into the sea before being shot at. As Angela Davis stated on her visit to Palestine

“The Israeli military made no attempt to conceal or even mitigate the character of the violence they inflicted on the Palestinian people. Gun-carrying military men and women-many extremely young-were everywhere. The wall, the concrete, the razor wire everywhere conveyed the impression that we were in prison. Before Palestinians are even arrested, they are already in prison. One misstep and one can



Figure 14 Coex, Thomas. Picture of The Zionist Separation barrier divides East Jerusalem and the West Bank town of Qalandia.

be arrested and hauled off to prison; one can be transferred from an open-air prison to a closed prison” (Davis, 59 2016).

The dam, the national water carrier project, the wall, the checkpoints all become a way to divert, tame and steal both the land as a resource and erasure of Palestine. The agency of both the land and the people are stolen. The removal of agency from the river, allows for the narrative of scarcity to form. The control of the river must occur in name of security, similar to the language of incarceration, that in order for society to be safe people must be locked up. The language of security crafts a myth of scarcity and fear. The language of security labels Palestinians as terrorist, while the dam and the national water carrier project terrorize the land in the name of national security. Removing the river agency not only creates the scarcity myth but also furthers genocide of Indigenous people and of the land. The shift of “water allocation most often generates interstate conflicts, which rapidly escalates into disputes between central government and states” (Shiva 2016, 69).

During my time in Jerusalem, I stayed in my mother’s family’s house. The house my grandparents got married in. Walking through old city in Jerusalem was amazing. The beauty of stone buildings, the way they kept you cool even under the hot summer sun. The smells of freshly baked pita bread, cooked falafel, and hummus for breakfast, and all our amazing sweets and spices place out for sell filled me with joy. One morning, my aunt asked me if I want to go spend the day at school she worked at. So, the very next morning we woke up early and headed out, but after walking a couple of feet she turned around and told me that the settler children will be escorted by the Zionist military to their schools. She

warned me that if the children got close to us that we should put our hands up, so the Zionist military knows we are not touching the children. Within a couple of minutes of her telling me this, a group of children walked by and we had to put our hands up and lean against the wall, to keep from getting shot.

Water security is what Wolf (1995) discusses as necessary if cooperation and an agreement around the Jordan River watershed can ever be made between Palestine and the Zionist State and peace can be brought to the region through the process of conflict resolution. In addition, many of the conversations around the water imbalance not only place the blame between Palestine and the Zionist State as merely a religious war but use “neutral and objective language” (Alatout 1994, 59). Power dynamics are left out of the conversation when it becomes a religious war or conflict. This objective and neutral language place Palestine and Zionist State on the same playing field, rather than understanding them in the view of colonized and colonizer or occupied and occupier. On the other hand, Pallant (2007) argues that “environmental security, however, requires more than just freedom from military attack. It also means access to high quality water, in sufficient quantities, to ensure public health, the production of sufficient food stocks, and the potential for economic development” (Lipchin, vii). Furthermore, Shiva (2016) argues that the “means of shifting water control from communities to central governments and colonizing rivers and people” (Shiva 2016, 53). Additionally, the Water resource Management policy created by the World Bank in 1993 states that “water is to be explicitly treated as a key resource for economic and social development, with

emphasis placed on managing water demands and water quality in the interests of the whole community” (Berkoff 1994, v).

The fear of settler colonial nations state securing their borders by conquering land and people eventually lead to the destruction of the environment. As a result, the Jordan river is having now been “reduced by up to 95 percent of its original flow,” while the dead sea continues to shrink (Lafond 2016). The so-called scientific progress resulting in the current construction of dams and the national water carrier project for making the desert bloom has crafted more problems and in attempt settler states attempt to fix these problems with more technology. This very dichotomy between modernity and traditional is in essence what causes the settler state to create more environmental disasters. When progress is associated with technology, science and modernity, we fail to acknowledge the knowledge that has been passed down traditionally. As Mona Fayyad Kawtharani stated

[the] best way to control us was by destroying our cultural and religious beliefs, so that the believer came to be defined as a ‘fanatic.’ And this was done to enable the West to invade our lands and to penetrate with its consumer commodities, to transform our countries into markets. This led to political and economic dependency, and to loss of cultural identity, which was replaced by ‘modernisation.’ The Eastern would not buy these diverse commodities-clothes, cars, electrical appliances, processed foods, furniture, etc- unless he was convinced that he was in need of a culture other than his own, and that this culture

represented ‘modernity’ whereas his own represented backwardness” (Haddad 1997, 48).

We need to move away from western progressive discourse and practices and relearn to understand the world around us as interconnect eco-systems that depend on each other. Instead of creating a binary where traditional knowledge is deemed backwards and on the other end modernity is viewed in regard to progress, we need to strive to use traditional knowledge and view it as modern knowledge. We need to unlearn settler colonial practices and move into a space where all can find liberation outside of these carceral spaces. Our resistance will always be there. Our intifada were our sites of struggle. Our people as the Zionist state continues, as settler colonialism continues as an on-going project, we continue our struggle, our intifada. As Yazzie and Baldy state, “how we struggle is how we remember, how we live, how we dream. It is how we relate. This is what water teaches us” (Baldy, Yazzie 12).

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CHAPTER 4: TOURISM: DISPLACE AND GRIEF

"I have known rivers

Ancient dark rivers

My soul has grown deep

Like the deep rivers"

-Langston Hughes

"I've been in New York for five years and I still get lost in the streets, but yalla no problem, anyway, I am losing it on my land and I am losing it within the diaspora. For 35 years, I have been on a trip. Everyday is a journey and the journey itself is home. So, I am here or I am there the universe is my home." -DAM (First Hip-hop group from Palestine)

I remember as a child watching my mother and tata (grandmother) sit around the kitchen table with two large bowls in front of them. One bowl filled with zucchini and the other a mixture of rice, beef/lamb, and spices all mixed that they had already prepared. They would each grab a zucchini that's top had already been cut off and my tata and mother would each carefully with a carving tool remove the inside stuffing of the zucchini. The yellow inside of the zucchini would leave a hollow vegetable, ready to be stuffed with the mixture of meat and rice. The sound of television always in the background either on the Arab news or a soap opera that my grandmother had been watching. Usually the news though, the horrific graphic detail and imagery of war always floating on the television. Palestine always discussed. Whether the demolishment of people's houses, or the bombing of Gaza, the occupation is always in the midst of our lives. Violence is always occurring. As the TV roared, my tata and mother unstuffed and

re-stuffed each zucchini carefully and gently, since any rough or quick movement could quickly puncture a hole in the fragile zucchini. My clumsy hands always quickly punctured holes. I could never figure how they did it so gracefully. The removal and re-stuffing. So gracefully stuffing our vegetables for my favorite dish, Kusa. After all the zucchini was stuffed, they would use the remaining mixture of rice and meat to fill the grape leaves. Quickly wrapping and stuffing the grape leaves with the same rice and meat. . The meal preparation alone would take hours. But as the meal cooked the house was filled with smells of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cardamom. These smells filling our nostrils reminding us of home and of displacement. How away from our homelands we continue to eat and honor the foods that we always have? How lamb is an important meat and how zucchini is something my great grandmother grew in her garden. My mother and tata stuffed the feelings of displacement, of loss, of grief into a home cooked meal filled with love. Displacement from our lands, waters, and people. How do you grieve in displacement? I, myself, have yet to figure out how to unstuff and re-stuff the zucchini in the way my mother and tata did. I cannot figure out how to not puncture a hole, let alone stuff well enough. Maybe it is a reminiscence of generational trauma embedding itself out, but also a skill set taught as a form of survival to stuff away the feelings of displacement. My tata is excellently skilled at making this dish. We still, as a family, discuss how she made the best Kusa. How she survived the nakba but can stuff the Kusa perfectly. How do we learn to unstuff? How do we learn to refuse when the recipes of trauma have been passed down, while honoring the resilience?

Where are you from? No, where are you really from? These questions haunted me from an early age. How do I explain to them? Yes, I know I am not from the west. Yes, I know this is not my land and will never be. But how do I as a child tell them, my land was stolen. My mother would always tell me our land was stolen. How do you explain this, when I tell them, 'I am Palestinian' and they tell me 'I don't see it on the map?' How do you explain this, when you are in catholic school and the teacher justifies the state that occupies your land through your stolen religion? How do you explain where you are from or who you are post 9/11? When the lands where you are from only embody terrorism and violence to the West. When the language you speak, the language that begins our greetings with peace, is now nothing more than a threat. Causes fear, terrified looks in the others around me. How do I tell you where I am from, when you have already othered us and erased us? I know I am not from here nor from there. Always on the outside.

Displacement. Displacement is the backbone of my family. I do not know our lands. My mother does not remember the Jordan River. My father refuses to remember. My brother lost in the West. We cannot return. Displacement. My grandparents were buried for the first time since time immemorial in foreign occupied lands. Buried away from our homelands, away from ancestors, buried in another stolen land. Displacement. My grandfather dies in Jordan and no one in our family can afford to go to his funeral. Displacement. It is life and death. Displacement is every aspect. Displacement. Is having family come and go, living with us and then leaving us. It is the constant change, and nothing is constant except change. It is the tears I cry every time someone leaves. It is the

act of finding home in the temporary. Palestine becomes synonymous with “exile, dispossession, the inaccurate memories of one place slipping into vague memories of another, a confused recovery of general wares, passive presences scattered around in the Arab environment. The story of Palestine cannot be told smoothly. Instead, the past, like the present, offers only occurrences and coincidences. Random.” (Said 1986, 30).

Our dispossession, exile, displacement from home is haunting. It is the seen in the way my parents tend their garden. It is the plants they chose to plant. It is the olive tree my father visits in our backyard every morning. Our dispossession is constantly present. It is in the fact that my parents live off Balfour street. Balfour, the man in the British parliament in 1917, that gave away our land, that dispossessed us in the colonizers written promise to secure a Zionist homeland, upon our homeland. My parents live on a street named after the man who stole everything. Dispossession leaves us lost yet offers “language to express experiences of uprootedness, occupation, destruction of homes and social bonds, incitation to ‘authentic’ self-identities, humanitarian victimization, unlivability, and struggles for self-determination” (Butler 2006, 11).

Dispossession of our lands, the displacement of our physical existences on our land, lets us not live. Land for Indigenous people is crucial for life, since “for colonized people the most essential value is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (Fanon). Land is crucial to our identity as Indigenous peoples. Land is tied to our way of life, to our existence, to our foods, stories, water, to life itself. Dispossession is renamed for Indigenous peoples by Leanne Simpson as an ‘expansive dispossession,’ because the process of dispossession for Indigenous people is

“more complex terms than just land loss. We have to think expansive dispossession as a gendered removal of our bodies and minds from our nation and place-based ground normativities” (Simpson 2017, 43). The complexity of losing land and being displaced affects all aspects of life, especially since dispossession functions as “an authoritative and often paternalistic apparatus of controlling and appropriating the spatiality, mobility, affectivity, potentiality, and relationality of (neo-)colonized subjects” (Butler 2006, 11). Since Indigenous people’s land “is not possession, it is deep, reciprocal, consensual attachment. Indigenous bodies don’t relate to the land by possessing or owning it or having control over it. We relate to land through connection-generative affirmative, complex, overlapping, and non-linear relationship” (Simpson 2017, 43). Thus, the complexities of settler colonialism displacing us from the land cuts the reciprocal relationship we have that allows us to be interconnect with the land, each other, language and identity.

However, many displaced Palestinians have been living generation after generation in refugee camps away from our land. Treated as second class citizens, living stateless without any form of documentation, without that ability to move. Refugee camps made into permanent structures after 70 years. What does permanent even mean, when refugee only know the temporary? When the hope to return home is the only wish? When refugees still have the keys to their homes. When children are taught of the idea return “at home because it was the answer for everything” (Irving 2012, 15). When grandchildren know only the camps or the host countries and not the homeland. This entirely changes the way Palestinians view the world, a world that has shut many doors. The Arab

countries that host most of the Palestinian refugee camps have treated Palestinians as a disease, like a cancer affecting their countries, rather than viewing the colonizer as the plague, the colonized become the enemy. Rather than viewing colonization as the root of the problem, the uprooted are looked at as causing the internal problems. Colonialism crafts “world where I am never safe. It is a violent system of continual harm forced on my body, mind, emotions, and spirit designed to destroy my ability to attach to my land” (Simpson 2017, 45). Colonization affects every aspect of life.

Both my parents lived through Jordan’s civil war. When Palestinians were building political power to return home, the Jordanian government stepped in and displaced us further. Took away citizenship and killed our organizers and displaced their families. Black September. My father remembers this time more than my mother. My father still has nightmares of war. Of civilians dying. I grew up remembering the screams at night. The dreams he had. How much my father grew to hate Jordan. Grew to hate that he had to serve in a military that displaced his own and did not to protect our people. How much he refused to return. How he refused to acknowledge that he was born outside of Palestine. For years I believed he had been born in the homeland. Not knowing he was the first in his family to be born in Jordan. He refused. He doesn’t share much of this time, but I do know that both my mother and father never felt like Jordan was home. They as Mourid Barghouti expressed “you become a stranger in your places and to your places at the same time. The displaced person becomes a stranger to his memories and so he tries to cling to them.” What is home?

Displaced people are both displaced from the new place they settle within and still embody the original dispossession from their homelands. They belong to neither here nor there; “it is enough for a person to go through the first experience of uprooting, to become uprooted forever” (Barghūthī, 2003 131). We are not only uprooted once, it becomes an ongoing presence, my tata was physically uprooted, but our uprootedness is passed down. It continues to exist in our lives, our uprootedness dictates how we live and where we live. We all become uproot from the homeland. Displacement surrounds you. Similarly, trauma does not leave the memories of the people who experience them. In fact, trauma is passed down genetically. It changes a person’s DNA, their genetic memory. It changes the essences of someone and the changes the future generations. It’s been proven that “certain fears can be inherited through the generations, a provocative study of mice reports... fearful memories haunt mouse descendants...genetic imprint from traumatic experiences carries through at least two generations” (Callaway 2013). Trauma like displacement surrounds you. Trauma gets passed down because it “binds you to what can’t be forgotten or forgiven. It binds you not to the repetition of a memory of a terrible, horrible, shocking event or experience but binds you to the *repression* of it” (Gordon 2008, 4). The nakba, the genocide, the forcible removal and displacement of our people has become binding to our identity.

How easy and normal does it become to stuff and displace my feelings? How hard was it for you tata? How did you hold yourself like that? How much pain do we hold onto and form into a home cooked meal made from love in an attempt at normalcy? An attempting at forgetting but remembering. How do we move beyond survival to freedom?

Growing up my mother would always remind us that “people are dying.” People are dying. I repeat it to myself whenever I need this reminder. I repeat it when emotions are high. When I am stressed or anxious about something. When school is too much. When life is too much. When depression or sadness sinks in. Or when there is too much happiness or joy. When love for family, friends, or even lovers are only imagined as temporary. Love becomes fleeting, so I love with urgency always out of fear of death. Even love becomes occupied. I do not know to how embrace emotions casually. Whenever there is a strong emotion whether it is positive or negative, I repeat people are dying. I remind myself to be grateful to humble myself, because people are dying. People in our homelands are dying and I am here. We are dispossessed from not only our lands but from ability to feel. We are disposed and displaced from our emotions. Settler colonialism operates in a way that ensures “it always controls the processes as a mechanism for managing Indigenous sorrow, anger, and resistances, and this ensures the outcome remains consistent with its goal of maintaining dispossession.” (Simpson 2017, 45). The theft of our emotions is inherently linked to the theft of our lands and functions in a way of control.

Moreover, in child development it has been shown that “sever separation in early life leave emotional scars on the brain because they assault the essential human connection the bond which teaches us that we are lovable. The bond which teaches us how to love. We cannot be whole human beings-indeed, we may find it hard to be human-without the sustenance of this first attachment” (Viorst 1986, 29). If that first attachment for Indigenous people is land and they are dispossessed from their land,

displaced, and occupied how does affect our beings? Thus, I stuff my feelings down as a reminder that we are not home. Dispossession and displacement affect all aspects of our lives. It does not just disappear when they exile us from our homes. We “Palestinians conduct ourselves, I think, with an energetic consciousness that there are still chores to be done, children to be raised, houses to be lived in, despite our anomalous circumstances” (Said 1986, 67). Dispossession and displacement is not only a physical experience it is a spiritually and emotional one. It does not allow you to feel. It displaces your feelings into the Kusa, into the chores, into this thesis. Dispossession dispossess me of my feelings and displaces them onto distracts from the pain or grief. Dispossession occupies my ability to feel.

I grew up having nightmares of war. Of people dying. I'd wake up screaming in the middle of night. Terrified. My mother after a while told me to just look around and tell myself it is not real. A thought to comfort me, but a thought that I had the privilege of saying to myself. I do not know where these dreams came from. But every time there would be tears streaming down my face, heart racing and in between sobs I would attempt to catch my breath. The dreams probably started at 4 and stopped at 8.

We are denied our own history. My mother did not have the opportunity to ever visit our sacred river. The first time she went to the Jordan River, was the first time she took my brother and I, when I was 12 years old. The opportunity to know our land intimately is stolen from us, occupied, and our memory altered. My family has never even had an opportunity to learn or land, to witness the vastness of the Jordan River that the colonizers did. No one in my family knew the Jordan River was once 60 yards long. We

only know the River as dammed, displaced, caged up, and dying. Settler colonialism is a disruption to our way of life. It disrupts our knowledge and access to space and mobility in the same way the dam controls the river and the mobility for water to travel freely. Settler colonialism has disrupted our ability to know our homelands, while at the same time disrupted the River from reaching the Dead Sea. It is all interconnected. My mothers and aunt's inability to ever visit the Jordan River was since a majority of their early life the river was a military occupation on both sides. The Jordan military stationed on the east side and the Zionist military on the west side. Palestinians on both sides of the river are unable to witness our sacred site. The river itself was a place of refuge, an escape in 1948 when Palestinians were forcibly displaced. They crossed the Jordan River seeking to survive. The Jordan River has been transformed with our own histories. It was once a place that nourished us and a sacred site, then it became a place to survive to escape too, and not the river itself is barely surviving after a military occupation incarcerated it along with our people. And now mostly recently, the Jordan River on both sides, still a displaced river, has become a site for tourism, a site to continue our displacement, but a place for others, for westerns to come to in the same way that Lynch explored our Rivers. Our erasure continues through the tourism industrial complex. Our erasure from our lands, our knowledge and history continue when it becomes a site for everyone else but Palestinians that live in the West Bank or the Palestinians in refugee camps that are stateless. The River dying still cannot be returned to us, while at the same time becoming a site accessible to the West for the consumption of tourism.

Tourism as an industry is inherently interlinked within “political processes, claims, and goals. Historically, tourism has been strongly embedded in colonial practices” (Boer 2016, 10). Tourism crafts an image of place and is tied to who has control over space. The space through tourism can be crafted into anything; “tourism as an instrument to convey and affirm narratives and images that remake people, places, and pasts in a politicized way. Stories and images intended for tourists are often one-dimensional” (Boer 2016, 10). In a similar way that the Zionist state renamed the names of our villages by the Judaization of Arabic names or usage of the bible as forms of rightful claim, tourism furthers this claim for settler colonial nations. The development of tourism also fosters territorializing of space and the “practices of nation-making and military and colonial projects” (Devine 2017, 606). Furthermore, tourism creates a market based on the historical image crafted by the settler state, thus, reinforcing the claims of the state through the market. The images around tourist sites is what Salazar (2012) named ‘tourism imaginaries’ which is the violence formed through the construction of images “that materially manifest in peopleless wilderness spaces and pristine, white sandy beaches. The commodification of culture and place in tourism often constitutes an act of epistemic and symbolic violence as most tourism imaginaries engage in orientalist practices of ‘othering’ local inhabitants” (Devine 2017, 608). As a result, space, land, water are controlled through terrorism but so is the image crafted about the Indigenous people, “tourism imaginaries reflect the stereotypes, ideals, and desires of their designers, rather than the multiple and often conflicting place-based identities overlapping in any given space characterized by tourism development” (Devine 2017, 608). Settler

colonialism needs tourism to reinforce its own illusionary notions of space, history, and realities which “effectively produced a spatial fetish” that “hides the violence necessary to the production of the tourist sites, as well as tourism’s violent effects in the everyday lives of local community members” (Devine 2017, 610). This further displaces Indigenous/local community members from their own spaces and commodifies the space and culture.

The commodification of Palestinian Indigenous knowledge of land and history is something that the early Zionist movement attempted to reimagine and reorder early on. For example, “in the 1932 the [Zionist information Bureau] pressured Thomas cook & Son and other tour operators to start contracting Jewish hotels, drivers, and guides in order to support the Zionist cause in Palestine” (Boer 2016, 11). Settler colonial states attempt to destroy Indigenous communities and replace them. Thus, tourism becomes an important tool for settler colonial projects to “in the co-option of Indigenous cultural artifacts and practices. In tourism, these practices of appropriation become visible and tangible.... this way indigeneity can be controlled, disempowered, and appropriated. The same accounts for spaces” (Boer 2016, 11). Tourism creates “uneven geographies and histories of movement and incarceration” while at the same time allows for leisure of the settler upon our own displacement and dispossession (Devine 2017, 608).

The dispossession of land from tourism reflects the continued violence Indigenous communities experience. This violence of dispossession results in the “recurring themes of enclosures and extraction, erasure, and commodification, destructive creation and (neo) colonialism” (Devine 2017, 606). The privatization of land, space, and water

displaces people and further displaces us from our ability to even have access to our sacred river. In two pictures below, the first one shows the Jordan part of the river, while the second picture shows the Zionist state side of the Jordan River. The two images show the vast contrast between the settler colonial state asserting claims to land and space by building such a vast and occupying building. It is to assert claims to land and history. Furthermore, the largeness of the building the Zionist state built upon the Jordan River is a reflection the way that “space is imbued with power since it is not only hegemonic in conveying a sense of the geography of the nation-state as being just ‘common sense,’ but it has also been actively utilized in dispossession and disempowerment toward the benefit of one group of peoples over another” (Barnd 2017, 13). The contrast in structure also reflects the way Indigenous and settler spatiality forms. One embeds within the landscape while the other attempts to conquer and control the land. The building by the Zionist state takes up space, like dams on the River. Both the dam and the tourist attraction enclose space, displace, and control who has access to these cultural/religious sites. The structures built for tourism purposes are like the structure of the dam built physically upon the Jordan River. We are then unable to return to homelands, to the “right to one’s own heritage, history and recognized presence in space” (Devine 2017, 609).

Additionally, the ability for tourists from the West to come to our River and baptize themselves in our sacred rivers is an example of our own dispossession when my own mother’s first time on the River was in her late 30s. Our sacred river that rebirths us is granted to others before we have a right to even see her.



Figure 16 Picture of the Jordan side of the Jordan River.



Figure 15 Picture of the Zionist side of the Jordan River

Furthermore, it is not just our river that has been turned into a site for the West to engulf into their own imagery of the Holy Land. It is also Jerusalem, not only does the physical dispossession of Palestinians currently happen, but it has become a site for the Zionist State to sell our religion, to show the West the Holy sites, to reenact the death of Jesus and to make a profit from our knowledge. It is Lake Huleh, formerly drained and turned to swamp, and the destruction of our water as their first environmental nation state project. After the environmental destruction to the Huleh, the Zionist state realized they need to refill it. It is now a tourist destination for people of the West to visit, to bird watch. The lake was once home to 20 village sites and now has a man-made island in the middle for people to sit and bird watch, our sites of destruction and death become sites of enjoyment for the settler. This form of violence is another way that the settler state further alienates us, and erase our Palestinian histories, cultures, sacred sites and architecture; “our most sacred places have been made into provincial parks for tourists, where concrete buildings cover our teaching rocks. Our burial grounds have cottages or homes on them” (Simpson 2017, 4). The welcoming of tourists and settlers into our sites, while at the same time Palestinians in the West Bank live under a military occupation, Palestinians in Gaza live under siege, Palestinians in refugee camps live without documents stateless with no ability to move, and while Palestinians on the outside, in the diaspora, might be denied entry into our homelands.

My family’s life outside of the homeland was decided for us. We cannot return to live there. We might even be denied the right to visit. My father has not returned, I believe out of this very fear of possibly being denied the right to visit his home. How does one go

through the world, when you are constantly afraid of being denied? How do we come to terms with the fact that so much of our lives have been decided for us as displaced people? They took from us the ability to see what we could have been. The creation of Zionist state “forced us to remain with the old. That is its crime. It did not deprive us of clay ovens of yesterday, but of the mystery of what we would invent tomorrow” (Said 1986, 69). It deprived an entire people of how our lives could have been in the homeland. It took in part the ability to live, since land is life and settler colonialism “has always included a project of attaching white bodies to Indigenous land, and attempts to ‘reclaim the commons’ can erase the Indigenous presences” (Bergman 2018, 118). The Zionist state uprooted our dreams, stole from us the ability to live, occupied our futures and even our breath. It took from us the ability to dream, of imaging our lives in our homeland. It brought us trauma, generational trauma that has become embedded within our DNA. It has changed not only our landscape but the very essences of Palestine. They not only renamed our lands but changed our future generations. Haunting us of our past, our present and our future. We are constantly living in “air of that time was charged with the call for a return, to old things, to something essential, some part of us that had been left behind in the mad dash out of the past and into the America” (Coates 2015, 37). We constantly embody grief and a call to return.

At 12 years of age is when I saw my first bomb. It lit up the sky in the same way that fireworks do here. Colorful in the distances. Loud except there were no children laughing with excitement here. I was playing at a family friends farm. Running around. When the Zionist state dropped the bomb on Lebanon. Terrified.

I ran around in circles, crying, yelling “I wanna go home,” “I wanna go home.”
My family so normalized to this violence did nothing when I cried and screamed
in terror. My mother laughed at my reaction. They did not react to the sound of it.
I still hate loud sounds. I still hate fireworks, not because they trigger me, but
because to the West they symbolize joy, pride, while children in the east have their
skies occupied by drones set by the west. How do we move beyond normalizing
this violence? How do we learn to find comfort in one another?

Our displacement, exile and dispossession follows us and are passed down genetically. The inability for Palestinians to return to the homeland “has created generations of us that have to adore an unknown beloved; distant, difficult, surrounded by guards, by walls, by nuclear missiles, by sheer terror” (Barghūthī 2003, 62). Palestinians in the diaspora do not know home, outside of some romanticized version of the homeland; “the long occupation has succeeded in changing us from children of Palestine to children of the idea of Palestine” (Barghūthī 2003, 62). This represents the desire to return but inability to embrace the desire to know Palestine and still be a stranger to it. How does this forever change our being? We have become a “generation of Palestinians strange to Palestine; born in exile and knowing nothing of the homeland except stories and news. Generations who possess an intimate knowledge of the streets of their faraway exiles, not from their own country” (Barghūthī 2003, 62).

“For the generation who had been expelled from their lands. It’s not just liked
this land has been taken from them like this. It’s their memories, it’s their life, it’s
their ancestors, it’s their history, and their emotions. There’s this connection to

the stones, to the soil, to the trees, to the birds, to the animals that they can't have anymore. It's all their life. It's like they take everything from inside you that makes you who you are inside. That is what will create this sadness and anger to resist. Because something is missing-it's continuing, this endless missing to the land. That's where the capacity of sacrificing comes from. The Palestinian revolution started from there, from refugees, from those who lost their land. All the time, it's this revolution, this wood for this fire that inspires the resistances of the people." -Jamal Juma (Desai 2017, 129).

Our memory, space, history and life are forever altered. We are unable to return home or to the past, but the present comes with more death and more occupation. We only have the future to look forward to, but what does the future look like when Gaza is already in unlivable conditions, when our river is dying. Who do we become without our land? Who do we become without home? How do we mourn our losses? How do we grieve when we are not granted that privilege? How do we mourn when our deaths are by the thousands sometimes? How do we remember our martyr's deaths when the assaults are ongoing?

As Judith Butler eloquently writes, "violence against those who are already not quite living, that is, living in a state of suspension between life and death, leaves a mark that is no mark. There will be no public act of grieving" (Butler 2006, 36). There is no act of public grieving for Indigenous people killed in the millions and lands continued to be occupied, there is no act of public grieving when Blacks folks enslaved are still slaughter by the same slave portal, there is no public grieving when children are stolen from

refugees at the border, when refugee are incarcerated, when Black, Brown and Indigenous are incarcerated. There is no public grieving when Palestinians, Iraqis, and Afghans are bombed. The bodies deemed by the west “as dangerous, violent or criminal is politically unqualified, unworthy of being lived, their death is unworthy of being mourned” (Athanasίου 2006, 44). There is no public grieving for the people who I relate to, for the people who I look like, for the oppressed, but the settler state will make up their own independence day to celebrate the genocide of Indigenous people and never forget 9/11. The history of land I grew up is inherently linked to the history of my homeland. My story is connected forever with the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island and with enslavement of Black folks. As Angela Davis shows in her recent book *Freedom is a constant struggle Ferguson, Palestine and the Foundations of movement* suggests “that there are connections between the militarization of the police in the US, which provides a different context for us to analyze the continuing, ongoing proliferation of racist police violence, and the continuous assault on people in occupied Palestine, the West Bank, and especially in Gaza” (Davis 2016, 14). And as Winona LaDuke has previously stated on Facebook that:

euro-americans in the United States can’t talk about Gaza, because we can’t talk about Israel. Because we can’t talk about the fact that the world is not suffering from a Israeli/Palestinian conflict, but that the world is suffering from the fact that Europe has never been able to deal with its ‘Jewish Question’ without some sort of intense barbarity and horror from the Inquisition to the Holocaust. And that Europe, in particular ‘Great’ Britain, the masters of divide and conquer ‘solved’

the problem by supporting the radical, terrorist, extremist Zionists and their mad plan to resettle the ‘homeland.’ We can’t talk about Israel because we can’t talk about Wounded Knee. Because we can’t talk about Sand Creek or Carlisle ‘Boarding School.’ Because we can’t talk about forced sterilization or smallpox blankets or Kit Carson and his scorched earth policy in the Southwest. Because we have Andrew Jackson on our twenty-dollar bill. Because we are one huge settlement on stolen land. We can’t talk about Israel because we are Israel.”

(LaDuke 2012).

My occupation, my families settling on another people’s land, is inherently tied to my displacement, my ability to live on this land as a settler is filled with more mourning and grief of the genocide, violence, enslavement and more dispossession. It is my birth here on Turtle Island, the first in our family away from our migratory homelands. It is the death of grandparents buried on Ohlone lands, away from our homelands. It is the reminder I am not from here nor there. It is in between worlds, in between life and death, and it is in between safety and grief. Our oppression continuously connects us through time and space in the same way that our existences is our resistances.

Years later when I brought up the memory of the bomb to my mother and her reaction. She explained to me that she herself reacted the same exact way I did as a child during Jordan’s Civil War. She yelled in Arabic and ran in a circle crying. My grandmother laughed. No one provided comfort to her either. My grandmother survived the Nakba.

Although we grieve and mourn on our own or within our own communities and in solidarity with one another we dismantle that our lives are not worthy of public grief. Our

lands, rivers, water ways, mountains, and our people are worth more. Grief teaches us that “if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions of our desires” (Butler 2006, 20). We mourn to express the “loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly forever. Perhaps mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation (perhaps one should say submitting to a transformation)” (Butler 2006, 21). Perhaps in our grief and in our mourning and in our joy, we find each other and we find “passion and grief and rage, all of which tear us from ourselves; bind us to others, transport us, undo us, implicate us in lives that not our own, irreversibly, if not fatally” (Butler 2006, 25). The public act of grieving within settler society may not be granted for us, but we can grieve together and foster the cracks within the empire.

Our connections as oppressed people globally are inherently linked and through these connections and the solidarity movements do, I find hope or even joy for our future. It is through Indigenous people, People of Color, Black people, and all oppressed peoples working towards freedom and liberation. A freedom that is built on transformation, vulnerability, love, rage, angry, hatred, grief, and happiness. A freedom that is based in the liberation of all people, all oppressed people and outside of the image we know of statehood and settler colonialism. Our future is the “refusing to get over...shared power might arise from accepting, refusing, hanging on, or letting go. This is the wiggle room of freedom; not the absence of constraint or a do-what-you-like individualism but an emergent capacity to work on relationships shift desires, and undo ingrained habits” (Bergman 2018, 236). It is through oppressed people’s refusal to give up that we

collectively “learn to transform the mechanics of loss into a constantly postponed metaphysics of return” (Said 1986, 150). Our future together in solidarity is how we return to an emergence of the past, present and future, whether in our displacement or dispossession of our lands, bodies and waters we will return. We cannot continue to allow settler colonialism the ability to “to dispossess. We cannot allow our processes, our emotions, or our intelligence to be co-opted and processed into the structure that is root of all of our problems (Simpson 2017, 46). Out of the incarceration that settler colonialism builds upon us, upon our bodies, upon our lands, upon our emotions and upon our water ways. We will return and break free collectively outside of the boundaries they have crafted for us, outside of statehood and borders. We will return to the land, to our waters to who we are and to who we have become.

What is home?

To a displaced person, but finding temporary

Being temporary; Temporary to locations, to lives lived, & to people.

How do you hold onto one another in?

Displacement.

How do I learn to be more than the temporary?

More than wishes of Return.

When life has never taught Us

That home, homeland cannot be home.

When we are told to leave.

Before we ever get a chance.

To return,

Denied entry to the homeland.

But letting strangers in

What is the difference, to a displaced person?

When the stranger is home.

When are always seen:

As the question,

As the temporary,

As the foreigner,

As the exotic,

As the refugee,

As the problem.

Never home enough for here

& Never home for there

Always living in the outside

So, uprooting becomes easier,

Then finding home. & finding home

Within your body for the night

Becomes easier, then finding home.

And leaving you should be easier in the morning, but yearning

For home, for you is constant.

Cause home is nowhere to be found.

Even in your body.

Even in the comfort of you.

Of you knowing me, home is not found.

Home for a displaced person

Is everywhere and nowhere

Lost in the abyss

Of yearning,

Of wising,

Of return,

Returning to you,

To the homeland,

To here,

To there,

To somewhere,

Else than the outside

Of temporary.

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Conclusion: Resurgence, Reclaiming and Returning

“I have a dream, when Palestine is liberated- I’m going to sleep under a tree for three days. I want to smell the soil. It’s not the house. It’s my country. We can build a new house. The important thing is to go back” -Leila Khaled

*This conclusion is my ending thoughts, hopes, dreams and reflections of this process and this journey of both life and home. This master’s program through Humboldt State University has been a violent space for BIPOC from our course work, to the material taught, to the erasure of Indigenous people from the land, which is especially relevant in a program focused on environment and community, to racism and white supremacy embedded in the program. Two other women of color and myself were threatened during this so called educational process and then this same student filed a “no contact order” (university version of a restraining order) upon us after yelling at us in front of the department chair. The department failed to protect us or provide us with an education we deserved. In fact, the university, being an extension of settler colonialism, protected white supremacy and punished us, prevented our ability to move through space, and even silenced us. This order told us that no contact was allowed with this fellow student and we had to switch classes. We could not be in the same space, which even applied to off campus activities and if we failed at following this or the student wanted to claimed we did contact him we would be in “**VIOLATION OF THIS DIRECTIVE [and] MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION WHICH MAY INCLUDE SUSPENSION**”*

OR EXPULSION FROM THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM.”

The emphasis bold and capitalization of the letter is directly how it was written in the restraining order we received. White Supremacy and settler colonialism are embedded within institutions in the united states of amerikkka. The university does not care nor has any intention of protecting Black, Indigenous, or People of color. Our voices were erased, ignored and we were vilified and stereotyped as ruptures in the program. We were looked at as individual problems in order to protect institutional racism. This space, department, and university is a violent space. All the while at the same time, I have been writing this through a global pandemic, climate change, the continued genocide of both Black and Indigenous people, the ongoing theft of my peoples lands and water, and family health issues. My own personal experience should never be separated from my writing, it is constantly interconnected. Therefore, I am including this part of story because it is necessary in understanding the complexities of this writing process. In conclusion, this thesis is my hopes for this world and letting my voice be heard, because “you can try to avoid us but it’s pointless you can never avoid the voices of the voiceless.” (Lowkey 2009, Voice of the Voiceless)

This is not a conflict. Do not call it that. This is about a colonizer and the colonized. The occupier and the occupied. The settler and the settled. This is an Indigenous struggle for land. Land itself is life. Language is powerful. The words that have historically been used to talk about Palestine/Zionist state are words that place them on equal playing fields such as conflict, war, and tensions. These words neutral, objective words attempt to discuss them as equal but create a mirage. Conflict hides the land theft, the genocide,

displacement, the refugees, the borders, the wall, the militarized checkpoints, the stolen water, the incarceration of our people and rivers. Conflict hides the fact that Zionist state has one of the strongest militaries in the world. Language is powerful, we can use it to show the reality of the situation or we can hide it all. However, I believe it is important to discuss the truths and name power for what it is. Do not call racism, violence, state sanctioned violence, genocide, displacement, land theft as a conflict, do not label them as tensions or ruptures. These are acts of violence and one side typically has more power. Give reality to those power dynamics. Name them for what they are, which so often in a language of academia used to hide the truth. The truth is that our institutions are established with a foundation of racism, on the theft, genocide, and enslavement of both Indigenous and Black folks. Part of decolonizing the world we live in is decolonizing the ways in which we discuss violence, since if we never talk about the violence in relation to power, violence will continue to affect people's everyday lives.

Dates and numbers constantly haunting my life. Dates imprinted into my memory and numbers bring about memories that I did not even know lived within me. Triggered.

Cannot see the number 48 without think of our Nakba. Numbers are not just numbers; people lost their lives. They are more than just a number, but here I am obsessing over numbers and dates.

1948, 1967, 1993, 2000, 2006, 2014.

1948: they stole my grandmother's home in Ramle

1967: they occupied my father's land in Rafidi

1993: the year I was born but was also the beginning of the 'peace talks'

The peace talks lead to more Zionist settlements in Palestine, more land theft, the largest land theft since 1967. Peace stole more of our land.

2006: Gaza becomes the largest open-air prison, Israel puts a complete blockade on it, they control how much food is let inside.

14 years later and they are still in blockade. Still locked up.

2014: Known as Operation protective edge in which Israel killed 2,200 Palestinians in Gaza in 50 days during Ramadan.

Dates and Numbers constantly float through my newsfeed, I cannot escape the dead. The numbers. The names. Their ages. As revolutionary Leila Khalid states “at school we used to go on demonstrations, always, on three dates. Even when we were very young, we learnt the 15th of May, the 2nd of November, and 29th of November. November 2nd was the Balfour declaration and the 29th was the UN resolution and partition of Palestine” (Irving 2012, 17 2012). It becomes an obsession, a constant thing to keep checking. The irony of all of this, as I sit and attempt to write this thesis, we in March of 2020 are in the middle of a pandemic. Dates and numbers yet again haunt my life. I wake up every day to check the amount of new cases of the coronavirus in the world, here on Turtle Island, and in Palestine. Terrified, afraid of it spreading in Gaza, in the largest open-air prison in the world, it will spread like wildfire, like the wildfires burning Indigenous lands here. The settler states look indistinguishable. One state destroys the coronavirus tests, so the virus can continue to spread, while the other settler states lets the land burn, letting people choke on the burning landscape. Both are killing people they deem undesirable of life. Black men and women gunned down. Indigenous men and women gunned down.

Palestinian men and women gunned down. All by state sanctioned violence. Women, children, men locked up behind bars. Women sterilized. These settler states are indistinguishable from one another.

There are so many more numbers and dates that can be discussed, but these are the ones that greatly affected and shaped my life from before I ever came to be and have determined my family's faith. These dates remind me of how powerless, we are in this world. As much as we want control over our lives, there is so much I am unable to control. Its humbling in a way, a reminder of how power, displacement, and violence continue to play such a large part in my life. However, at the same time it is unfair that some people can maintain control over so much of their lives. How their power and privileges give them access to feeling like they are in control of their own destiny.

Incarcerated people need to be freed in both Gaza and in every other prison in the world, in the same way we need the removal of Dams. Freedom must come, liberation must come, but how does it come when there is an occupation and a pandemic? How do we imagine freedom, when death is so close? When uncertainty is around every corner? And to be honest, I ask myself everyday what is the point of this, when people are dying? *In the same way that my father falls asleep to the news and wakes up to it. Death is constantly around. When your cousin at 16 dies in the West, you wonder if it would have been the same faith if we were living under the occupation within our homeland. Everything about our displacement goes back to our displacement. Death outside of the homeland still reminds us of how we cannot lay rest upon our own lands.*

They took from us the ability to see what we could have been. The creation of Zionist state “forced us to remain with the old. That is its crime. It did not deprive us of clay ovens of yesterday, but of the mystery of what we would invent tomorrow” (Barghūthī 2003, 69). It deprived an entire people of how our lives could have been in the homeland. It took in part the ability for us to live, since land it is life. The Zionist state uprooted our dreams, stole from us the ability to live, occupied our futures and even our breath. It took from us the ability to dream, of imaging our lives in our homeland. It brought us trauma, generational trauma that has become embedded within our DNA. It has changed not only our landscape but the very essences of Palestine. They not only renamed our lands but changed our future generations.

How does one move forward in exile? When the homeland is where one desires to be, but cannot return? My life in a constant state of transit. Home. How does one begin to imagine it? We are as Palestinian “very much a person in transit: suitcase or bundle of possessions in hand, each family vacates territory left behind for others, even as new boundaries are traversed, new opportunities created, new realities set up. It could even be argued that we are too mobile and too adaptable” (Said 1986, 130). I move across the state, across the united states with no attachment to space. My family growing up in a constant state of here and there. Cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, constantly living with us and leaving us, uprooting, and returning over again. Traveling past these artificial borders. Family displaced to everywhere from Italy, to Australia, to Latin America, to Canada, to Egypt.

What does it mean to imagine a new world, when you cannot even access your homeland? How do we decolonize, when even the concept of decolonization has become colonized? How do we move forward? How do we imagine a new world where our rage, and our anger has not been colonized? Has not been stolen and silenced? How do we reimagine when we suppress our feelings around violence? How do we tell our stories, when our voices are silenced?

The voice of the voiceless will always find ways to haunt the ears of the oppressor.

Our emotions dammed up to be adaptable, to survive outside of the homeland. Our emotions shoved down, so that we can watch the news and not cry every day. Dammed up behind walls, guns, checkpoints, and soldiers interrogating us on our destination. The destination that we have no choice in but are now on a journey to home. To return. We not only pass down our traumas, we also pass down hope to each generation. Hope, that one day we will return. Return to a liberated homeland. To a homeland where are people are not incarcerated, where our lands can be tended to again and our rivers undammed and able to return their normal migration patterns, and finally to refill the Dead Sea. Return means more than a building to Indigenous people, it means to be able to return to a way of life. Our lands restored. Our rivers flowing freely once again.

We will continue to fight, and our martyrs will live on in our memories. We will continue to hope. From the river to the sea Palestine will be liberated one day, and we will return to our land. To hopefully one day a Palestine without borders. A home for all of Palestine's grandchildren with sovereignty to our land. A land that will sustain us once again and rivers will fill up with the joy of our tears. It is hard to imagine a new world

without the liberation of all Indigenous people. It becomes impossible in my mind that the world will change until Indigenous people are given sovereignty over their own lands again. I honestly believe Indigenous liberation is at the center of imagining a new world and until we liberate all homelands, the colonization of space, of land, and of water will continue through settler designed carceral geographies.

Hope is how we continue. Hope is the maintaining our identity. Hope is my mother teaching me of our balad. That our land is stolen. That is this not home. Hope is having our family keys past down generation after generation. Hope is our stories. Hope is remembering. Hope is how we keep strong. Hope is our refusal; “it is about refusing colonial domination, refusing heteropatriarchy, and refusing to be tamed by whiteness or the academy...refusal is an appropriate response to oppression” (Simpson 2017, 33). As Said stated we will “reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land” will decolonize the land you stole and rename our worlds. We will return. From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free. Our rivers will yearn and fill up once more. We will undam the damage to our lands and unlock our homes once again. Learn how to craft, cultivate, and live within our homelands again. We will relearn and our land will relearn us. This process will look different than before, but it will happen. We will not depend on the occupier or their ways, we will craft new ones that do not depend on the colonizer rather we will continue crafting and building on the “inter/national interconnectedness that has been growing between Black, Palestinian, and Native Liberation efforts” (Baldy). As Edward Said best put it “survival in fact is about connections between things” (Said 1993, 336).

“How did I sing for my homeland when I did not know it? Should I be praised or blamed for my songs? Did I lie a little? A lot? Did I lie to myself? To others? What love is it that does not know the beloved?” -Mourid Barghouti



Figure 17 Picture I took in Jerusalem, my mother's home/land in 2013

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