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ON SOLIDARITY DELEGATIONS

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# Roundtable

## ON SOLIDARITY DELEGATIONS



AHMAD ABUZNAID, PHILLIP AGNEW, MAYTHA ALHASSEN,  
KRISTIAN DAVIS BAILEY AND NADYA TANNOUS

*Delegations of Black revolutionary leaders to the Middle East were a prominent feature of Black-Palestinian transnational solidarity at the height of the worldwide revolt against imperial domination in the decades following World War II. Though they never ceased, delegations have become a critical feature of solidarity practices once more. Unlike their historical predecessors, today's delegations are no longer organized in collaboration with the official organizations of the Palestinian national movement but between individuals and/or social justice organizations. In addition, the delegations are no longer unidirectional, as they now encompass visits by activists from Palestine and other "Palestinian geographies" in the Middle East to the United States. Finally, recent delegations have included one by indigenous youth to Palestine and several from the African continent to the Middle East. This roundtable, featuring leading organizers of recent delegations, aims to reveal the ruptures and continuities of a historical legacy. We intend for this roundtable to serve as an archive and a site of knowledge production.*

AHMAD ABUZNAID: I consider the work that the delegations have done to be both a continuation and an evolution of critical work done in the past. While earlier iterations of Black-Palestinian transnational solidarity (BPTS) were notably anti-imperialist, today, there is a new dominant discourse that draws on the framework of U.S.-based racism, Jim Crow, the civil rights movement, integration, apartheid, and boycott, as well as references to the occupation of Ferguson and the Movement for Black Lives. There is still an anti-imperialist thrust to the movement, one that we need to strengthen, but we are connecting our struggles on slightly different grounds. For instance, in 2016 the Dream Defenders participated alongside Donkeysaddle Projects and others in leading community conversations across the United States after the performance of the play *There is a Field*, based on the story of the murder of seventeen-year old Aseel Asleh by Israeli police in October 2000. Participants in those talk backs tended to delve deeply into subjects such as racism, police brutality, and other forms of state-sanctioned violence all connected through Asleh's story.

Our delegations have been extremely useful in establishing shared analysis, strengthening relationships, and providing opportunities for collaboration and more, but there have been several real challenges as well. Funding is always an issue—we simply do not have enough funding to

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take all of the people we need to take to Palestine, nor do we have enough funding to fully support the grassroots organizing that goes along with the delegations. Not only is funding limited, or at times unavailable, doing this kind of work can actually be detrimental to obtaining funding. The Dream Defenders and others who have taken a vocal stand on Palestine have basically paid a tax, and not a light one. And this tax is not just financial; it includes sustained and sometimes vicious attacks from the right wing, Zionist institutions, and even allied or mainstream members of the Democratic Party. Stokely Carmichael referenced some of this when discussing the downfall of the Student National Coordinating Committee (formerly the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC]). Those who have persisted on the path paved by the Black radical tradition knew the consequences they would endure for standing with Palestinians.

There has also been a very strong political price to pay for saying anything critical of Zionism. Historically, this surfaced in the case of Andrew Young, who guided the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was a close confidant of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Young later served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations (UN) under President Jimmy Carter, but he was fired just days after meeting with officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). In more recent years, we have seen state delegate and former Florida state senator Dwight Bullard lose his primary race in Florida after participating in a delegation, with attack ads in his district stating that he supported terrorism. In the 2018 gubernatorial race, Governor-elect Ron DeSantis accused Democratic candidate Andrew Gillum of anti-Semitism because of his association with the Dream Defenders. Gillum lost to DeSantis by fewer than fifty thousand votes. Similarly slanderous attacks were recently directed at Marc Lamont Hill,\* leading to the termination of his contract as a commentator with CNN. Hill's case probably provided the best example of the movement rallying around in support (including key media players behind the scenes) and stifling the attacks after the initial outcry. We have to continue to get better at preparing for and reacting to these attacks, or at least get better at navigating them strategically.

Translating the delegations' trips to action has been something of a challenge. We have seen delegates return to record music, create art, or write poetry infused with Palestine justice and solidarity themes. Delegates have written think pieces, spoken on panels, led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns in their communities; they have spoken at the UN, organized petitions, protested both in the West Bank and the United States, and more. We have even had delegates go on to sponsor and lead other delegations. We have also been able to do more with groups on the ground in Palestine. In 2016, we hosted two Palestinian women from Birzeit University's Right to Education campaign at our six-week summer freedom school program for organizers of color. Our delegations have featured a similar makeup since the start: they continue to be primarily Black, but we have also been committed to bringing on Latinx and indigenous individuals from a variety of professions and paths. We continue to explore the role that artists can/do play, as we believe that the arts are a transformative means of organizing. One change for us has been developing a clearer plan for post-delegation involvement. Many people are sympathetic to Palestine but often struggle to find the proper vehicle for involvement. We think the network we are creating with former delegates will help create that vehicle.

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\* Marc Lamont Hill is a cocurator, along with Noura Erakat, of this *JPS* special issue. –Ed.

PHILLIP AGNEW: Our first Palestine delegation changed everything for each of us on every level. The delegation really forced me to see the many ways that I had become numb as an organizer, how I had grown accustomed to many forms of repression within the United States: for example, the concept of settlement expansion and its role in Israel's political project to dispossess the Palestinians of their land, force them to move, and kill them in the process if need be. To me, that was analogous to what in the United States is benignly called "gentrification." When I reflected on the trip, I was really struck by the power of language and its ability to rebrand brutal realities as seemingly anodyne or less egregious facts. Being in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and seeing how entire neighborhoods, and even cities such as Jerusalem—as well as large swaths of land, including parts of the region that belong to other states—are being seized by settlers with state backing laid bare for me how the same political project is unfolding in the United States.

What I witnessed on the delegation has really stuck with me. Of course, we were aware of the dangers of traveling: the possibility of detention at the border(s), the potential for physical and/or verbal harassment wherever we went, the prospect of being separated from our guides. Still, in very fundamental ways, we were wholly underprepared for the experience. There were the more obvious displays of dehumanization: the Israeli settler on his morning jog with his long rifle strapped to his back, the checkpoints literally splitting in two what were once neighborhoods and homes, the military installations encroaching on holy sites. Still, what remains etched in my mind are what appear as "lesser" offenses but belie deeper evil: the nets above our heads in Hebron to prevent the spit, urine, and feces that Israeli settlers direct at Palestinians walking below from reaching their intended targets; the miles of shuttered Palestinian shops; the children stopped and frisked as though it were routine. I was also struck by the level of Israeli state surveillance and monitoring, and by the way in which the Israeli army had perfected the occupation regime (U.S. police departments could only hope to emulate them, which is why so many U.S. police go to Israel for training). In many ways, I think that Israel in the oPt represents what the future looks like in the United States; it is a model of a totalitarian or police state regime whose courts are run by the military and whose law is military law. Under the Trump administration, such conditions are being all the more accelerated. This became clear to me during and after the delegation traveled to Palestine—in that regard, Israel was not only a window, but a mirror.

Being in Israel/Palestine, I was also struck by how quickly Black organizers clung to their Americanness. There was just a level of confidence that we felt moving around the country and in our exchanges with the Israeli military. We felt that we could stand up and say whatever we wanted. There was an assumption that we enjoyed a certain level of protection from abuse as Americans. This was the first time I'd ever felt that level of attachment to the United States as a nation-state. Whether or not we admitted it, we knew (and hoped at the time) that the Israeli state would protect us should something "bad" happen. This was a big departure from our posture in the United States and one that we're still unpacking.

Ahmad Abuznaid deserves all of the credit for the Dream Defenders' deep commitment to ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine. A cofounder of the organization and a native of Jerusalem, Ahmad single-handedly inspired us to organize solidarity delegations. Though our politics compel our solidarity, our organizational commitment to the struggle of Palestinians is deeply rooted in our very personal connection to Ahmad and to the Palestinian people we have

met through him. While some of our members were grounded in a strong internationalist outlook, and all of us had some understanding of how U.S. policy affected the rest of the world, our analysis deepened exponentially through travel. We also became aware of the long history of Black American solidarity with Palestine and came to appreciate the importance of, and our responsibility for, standing with Palestinians against the State of Israel, not solely because of that history but because of the absence of a truly international lens in both the theory and practice of our liberation movement's current iteration.

Like others in the United States, I had been heavily courted by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in college. I also grew up within a religious tradition that spoke of Israel, and the "children of Israel," in the highest of terms. Thus, for me, Israel was the object both of fascination and great admiration—admittedly shallow and based on a very particular reading of biblical scripture. For the better part of my life, the U.S. narrative regarding the State of Israel was simply common sense. That is why Ahmad's commitment to educating and politicizing me later in life was critical. Educating ourselves as activists, we found that the Black Panthers, SNCC, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and notable figures like Carmichael and Huey P. Newton, had all been unequivocal about the liberation of Palestine. In a way, we felt behind both in terms of the present global context and vis-à-vis the generations that came before us. We really didn't need to do anything new, as they had already trodden and blazed this trail. We just needed to follow in their footsteps.

There is a faction of the Black Lives Matter movement that is concerned with our support for Palestine and specifically questions our stance on the grounds that there is widespread anti-Black racism in Arab communities. My view is that this refusal of solidarity with Palestinians is not based on a commitment to the local or the domestic; rather it is spurred by hearing about, or maybe peripherally experiencing, anti-Blackness perpetuated by the Arab community in the United States. While the conversation around anti-Blackness is an important one, it does not supersede the duty to stand with Palestinians against Israel's colonial reality. Not doing so would have debilitating effects for the global justice movement.

With a perversion of identity politics and what has been called "Afro-pessimism" as the determining factors of strategy and solidarity, our movement has become very insular in recent years. Black people who live in other parts of the world are tired of African Americans dominating the conversation about the Black experience. We have become myopic, narrowly focused on domestic issues, and averse to engaging in many global struggles because of the perverse notion that other people are anti-Black. This myopia has had devastating effects on our ability to develop radical practices and legitimate strategies for victory against a truly global neoliberal, white supremacist empire.

MAYTHA ALHASSEN: I usually prefer the term "Afro-Arab engaged witnessing" to BPTS as it encompasses the experiences of Afro-Palestinians. Our imaginary around BPTS should extend to those affected by and tied to it in the rest of the region commonly referred to as the Middle East/North Africa or MENA. In insisting on an Afro-Arab geography called Northeast Africa, I reinvoké an alternative cartography mapped by John Henrik Clarke and Carmichael. In my research, I offer "engaged witness" as a framework to think through a mutually animated practice

of witnessing and testifying. Although “Afro-Arab” doesn’t capture the specificity of Palestine, it acknowledges that support for Palestinians involves a critical anti-Zionist position that requires addressing the tentacles of Zionism in the entire region. U.S. Black radicals traveled to the region during the 1960s and 1970s, and in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Even Black moderate politicians traveled to neighboring countries like Lebanon and Syria to gain a better understanding of Zionism’s geographic implications. There, they met with the PLO and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Such travels to what I like to call “Palestinian geographies” produced radical interventions. The reaction to the Young affair—the forced resignation of the first Black American ambassador to the UN for meeting with a PLO representative—ushered in a new era of Black engaged witnessing of Palestine. The delegations of the 1970s and early 1980s involving prominent members of the Congressional Black Caucus might be interpreted as “moderate” political interventions, but they constituted the first time (and still remain the only time) that U.S. politicians serving at the federal level experienced Palestinian geographies without invoking a “both sides” narrative or visiting Israel.

We have also forgotten the crucial role women played in transnational solidarity work. The connective tissue linking Malcolm X’s anti-Zionist politics with the bold political intervention of SNCC in 1967 revolves on the praxical axis of Ethel Minor’s political education and Third World organizing history. A former Nation of Islam (NOI) member who followed Malcolm to build the Organization of Afro-American Unity after the “shattering” with the NOI, Minor joined SNCC following Malcolm’s assassination. As SNCC’s communications director, she organized a politically radical reading study group that included literature critiquing Zionism, influencing the positions of SNCC and of Carmichael on Israel and the oPt. As the editor of SNCC’s newsletter, *The Movement*, Minor defended the highly controversial feature, “The Third World Round-Up: The Palestinian Problem: Test Your Knowledge,” which appeared in the June–July 1967 issue. Indeed, as SNCC’s editor, she made her stance clear in a later editorial subtitled “SNCC Is Partisan,” in which she wrote: “We question the motives of those Americans who oppose American militarism and support Israeli militarism . . . who cry out against the napalming of Vietnamese and consider the napalming of Arabs ‘necessary.’ . . . You who denounce black violence for liberation and support Israeli violence for conquest are in a trap.”<sup>1</sup> SNCC suffered financially for their public advocacy of Palestinian liberation and their denunciations of Zionism, with donors pulling their funding following the aforementioned issue of *The Movement*.

There are many other examples of the critical role women played in nourishing BPTS and organizing solidarity delegations. These include: the signing by Ella Collins (Malcolm’s half-sister) and Grace Lee Boggs of the 1970 statement by the Committee of Black Americans for Truth about the Middle East, titled “An Appeal by Black Americans against United States Support for the Zionist Government of Israel”; June Jordan’s poetic reflections on her travel to Palestinian geographies in Lebanon in the 1980s, a trip that was facilitated by Barbara Lubin, Jewish American founder of the Middle East Children’s Alliance; the organization of a Black August concert by Malcolm X Grassroots Movement members to raise money for the Palestinian town of Jenin in 2002; the delegations that Nancy Mansour began organizing in

2007 with her inaugural Existence Is Resistance trip in 2009, which brought hip-hop artist M-1 from Dead Prez to Gaza and the West Bank; the co-organizing by historian and Black Radical Congress member Barbara Ransby of a delegation to “occupied Palestine” of “indigenous and women of color feminists”<sup>2</sup>—which included scholars Angela Davis, Gina Dent, and Beverly Guy-Sheffall—who called for divestment from Israel upon their return; the decision of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Alice Walker to join the Freedom Flotilla II to Gaza in 2011; the Dorothy Cotton Institute Palestinian/Israeli Nonviolence Project, a delegation of leaders from the civil rights movement (including King associate Dorothy Cotton), which traveled to East Jerusalem and the West Bank in partnership with the Interfaith Peace Builders in 2012; and the January 2014 Carter Center delegation to Palestine, curated by filmmaker dream hampton.

One of the limitations of the traditional delegation model is that it does not have sustained engagement built into its blueprint, nor do we usually imagine the delegation’s work beyond the visit itself. We haven’t sufficiently addressed delegations’ pre- and post-visit experiences, which should include political education and organizing strategies to link movements. We need to reimagine the delegation as a longer engagement than touchdown in the 1948 territories (Israel) or the 1967 ones (West Bank and Gaza) and the end of airport interrogation upon returning to the United States.

For the delegation that I organized in 2015, I curated a suggested reading and viewing list that included short, manageable articles and videos in addition to essential reads on the occupation of Palestine. Although we tried to organize a one-day training before our trip to prepare the delegates and provide them with some context (basic history of the region, the Nakba, the framework of settler colonialism, the occupation of the Palestinian territories, and the BDS initiative), we were only able to offer a phone call on how to navigate interrogations upon entry into Israel.

In addition to accounting for the material experience of anti-Blackness in Palestine, a true BPTS movement must radically attend to the complicity of U.S.-based Palestinians and Arabs in systemic structures of anti-Blackness inside the United States. These include: Arab-owned liquor stores in Black neighborhoods; Arab supremacy in U.S. Islamic discourse, including the infiltration of mosques (*masajid*) by religious bodies like the Muslim World League that are sponsored by authoritarian Arab states; lack of rigorous involvement in issue areas important to the Black freedom movement and the Black radical tradition, such as prison abolition; and the questions of state violence represented by police brutality, housing discrimination, voter suppression, and so on. When we ask Black folks to be in solidarity with Palestine, we are asking them to risk being professionally uprooted or aggressively harangued by Zionist groups, to expose themselves to public character assassination, and to have their organizations defunded and consequently suffer the destabilization of their lives and communities.

One of our most persistent challenges has been to counter myopically read capitalism exclusively through U.S. racial hierarchies and theories produced in hegemonic academic departments. Similarly, Arabs I encountered in Lebanon and Palestine were exclusively exposed to U.S. culture’s export of Blackness, and thus were not properly educated on the history of chattel slavery and its afterlives in the United States. In its contemporary iteration, U.S. Blackness travels to “Northeast African” populations through the image of “rich rappers and NBA ballers.”<sup>3</sup> Just as North

Americans have been deprived of an understanding of systems of oppression that inform the Israeli occupation, the material conditions produced through and by the enslavement of Black Americans have been concealed from Arabs as a result of education and entertainment that propagate the dominant U.S. worldview. As an example, on a Black diasporic delegation to meet and build with Palestinians, a frequent question directed to my Black American colleagues was: “Where was your family from before the United States?” A delegate responded, “I wish I knew,” before explaining the cultural, social, and spiritual dispossession that stemmed from the Maafa.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to facilitating arts-based workshops for incarcerated youth at Rikers Island, organizing with Blackout Arts Collective toward prison abolition, and helping to form an anti-racism education group (Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative) and a fund to bail out Muslims in pretrial detention (Believers Bail Out), I have found some of the most fulfilling work in the service of BPTS to be the Black freedom movement political education I’ve been able to impart to my parents, family members, and other Arabs in the diaspora. When my father shared a YouTube clip with me titled “Malcolm X on White Liberals” and my mother began reading Patrisse Cullors’s *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir* and asking me poignant questions nightly about the Black American experience of state-sanctioned terror, that’s when it was clear to me that the most enduring BPTS work is perhaps within our most intimate spaces.

KRISTIAN DAVIS BAILEY: One of the guiding goals of the delegations I’ve organized has been to fill in some of the gaps within existing solidarity efforts. This has meant organizing visits *from* Palestine to sites of Black struggle in the United States, and *to* Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, with the latter including Africans from the continent.

The first set of delegations, in November 2014 and April 2016, were part of the Right to Education tour (R2E) sponsored by the U.S.-based National Students for Justice in Palestine, in conjunction with the R2E campaign at Birzeit University in Palestine. The first tour took place just three months after the August 2014 police murder of Michael Brown Jr.—a Black teenager from Ferguson, Missouri—and the subsequent uprising that was responsible for the resurgence of Black solidarity with Palestine. We started the tour in St. Louis, Missouri in order to give the Palestinian students a brief orientation to racism and resistance in the imperial United States, and for them to see how Palestinian activists in St. Louis stood in solidarity with the Black struggle.

On their first full day of the delegation, the students attended a vigil and rally for VonDerrit Myers Jr., an eighteen-year old Black person killed by police on 8 October 2014. Local organizers were elated to learn that there were people from Palestine to support them; the experience immediately shattered the Palestinian students’ sense that theirs was an isolated struggle. “I felt like we share the same struggle,” then-engineering student Mahmoud Daghlas told me. “We share the same movement, we share the same fight against one system and one regime. In Palestine, we have the Israeli occupation that is fully supported by the U.S. government [which] oppresses social [justice] movements in the United States. To see that eye to eye was really, really good.”<sup>5</sup>

Between the two R2E tours, students gathered with activists: in St. Louis and also in Detroit, where they met Boggs; in Hawaii, where they spoke at an event alongside Davis; and in Florida,



where they met with the Dream Defenders. Two Palestinian students from the 2016 tour also visited the Pine Ridge Reservation in North Dakota.

After moving on from student organizing and cofounding Black for Palestine (B4P),<sup>6</sup> I began to look to Lebanon as a site of engagement with the Palestinian struggle. B4P views the refugees' right of return as central to justice for Palestinians and holds that to advocate effectively for their return requires cultivating direct relationships with refugees. We wanted to ensure that the resurgence of Black-Palestinian solidarity extended to Palestinians living in exile, who are isolated both from their nation and from the international solidarity movement in the West.

In 2017, we attempted to send volunteers from Kenya and Zambia to a sports camp for Palestinian youth in Lebanon, but only one B4P representative from Brooklyn was able to get into the country because of the Lebanese government's racist visa policies, especially towards non-Westerners. In March 2018, I led a B4P delegation of fifteen organizers to Lebanon. While most of us were the descendants of enslaved Africans, the delegation also included Diné (Navajo) as well as Arab American and Mexican American comrades, in addition to individuals from South Africa and Zambia. It was important for us to build relationships with Africans from the continent in our practice of internationalism and solidarity. We visited youth centers in Baddawi and Burj al-Barajneh camps and met with officials of the Lebanese Communist Party who provided context on local and regional anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles.

Delegations face a number of challenges: limited understanding of our respective contexts; limited time to build relationships, whether between delegates or across geographical groups; the one-time and unidirectional nature of the engagements that tend towards "bearing witness"; and finally, changes tend to occur on an individual level, and only occasionally on an organizational level.<sup>7</sup> Developing sustainable actions or next steps from trips is another difficulty.

One final challenge is in how our struggle is narrated and received: do we present ourselves as "Black" or "New Afrikans"? Are we struggling for sovereignty, equality, or something else? Do the everyday Palestinians that encounter us know of our struggles in the United States and see us as comrades against colonialism and imperialism or just as privileged Americans touring the camps? How does our U.S.-centrism mute the struggles of African comrades or inhibit connections between Africa and Palestine?

I believe the key to moving beyond some of these limitations is to build organizational relationships that give rise to longer and recurring visits, ideally allowing smaller groups of people to live in and volunteer with communities under struggle. A multidirectional project mirroring that of SNCC's 1964 Freedom Summer in Mississippi comes to mind, where dozens of people could spend months integrated in communities like Detroit, Michigan and Jackson, Mississippi; Johannesburg, South Africa and Nairobi, Kenya; as well as in refugee camps across Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine, working on projects that are empowering for the wider community. In the United States, the impact of the Freedom Summer not only reverberated through the Black movement, it directly shaped the New Left, with participants going on to form the free speech and antiwar movements.

It is my belief and aspiration that creating the conditions for meaningful cross-pollination between and across African and Palestinian struggles will lay the groundwork for new transnational alliances and movements.

NADYA TANNOS: As diasporic Palestinians in North America, many of us are unable to return home; our land is not yet liberated, our very exile a result of ongoing Zionist colonization of Palestine. In the United States, a carved-up piece of a larger Turtle Island,<sup>8</sup> we do not passively exist in diaspora; we are living on other peoples' lands. Even if we are here as arrivants—people who were not part of the original violence of colonization but who came to and remained in settler colonies—we are an indigenous people with a land-based identity residing in other indigenous peoples' lands. We do so, not through their own sovereign structures, not by forming agreements and co-community, nation to nation or community to community, but through the institutions and structures of settler-colonial states such as the United States and Canada.

In this light, we have a responsibility to support the calls for liberation of the peoples whose lands we are on. This means engaging in a praxis of decolonization, legitimizing the popular leadership of our indigenous siblings, and following their lead to transform power and take back control of their lands. Materially, settler-colonial nations around the world build and depend on one another to occupy and ethnically cleanse indigenous populations. Counteracting and disrupting such power constellations, with a view to breaking them down, is the responsibility and directive that we carry as Palestinians in North America.

When our Palestinian delegation arrived at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in 2016 and asked for permission to stay, we were met with so much joy and so many tears. We learned a history that had not been broadly taught to us: some of the Lakota elders said that they had not seen Palestinians since the 1970s and 1980s when delegations had visited Standing Rock and other reservations of the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota. One elder woman mentioned that a representative of the PLO who had visited them helped craft the language of their petition for rights and recognition as a sovereign nation to the UN—a history that author, academic, and cofounder of The Red Nation, Nick Estes, currently documents and teaches.<sup>9</sup> These elders were overjoyed that we had returned.

The visit brought our long tradition as co-conspirators into the light. Just as BPTS belongs in the context of Third World internationalism and ongoing joint struggle, Palestinian solidarity with indigenous peoples is part of the same history, and comes from a rich tradition, that precedes the recent revival of Palestinian delegations to Black Mesa or Standing Rock. Palestinians in North America often do not know the visceral, daily, and material realities of our native siblings on reservations or in urban and rural communities, nor have we acquired the tools to distinguish between nations' histories and current conditions within the diversity of native nations. To be invited to stay in our siblings' homes and connect firsthand builds trust and familiarity, and it provides the opportunity for real revolutionary change through relationship building and knowledge sharing. After Standing Rock, some of our Palestinian Youth Movement chapters continued to build on these initiatives, realizing that we needed to further develop our analysis of decolonization and follow it up with a set of actions.

Witnessing the recent delegations of Black comrades to Palestine and a new wave of people-based power has been inspiring, as has speaking with organizers and individuals who have returned from Palestine. I see both the Black and indigenous delegations to Palestine as part and parcel of the same concerted effort to build and reaffirm anti-colonial struggle and to challenge U.S. and Zionist hegemony. Perhaps, just as the Ferguson uprising led to a revival of Black

delegations to Palestine and set off a new wave of Black-Palestinian joint struggle, native nations and communities taking a stand against the corporate desecration of their land at Standing Rock made their own resilience highly visible to the rest of us and contributed to the revival of Indigenous-Palestinian joint struggle.

In preparing for the indigenous youth delegation, one of our greatest concerns was how to attend adequately to instances of post-traumatic stress disorder relapse among Palestinian, Native American, and Native Hawaiian delegates on the ground. We believed this was a real risk, since Palestine is an active site of colonization and therefore a potential trigger of ancestral trauma. Indeed, we found that Zionist violence in Palestine paralleled experiences and stories of colonial violence for our indigenous delegates, some so nearly identical that they provoked visceral reactions, including shock, tears, verbalization, and silence. What we did not realize was that witnessing these violences and experiencing them together—while connecting with local communities of Palestinians and with each other—also brought about a deep healing and reassurance to all members of the delegation in ways that I can hardly put into words, an ultimate sense that we will not only endure colonization but outlive it. On the delegation's last night there, we shared reflections. A striking takeaway for everyone was an awareness of what our ancestors had overcome in order to survive, which made our duty to carry the struggle forward all the more clear to us. The next steps will continue to build on these truths.

Rooting the United States' hegemony in the original violences of settler colonialism can help frame historical and current violence of the United States, both at home and abroad. By unpacking the foundations of oppression, we can also challenge them, and help expand the possibility of indigenous futures and resistance. In other words, if we interrupt the extraction of heavy metals and radioactive substances from under native lands in the United States, and if we stop the testing and housing of weapons on those lands, we simultaneously fight for dignity and debilitate the U.S. war machine. If we, as residents of North America, disturb the stability and very foundations of the United States by demanding reparations and the abolition of the prison-industrial complex; if we curtail U.S. militarism by stunting the recruitment of Black and indigenous populations and others from poor communities to the U.S. armed forces; if we collectively fight, not just for our cultural rights, but for our political rights, we can build power together in ways that include visions for community health and rebuilding. We can cut off the flow of support to Israel, and we can disassemble the U.S. empire, from here. I truly believe that if we engage in co-resistance, we will attain our collective freedom from existing fascism, imperialism, and colonization.

### **About the Contributors**

Ahmad Abuznaid is a Palestinian American attorney, organizer, and advocate. He was born in East Jerusalem and spent parts of his childhood there and in the West Bank, growing up mostly in south Florida. Abuznaid went on to cofound the Dream Defenders after law school and currently directs the National Network for Arab American Communities.

Phillip Agnew cofounded the Dream Defenders in 2012 following the murder of Trayvon Martin. He and his partner, poet Aja Monet, founded Miami's Smoke Signals Studio as a radical community-based artistic space welcoming those invested in using art, sound, and music as a meeting place for transformation and liberation.

Maytha Alhassen, Ph.D., is a historian-anthropologist, journalist, and social justice artist. Her dissertation "To Tell What the Eye Beholds: A Post 1945 Transnational History of Afro-Arab 'Solidarity Politics'" (PhD. diss, University of Southern California, 2017) is currently being transformed into multiple books. She serves on the editorial board of *Feminist Studies in Religion* and is a cofounder of *Believers Bail Out*, a contributor at *The Young Turks*, and a writer for the Hulu series *Ramy*.

Kristian Davis Bailey is a cofounder of Black for Palestine. He has organized two delegations of Palestinians to the United States and a Black-led delegation to Lebanon.

Nadya Tannous is a community organizer born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area (occupied Ohlone territories). She sits on the national executive board of the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), a transnational, grassroots movement of young Palestinians in Palestine and in exile. In November 2018, she co-coordinated PYM's ten-day Indigenous Delegation to Palestine. She holds an MSc in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies from the University of Oxford and is currently on staff at Eyewitness Palestine.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 SNCC, "SNCC and the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *The Movement* 3, no. 9 (September 1967), <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/mvmt/6709mvmt.pdf>.
- 2 Barbara Ransby, "Why We, as Women of Color, Join the Call for Divestment from Israel," *Colorlines*, 13 July 2011, <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/why-we-women-color-join-call-divestment-israel>.
- 3 Author interview with an anonymous source, Los Angeles, CA, July 2018.
- 4 Maafa, also known as the Black Holocaust, refers to the millions of Africans who died during the Middle Passage, the journey of captivity from the west coast of Africa to the shores of the American continent in the transatlantic slave trade. The term means "terrible occurrence" or "great disaster" in Swahili.
- 5 See the students' full reflections in Kristian Davis Bailey, "Building Unity, Wrecking Walls: Palestinians Come to Ferguson," *Ebony*, 14 November 2014, <https://ebony.com/news-views/building-unity-wrecking-walls-palestinians-come-to-ferguson-032>.
- 6 According to its website, "Black4Palestine is an emerging national network of Black activists committed to supporting the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice, peace and self-determination. We seek to integrate our work around Palestine into the global and domestic struggles for Black liberation and human emancipation." See <http://www.blackforpalestine.com/>.
- 7 The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) has maintained consistent support for Black and indigenous struggles in the United States; U.S. laws criminalizing the PFLP prevented us from engaging with the PFLP, and there is no equivalent organization within the Black struggle.
- 8 Turtle Island is a name used by many Native Americans and first nations people, and by indigenous rights activists, to designate the land mass of North America.
- 9 The Red Nation is a coalition of activists, educators, students, and community organizers advocating the liberation of native peoples from capitalism and colonialism. According to its mission statement, the organization "center[s] Native political agendas and struggles through direct action, advocacy, mobilization, and education."