

# WHY PALESTINE MATTERS

## THE STRUGGLE TO END COLONIALISM

### Discussion Guide

Katherine Cunningham

**W**hy Palestine Matters: *The Struggle To End Colonialism* offers a global perspective on the issue of justice for Palestine. In addition to this discussion guide, supplementary educational resources, video clips, and updates designed for home use or a classroom setting are available on a website dedicated to this book. It can be accessed at [WhyPalestineMatters.org](http://WhyPalestineMatters.org). Any and all materials can advance self-directed education and be adapted for use in a group setting.

#### Guidelines for Group Facilitators

*Why Palestine Matters* is intended to open a space for engaging the cross-currents among some contemporary global justice issues through looking at the history and present-day experiences in Palestine. We suggest some important guidelines for facilitating a study group, including:

- Keep the discussion non-judgmental and open to discovery. The goal is to create a safe space for exploring the intersectional dynamics from the chapters for each session.
- Accept experiences of dislocation from one's comfort zone and accept debate on ideas regarding what is normal or standard.
- Focus on collaborative learning, resisting leadership as "the expert" and allow enough time for processing information and responses.
- Affirm the diversity of perspectives with emphasis on how the material is touching hearts and minds. Try using summary statements to help move discussion to the next questions or topics to be considered.
- Incorporate various facilitation strategies to maximize participation, and be flexible if your approach isn't working. If your group is too large for whole group discussions, transition into working in partners, triads, or small groups before coming together as a whole group.

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August 18, 2017. Graffiti artwork, Bethlehem, West Bank.



Ahmad Al-Bazz/ActiveStills

- Have the following materials available: newsprint, easel, markers, index cards, pens or pencils, tape or gum to attach paper to surfaces or a whiteboard.
- Use video clips or sidebar quotes as discussion prompts.

### Suggested Format for Initial Discussion Groups

Tailor the group's format to time available because the quality of learning and interaction on these topics is of greater importance than covering all of the material in the book. This discussion guide is for *an initial run, not a deep dive*, leaving open the possibility of future in-depth topic groups. Most adult groups can commit to 3-4 sessions of 60-90 minutes. Keep the sessions scheduled weekly to maximize energy and commitment to the study. Video clips from WhyPalestineMatters.org can be part of the preparation for the next class along with do-ahead readings.

## SESSION 1: Narratives of domination and displacement through a Palestinian lens

### ASSIGNMENT FOR FIRST CLASS:

*Prior to the first meeting, encourage participants to read the Introduction and Chapter 1.*

### FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

- As the group first gathers, structure brief participant introductions with time to identify personal expectations.
- State course objectives, what the course will and will not cover. The overarching framework is justice, human rights, and international law. By presenting the history and experience of Palestinians as it intersects current global justice issues, the intention is to provide a counterweight to the dominant narrative and to bring attention to information not readily available through other sources. Disclose that for these reasons the book lifts up the Palestinian narrative.
- Set ground rules for discussions, including keeping confidentiality for what is said within the group. Remind your group about this covenant for each session.
- Be supportive in handling these very difficult and disturbing intersections of histories, including personal experiences of participants.
- Promote an atmosphere that encourages participants to express and honor differences in experience and in response to the book, rather than to make assumptions or judgments.
- Make it clear that doing the homework for each session is critical to getting the most from the course, as is showing up for each session.
- Prior to each class, allocate how much time you want to spend on each item. Use the discussion questions as

a guide. Choose what you want to include, and let go of suggested items that may be too time consuming and impede giving other items adequate time. Do not rush through any discussion in an attempt to cover everything.

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. G.J. Tarazi outlines the term “tools of domination” for the parallels he sees as a Palestinian American living with the narratives of his dual homelands.
  - As a group, list some of the inter-connected patterns in the histories he outlines. Evaluate the comparisons he makes.
  - Explore how parallels affected participants, including which contained new ideas, perspectives, or information.
2. Ask each participant to jot down the definition of colonialism, as G.J. Tarazi uses it. Encourage sharing among members of the group.
  - Consider as a group how this shapes the “exceptionalism” of the oppressors and the “dehumanization” of the oppressed.
  - Inquire what is known or imagined about how the oppressor may justify its actions.
3. **Small groups/Personal impact:** Allow ample time for participants to process the personal impact of Chapter 1.
  - Did any of the information in Chapter 1 contradict facts previously understood? How might participants deal with those reactions over the next four weeks? What might the group agree to do as it encounters some of those contradictions?

## SESSION 2: Encountering intersectionality: focusing the lens more closely

### ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 2

*Read Chapter 2. Encourage each participant to make note of the quotes or photos that impact him/her/them most strongly, and to come to class prepared to share and discuss these.*

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Personal impact:** What is this lens of intersectionality?
  - Ask a participant to read aloud the beige box quote (page 20) as a prompt for talking about intersectionality, and in preparation for discussing the last paragraph of the text on page 21.
  - Instruct participants to write down on an index card at least one way that intersectionality contributes to their understanding of human rights and justice. In small groups, share and discuss.
2. **Discussion in pairs:** Consider ways that historically, African American women stand at many intersections/struggles.

This 4-5 session discussion guide is expanded on the website, offering options for additional sessions, stand alone sessions, and for designing your own course by selecting what is most appealing to your group.



The towering 26-foot-high Israeli separation barrier has become a canvas for dramatic protest art and political commentary where it severs Bethlehem from the surrounding environs and nearby Jerusalem. This graffiti highlights the insidious significance of the Balfour Declaration on the occasion of its centennial.

- What does this tell us about the importance of identities in restorative justice? About coalitions of solidarity in advocacy for change?
  - Share with the whole group.
3. **Whole group:** Identifying points of intersection
- Spend 5-7 minutes in silence during which participants individually review all the photos and quotes from page 21-29. Ask each person to explain the personal impact of the photo or quote they identify as most impactful while others in the group listen in silence.
  - Record on newsprint the names of the struggles and the intersections that are pictured.
  - Share any new perspectives that have emerged in light of the oppression and suffering Palestinians and other communities continue to endure.
  - Share additional insights, learning, or reactions.

### SESSION 3: Changing the narratives on cultural theft, distortion, and normalization

#### ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 3

Read Chapter 5. Ask each participant to choose the most important issue to him/her/them to discuss in the session, such as kufiya, appropriation, dialogue, normalization, rebranding, pinkwashing, feminism, and brownwashing. Go to the web site and view Remi Kanazi reciting his poem “Normalize this.”

#### FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Personal impact/Discussion:** Begin the discussion by asking participants to look again at the banner photos on pages 65-67.

- Imagine yourself seeing these banners on a local university campus. How would you describe to a friend the “narrative” of these banners? Include the concepts of rebranding, indigenous, and intersectionality in your description.
- Ask for two volunteers to briefly argue the pros and cons of whether the banners meet the criteria of cultural theft as Steven Salaita defines it when he refers to “the dynamics of Israel’s voracious appetite for anything that can be marked ‘Indigenous,’ which it needs to shore up an ever-tenuous sense of legitimacy”? (page 61) When they are finished, encourage feedback from others in the class.

2. **Discuss:** “normalization”

- What does the term “normalization” mean in the context of colonization? What new understanding does this reflect?
- Given the discussion from Chapter 1, does the quote from performance poet Remi Kanazi and the discussion in the article on page 60 have any new meaning?
- As a class, list events, groups, books, movies, and other initiatives that you would consider examples of normalization. Based on what you are learning, would you support these in the future? What is the reasoning behind your decision?

3. **Small group/whole group:** Ask participants to talk about why and how their choice of issues in this chapter impacted the focusing of their own “lenses.”

**Proposal:** (If this is an option) Before proceeding, ask if the class would like to schedule a fifth bonus session. Discuss and decide.

### SESSION 4: Resistance as a just and moral imperative, now and for the future

#### ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 4

Read Chapter 7. Also read Chapter 4 as background for this discussion. Jonathan Kuttub’s article in the Epilogue can be assigned for either Session 4 or Session 5. As a bonus to enhance study, read the foreword by Richard Falk.



Addie Domske

Affirm the diversity of perspectives in group discussions with emphasis on how the material is touching hearts and minds.

## FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

If this is the final class, add #3 from Session 5. Hard choices may be required about which questions to include in this session. In a 4-session course, consider extending time for the last session. It is important to link learning with action.

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Personal impact:** Find a photo that captures “memory.” Share it with another person. Focus on it while the facilitator reads aloud the quote from Kathleen Christison on page 78 under “Resistance and Solidarity as Hope”: “Although Palestinians have no near-term expectation of achieving justice, . . . they have been able to keep their struggle alive and bring it to wider international attention simply by determinedly maintaining their sense of peoplehood. . . . Memory is the key: it is the seed of resistance, the inspiration for resistance, and the moral underpinning of the struggle.”

2. **Discussion:** As a class, brainstorm together and record on newsprint examples of how memory grounds resistance for Palestinians.

- According to Angela Davis, on page 79, Palestinian resistance is connected to the Movement for Black Lives and the struggle for justice and dignity. She claims that Palestine is at the forefront of the collective struggles toward a “more habitable future” for all people. Discuss arguments that support her claim as well as any pitfalls in her statements.
- Using the examples in Chapter 7, would you agree or disagree that hope and solidarity are linked? What does or does not resonate for you about this assertion?
- How can the language of intersectionality inform and inspire efforts of creative resistance?

3. **Small groups:** Using one or more of the stories of resistance from Gaza on pages 92–93,

- Discuss resistance in light of narratives of colonialism and ethnic cleansing.

4. **Discussion:** Review the definitions of BDS on page 86 (beige box) and the three demands of the BDS movement.

- What strikes you as the intent of the demands? Do the demands seem realistic?
- What do you know about the history and success of BDS initiatives outside of the Palestinian struggle for justice? Describe any personal experience you have had with any other boycott or divestment initiatives.
- On what basis might someone label the BDS movement as antisemitic? What arguments would you make to a friend who described the BDS movement as antisemitic?

- The SRI movement—socially responsible investing—came out of efforts beginning in the late 1960s to dismantle apartheid. Have you experienced or come across SRI in your workplace or community? If so, how?

- Imagine discovering that your company, organization, municipality, or faith-based community was invested in contracts that profit from human rights violations today. On what moral, ethical, or investment grounds would you encourage your group to adopt nonviolent economic measures? What if the violations are against Palestinians?

## 5. **Small groups/whole group:**

In small groups, and then as a whole group, review the options that Jonathan Kuttub proposes on page 96.

- How do these proposals change the narrative of colonization, oppression, and denial of human rights for Palestinians?
- Share thoughtful reactions as well as emotions evoked by the content of Kuttub’s proposals.

## BONUS SESSION 5: Awareness and action

### ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 5

*Read Foreword by Richard Falk.*

## FOR DISCUSSION

1. **Discussion:** Discuss Richard Falk’s Foreword and international law as it impacts on the material in Chapter 1 and throughout the book.

- List violations of international law these actions and struggles represent.
- Suggest policies or actions to repair the failures of domination and to restore justice.

## 2. **Small groups/whole group:**

In small groups, and then as a whole group, review the options that Jonathan Kuttub proposes on page 96.

- How do these proposals change the narrative of colonization, oppression, and denial of human rights for Palestinians?
- Share thoughtful reactions as well as emotions evoked by the content of Kuttub’s proposals.

3. **Small groups:** Consider and share ways you have shown or will plan to show solidarity through supporting resistance actions by Palestinians or other solidarity groups?

- Be as specific as possible.
- Make an action plan of next steps.

4. **Whole group wrap up:** Why concern oneself? What is the value of seeing and knowing? Should we sit on the sidelines or join the struggle?