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Student Resistance and University Repression The Struggle for Decolonial Pedagogy and a Free Palestine

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Abstract

The genocidal campaign in Gaza has been regarded as the worst in modern history. With 30,000 Palestinians murdered including over 10,000 children (a devastating 1% of the population), university political theater and hypocrisy have been abundantly clear. Academic mission statements that repeatedly contend the importance of diversity, equity, decolonization, and justice are being exposed for their hypocrisy and demanded to explain their positions in relation to Gaza. In this manuscript, the authors narrativize their experiences as students at a large public urban university who organized for decolonial educational interventions in a school of education. Students called out the silence of school leadership and the Zionist impulses of university administration. We demanded that the school of education create curricular interventions that teaches future teachers, scholars, and researchers about the long struggle for Palestinian liberation, and how to be in solidarity as educational praxis. We envision methods for building radical study in alignment with principles of self-determination, courageous will-building, and anti-indoctrination pedagogy across K-20 educational settings.



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We narrativize our experiences as students at a large public urban university who organized for decolonial educational interventions in our university's school of education. Amid the intensifying murder of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, students throughout our university called out the silence of school leadership and the Zionist impulses of university administration. More specifically, we demanded that the school of education create curricular interventions that teach future teachers, scholars, and researchers about the long struggle for Palestinian liberation, and how to be in solidarity as educational praxis. We take up this action to raise and expose the contradictions of school and university mission statements that proclaim the necessity of "striving for the well-being of all," while remaining silent on the genocide of Palestinians by Israel¹. Genealogically, we situate ourselves within Black knowledge traditions and political movements that have long narrated the pertinence of Palestinian liberation in the broader framework of revolutionary Black freedom struggle. We learn from the likes of Malcolm X and his 1964 essay "[z]ionist Logic" which notes, "The Israeli [z]ionists are convinced they have successfully camouflaged their new kind of colonialism." and presses the importance of an internationalist struggle against state violence and colonialism. We write from the teachings of Black political movements like the Black Panther Party, who released a statement in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for liberation in 1970 and assert, "We support the Palestinians' just struggle for liberation one hundred percent. We will go on doing this, and we would like for all of the progressive people of the world to join our ranks in order to make a world in which all people can live." (quoted in Peterson-Smith, 2020). June Jordan (1983) penned "Apologies to the people of Lebanon," a poem dedicated to Palestinians displaced and murdered in Lebanon from 1948-1983 that reads as if she were writing about Gaza in the current moment, "They blew up your homes and demolished the grocery stores and blocked the Red Cross and took away doctors to jail and they cluster-bombed girls and boys." (n.p.). The study of Black revolutionary thought and action have been instrumental in narrating the urgency of Palestinian liberation as a revolutionary principle toward an anti-imperialist world (Peterson-Smith, 2016). We write in solidarity and are careful not to analogize or list shared experiences of violence and dispossession as the cement that necessitates coalitional struggle. Rather, we heed Kelley's (2015) analysis of solidarity as being founded on shared principles of radical critique, worldmaking, and liberation as opposed to shared identity and experience. He argues "it is not the condition of captivity that is the basis of solidarity but the critique of captivity from a place of confinement, the shared dreams of liberation, and the mobilizing and planning to fulfill that dream." (p. 85). We join in the struggles on college campuses across the U.S. and take up specific actions in the school of education in efforts to name and resist Palestinian scholasticide, a process that is routinely reproduced in U.S. schools and universities.

Central to our work as liberatory educators is an unrelenting resistance to the colonial project of scholasticide. Professor Karma Nabulsi, an Oxford don and Palestinian expert on the laws of war, coined the term in the context of Israeli assaults on Gaza in 2009 and in response to the attacks on Palestinian students, scholars, and educational institutions dating back to the Nakba of 1948 and the 1982 invasion of Lebanon (SAWP, 2024). The first mention of the term Scholasticide that we were able to trace appears in an article with *The Guardian* written by Ahmad Harouda and Vulliamy where they quote her directly from discussion with her about a 2008/9 Israeli bombing of Palestinian educational structures (Domínguez, 2024). Nabulsi coined the term

¹ In this article, we lowercase the colonial occupying forces of the 'U.S.' and 'Israel', as well as 'Zionist' and 'white' as a racial category to delegitimize their fraught power and assert them as textually miniscule in the writing of this article.

to underscore how studying in schools and universities are an important part to the fabric of Palestinian culture and life in Gaza and the West Bank, and to pinpoint how the extermination of Palestinian knowledges and education structures are central imperatives of israel's colonial power. She notes that "Israel is seeking to annihilate an educated Palestine." (n.p.) We understand scholasticide to be a central tactic of colonial power broadly and situate the american university as an essential structure that continues this brutal attack. Our organizing work was thus occasioned by the loud silencing of Palestinian suffering and the refusal to acknowledge Palestinian scholasticide as an issue of educational equity and justice by our institution generally, and the school of education specifically.

We remain compelled by radical praxis of truth telling and collective liberation struggle. The Indigenous people of Palestine have fought steadfastly for their right to self-determination since the invention of israel in 1948, and the apartheid, colonial carnage, occupation, and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by the israeli government that continues the ongoing Nakba. In fact, Palestinian resistance to colonization dates back to the turn of the 20th century, when British imperial policy made Palestine a site of steady Jewish immigration toward a Jewish state (Erakat, 2020). The relationship between Indigenous and colonizer is one of power and brute force. The colonizing power structure not only works to physically expand its geography through the destruction of physical institutions, but also works to destroy knowledge systems and cultures, replacing them with colonial thought that reiterates domination as common sense, and positions Indigenous peoples as what Edward Said calls "Orientals." Said (1977) teaches us that orientalism is a European project that positions the original peoples of the land as the Other through the physical and epistemic violence of the state. Said is arguing orientalism as Europe's cultural contestant, a lens created by the West that produces an Other to define Europe through a symbiosis of contrasting ideas, experiences, and images (Said, 1977). This colonial project is thus interdependent and sealed into civil society through knowledge production, and lives on academically through the reproduction of its doctrines in state educational institutions. In the case of israel, (Wind et. al., 2024) notes,

Israeli universities have long constrained the right of Palestinian faculty and scholars to investigate the subjects and events most central to the Palestinian experience: the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 and, with it, the mass expulsion, dispossession, and fragmentation of the Palestinian people, thereafter divided into refugees living in the diaspora, those living under Israeli military rule in the OPT, and those living as citizens within Israel's pre-1967 borders. (p. 109)

Thus, the occupation of Palestine is nurtured and sealed through the opposition and punishing of Palestinian knowledge traditions, making scholasticide a central pillar in the continued domination project of the israeli state. The educational work of Palestinian scholars and thinkers must be contextualized as fierce resistance to occupation and the continuation of the fight for self-determination--what Nabulsi (2009) might call the continued creation of "an astonishing history with their stamina, their resilience, their unwillingness to surrender, their luminous humanity" (n.p.). Our work at our institution is not only a fight against u.s. university's fiscal support for israel, but also, recognition of the continued process of Palestinians' ability to educate, build community, nurture one another, and resist physical and epistemic settler colonial violence. We envision methods for building radical study in alignment with principles of self-determination, courageous will-building, and anti-indoctrination pedagogy across u.s. K-20 educational settings.

This paper will map our university's repressive tactics against students who made learning demands in the school of education as an indictment of the university's existence as a tool of colonialism and scholasticide. We reveal the university as a larger genocidal project by examining three formations of repression that our university made against students in solidarity with Palestinians. These formations escalate in succession: from denial and ignorance to enforcement of 'proper channels' and administrative pressure, to violent and direct repression using militarized force. Even as school of education leadership ignores our efforts, the authors close with deep reflections about how we self-determine our educational futures *against* the university and in concert with liberatory educational praxis. We close with implications for educational actors, including student organizers, teachers, and community leaders.

Chance Encounters in the Face of Empire

In 1976, June Jordan penned "I must become a menace to my enemies", an earth-shattering poetic letter to Agostinho Neto, president of The People's Republic of Angola, and still, a relevant liberatory message occasioned by the violent forces of hegemony. She queries, "How many of my brothers and my sisters will they kill before I teach myself retaliation?", issuing a clarion call for oppressed people to wake up and act amid violent nation state attacks. The genocidal campaign in Gaza has been regarded as the worst in modern history. More than one-hundred college student encampments have been organized around the world in response to the unrelenting violence against Palestinians in Gaza. Even less is known about resistance within university academic schools of study. Our struggle began against the school of education, as genocide in Gaza and the West Bank is an educational issue with schools and universities as primary targets of military attacks killing faculty, teachers, and students. In this knowledge, the authors of this article became comrades through a series of repressive experiences in the University of Pittsburgh, particularly the School of Education, one of many organized fields and disciplines entrenching university counterinsurgency and scholasticide.

Chris's introduction to organizing work comes through a set of new experiences that shape his relation to Samuel and the broader framework of critical education. Chris is a Black male graduate student who comes to consciousness through Black feminism and other Black critical theories. He studies Black temporalities and spatiality and became invigorated by such questions based on his lived experience with antiblack violence as a child and an adult. His background and area of study merge Black studies and education studies to examine how structural and ontological antiblackness overdetermines the conditions of possibility for Black people in modernity. The "Critical Histories of Education" graduate seminar was his first time teaching a graduate seminar on his own and is where he met Samuel. In a strange yet exciting overpopulated graduate seminar, Samuel (and a few others) quickly stood out as a deep reader, thoughtful writer, and conscious political organizer. Within the first few sessions, it was clear that Samuel was interested in broader questions of power, political economy, and liberation struggle and actively engaged in course readings and discussions with these pillars at the forefront. Chris aimed to teach with an emphasis on structures of violence and analysis of structural paradigms and maintained a personal responsibility to ground his teaching in an analysis of power, namely, antiblackness, capitalism, and cisheteropatriarchy. The course was designed for students to leave the class with a broader understanding of civil society's normative mechanisms of subjugation so that they could work to fight against them in their schools, communities, and within themselves. Samuel's intellectual curiosity was most rigorously expressed through his writing and was pedagogical for Chris in his

role as instructor. After the escalated genocide of Palestinians took form on October 7th, Samuel began to organize students within the school of education and approached Chris requesting assistance and support, an offer he accepted swiftly. Our organizing and pedagogical work would deepen from this point forward. We were no longer “student” and “instructor” within the structure of the university, but rather, comrades in the fight against its zionist operations and for a liberatory education that aims to equip the oppressed with the knowledge and tools we need in the continued struggle for freedom.

Samuel is a Jewish Pittsburgher whose family has gone to synagogue in Squirrel Hill, the major Jewish population center in Pittsburgh, home to a vast array of different synagogues and ‘secular’ Jewish institutions, since 2006. His family was deeply entrenched in their congregation and community (first Or L’Simcha, which then joined Tree of Life), many times leading parts of the service, joining Jewish service organizations, and being there for others. Jewish education and Jewish values were just as important in his raising as his general education at a public school. The way these Jewish values were imparted was through zionism, with the depiction of the zionist project as the materialization of these values. Samuel entered the university--with its enlightenment and violence in all its entirety--around the same time as the Great March of Return, the nonviolent protests of Palestinians held in Gaza that were responded to with coldblooded murder by israeli forces. Samuel joined the school of education his junior year –the year journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was murdered by Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) soldiers covering a raid—realizing the totality of the colonial education system and the damage it causes to children and to our future as a people. The incoming summer of Samuel’s master’s program in education, Chris and Samuel met. Chris was teaching a course on critical histories in education. Chris genuinely embodied teaching as a practice of freedom and worked to prepare students for critical thinking, deep analysis of social conditions, and encouraging difficult conversations at intersections of race, class, and gender so people would know what is happening in the world and how to make informed decisions as educators. Samuel began his teaching at a predominantly white arts based high school in the history dept, moving to the middle school there. For the last school year, he has been at a predominantly Black and refugee/immigrant population school providing a clear and distinct picture in how schooling environments are constructed around different populations with different intentions.

Critical Education and the Neoliberal University

Formal education institutions are key sites in which the power of the empire manifests, they are the machines of scholasticide. Empire requires the total annihilation of the Indigenous, a complete rewrite of history, and control over the narrative and minds of peoples. This requires total war, a protracted war of subjection on all fronts, ideological and material. This is the context in which we must reflect on our pedagogy and praxis as critical educators. Traditionally, teachers are foot soldiers of this project: trained to teach manipulative and false curricula, promote the myths and honor of the empire, and instill in kids obedience to and fearful acceptance of hierarchy and authority. A critical educator is one who subverts this system, resists it, and counters it with truth in their lives and praxis.

The critical educator is going to be labeled as the outlaw, and later as the hero. We learn this from Basel Al-Araj’s *Exiting Law and Entering Revolution*, where he details how the ‘outlaw’ of society is the blueprint for the revolutionary, having a knowledge set from living on the periphery of an oppressive system by way of being a constant agitator against it. His articulation

of the ‘outlaw’ aptly lays out how a critical educator will be labeled as outlaw and must internalize this as a way of being:

In many cases, the outlaws become figures of agitation in societies that persist in a state of submission, as they are the most capable of existing outside of the system that imposes humiliating conditions on the living. They also possess sufficient knowledge to live and sustain themselves outside of the dominion of unjust law. They set for themselves strict rules that organize their world with just traditions, granting the human being their dignity and the right to live a decent life in return for fulfilling one’s duties. (Al-Araj, n.d, n.p.)

We take up this work as educators in the institution of higher education and step into the position of outlaw and agitator amid a structure that trains professionals and deradicalizes movements. Harney and Moten (2013) have discussed this at length and assert the only possible relationship with the university is a criminal one in which we abuse its hospitality and re-allocate its resources to the oppressed. They situate the university as a co-opting and counterinsurgent tool of the state that has collapsed critical education into professionalism. They assert,

A professional education has become a critical education. But one should not applaud this fact. It should be taken for what it is, not progress in the professional schools, not cohabitation with the *Universitas*, but counterinsurgency, the refounding terrorism of law, coming for the dis-credited, coming for those who refuse to write off or write up the Under-commons (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 106)

We take heed of their analysis and engage the position of critical educator through anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and liberatory educational praxis, to be *in* and not *of*, the university.

We understand the university as a mechanism of scholasticide, a major site of the empire’s carrying out colonial scholasticide. From the u.s. to occupied Palestine this is true of all universities operating under/within colonial systems. Oppressed and marginalized students in the u.s. have a long history of organizing for more liberatory education and to maintain their knowledge traditions as sites of study. From the resistance to boarding schools to the fight for Black universities to exist, to the organizing of Freedom Schools in the south, to anti-apartheid activism in the 1980s². Palestine has seen this similar history of student organizing, particularly amongst Palestinian and Arab students, who enter ‘israeli’ universities as strangers and foreigners, and are treated with hostility and attempts to erase their identities (Mansour, 2024). The very schools they attend occupy their land as ‘land grab institutions’ (Wind, 2024). Though they exist to destroy their knowledges, histories, traditions, and resistance movement, the resistance remains steadfast. This can appear as student organizing as well as armed resistance factions of many young Palestinians fed up with the occupation and continued genocide.

The Structural Foundations of U.S. Higher Education

Central to our writing here and the collective organizing of university students and community members are deep meditations on violence. The structural paradigm of this world—the ways in which it bifurcates peoples on race, class, religion, and gender—is maintained and

² The authors are most particularly interested here with the ‘shanty towns’ built by anti-apartheid activists, including on the University of Pittsburgh’s campus.

mitigated through oppressive forces that cohere civil society and facilitate the suffering of the oppressed. We enter our conversation about university repression, critical education, and Palestinian liberation with two central analytics that work in tandem to repress the freedom struggle and promulgate the Zionist logic of the university. The interconnected foundations of antiblackness and colonialism work to situate the U.S. university as an institution and aspiration invested in the expansion of both structures (Rodríguez, 2012). While the two work simultaneously, there are distinctions between them that are not only important for political clarity but also grounded in the origin of United States universities and are essential for continued collective struggle toward liberation, the clarion call for the critical educator.

We engage the university not based on the propagandized notions of a “great equalizer” or as some sort of beacon of equity and diversity. Instead, we contend that the university has maintained “gendered racist apartheid colonialism” and track the structural continuance of its foundational modes of violence (Rodríguez, 2012, p. 809) as essential to the practice of collegiate equity and diversity. Doing so allows for a clearer analysis of the recent police escalations at student encampments across the U.S. and clarifies the level of violence the university³ has the capacity to enact. From its inception, the university has been an extension of the settler colony to serve the aims and purposes of the state, preparing its incoming classes of white male colonists (Thelin, 2004). The “men of affairs” who would serve as lawyers, doctors, judges, and presidents—the white male keepers of empire—were (and remain) formally trained in universities (Dancy et. al., 2018; Palmieri, 1987). In other words, the so-called new world necessitated educational institutions that would nurture, reproduce, and expand white supremacist colonial logics and technologies of racial gendered violence. Settler colonial logics—the elimination of indigenous peoples, land, and knowledges—are foundational to the structure of universities and still ground their practices. We understand the U.S.’s support of Israel as settler-colonial Zionist allyship, two settler states combining resources to carry out genocide of Indigenous peoples.

An analysis of antiblackness is tantamount to our understanding of university political economy and asserts slavery as the global structuring logic of human racial casts (Dancy et. al., 2018). Central to colonialism is the knowledge of Black people as non-humans and rather, property to be accumulated to carry out the prerogatives of slave owners and slave-owning institutions. The university is a central facilitator of such logics. In his canonical text, *Ebony and Ivy*, Wilder (2013) details the origin of U.S. universities as steeped within the violence of chattel slavery. He notes the buying, selling, and regulation of slaves through brute force was as regular a university operation as student coursework and dormitories. In fact, many of the presidents of colonial colleges (what are now today’s Ivy League institutions) owned slaves who were warehoused on college campuses as plantations, underscoring the university as not only a site of settler colonial violence but also a plantation in and of itself. Black studies scholars have lamented how the violence of slavery never ended and how the position of the slave is structural, paradigmatic, and ontological (Douglass, 2018; Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2016; Wilderson, 2010). Thus, our use of the word slave is meant to demarcate both a structural position and a set of historic experiences that set way for antiblack violence in the current moment. For example, Hartman (2007) notes how slavery created a measure of man and a ranking of life that has yet to be undone in what she coined “the afterlife of slavery.” In her canonical text *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman (1997) argues that a constituent element of

³ The authors note the intense repression of universities that has been documented and challenged by the Center for American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Palestine Legal network (Pal Legal) including filing Title IX cases against several universities for anti-Palestinian racism, anti-Arab racism, and Islamophobia.

slavery--and thus, its afterlife--is the fungibility of the slave. This refers to the ways in which Black bodies were exchangeable and replaceable within a capitalist economy that propertied bodies. The afterlife framework situates the continuation of fungibility beyond the institution of chattel enslavement.

Black education scholars like Dumas (2016) have underscored how educational institutions work to reproduce slavery as a structural position that is maintained through various spectacular and mundane modes of violence. In the afterlife of slavery, Black people are still locked into the constitutive elements of slave relations in a “post-emancipation” civil society (Hartman, 1997). The ways in which antiblackness and colonialism are ongoing and carried out in contemporary university settings that cohere the widespread Zionist logics that necessitates student organizing, encampments, and demands for divestment. In other words, we have found through study and lived experience that the university is functioning as it always has--facilitating violence and reproducing empire using the same logics that it was built upon. The interrogation of these logics is central for the critical educator and for education as a practice of freedom more broadly. Our intention in our writing is to assist in building the capacity of critical educators to study, organize, and teach in ways that are informed, liberatory, and in solidarity with oppressed peoples globally.

The last structural piece to this paper for its organization is the centering of Palestine. We do so by noting which points during the intensification of the longstanding genocide we were acting in. It is to represent the urgency in which we must act, to paint the picture of mass loss and despair of each moment. The last updated counts (during the writing of this paper) on deaths put the total at 62,263 human lives, 62,263 worlds ended⁴ (AJLabs, 2025), with estimates showing 70% were women and children (Al Jazeera, 2024). At least 1 in 10 Palestinians in Gaza is either injured, missing (under the rubble), or killed (Zhang et al., 2024). These numbers are the “official” ones, confirmed by other sources like the United Nations. They are undercounts that the Zionist entity and its allies still seek to deny and discredit through massive media efforts to adapt passive language for genocide while questioning tones on Palestinian sources. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for war crimes and have made declarations requiring Israel to allow aid into Gaza, neither of which have been truly enforced. A Stage 5 Famine has also been declared, an irreversible stage of malnutrition that will kill hundreds of thousands (World Health Organization, 2025). Netanyahu has further proclaimed they will occupy Gaza City, and then all of Gaza (Berg, 2025). US-mercenary and privately owned Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) operate all the aid through death traps they made where they kidnap and slaughter Palestinians seeking aid (Now, 2025). Hundreds of medical/emergency workers from the Gaza Health Ministry have been murdered by the Zionist entity, their hospitals and health centers are consistently targeted, ambulances bombed to prevent health services from reaching those in need⁵. Those counting the dead were killed themselves. Hundreds of journalists risking their lives to show the world what is happening, despite no action or movement from the world, have been slaughtered. Some were targeted directly with their families like Yasser Qudih

⁴ In Jewish tradition, there is a famous saying from the Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5 that to kill one person is to kill a whole world, and conversely that to save one life is to save an entire world

⁵ Or blocked by Zionist forces (like in the case of Hind Rajab) as seen in the West Bank commonly. At the same time, Zionist forces will use ambulances and other civilian vehicles to infiltrate Palestinian areas to carry out executions and kidnappings.

or put on public hit lists as ‘ Hamas operatives ’ without any proof, then killed by targeted strikes like Anas Al-Sharif (Adler, 2025; Reuters, 2023).

The zionist entity is actively destroying all work towards archiving and exposing their crimes in Gaza. The archives themselves are not untroubled, they are built from conditions of unfreedom--slavery, colonial occupation, and enclosure to obfuscate the quotidian violence of history (Hartman, 2007). Notwithstanding, entire archives and libraries have been wiped out. Journalists, academics, and scholars—the vanguard of the archives—have been slaughtered. All universities have been destroyed, as well as hundreds of historical and heritage sites. Both israel and the u.s. have officially denied the existence of famine, the targeted killings and detentions, the intentional bombings in effort to hide the fact of genocide. Thousands of Palestinians remain under tons of rubble and spent ammunition. Thousands more are near death in the few barely functioning hospitals left following the systematic destruction of the healthcare system from Al-Shifa to Al-Adwan hospitals. Children are being born and killed before they can open their eyes. People are freezing to death, when they are not being burnt alive in their tents. The camps of those displaced countless times are flooded and washed away in the rain.⁶ Famine covers the whole of Gaza, from the besieged and cut off North to the camps of millions in Rafah and Al-Mawasi (the designated ‘ safe zone ’ where tents have been firebombed).

Intensified Genocide and Student Learning Demands

Following the October 7th intensification of israel's genocidal military operations, we began our work in the school of education. We galvanized students, sought support from local community, and collectively demanded curricular interventions and educational programming that could help situate the violence and contextualize genocide in Gaza as (also) an educational catastrophe. This is the continued Nakba, the central mechanism of the occupation entity--the state and society of israel--an entity that invades all facets of life. Nakba is the Arabic word for catastrophe or disaster, and is the term used for the beginning of zionist settler colonialism in 1947-48 and its continued effects. It was officially called Plan Dalet by the israeli Occupation Forces IOF (Khalidi, 1988). This was the strategic and planned mass campaign of terrorism to create the zionist entity in Palestine under the murderous helm of warlord prime ministers like Menachem Begin and David Ben Gurion. They surrounded entire villages, burned, looted, stole land, poisoned water, and enacted sexual violence, all carried out by zionist gangs that became the IOF. The IOF forced the expulsion at gunpoint of more than 700,000 Palestinians who were never allowed to return home (Eghbaria, 2024).

Students across Pitt's school of education were confused, afraid, and uncomfortable with carrying on with business as usual. After careful deliberation on the kinds of interventions we felt we needed, we began our work with open letters to the school's senior leadership. We sent the first letter when around 10,000 Palestinians were confirmed killed by the zionist entity. The atrocity was unfolding right in front of us, live-streamed to our phones. Hospitals were severely strained, the 17-year siege in full effect and intensified. The constant bombing and shooting made Gaza a site of absolute terror. As scholars and teachers in preparation, we felt a responsibility to call for learning initiatives that would help us grapple with what we were witnessing in our work as

⁶ The totality of human loss may never be fully known but it exceeds 186,000 even if the fighting had stopped the day of publication, July 5th 2024, according to a correspondence published in *The Lancet* (Khatib et. al., 2024).

educators. Student organizers represented the multicultural community of our school, stretching across gender/sexuality identities, religious affiliations, and ethnic identities. Across difference, we were bound by the necessity to address genocide and resist scholasticide. We sent out an open call to the school of education to address and respond to genocide, specifically, the educational implications of Palestinian children in Gaza and Palestinian students at the University of Pittsburgh. Our letter detailed concrete demands for the school to actualize its stated mission and values of justice and equity. We offered the following as a vision for deeper learning and reflection:

1. We are demanding educational programing, professional development, and a climate of solidarity and support for decolonial pedagogy and praxis. a) This includes assured protections for any faculty and students who speak up from ramifications within and without the university, including the conflation of Zionism, Judaism and [i]sraeli genocide of Palestinians.
2. A series of programs bringing in Anti-[z]ionist Jewish Speakers, anti-colonial Palestinian thinkers, and SWANA and Arab liberation fighters. By extension, this should include speakers on the numerous other global liberation struggles happening now (i.e. Sudan, DRC, West Papau, Haiti, Colombia).
3. Freedom Seminars on decolonial, anti-colonial, and liberatory pedagogical praxis (including a continuation of the past Gaza webinar).
4. We want 2 new faculty in SOE engaged in global anti-colonial educational studies that are not missionary, not about “u.s.” outreach, but about decolonization.
5. Curricular interventions that create spaces in our programs of study for us to do the critical work of studying global oppression. a) The creation of a permanent oversight group of students and faculty (elected by the students and faculty, to direct and oversee the programming. b) Faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to attend these co-curricular programs, with direct focus on education as a practice of freedom. c) Issues that may be discovered, realized, and/or arise from these programs be discussed in department and program area meetings in terms of ideas for program development.

We wrote, in many ways emboldened by the stated values of our school, to ‘ignite learning.’ “commit to educational equity”, “disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures”, and “approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development”. Our demands proposed frameworks to the school for necessary preparation for its students to understand what is being done to Palestine, and to provide space and opportunities for Palestinians and other colonized peoples to share their wisdom, stories, and politics to inform our educational praxis. We had a large backing of support for our demands from individual students, student organizations, and folks in the community. To our dismay, we received a shameful response from the dean consisting of a five-line email that encouraged us to participate in a neoliberal university-wide initiative to engage “diverse viewpoints” that required an application, abstract, and approval process. There was zero engagement with the content of our letter and no invitation to meet and discuss our demands. Indeed, it was a total dismissal and redirection toward neoliberal university programming that was also inattentive to our demands. It became clear to us then, that our school’s senior leadership was apathetic and inept in their engagement with student generally, and student organizers particularly. It was also clear that our stated mission and vision did not apply to Palestine

or Palestinians. This was just the beginning of a series of university repression tactics toward student organizing despite public claims and veneers of moral authority and commitments to justice. Our charge was (and remains) urgent, and we quickly learned that the type of teaching and learning that valued Palestinian existence would require struggle and occur *against* the school and its leadership.

Three Scenes of University Subjection

Scene 1: Selective Empathy, Incorporation and "Darkness": University Rhetorical Devices of Zionism

The University of Pittsburgh senior leadership largely refused to recognize Palestinian existence. Its public stance, as communicated by the chancellor, spoke of “violence in the middle east” but specified Hamas’ “unprecedented terrorist attacks against [i]srael and innocent civilians.” She also referred to the violence as “another wave of darkness”, an antiblack rhetorical device that makes extreme violence analogous with darkness and by extension, dark people. Each correspondence—the decontextualized condemnation of Hamas, the antiblack impetus in use of the word ‘darkness’, and nonspecific discriminating reference to violence in the middle east—work to naturalize zionism among university personnel and the broader public. While we have already traced the violent antiblack and colonial origins of the university, it is important to note its contemporary ignoble power to legitimate knowledge. It is a kind of tyranny over broader understandings of what counts as common-sense, knowledge, and who counts as people worthy of empathy. Her refusal to name Hamas within its proper historical and political context only works to deepen the pervasive propaganda of the west. To be sure, Hamas emerged in 1987 as an organized expression of resistance to and frustration with israel’s violent occupation of Palestinian land and peoples (Hroub, 2025). Their aim is to liberate occupied Palestinian lands, and they hold status as a legitimate political party with a military wing and the right to resist occupation and self-determine under international law. Hence, her decontextualized condemnation of Hamas and framing of israel as victim works to secure zionism as the primary lens in which university actors view genocide in Gaza. This is further supported with her abstract reference of “violence in the middle east”, and the omission of mass Palestinian extermination by the israeli and u.s. Government. The omission of Palestinian existence is an intentional effort to erase Indigeneity; a key tactic of colonial structures being enacted by the head of university powers.

Campus-wide, students campaigned, protested, and wrote to administration demanding they condemn and divest in genocide in Gaza, and islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism on our campus. In hindsight, it was a request for recognition by an imperial structure that masquerades as a beacon of justice. This is another core tactic of the university’s continued path of destruction, dispossession, extraction, and death through ‘faux’ neutrality. This tactic prompted our insurgent strategy to shatter the institution’s silencing techniques centrally mechanized through leadership rhetoric. Within the broader context of institutional zionism, students in the school of education worked to respond to the disingenuous email from our dean which refused dialogue with student demands to study, learn, and name Palestinian scholasticide in favor of the directives of the university propaganda machine: empathy for general region without naming colonial violence, invitation to university events unrelated to genocide of Palestinians, and underscoring the university’s commitment diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

A week after our dean's non-response, student organizers released another public letter in response to her scant email and non-engagement with our demands. It included an added demand for the resignation of the then interim (and now permanent) dean for failure to deal forthrightly with students in the school where students are pursuing degrees, paying tuition, making demands of the school to live up to its values and mission. The response letter was also not engaged, and the dean replied with an even shorter email than the first—“Received, thank you.” This was another non-response, and yet another let down for students. This time, however, we were contacted by student signatories who were frightened in the aftermath of various threats from administration and stakeholders who control their fundings following its public release. We were also contacted by the Provost and a Vice Chancellor, who invited us to meet with them to discuss our efforts. The public exposing of contradictions in the dean's scholarship and the call for her resignation was labeled by university leadership as an ‘attack’ on “leadership of color”, specifically, a Black woman interim dean. The context of genocide that by this point had claimed the lives of over 15,000 Palestinians was ignored, but the call for the dean's resignation was not. The university displayed its ability to compartmentalize and alienate themselves from material reality to chastise students for one *additional* demand without recognizing the others. Our public letters worked to illuminate our school's contradictory ideologies and how they impacted students at an intimate level. The lack of meaningful response from leadership unearths what Ferguson (2021) refers to as a constitutive element of modern power, “the ability to extend itself in micro and macro directions.” (p. 63). Ignoring student demands and outcry while claiming to support student well-being reflects an institutional investment in maintaining power, status quo, and the university's imposition on the personal lives of students and community (Ferguson, 2021). Student support and safety are exposed as neoliberal contradictions that are maintained by dismissive leadership and passive faculty. The incredibly wild goose chase designed by the university to avoid materializing its mission statements is an intense deflection, all in the name of protecting and naturalizing zionism and erasing Palestinian knowledges and existence.

Scene 2: Weaponized Identity Politics and the Limitations of “Proper Channels”

The aftermath of our second letter displayed the ways in which the university co-opts the language of liberation toward its own oppressive aims and criminalizes students who are organizing against genocide in solidarity with Palestinians. Critical educators must be warned, state institutions will adopt the language of liberation as a neoliberal counterinsurgent strategy. We must remain sound in our principles and commitments and refuse the ruse of identity-based representational politics. The use of diversity, equity, and inclusion permeated our struggle against the university and was weaponized against students. Whereas the content of the writing was once again disregarded, the one line calling for our dean's resignation resulted in an email from the provost and the vice chancellor of equity, diversity, and inclusion (an outsourcing of the conflict between students and leadership in the school of education to the university's most senior leadership). Apart from a few supporting faculty members—one of whom was removed from his administrative role—the general understanding of our efforts was categorized improper use of student signatures, and an anti-black woman attack against “leadership of color”. The university tries to posture itself as a moral authority as it invests in the murder of Palestinians in Gaza, a cruel irony that was unearthed by u.s. encampments and the brutal responses from university leadership and police. Upon request, we organized ourselves around a meeting with the provost and vice

chancellor knowing that our demands would continue to be sidestepped for more dense analysis of our conduct, behavior, and proper tactics toward change.

There were three recurring themes articulated by the provost and vice chancellor: the national university political economy in which leadership of color are under attack, the letters to the SOE leadership as “unfair attacks” against an interim Black woman dean, and the evasion of “proper university mechanisms” to enact change. The turn to supposed attacks on leadership of color was spearheaded by the Vice Chancellor of Equity and Justice, a Black man who is an alumnus of the Pitt School of Education. In fact, all discussions of racial identity were *only* mentioned by him, while the white Provost celebrated bureaucratic processes and hammered down on the necessity of using existing university mechanisms. The white senior leader focused on the hierarchical structures and processes of the university in order to discipline us into behaving like civil students. He was a conservative warden. The Vice Chancellor, a liberal warden, disciplined us by attempting to convey his care and responsibility for “leadership of color” and all university stakeholders as if student organizers were not also Black and other people of color. The shallow use of identity politics silences the more pressing context of genocide in Gaza, the university’s fiscal contributions to it, and the voices of historically oppressed students who are anti-colonial and practicing a liberatory education. In the same breath, the vice chancellor told us that he was “with us” and “supports us”, while doubling down on the need to adhere to all stakeholders on “both sides of this issue”, and protect Black leadership who lead in ways that are both antiblack and Zionist. Blackness as a leadership identity is what was central for him, not a Black freedom politic or a recognition of the compounding power asymmetries of being both Black and student. He spoke as if leadership of color were more important than students of color because it is the leader’s job to protect the interests of the university. Dumas (2010), in conversation with British filmmaker Isaac Julien, argues that simply being Black is not a signifier of a pro-Black cultural politics.

It is not enough, it is not a viable politics of freedom simply to be 'Black.' As Black British filmmaker Isaac Julien has said: ‘What does that black subject do, how does it act, how does it think politically... being black isn't really good enough for me: I want to know what your cultural politics are’ (quoted in Hall, 1992, p. 32). (p. 410)

In our struggle against the institution, we came up against Black leadership whose practices were within its Zionist interest.

Critical educators must maintain a critique of identity because it will undoubtedly be weaponized to quell dissent. Our critique of the Black dean’s leadership praxis and its contradistinction with her scholarship was not engaged. We did not critique her Blackness, or her womanhood but received backlash insinuating we did. Because of her identity, she is positioned as an innocent victim of an unfair attack amid a climate of Black university leadership being under duress. It was the weaponization of neoliberal diversity, a deadly state tactic that assumes more faces of color inherently intervenes on structural violence. Our position as Black, Brown, and historically oppressed students is missed, sidestepped so that Black university leadership can remain “safe” as they repress student voices and remain silent on genocide in Gaza. Thus, the conditions of possibility for identity are entrenched in the prerogative of state institutions that maintain and facilitate state violence. As stated earlier, the university functions as a site of antiblack settler colonialism. In the afterlife of chattel slavery, the slave relation between Black people and the university remains constant. The Black Vice Chancellor claiming neutrality on genocide, and the Black dean repressing and ignoring student demands for the study of Palestinian liberation, are

articulations of the continued slave relation of domination over Black people in leadership positions. Returning to Hartman (1997), fungibility is a concept that marks the exchangeability, replaceability, and elasticity of the slave on the plantation. In the afterlife of slavery, the university is still a plantation structure, where Black leadership remains fungible, implemented by the university power structure to diversify the faces of empire, and to quell organized struggle from students, faculty, and community members (Dancy, et. al., 2018). This is structural in as much as the imperative of the university remains to maintain hegemony and nurture the interest of the state. For example, her interim status as ‘volunteerism’--as articulated by the provost--was mentioned to articulate a lack of institutional capacity to meet student demands. The provost lamented our “attack” as unfair, in part, because the interim dean was functioning in a “volunteer” capacity in the school of education. Ironically, he himself was serving in the role of interim provost, but never referred to himself as a volunteer or unable to fulfill his roles and responsibilities as provost. How is it that the category of ‘interim’ is *disabling* for the Black dean but *enabling* for the white provost? We argue that it is her Blackness that made the provost speak as if she was a placeholder in the university bureaucratic structure as opposed to a capacious school leader with roles and responsibilities to listen and address the needs of students. We find it important here to analyze university relations in this scene through an analysis of plantation politics because of how contemporary iterations of university politics embed “racial hierarchy, interracial conflict, white supremacy, and Black domination” (Squire, 2021, p. 60-61).

A related theme that was pressed by both university wardens was the need to use the existing proper mechanisms of the university to “enact change”. We were repeatedly told that the main error of our ways was that we didn’t open space for dialogue or use the existing mechanisms of the university’s bureaucratic structure. If we had only gone through the proper mechanisms, our efforts would’ve been engaged in good faith, and our chances of our demands being met would’ve increased tenfold. These were the sentiments of the provost that were followed by comments on the letter that he was clearly reading for the first time *during* the meeting. We note here--as we did in the meeting--that the proper mechanisms are precisely what is being resisted. They are mechanisms of maintenance by the university to protect the status quo and quell the liberatory efforts that necessitated our demands in the first place.

Scene 3: The encampment, the State, and University Repression

The final and most escalated scene comes when the university fails to repress the consciousness of people. The encampment represented a conscious collective who people opposed Palestinian genocide. Both anti-zionist jews and Palestinian students worked collectively to advance struggle and organize student resistance. This is the scene most epitomized by the Popular University, the student encampments that were staked on university grounds across the world as part of a direct action against the levers of genocide and colonial powers writ large. The name Popular University is a perfect encapsulation of the encampment⁷, liberating the land and resources of the university and breaking down the walls to create an open community. It becomes the peoples’, theirs to mold. We held extensive anti-colonial teach-ins with guest speakers, cultivating the kind of study necessary amid constant repression. Within the belly of the beast, liberated spaces

⁷ The student occupation and/or encampment has been a long tried and true method of student organizing to achieve demands (Beeninga, 2017; Soule, 1997). In this case the use of tents was especially meaningful for students as it made clearer the solidarity with those displaced and surviving in tents in Gaza.

of marronage were created as a materialization of the demands of decolonization, as best as students could.

The student movement arising here in the u.s. is one aspect of a broader global resistance. Not only did student encampments pop up across the globe in the modern age, but Palestinian youth also both in the diaspora and in occupied Palestine have been organizing since the Nakba. There, student organizing is in a more clear and direct condition of anti-colonialism, and is intimately tied to the armed resistance that arises.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the student movement in Palestinian universities was one of the various emerging popular mass organisations which constituted a front of semi-legal organisations to the clandestine political fractions of the PLO in the 1967 occupied parts of Palestine. (Meari & Duhuo, 2020)

Students, organized with the understanding these were part of the same resistance effort. The student encampments in the belly of the beast are an expression of students' solidarity with Palestine and willingness to join that war, even staking a front on their own universities.

In conversation with Basir Al-Araj (2023), and his conception of the colonial world in constant conflict, we understand the world as split between those on the side of empire and those fighting against it for liberation. Masses of people are lifting the veil from their eyes; they are recognizing the lies they have been taught. They now see the world as it is. Empire has designed and created its own vision of the world, imposing it on millions of people through compulsory education. That image is burning down, and people are choosing sides. Those who see through the lies are joining the camp of liberation, joining the fight that has ensued since the dawn of empire. We see bodies torn to shreds, children with missing limbs, babies who have lost their entire families. We know this is the culmination of the compounding pressures of decades of quotidian violence. We witnessed the tent massacres in Rafah and Al-Mawasi, and the insidious massacre of Nuseirat (which was hailed in the media as a rescue operation) (Cook, 2024). Since these encampments⁸, we have seen continued images of Palestinians burned alive in tents, like Shaban Al-Dalou⁹, martyred in their tent in the courtyard of a hospital engulfed in flames. It is a holocaust, destruction by fire.

The University recognizes its attempts at ignoring, deflecting, and re-routing action are failing. Even minor concessions—like the creation of leadership roles and committees to look into “equity issues—have all failed to rectify and reconcile the contradictions between the stated mission of education and the practical needs of empire. The ‘both sides’ tactic fails as the administration lies about actions taking place right outside their offices. The veneer of respectability crumbles when the administration picks up the phone to call in the armed wing of the state. The empire is in its final days, tightening its spiral of death, lashing out more and more violently. When encampments began to spring up at universities nationwide, students across the University of Pittsburgh began to organize and act in solidarity with students at other universities and in Palestine who have lost safety, education, homes, and livelihoods. During the beginning of the encampments, the recorded number of slain Palestinians had reached around 35,000. Tens

⁸ Encampments were ended for various reasons, but across the nation it was by and large university and state police’s violent intervention that ended the encampment stage of struggle.

⁹ Shaban would come to be honored when students at Pitt occupied a major library area and renamed the library after him.

thousands of homes, schools, hospitals, universities, and markets reduced to rubble. The number of bombs dropped accelerated the worldwide climate catastrophe. The live-streaming of the genocide in Gaza has ruptured the illusion, exposing zionism for a new generation.

Across the nation, the student encampments for Palestine exposed not only the zionist logics of university administrations, but also, the reality of policing and its utility in maintaining the status quo. The second encampment was forced to be more renegade than the first, which existed off school property and was okayed by the city. This time, students calmly came onto the lawn¹⁰, set up tents and wooden barricades to encircle and protect the liberated zone from continued police and zionist harassment and intimidation. This was a small section, no bigger than two basketball courts, but well organized. One side of this section was on the street, with a wall of bushes separating the lawn from the sidewalk. The other side was the walking path on the lawn in front of the tallest and most recognizable building in the city, the Cathedral of Learning. Upon their arrival, cops were violent; beating, pushing, and pulling students in a failed attempt to dismantle the wooden barrier¹¹. They made their own mini barricade around the camp, which was overcome by the community to protect each other from police escalation. Their reactions required the students to shift focus from liberation through education and community to defending themselves against immediate police violence. From that point on, the people at the encampment were on the defensive, forced to hold a line around the encampment to protect each other, their belongings, and their struggle against militarized police. There are reports of cops asking to be allowed to beat students, videos of them kicking students, pointing guns at students, and pushing others down steps. Much like 76 years of Nakba have not stopped Palestinians, this did not stop the students.

The abusive logic of the police and university leave violence and repression as its only possibilities. Police visit freedom fighter's homes without warrants or reason, they harass people at their jobs. They watch and follow students on campus. All of these are attempts to intimidate people who fight for liberation, retaliation tactics for exposing how weak and scared the police really are. Many witnessed--both in person and livestreamed--scores of cops, military grade equipment, riot gear, and surveillance technology. They destroyed water, beat students, and surrounded the camp wielding 'less lethal' weapons. It was a police escalation, plain and simple. Students made zero attempts to take extra ground or go into buildings. Human-chains were made and students held makeshift 'shields' to protect themselves from police aggression. The cops exist to fight and repress and that's what they did. They lost publicly and want to make up for it. More than a dozen people have been charged by the DA (in the interest of university) and are going through trials¹². People remain in an active conflict with the state. It is a constant dialectic of liberation and repression on all fronts. Those fighting for liberation all over are in a constant

¹⁰ For footage see City Paper of Pittsburgh and Public Source, along with the Instagram pages for Pitt Apartheid Divest and SJP Pitt <https://www.pgcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/police-surround-a-pro-palestine-encampment-at-pitt/Slideshow/26091772>

<https://www.opencampusmedia.org/2024/06/05/pitt-encampment-leaders-say-chancellors-push-for-elevated-police-presence-prompted-dispersal/>

¹¹ Batons were pulled out almost immediately, against a line of college students holding trash can lids to protect themselves and their comrades as others peacefully set up tents. At no point did any student threaten a cop, initiate violence, or escalate. All escalation and violence came from the cops.

¹² Since the original writing of this piece, one defendant has sadly taken their own life, in part due to the stress of court and the injustice faced

struggle against colonialism, from Palestine to Pittsburgh. Therefore, as teachers, we must see ourselves as involved with this very real and immediate struggle.

The university is an extremity of the schooling system that exists to reproduce empire. Principled collectivity amongst educators is being able to stick with each other, holding each other accountable to our red lines, following our principles as a collective to resist scholasticide as a form of protecting community. The Israeli offensive force and the Pittsburgh Police Department are showing us that their job is maintaining the violence of the status quo, the enforcement of settler-bourgeois desires. The oppressed must learn their oppressors, and work with each other to build strategy, and care for one another. Colonial miseducation raised us, bounded our imagination of possibilities to the limits of the state. Teachers are traditionally trained to reinforce the myths of history, advance analysis of state heads as great men, and naturalize the state of the world as is.. The cycle of miseducation sanctions violence. Zionists teach the masses that Palestinians are evil to publicly sanction a genocide against them and represent Palestinians as evil for resisting violence.

Each scene of repression and violence has become normalized, expected even. First is the work of othering protestors, to pose them as violent outside agitators, requiring a definition of violence that makes colonial violence innocent and resistance to oppression culpable.

It is not just different structures of oppressive violence that radical scholars are trying to make legible, it is violence of a certain depth, with specific and morbid implications for some peoples' future existence as such.' (Rodríguez, 2012, p. 812)

Criminalization is made easier and more digestible for the public by smearing the movement's ideology. In the case of Palestinian liberation struggle, this often manifests in false accusations and the weaponization of anti-Semitism. This is accepted despite existing substantive arguments that contextualize and historicize this asymmetry between the colonizer and the colonized¹³. Criticality is more than asking questions, it is the focused study of power. Power manifests in numerous ways, and a critical educator is one who prepares students to recognize it and combat it in its various forms. People not only saw the massive police response and attempt to lay siege to the liberated zone at the University of Pittsburgh as normal but justified it. No one with the power over the monopoly of violence questioned the narrative coming from the chancellor that was filled with outright lies. Much of the Pittsburgh public still denounces the struggle for liberation, and action here remains low. It ties back to misinformation on what the struggle is, dismissal of material conditions of suffering, and a flawed analysis from normalized miseducation. Critical education is needed now more than ever.

Liberation as Pedagogical Position Toward the End of the University

This article is meant to center Palestine, the Palestinians' struggle for liberation, and how it is a struggle for all on all fronts. As Ghassan Kanafani – former leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) – said “The Palestine cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary...” (Assi, 2024). Our liberation here in the stolen and unceded lands of Turtle Island is tied up with the Palestinians liberation of their ancestral homeland. We are

¹³ The authors want to recognize the long deep history of Jewish anti-zionism that has existed from the beginnings of Zionism as a political movement, especially seen in the Jewish Labor Bund and now Jewish Voice For Peace (JVP)/International Jewish Anti-zionist Network (IJAN)/Jews Against White Supremacy (JAWS)

witnessing a genocide of unknown proportions. The unbridled and unchained aggression of the zionist entity has created untenable conditions in Gaza, where skin diseases are spreading and Polio is confirmed to have returned as an epidemic. The social conditions in Gaza are exemplified by heaps of waste, sewage, and bodies littering the streets. Cleaning and caring for the land is an impossibility or death sentence under sniper fire. As educators, those tasked with teaching the youth and helping them come into consciousness, we must reckon with this in and outside of formal educational institutions. We cannot continue to ignore, obfuscate, collapse, or pretend there is nuance where there is not. This is the miseducation that Dr. Carter G. Woodson wrote about over a century ago in response to the major attacks on Black people in the u.s. He notes, “...there would be no lynching if it did not start in the classroom. Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that everybody is taught to regard as inferior!” (Woodson, 1990, p. 3). We understand that education within the settler-colonial empire is intended to reproduce and naturalize white supremacy and its logics within all of us.

The political economy of K-20 schooling positions those who resist as outlaws, narrating and defining us as dangerous outside agitators. Al-Araj teaches us to expect the smooth transition from outlaw to revolutionary.

The beginning of every revolution is an exit, an exit from the social order that power has enshrined in the name of law, stability, public interest, and the greater good. Every social and economic authority necessarily intersects with and is an extension of political authority. This is how these heroic figures can be understood and appreciated by the general public, who are overpowered, as though by instinct. From there, we understand the hostility of social, economic, and political authority towards these figures, and its use of the law as a tool to tarnish their image and criminalize them. We therefore also understand the smooth transition from the outlaw into the revolutionary—the one who resists. (Al-Araj, 2023, n.p.)

We continue to analyze and critique the narratives and framings of the state, and do not blindly accept the empire's statements and positions. This is the urgent charge for the critical educator in the struggle for Palestinian liberation. This analysis must be internalized to our process of reflection in all spheres of life. We, as critical and liberatory educators, must take the veil from our eyes and join the fight!

We cannot stand idly by watching daily violence that binds and grounds the systems we aim to end. We cannot allow both teacher education programs and the spaces in which we teach to remain as is. The critical educator is an active participant in history with a global critique of power and oppression. Criticality also requires one to self-critique and point out the limits in our collective imagination. If we truly want to understand and fix the issues ‘here’, we must contend with the genocide in Palestine that has been ongoing for 76 years, especially its most recent intensification and barbarianism in Gaza. Malcom X (1965) noted at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem,

As long as we think — as one of my good brothers mentioned out of the side of his mouth here a couple of Sundays ago — that we should get Mississippi straightened out before we worry about the Congo, you’ll never get Mississippi straightened out. Not until you start realizing your connection with the Congo (p. 97)

An internationalist lens is required, as the conjoined and intertwined systems of colonialism and antiblackness take root and define themselves internationally. It sets the geographies of

human/non-human distinctions which directly situates how we engage with subjects like history, science, and the humanities in schools. It is up to us, the critical educators, to constantly intervene to protect and defend our students and communities. We are already at war against settlers and capitalists. Our weapons are vast in range. Curricular interventions and ‘uncomfortable’ discussions about power, politics, and oppression with students is one form. Being a visible and vocal representative of oppressed communities in the struggle for liberation is another. Being a prepared and knowledgeable teacher allows us to be effective in focusing our collective grief and rage towards direct action in our teaching, research, and service.

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