Malice Enough in their Hearts and Courage Enough in Ours: Reflections on US Indigenous and Palestinian Experiences under Occupation

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To see for ourselves the conditions under which Palestinians live and struggle – this was the mission of the delegation of Indigenous and Women of Color Feminists that traveled to Occupied Palestine in June 2011.[1] All of us had been part of social justice struggles in our respective communities and all of us sought to increase our capacity for effective solidarity action with Palestinians. I traveled with the delegation as an Indigenous woman living under US occupation seeking to understand how another Indigenous population struggled under settler colonialism. Sometimes it takes seeing the suffering of others to realise the full magnitude of our own suffering. As a Dakota woman in Palestine, I had the painful experience of witnessing the monstrous destructiveness of settler colonialism's war against a People and a land base. I told one friend that it was like witnessing a high-speed and high-tech version of the colonisation of our Indigenous homelands. Colonisation ought to be one of the most easily recognised forms of oppression in the world, but it is not. In fact, colonising powers work so steadfastly to rationalise and justify this crime against humanity that it eventually becomes normalised, acceptable, and even righteous. I come from a place where the government denies that it is colonial – it denies that it is a government of occupation. I recognised this

same colonial deception at play in Israel's disavowal of itself as a colonial entity.

In spite of Israel's attempt to project a righteous image to the rest of the world, one of the first impressions upon arrival in Palestine is that there is something terribly wrong. The Apartheid Wall, frequent security towers and checkpoints, as well as excessive use of barbed wire, instead appear as manifestations of an illegitimate government trying desperately to exert control over a land and people that are not its own. These prominent physical structures powerfully and immediately convey the essence of colonial domination in a way that few other images can. Most of us coming from a militarised society like the US are familiar with surveillance and the constant threat of military or police crack-down for any disobedience (anyone who bumps up against the system knows this). But what exists in Palestine is a particular reflection of the combination of a highly-technologised (or high-modern) Israeli military apparatus and the use of that apparatus to facilitate colonialist aims. It targets the Indigenous population for elimination or exclusion, harassment, and subjugation, just as when the US military targeted Indigenous peoples. If the US was still in its heyday of its expansionist frenzy but had twenty-first century technology, I imagine the visible effects of colonisation across the continent would look very similar to those in Palestine. It is only because the US militarily subjugated Indigenous Peoples by the end of the nineteenth century that we do not see the level of surveillance and checkpoints, or an Apartheid Wall on every reservation. Today the US does not consider Indigenous Peoples a serious threat to national security or to its settler population and thus does not need to employ such severe tactics of control and repression in the name of 'security' and 'defense'.

In general, Indigenous people respond to colonisation by fleeing, fighting, or capitulating. When an Indigenous population is faced with land theft, occupation, constant encroachment, ethnic cleansing, and other forms of naked repression, resistance to violence will escalate and at least some of the colonised will act in self-defense. Israel has attempted to justify its extreme militarisation and repression under the banner of 'security', but in the context of colonial occupation this is a farce. As one of our hosts in Qalqilya

said, 'The Wall isn't about security – it is about stealing land!'. The discourse of security employed by Israelis is really about ensuring that the violence proceeds unilaterally – that Israelis can continue invading, stealing, destroying, oppressing and colonising while trying to minimise the impact of any defensive actions by Palestinians. A speaker for one of the women's organisation also summed it up concisely: 'Israel is not defending itself; it is defending its occupation'. An illegitimate and oppressive power must always use violence and force, or the threat of violence and force, to sustain itself. In this case, the ruling regime has created repression so severe that the militarised landscape belies Israeli narratives of peaceful intentions and has the potential to finally tip world opinion in favor of the Palestinians. It is precisely because the Palestinians have continued to resist settler occupation that the Israelis are pushed to ever more obvious and atrocious violations of human rights in their theft of Palestinians lands. While listening to Palestinians tell their stories, we repeatedly heard people say they do not have a problem with Jews or Judaism, but with Zionism and occupation. There is no question that Zionist Jews would not have to fear Palestinian violence if they were not colonising Palestinian lands.

The same logic is true in the US context. Pioneer narratives are filled with the expressed fear of Indian or 'savage' violence, as if Indigenous acts of violence could ever have been anything but defensive. If settlers did not occupy Indigenous land (if they were back in Europe, for example), and if they were not benefiting from the exploitation of our people, land, or labor, they would have no reason to fear Indigenous people. It is only when colonisers want to stay in the business of colonising that they use whatever means they can, including the building of physical control mechanisms, to facilitate white colonisation and Indigenous subjugation. Our people had lived freely in our homeland for thousands of years and never needed jails, fences, or walls. These control mechanisms employed by the settler society were shocking to my ancestors. Those who could see past their fear had nothing but disgust for the people who would create and use such inhumane devices. I had the same reaction upon seeing the Wall for the first time in the prison city of Qalqilya. What kind of people would build such a monument to oppression?

In the era of rapid colonial expansion in the US, military forts were usually the first structures built on Indigenous territories, while jails followed shortly after. In fact, a jail was among the first buildings created by government workers at the Upper Sioux Agency in Minnesota to house non-compliant Dakota people. It was just a little more than a decade after being confined to reservations and beginning to live under a colonial regime that our people declared war against the US government and its citizens. When our resistance was at its peak, during the US-Dakota War of 1862, General John Pope wrote to General Henry Sibley:

> We have now the means to make a final settlement with all these Indians [...]. All annuity Indians must be notified that hereafter they will not be permitted on any pretext to leave their reservation, that all the soldiers have orders to shoot them wherever they are found and citizens are authorized to do the same.[2]

By the following summer the colonisers forcibly removed Dakota people from our homeland and placed bounties on our scalps. The tactics of colonial control continue to the present day. Indigenous people in the US remain disproportionately represented in the prison system, with rates thirty-eight percent higher than the national rate.[3] In Dakota territory, few, if any of our people, have been untouched by these high rates, as almost everyone has at least one family member who has served time in prison. However, even when we are not in prison we do not have to see physical walls or barriers because we know that if we violate the invisible borders we will join the ranks of the incarcerated or dead. Two centuries of colonisation have impressed that upon us and our population has become remarkably obedient. I saw something different in Palestine.

Our first day in the West Bank we visited the village of Awarta, where they had just experienced 45 days of terror in which their village was under siege by Israeli settlers and military. Even as we spoke with them, they reported that just a few hours before we arrived settlers had set fire to their wheat crop, attempting to destroy their food production. As I listened to the stories conveyed by village

council leaders and families about their lives under occupation, it was as if time had compressed and I was listening to descriptions of the tactics used by American settlers and military in North America. While colonial leaders were often responsible for dictating policies that supported colonial expansion, civilian populations of settlers had much to gain from helping to implement those policies. For example, scorch and burn was a tactic used in the earliest stages of American colonisation, prompting the Seneca victims of his policy to name George Washington, one of America's most famous founding fathers, Town Destroyer. Major General John Sullivan's army carried out Washington's orders by razing Haudenosaunee orchards and ripening fields of corn and beans. Washington's troops and their families were later rewarded for their service with title to Indigenous lands.

Similarly, as people of Awarta described the theft of their sheep and goat herds, the confiscation, theft or destruction of their olive trees and the introduction of destructive wild boars, images also flashed through my mind of the obliteration of bison herds on the great plains, the theft and ruin of our prairies, and the introduction of ill-suited and destructive cattle that have devastated that biome.[4] In addition to striking terror into the hearts of a population, these attacks on food sources and eco-systems are intended to starve civilian populations, cripple ancient cultures and practices, and subdue those who manage to survive. Sullivan summed up the colonial character required of such actions when he stated that 'the Indians shall see that there is malice enough in our hearts to destroy everything that contributes to their support'.[5] Indeed, the cause of the malice in a colonising Israel, as in the occupied US, is that they covet a land that the original inhabitants do not want to relinquish.

Awarta council leaders told us of the spring 2011 arrests of a hundred women, a tactic used by the military to put pressure on the village. They described the arrest of one of their 83-year old women who was taken to the nearby military camp, interrogated, and forced to sign papers in Hebrew she did not understand. And all this was in addition to the beatings, shootings, invasion of homes, theft of resources and traumatising of children. The examples were reminiscent of similar tactics employed by American colonisers who used combinations of deceit, blackmail, bullying, bribery, threats,

and terrorism to achieve acquiescence or compliance, especially for land cessions, all while adhering to perverse colonial notions of legality.

Incredible sadness swept over me when we viewed from a hilltop the encroaching Israeli settlements, which the people of Awarta have seen gradually expand. Awarta elders described the progression from temporary structures to permanent structures, as land is confiscated and the colonisers move in. I had seen all this before. And, I knew that if this colonial invasion was not stopped, the colonial appetite would not be sated until there was total and complete Israeli domination over the land, no matter the consequences for Palestinian people or the land base. Still, the people we met in Awarta were committed to never relinquishing their homes.

Of course the Zionist ideology that underpins Israeli colonial occupation is the same as the Manifest Destiny ideology that underpinned US colonial expansion, in that both are based on a belief in a divinely-sanctioned right to occupy someone else's land. The legal systems arising from these colonial contexts are specifically designed to codify colonial claims. Like in Palestine, every Indigenous nation in what is now the US faced similar actions of legalised land theft. US courts adopted into law (and they still uphold) the Doctrine of Discovery, a principle originating with Pope Nicholas V. As scholar Steve Newcomb has argued, this doctrine allowed Christians to declare war on non-Christians throughout the world by sanctioning the conquest, colonisation and exploitation of non-Christian nations and territories.[6] Thus, when colonial laws sanction theft and colonisation, the colonised cannot expect justice to be administered in the courts. As many Indigenous nations have experienced, colonial ideology manifests itself throughout the judicial and legislative bodies of the US government. Dakota people, for example, experienced legalised land theft when the US negotiated treaties with my ancestors that they never intended to honor, repeatedly violated those treaties, and then used our attempts to defend ourselves against ongoing invasion, starvation, and colonisation to unilaterally abrogate the treaties and ethnically cleanse us from our Minnesota homeland. That is, in the end, they kept the money, the goods, and the land – all 'legal' within the

apparatus they had constructed to justify their actions. When they needed to remove us from our homeland, they simply passed a bill to do so and made it law.[7]

In Palestine I also observed how a constructed legal apparatus facilitates colonisation. Our delegation met democratically elected leaders targeted by Israeli authorities for their participation in the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Hamas government. They faced prosecution and imprisonment in the Israeli (in)justice system, the confiscation of their identification cards, and expulsion from their homeland.[8] We visited three of the legislators who have been living in a tent at the Red Cross headquarters since July 1, 2010. The threat of deportation of these lifelong residents of Jerusalem is in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, but Israel has established its own legal code for addressing anyone who is perceived disloyal to the Israeli state. PLC Member Muhammad I. Totah relayed: 'We have to pay a high price for the freedom of our country'. Indeed, attesting to the urgency of the situation, just three months after our visit, the occupation forces abducted Ahmed Attoun from the Red Cross tent and took him into Israeli custody. Because their freedom is threatened by the government, there is no hope that justice will come from it. While they continue to steadfastly refuse to leave Jerusalem and sacrifice any kind of normal life, while participating in this long-term sit-in (or in prison, in the case of Attoun), to find justice they will need help from the rest of the world.

Likewise, in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem, I witnessed the consequences of Israeli's usage of legal tactics to steal and occupy Palestinian homes. In this case, groups of Jewish settler organisations falsely laid claim to property and used the court system to obtain 'legal' title. We met Sheikh Jarrah families who had been betrayed by legal counsel that conspired with the Jewish settlers and created the 'Toussia-Cohen' agreement, an agreement never approved by them and one that did not challenge Jewish ownership claims. Israeli courts have, nonetheless, determined the agreement as legally binding and used it as grounds to issue subsequent eviction notices. Like in the case of the PLC members, such examples illustrate the extreme unlikelihood of finding any semblance of justice within the Israeli court system, a system specifically designed to serve Israeli colonial interests.

Colonial governments are particularly adept at enforcing colonial court rulings with police and military power, and the case of Palestine is no exception. We heard one story of armed soldiers using explosives to blow off the door of the family's house at 4:45 a.m., and then physically throwing out terrified members of the family, including elders, children, and women in their night-clothes. Within a few hours of their eviction, all their belongings had been thrown in a park and they were forced to watch as Jewish families moved in to occupy their homes. Families already evicted have since experienced Israelis destroying their tents at least seventeen times, repeated outrageous court fines, arrests, daily clashes with settlers and constant surveillance.[9] While the evicted families personally experience the daily consequences of displacement and occupation, they also recognise that this is part of the larger colonial project of creating a Jewish majority within East Jerusalem by ethnically cleansing Palestinian people neighborhood by neighborhood. The people of Sheikh Jarrah are committed to resisting this physical erasure from the land, but they too seek help from the rest of the world knowing that they are battling an unjust and powerful government of occupation.

Erasure is another tactic used by colonising powers and it takes a variety of forms. I witnessed the attempted erasure of Palestinian people and presence on the land in multiple ways. We heard from students that in their academic work in Israeli-controlled institutions they were required to refer to themselves as 'Israeli-Arabs' rather than Palestinians, thereby re-constructing an identity that denied their ancient relationship with the land. I saw signage in Hebrew that re-named the landscape, denying Palestinian place-names and imposing a colonial identity on the land. I heard our Palestinian hosts describe how history was being re-written to insert and give prominence to Jewish presence at Palestinian sites. This was especially apparent in the Old City of East Jerusalem, where a small Jewish Quarter once existed but has now expanded and colonised the area. We were all deeply disturbed when one of the guides on our counter-colonial tour realised that the place where he once went to school is now claimed and occupied by Jewish institutions and settlers. Indeed, behind the tall fence separating us from them, Jewish children were happily playing. Our Palestinian host was visibly stunned. We learned that the Old City is, both

metaphorically and literally, a place where Israeli colonisers have bulldozed over the Palestinian presence on the land in order to impose a Jewish-only narrative. The Israeli destruction of the Maghariba Quarter on 11 July, 1967 is a spectacular example of the lengths to which the colonial state has gone to physically eradicate Islamic people and history from a central religious and historic site. The once densely populated Maghariba Quarter and the Maghariba Wall (formerly known as the Al-Buraq Wall) have been claimed and renamed as part of the Israeli policy of Judaising Islamic sites by military force.[10]

All such colonial efforts are designed to assert a claim to land while, simultaneously attempting to make the indigenous the foreigner. Similar tactics characterise colonial claiming and renaming of Indigenous spaces in the US. Accompanying the theft of our lands and the implementation of major campaigns of ethnic cleansing was always a process of ideological colonisation. While some Indigenous names continue to dot maps and infiltrate the English language, the vast majority of our place-names, and historic and sacred sites were replaced with European or Euro-American constructions. Like the eradication of Indigenous plants, animals and eco-systems and their replacement with European plants, animals and desire to exploit, the imposition of new names on the land was a central part of the colonial project. Every lake, mountain, river, forest, village, city, valley, plateau, and sacred site was claimed and re-named, usually after some white male or European landmark.

Unlike in Palestine, however, what US Indigenous people witness now is a manifestation of *imperialists' nostalgia*, in which, after centuries of occupation, settler Americans seek to revive some form of indigeneity in public spaces.[11] For example, I have seen dozens of cases in which Leftist-leaning settlers want to bring back Indigenous place names (after settlers worked to systematically obliterate our languages). They still do not want permanent Indigenous presence at those sites, or to relinquish control over these sites, but they want to appropriate and tokenise what they perceive as more romantic, authentic names, while assuaging their own sense of colonial guilt. That is, with our populations thoroughly subjugated, it is now safe for them to acknowledge that Indigenous people were here first, while feeling no sense of obligation for

accompanying actions toward justice. They do not perceive us as a serious threat. This also allows settlers to incorporate Indigenous people into a fictional narrative. For example, Minnesota's original state seal depicts an outdoor scene in which a white farmer is working out in the field while an Indian on horseback rides into the fading sunset. In this instance, Dakota people have been incorporated into the state mythology, but the constructed story suggests a voluntary relinquishment of our homeland to the benevolent settler. In 1983 the state legislature re-drew the seal so the Indian is angled slightly southward, closer to the settler, which contributes the added suggestion of friendly Dakota-settler relations, and even further obfuscates the actual history of the state. All versions conveniently deny the history of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and land theft, while incorporating indigeneity.

In Palestine, I saw no such nostalgia exhibited by Israelis because the people have not yet been subjugated and they still pose a very real threat to the Israeli occupation. With the colonial war raging, everything Arab and Palestinian is denigrated and reviled. Further, given the Zionist desire to create a Jewish-only state, there will be no room for such nostalgia. Another distinction in the Palestinian context is the concerted effort with which Israelis lay claim to Indigeneity. While this seems an impossible task, considering that God purportedly told Abraham, 'I give you and your descendants after you the land *in which you are a stranger*, all the land of Canaan', Zionists routinely falsify their relationship to place.[12] One way they attempt this is, as mentioned, by imposing Hebrew names over Arabic and biblical names. This was particularly apparent at the major historic and religious sites we visited: Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

While European colonisers have not claimed indigeneity in the Western Hemisphere, they have consistently attempted to deny the indigeneity of the Peoples of this land. For example, in the earliest days of their expansion into the Western hemisphere, Europeans attempted to explain the existence of lands and people about whom they had no knowledge – especially biblical knowledge – by placing us within their existing paradigms. They thus attributed our origins to one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. While that theory was short-lived, the

attempt to place the origin of our ancestors elsewhere has continued unabated for more than five hundred years.

Our Peoples are forced to watch as others lay claim to all we hold dear. We become trespassers in our homelands and criminalised for attempting to remain. We wonder how such violence can continue to be perpetrated against our bodies, our lands, and ways of being, and how the perpetrators continue to justify it to themselves and the rest of the world. We wonder why the lessons of previous centuries' colonial failures have not been learned. Through systematic programming, even coloniser children understand their superior place in the social order, while the children of the colonised are forced to swallow daily doses of humiliation and injustice. It is these daily assaults, experienced a hundred times a day, that characterise life under colonial rule. Assuming that we have not capitulated or become a collaborator, these assaults fill the colonised with a burning rage that always simmers under the surface until it has an outlet for release. During my time in Palestine I heard the pleas for justice and my rage joined that of the Palestinians.

One young woman from An-Najah University confided to me that she hoped the Palestinians did not end up like us – the Indians of North America. Embarrassed by her frankness, she quickly apologised. There was no need for an apology – she simply expressed what I had felt the entire trip. Centuries of colonisation have taken a toll on Indigenous populations in the US. To withstand ongoing occupation requires never losing sight of the end-goal of liberation and fiercely engaging and supporting acts of resistance. In Palestine, this is happening. The majority of Palestinians are still treating settler-colonialism like a war that is being waged against them. They have never abandoned their belief in their right to their homeland. And, they believe liberation is attainable.

Though there are 4.9 million self-identified American Indians according to the 2010 Census, few express a belief in our continuing right to our homelands, very few are actually committed to resisting American occupation, and even fewer believe liberation is possible. So successfully entrenched is settler-colonialism in the US that it is invisible to most of the population, settlers and Indigenous alike. It is not that settler-colonialism is any less violent or destructive in this hemisphere, it is that our resistance has waned over its extended

duration, rendering the more obvious aspects of repression and control less visible. This is a product of our historical experience. Initial invasion and colonisation was so brutal that most Indigenous populations in the Western hemisphere suffered a ninety-eight percent extermination rate and retained only a small fraction of their original land bases. For example, the ethnic cleansing policy in the US was so successful at eradicating the Dakota presence in our Minnesota homeland – which allowed for the unobstructed theft of our lands – that today we occupy approximately .012% of our homeland.

The violence of colonisation did not end there, however, and was followed by sustained attacks on Indigenous ways of being. Even today colonisation manifests itself in myriad ways: corporate and government interests continue to encroach upon remaining Indigenous lands, notions of private property protected by law and enforced by police and military prevent us from regularly accessing sacred sites as well as lands and resources for subsistence purposes, we are subject to every institution and system of the colonisers while our own systems and institutions have been systematically eradicated or threatened, and, most importantly, our homelands continue to be exploited and destroyed at warp speed, jeopardising the survival of entire ecosystems and all the life they support. We have learned that if we step one toe out of line, or challenge US colonial power in any way outside of the prescribed legal routes open to us, people with guns show up to threaten us with imprisonment or death. Most of us have been trained to not step that toe out of line. Thus, populations of Indigenous people in the US have arrived at a place of acceptance or apathy. Many have embraced the values and culture of the colonisers and no longer imagine a liberated future. Not so in Palestine – visible evidence of a spirit of resistance is visible in the landscape and in the words and actions of Palestinian people who refuse to accept the loss of their homeland.

Among the people I met, I felt an enduring sense of defiance in the face of injustice. The gift I received in Palestine was one of inspiration. The Palestinians have become experts at maintaining a culture of resistance. Over and over again I witnessed fearless and courageous acts of truth-telling about their experiences under occupation, disallowing settler narratives to infiltrate or corrupt their anti-colonial perspectives. In every city and every town I met people

willing to risk their lives and their personal freedom for a liberated Palestine – both people with 'martyrs' in their families who paid the ultimate price for their commitment and men and women who had already spent years in Israeli prisons. I met people who had been used as human shields by the Israeli army, who had been beaten and shot, yet still did not allow this to dampen their spirit of resistance.

Given the similar processes of invasion, occupation, and colonisation, what is striking is not that our Peoples have similarly suffered, but that in the twenty-first century our responses to the suffering are so vastly different. At one time Indigenous Peoples in the U. S. did respond to these crimes against humanity in similar ways. For example, Dakota people, after attempting to negotiate with the invaders only to have those negotiations break down, began to challenge the occupation more forcefully, eventually engaging in direct warfare against the invaders in 1862. In the nineteenth century our people faced death, imprisonment, starvation, and execution when they did not bend to the colonial will. Still, people resisted. When Dakota collaborators were discovered, our resistors burned their houses, destroyed their crops, and sometimes killed or banished the betrayers of our people. The presence of collaborators, however, was indicative of the beginnings of a growing fissure within our population. It took only several decades of occupation by missionaries, traders, government agents and then settlers, for colonial divide-and-conquer tactics to take hold. Even before the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, a few of our people began to lose faith in our capacity to continue living as Dakota people and began to believe in the inevitability of settler dominance within our homeland. Their strategy for survival thus shifted from one of resistance to colonisation and hope for complete liberation to acceptance of, and compliance within, the new social order. When our people lost the 1862 War and the colonisers imprisoned us in concentration camps (civilian and warrior populations alike), sent us into exile, thereby effectively ethnically cleansing us from our beloved homeland, placed bounties on our scalps, and unilaterally abrogated our treaties, that was deemed proof of the failure of resistance and the collaborators gained converts. One hundred and fifty years later, those who still dream of liberation and engage in acts of resistance against colonial authority are in the vast minority, though a few of us are still here.

In the century and a half since our homeland was stolen from us, the colonisers have also waged a war against the land itself, causing unprecedented destruction through intensive mining, manufacturing, logging, industrial agriculture and feedlots, as well as coal, nuclear and hydro-electric energy production. In their desire to extract anything of monetary value, they have destroyed ninety-eight percent of Minnesota's white pines, ninety percent of the wetlands, ninety-eight percent of southern Minnesota's Big Woods, and ninety-nine percent of our prairies. The above-ground water systems all have toxins – major rivers like the Minnesota and Mississippi have levels of toxins so dangerous we cannot swim in the waters – and underground systems continue to be threatened by corporate use. Industrial agriculture has devastated the topsoil, the basis for all life on the land and the source of our food. Like the rest of the planet, we can only guess at what additional harms will come from global climate change, but it is already clear that the colonising society is threatening to all life.

Meanwhile, our culture, which has always been land-based, continues to languish as our capacity to renew it is severely curtailed by colonial dominance. While a growing number of our people fight to maintain our language, spirituality and connection to the land, we are still a minority and the rest have almost entirely embraced the values, religion, and ways of the colonisers. Most of our people have abandoned any hope of living freely within our homeland and they assume the permanency of the US government. In fact, many no longer feel particularly constrained by colonial society because they have fully embraced colonial culture. Where injustices are recognised and change is sought, most of our people (Dakota specifically, but Indigenous people more broadly) do not challenge the institution of colonialism but instead seek remedies within colonial paradigms and institutions that will never fundamentally alter the colonial relationship. Yet, we are at a stage now in which the failures of colonial ways of being, including the industrial civilisation, are now apparent and it is more important than ever that we seek to eradicate them. Right now, most of our people would starve if we had to rely on our limited land base for survival. Our lives may very well depend on our capacity to reclaim and protect the integrity of our homeland. For this, we need to revive a culture of resistance.

It is coming from this context that I stepped into Palestinian territory and experienced the always present spirit of *intifada* or 'shaking off'. In every way possible, from boycotts to fighting soldiers with fists and stones, Palestinians have resisted every aspect of colonisation. Even while experiencing tremendous hardship from Israeli colonial actions, a palpable sense of hope remains. It was clear that the sense of hope is not based on a naïve belief in a magic answer that will fall from the sky, but a hope that rests in the capacity of the people to overcome through struggle. While not all Palestinians are committed to resisting settler colonialism, there is clearly a strong section of the population among whom struggle is honored. Within this population, acts of resistance are celebrated and those who engage in them are honored. It was my experience in Palestine that awakened me to the realisation that though I have experienced support from small pockets of like-minded people, I did not know what it was like to be immersed in a culture of resistance, to have it surround me as I walked the streets, to see it in the graffiti and the monuments to the 'martyrs', to hear it in the indomitable voices of people who are still telling their stories to the world in spite of the efforts to silence them. I have never lived under conditions in which struggle was celebrated by anything other than a small minority. It is this aspect of Palestine that I found most beautiful.

The celebration of resistance is particularly clear in the honoring of the 'martyrs'. Precisely because the spirit of Indigenous resistance has languished in the US, these monuments held a particular significance for me. We, too, have our martyrs, but even their memory is often co-opted by collaborators who invoke their names and images to serve their own purposes. For example, on 26 December, 1862, thirty-eight of our Dakota warriors were hanged in what remains the largest simultaneous mass hanging from one gallows in world history. Some of us celebrate their memory because they were hanged for defending our land, our people, and our way of life. Today, however, major memorial events held in their honor emphasise reconciliation with white settlers rather than resistance, while justice has yet to be served (for example, the vast majority of our people still live in exile and settlers continue to deny us our homeland while they benefit from our dispossession). That is not what our people fought for. While I am sure Palestine has its share of colonial collaborators who work at odds with resistance efforts, in

many of the villages, refugee camps, cities and neighborhoods, there was an obvious atmosphere of resistance and deep reverence for those who gave their lives for Palestine. Pictures of 'martyrs' are plastered on the walls of neighborhoods, spray-painted with stencils, printed on banners, posted on signage and stories of their sacrifice are told and re-told. Even universities are positioned as locations of struggle and resistance. Though this is often true amongst student groups on college campuses in the US, rarely do institutions themselves maintain an anti-colonial political agenda. When we met with people from the Women's Studies Center at Bir Zeit University and the administration, faculty and students at An-Najah University, we learned how institutions have flourished despite the occupation and how they aim to teach students how to be active members of society. They support students and faculty who participate in the struggle, they offer special scholarships for political prisoners and families of martyrs, and they take time to honor and remember them at various events, including graduation ceremonies. Ironically, the Indigenous warriors honored in our public gatherings in the US tend to be those who assist the US government in their wars of imperialism rather than fight for liberation or the defense of our homeland. Those of us ramping up Indigenous resistance today have much to learn from the Palestinian example.

As one imperialist nation to another, the US government is important in maintaining the Israeli system of occupation – to the tune of $8.2 million every day. As Indigenous Peoples of the US, we can offer our solidarity to our Palestinian relatives by also challenging American imperialism at home. One of my favorite anti-colonial intellectuals, Kenyan scholar Ngugi wa Thiong'o, wrote that any 'blow against imperialism, no matter the ethnic and regional origins of the blow, is a victory for all anti-imperialist elements in all the nationalities'.[13] We all must continue to struggle against settler colonialism wherever it exists.

Palestinians have risen to challenge that colonial violence by exerting their claim to the land. In Sheikh Jarrah I heard voices say: 'This is our land. This is our life. This is our right'. Members of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign stated: 'Without resistance, we can never achieve our rights'. I saw signs in the kindergarten classrooms in the Ibdaa Cultural Centre in Deheisheh

Refugee Camp that said: 'The Right to Return Home is Inalienable'. In Nablus I heard: 'We will continue our resistance until our land is returned'. In Al-Bustan, the threatened neighborhood in Silwan, I read on one of their banners: 'In Jerusalem our home we shall remain, like a wall upon your chest and a shred of glass in your throat'. I heard from the people: 'We are ready to die – all of us – but we are not going to give up our homes'. Everywhere we went, the people of Palestine conveyed their love of homeland and their desire to live freely. In spite of the extremely high price of resistance, the people fight on. Palestinians have demonstrated that repression also breeds courage.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Waziyatawin is a Dakota writer, teacher, and activist committed to the pursuit of Indigenous liberation and reclamation of homelands. Her work seeks to build a culture of resistance within Indigenous communities, to recover Indigenous ways of being, and to eradicate colonial institutions. She is currently writing on the topics of Indigenous women and resistance and Indigenous survival in the collapse of industrial civilisation. Waziyatawin comes from the Pezihutazizi Otunwe (Yellow Medicine Village) in southwestern Minnesota. After receiving her PhD in American history from Cornell University in 2000, she earned tenure and an associate professorship in the history department at Arizona State University where she taught for seven years. Waziyatawin currently holds the Indigenous Peoples Research Chair in the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria. She is the author or co/editor of five volumes, her most recent being What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland *(St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2008).*

NOTES

[1] This North American delegation was organised by Rabab Abdulhadi, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Race and Resistance Studies, and Senior Scholar, Arab & Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Initiative (AMED) at San Francisco State University, California, and Barbara Ransby, Professor of African American Studies and History and Director of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Illinois-Chicago (and founder of Ella's Daughters). Other members of the delegation included: Ayoka Chenzira, Angela Davis, Gina Dent, Melissa Garcia, Anna Guevarra, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Premilla Nadasen, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. For the declaration we issued upon our return, 'Justice for Palestine: A Call to Action from Indigenous and Women of Color Feminists', see: http://electronicintifada.net/blog/ali-abunimah/after-witnessing-palestines-apartheid-indigenous-and-women-color-feminists-endorse#.TsqOZbLNItM. Accessed: 12/01/12.

[2] Quoted in Carol Chomsky, 'The United State-Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice', *Stanford Law Review*, 43, 1 (1990), p. 25, n. 71.

[3] Available at: http://www.deathpenaltyinfo.org/native-americans-and-death-penalty#criminal Accessed: 20/07/11.

[4] Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999), pp. 139-153.

[5] Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating & Empire-Building* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1997), p. 331.
[6] Steve Newcomb, 'Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice', *Shaman's Drum*, 1992, pp. 18-20. Available at: http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm_art.html Accessed: 20/07/11.
[7] 'An Act for the Removal of the Sissetons, Wahpatons, Medawakanton, and Wahpakoota Bands of Sioux or Dakota Indians, and for the Disposition of their Lands in Minnesota and Dakota' was passed by the US Senate in 1863. Not only did this unilaterally abrogate treaties with the Dakota, it awarded Dakota treaty money to white settlers for 'depredations' incurred during the 1862 War.
[8] For further information about these PLC members, see http://en.nuwwabalquds.com/ Accessed: 20/07/11.
[9] This process was relayed to our delegation verbally.
[10] In this case, the Israelis destroyed the houses in the quarter, expelling residents to refugee camps or to Jordan, and burying alive those who remained inside. Malice in their hearts, indeed. Further, in their push to exert dominance and control over the site, Israelis re-named the Mughariba Quarter the 'Wailing Square', and the Mughariba Wall the 'Wailing Wall', thus establishing a new narrative on a site that is now devoid of the original inhabitants. Forty years later, the Israelis were still working to fully eradicate evidence of Islamic presence there. In 2007, Israelis excavated and hauled away Islamic and Arab antiquities uncovered during the destruction of the path to the Mughariba Gate. See The Aqsa Foundation for Islamic Sacred Places Development, *Standing Firm: The Nakba of the Maghariba Quarter in Photographs Forty Years under the Israeli Occupation* (Um El Fahem: 2007).
[11] Renato Rosaldo describes how agents of colonialism 'long for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed'. ee Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), p. 69.
[12] Genesis 17:8.
[13] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Oxford: James Curry, 1986), p. 2.