



Summer 2015 Newsletter

TIPPING THE SCALE IN THE BALANCE OF JUSTICE

BY KRISTINA ERICKSON
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Pages of the calendar turn. Kneeling at the feet of time in the midst of this very different world we are entering, is it possible to measure the advancements of justice? A “revolutionary physicist,” as history sometimes calls him, believed that “science will advance one funeral at a time.” This in and of itself is fine rhetoric which, by relying on a notion of simplicity, opens chance to excruciatingly gradual, out-with-the-obsolete, justice-free cycles of advancement. Still, with many detractors in sight, we are left without clear definitions or solutions to the unfair complexities of today's and yesterday's world. So slow it goes. But surely we've advanced!

Carved into this earth are countries, which are filled with people who love them. At an early age I learned that I was an “other” in someone else's world. While visiting my American grandmother, she sowed into my six-year-old ears: “All your mother's people do is fight in the desert.” I said nothing.

So how are we to unprogram the inherited echo of lying criminals and oblivious criminals who plundered their way to a common delusion of “justice for all?” Already halfway through 2015 and acts of oppression-directed violence have attracted themselves into our lives as reliably as gravity. A glaring pattern of racially-driven police brutality has activated ancestral pain at America's ex-slaves and current slaves. Meanwhile, the blinding effects of privilege dilute an urgency and ability to function outside of our subliminally normalized master-slave realities. But why must we so predictably meet the needs of group identity through claiming space and tons of killing? Plainly reduced, our advancement-lacking discourse reflects the consequence of decreased knowledge.

With hopes of adding some justice to a painfully unbalanced scale, on February 23, 2015, the Rachel Corrie Foundation held its 9th annual Peace Works conference, *Justice Rising: From Palestine to Ferguson, From First Nations to the U.S. Borderlands*. In the warmly-lit, cedar-built* Longhouse on The Evergreen State College campus, the evening panel began with a moment of silence. “I would like to start by paying tribute to the indigenous people of this land on whose territory we stand today” said Omar Barghouti, Palestinian author, scholar, and cofounder of the Boy-



Kanahus Manuel, Gabriel Schivone, Sarah Eltantawi (moderator), Omar Barghouti, and Jesse Hagopian.

cott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Ten years ago the call for BDS was initiated by Palestinian civil society and Barghouti reports that the movement is spreading. “Close to 40 percent of Americans support sanctions against Israel.” The non-violent, peace-motivated BDS movement has grown past “fringe” status and is nearing the mainstream, and into something the state of Israel calls a “strategic threat,” which means it's working.

Large media outlets awakened (briefly) during the spring of 2014 when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation responded to the boycott and withdrew their massive investment in the private security company G4S—the central nervous system of Israel's prison-industrial complex who manufacture and contract checkpoints, surveillance tech, and other such noxious structures and equipment. The kitchen accessory company SodaStream, who “make water exciting,” and whose factory illegally settled in the West Bank, continue to see the value of their stocks plummet like falling scuds. And with just enough innovation and bravery to exit certain aspects of academia's herd mentality, eight academic institutions have now fully joined the boycott.

The list goes on and on. But it is important to remember these results wouldn't be here without tactical courses of thought and action; not to mention the parallel work of each Peace Works panelist, and many others:

Kanahus Manuel - Mother and warrior from the Secwepemc Nation who upholds her inherent responsibilities to protect land and water. She raises awareness about the 2014 Mount Polley gold-copper mine tailings spill that is known as possibly the worst mining pollution disaster in Canadian history.

Jesse Hagopian - History teacher and co-adviser to the Black Student Union at Seattle's Garfield High School—the site of the historic MAP test boycott in 2013. He is the editor and contributing author to “More Than a Score: The New Uprising Against High-Stakes,” and is an associate editor for *Rethinking Schools* magazine.

Gabriel Schivone - Member of the National Students for Justice in Palestine conference steering committee, who writes from his experiences as a humanitari-

an volunteer at the U.S. - Mexico borderlands, and recently co-authored the article “Gaza in Arizona: How Israeli High-Tech Firms Will Up-Armor the U.S. - Mexico Border.”

“A lot of the boycott movement today is about intersectionality, cross-movement coalition building.” Barghouti says. “BDS is not simply about Palestine. It's about this unjust world order where oil companies, military companies, and very anti-democratic governments, and banks, and institutions are controlling our fates. Our enemies are very connected, so it's time that we, the victims, the oppressed, connect as well...The most dangerous occupation is the colonization of the mind. So it's extremely important to start with decolonizing the mind as we decolonize our space, our resources and our lives. Part of that is shattering the hopelessness that they try to instill in our minds, especially among young people—that you're a nobody; that you've got to live with, adapt to the system, because that's how it is and that's how it will stay. They instill that in your mind from childhood so you grow up desperate or apathetic.”

As we group ourselves and begin driving concepts of well-functioning justice-based behaviors, we also move as individuals—each with various empathic limitations; each who were taught may or may not matter; each with particular degrees of distrust for certain power-holders (who have made it clear in too many ways that they do not notice or care to acknowledge their colonial hangover); each with a collection of experiences, that from some have caused silence. And as any silenced individual knows, it takes a lot of work to suppress who one's self is, year after year after year. For in order to impact change on this world-place and bring forth a better one, it is now necessary to voice courage. Live each remaining day carefully enough to see that justice is the soil from which the advancements of our future will grow.

“BDS IS NOT SIMPLY ABOUT PALESTINE. IT'S ABOUT THIS UNJUST WORLD ORDER WHERE OIL COMPANIES, MILITARY COMPANIES, AND VERY ANTI-DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS, AND BANKS, AND INSTITUTIONS ARE CONTROLLING OUR FATES.”

OMAR BARGHOUTI

*and other timber donated by the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN)

STEVEN SALAITA, FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS, ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:

HOW DEMANDS FOR "CIVILITY" MARGINALIZE NARRATIVES SUPPORTIVE OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

BY SANDY ALLEN
BOARD MEMBER



In July 8, 2014, Israel launched a 51-day military operation against Gaza, dubbed "Operation Protective Edge." People around the world were horrified by the images of carnage coming out of Gaza. Social media proved to be a powerful tool for disseminating information, video and photos, and expressing a shared sense of outrage.

Professor Steven Salaita raised his voice in a series of posts on Twitter condemning Israel's actions. Administrators at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) responded by terminating Salaita's faculty appointment for "incivility" in the content and tone of his tweets.

One year later, on June 13, 2015, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), a prominent academic organization, voted to formally censure UIUC administrators for terminating Salaita. An investigative report published by the AAUP on April 28 found that Salaita was "dismissed" from a position he had accepted and that the UIUC administration violated principles of academic freedom and Salaita's due process rights as a faculty member.

Salaita was a tenured professor at Virginia Tech University when he accepted a tenured position at the UIUC's American Indian Studies Department. He had resigned from his position at Virginia Tech and was preparing to move to Illinois when, less than a month before school was to start, he received a letter from UIUC Chancellor Phyllis Wise informing him that his appointment was terminated.

According to the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), Salaita's termination "functions as a penalty for his speech on an issue of public concern, constitutes 'viewpoint discrimination,' a violation of the First Amendment, and also threatens academic freedom by punishing a faculty member for speaking as a citizen on a critical issue."

The CCR is representing Salaita in the lawsuit he filed in January against UIUC trustees, administrators and donors for violations of his First Amendment rights and breach of his employment contract. The lawsuit is still in its early stages.



Salaita at Northwestern University. Courtesy of Jeffrey Putney.

On April 8, Salaita gave a talk at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, sponsored by the Rachel Corrie Foundation and The United Faculty of Evergreen. Dr. Salaita told the audience of students, faculty and other community members that his firing from UIUC involved a constellation of issues: restriction of academic freedom, corporatization of academe, and the decline of faculty governance over issues including hiring and firing.

But the "elephant in the room," said Salaita, is the "systematic marginalization of narratives in support of Palestinian rights in academic spaces." He said that "a long list of people over a 30-year period" have been fired, denied tenure, or not hired due to speaking on behalf of Palestinians.

Salaita stated that the UIUC Administration used the allegation of "incivility" to justify his dismissal. He said the predominant, normative use of "civility" is to shut down opposition to the status quo, and added, "No legal precedent predicates free speech on tone."

In the context of American Indian Studies, said Salaita, a discussion of European colonization involves a binary narrative of colonial logic: "civility versus savagery." For a university to invoke civility in its attack on an American Indian Studies professor is "insidious," he added. "It reproduces the colonial logic, treating it as common wisdom. Using civility as a cover connotes something other than a specific intent behind the action of firing a professor."

That perspective is echoed in the AAUP report which states: "Historians have shown that over the centuries ... the notion of civility consistently operates to constitute relations of power. Moreover, it is always the powerful who determine its meaning — a meaning that serves to delegitimize the words and actions of those to whom it is applied. ... Western European imperial powers often justified their conquests as efforts to "civilize" native populations."

Salaita's dismissal by UIUC has met with criticism on multiple fronts. According to the CCR, more than 5,000 academics have pledged to boycott the university; more than three dozen scheduled talks and conferences have been cancelled; and sixteen academic departments at UIUC have voted no confidence in the administration. As for the AAUP's vote to censure UIUC, Colleen Flaherty, writing at *Inside Higher Ed*, had predicted the vote, stating that it "could amount to the biggest consequence yet for the university." In a press release on June 13, the CCR stated that censure by the AAUP will be "a serious blemish on the university's record."

Dr. Salaita concluded his presentation at Evergreen on a hopeful note, indicating that he has been favorably surprised by the backlash against UIUC and feels optimistic about a broader shift in awareness around Israel/Palestine. He said the response has been "extraordinary ... a remarkable signal of our effectiveness."

"A certain sort of power has shifted," said Salaita. He attributed this to "a great strength of effort over so many years by students and academics across the country, as well as the hard work done off campus by groups like the Rachel Corrie Foundation."

As the Palestinian solidarity movement has gained momentum and popular support, Israel's advocates are increasingly abandoning efforts to argue their case on the merits and resorting to attacks on First Amendment rights and academic freedom. The AAUP's damning report and formal censure of UIUC, and Salaita's lawsuit against UIUC for his unjust dismissal, are substantial responses to those attacks.

Read full article at counterpunch.org

(RE)ORGANIZING: LEARNING FROM OUR PAST, LOOKING TO OUR FUTURE

BY KARL ANDERSON
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER



In February 18, 2015, the Israeli

Supreme Court made a decision not to hold Israeli Occupying Forces accountable for the killing of Rachel Corrie. While the legal efforts in Israel on Rachel's behalf were a Corrie family matter and effort, all of us at the Rachel Corrie Foundation were impacted. The outcome legalized Israel's unwillingness to deviate from a dynamic of power that explicitly serves to erase Palestinian minds,



bodies, and spaces. As if this were not enough, the verdict created bureaucratic precedents for never-ending states of war and facilitated a domestic legal framework for violating international law.

While the ruling gives carte blanche to military operations within occupied Palestine, its tangible lesson is not that Israeli military activities are somehow more legally robust than before. Israeli military action has manipulated both domestic and international legal frameworks that do not suit its expansionist needs, long before Rachel traveled to the region. Rather, the ruling reveals that U.S. and Israeli government demands, for Palestinians and those who fight beside them to maintain civility, are a farce intended to preserve oppressive systems of power. Twelve years of civil, law-abiding engagement with the Israeli judicial apparatus ended with an atrocious verdict, that proves this. In that time, thousands of lives have been lost, and even more have been deprived of the most basic human rights. This is the reality we face. So what is to be done?

There is no spell to cast to make this simply go away. Any strategy we pursue to challenge these realities must, at the very least, cultivate habits and practices that creatively shape a society based on liberation. Creating a new world free of these injustices has never been a singular endeavor. Collectively, we shape the realities around us in ways that leave lasting imprints, either as fully realized practices, or as subtle impressions, that impact the lives of others. At the Rachel Corrie Foundation, when thinking about our responsibilities post trial, we again turn to Rachel, remembering that she looked forward to "...when civil society wakes up en masse and issues massive and resonant evidence of its conscience, its unwillingness to be repressed, and its compassion for the suffering of

others." We strive towards this reality.

The trial verdict demonstrates that our mission must manifest in a way that proactively creates fissures in the status quo of the Israeli war machine. We vehemently believe in challenging this injustice, and re-emphasize that human rights and resistance to oppression "must be included in the way we define ourselves as a community," through behaviors, practices, and performances of our daily lives.

We do not seek the luxury of turning our attention away. Instead, we aim to pivot our stance in order to meet the challenges head on. In light of the realities, our mission must take on substantial qualities of grassroots resistance, particularly BDS, with guidance and direction from Palestinian voices with whom we are regularly in contact. We will continue to use the tools at our disposal to answer calls for justice from our allies, both at home and abroad.

In June 2002, less than a year before Rachel Corrie traveled to Rafah, she reflected on her studies at The Evergreen State College about resistance to racism, colonization, and oppression in the Pacific Northwest: "The brutal history drives home the importance of resistance and it makes national and international events relevant on a local level. So much of this has happened before. We can look at that history and then choose which side we want to be on now, and how willing we are to fight." Today, these words ring truer than ever. We are privileged not only by the color of our skin or the money in our pockets, but by our ability to choose how we engage with injustice. How will you fight?

WE GET WHAT WE PAY FOR: OCCUPATIONS, WEALTH DISPARITY, AND THE STRUGGLES FOR JUSTICE AND FREEDOM

BY MATT LESTER
BOARD MEMBER

“**T**hat’s a

nice idea but how are you going to pay for it?”



This question is often asked as a way of dismissing those who dare suggest we should have universal health care, better paid workers, and free college education. But after further inspection of where our tax dollars really go, the question should not be as silencing as it may seem. In fact, when we look at how our tax money is collected and spent, we should all be raising our eyebrows and asking questions.

Consider that the United States allocates over 45% of its federal budget (1.3 trillion dollars) on present and past military spending. Consider that, despite refusing to end the illegal occupation of Palestine, Israel is scheduled to receive over 3 billion dollars of military aid from the United States annually, amounting to 30 billion from 2009 – 2018. Of that total, Washington State annually delivers \$731,757,769.64, which could have been directed towards affordable housing, green job training, and healthcare. Consider that Walmart and McDonald’s—two of the companies targeted for the \$15 minimum wage movement—profit by dumping their labor costs onto U.S. taxpayers as their workers become reliant on public assistance programs to survive. According to recent studies, McDonald’s costs taxpayers 1.2 billion dollars annually and Walmart 6.2 billion annually in such expense. Finally, consider what is not collected in taxes. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), “In 1962, the wealthiest 1 percent had 125 times the wealth of a median household. In 2010, the ratio was 288-to-1.” Despite this inequality, the current tax structure allows the richest U.S. citizens to pay less than their fair share. Forcing the rich to fork over their untaxed wealth isn’t just pie in the sky thinking. They actually used to pay more. The EPI states, “The top 1 percent paid higher taxes in 1979 and received less in government transfers compared to 2007. In 2007, the top 1 percent had a 20 percent lower tax bill than in 1979 and received three times more in transfers than in 1979.”

A fair and just economic system is a critical prerequisite for upholding the tenets set forth by the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 25 clearly communicates that “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of [their] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control.” The current economic system of the United States is horrendously inadequate to uphold this declaration.

Given this, it becomes clear that the struggle for human rights in Palestine is connected to economic rights here in the United States. Israel destroys U.N. Schools with our tax dollars at the same time we fail to fund our own schools (see, for instance, Washington State Supreme Court’s McCleary decision). With a bloated military budget, unconscionable military aid, and a tax system that protects billionaires, there is more than enough money and resources to build and live in a just and peaceful world. The real question isn’t why are we not paying for that world, but rather, what needs to be done to bring that world into being?

As abolitionist Frederick Douglass put it, “If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

The Rachel Corrie Foundation understands this. In line with Douglass, we encourage and support “grassroots efforts in pursuit of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice, which we view as prerequisites for world peace.” On Tax Day 2015, we challenged board members, interns, employees, and friends of the Rachel Corrie Foundation to find ways to plug into local and grassroots struggles that promote both human rights and economic justice. (To name a few: Black Lives Matter, Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, and 15 Now.) Every Tax Day should be a call for economic justice that we not only want, but that we also need to survive. From addressing the injustice in Palestine, to impacting climate change, to providing for healthier and happier workers, we can’t afford to ignore these nice ideas.

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 **Rachel Corrie**
Foundation for Peace & Justice

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Meet Lamees! Recipient of RCF Educational Grant



By Abigail Senuty
Intern

Last fall, the Rachel Corrie Foundation awarded Lamees Abu Rahmah, a young Palestinian woman, a scholarship for her first year of studies at Birzeit University in the West Bank. Lamees is the eldest of four children and the first in her family to attend university. She also comes from a family with a strong commitment to nonviolent resistance to the occupation. Lamees lives in Bil'in and her uncle and aunt Basam and Jawaher Abu Rahmah were both

martyred during the weekly protests by this village, challenging Israeli confiscation of their land.

Lamees is passionate about access to education, particularly for girls. The Rachel Corrie Foundation feels a strong commitment to the same cause. In the future, we hope to establish a long-term scholarship program for Palestinian women to attend university. In the meantime, we are thrilled to support Lamees as this impressive young woman works toward a journalism degree, which will improve both her life and those of many in her community.

Since my childhood I have dreamed of becoming a journalist. I just completed my second semester at Birzeit University specializing in journalism with a minor in political science. I am very happy with my studies and particularly enjoyed a course I took last semester in film production. This is my favorite aspect of journalism. I also took classes related to advocacy, photography, and creative writing. I believe it is very important to expose the realities on the ground in Palestine through coverage of subjects

ranging from politics to society and culture. After graduation I would like to work in a broadcasting station and teach others some aspects of journalism. Outside of class, I enjoy volunteering. In the past, I have volunteered by planting trees, restoring old housing, and working with children. At Birzeit University, I participate in a student group called "The Right to Learn," a volunteer student peer tutoring program. We also visited a home for the elderly on Christmas Day to provide gifts and company for the residents.

I was also a member of the cultural folk dance group (dabke) and performed in many festivals in

the towns and villages in Palestine and also presented throughout Algeria. This was a very wonderful experience.

Thanks for helping me achieve my dream. I thank the Rachel Corrie Foundation for this assistance and opportunity to complete my educational career and give me the strength to succeed. I am very happy because I am in this university, and all that is thanks to you.

With respect,

Lamees Abu Rahmah

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