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**Transnational Subalternity and Black-
Palestinian Poetics of Solidarity**

**Postcolonial Interventions: An Interdisciplinary
Journal of Postcolonial Studies**

ABSTRACT:

Following a recent surge in state violence experienced by African-Americans and Palestinians, both groups have repeatedly expressed their solidarity with each other, informed by the analogy of their subjugation and by the connectivity of the hegemonic systems that produce their respective subalternity. Transcending national categories, Black and Palestinian activists are currently engaging in creative expressions of solidarity and resistance from US-American to Palestinian and Israeli localities. African-Americans and Palestinians often appear to be 'othered' targets of racist politics that deem their marginalized communities as faceless, situating them at the antipode of the white, Western self. As inadequately visible subalterns in (post)colonial public spheres, their plight often remains insufficiently acknowledged. Manifestations of solidarity within a broader decolonial aesthetics bear the potential to both reveal human rights violations and to formulate a transnational resistance. The aim of this research is to examine current and historic statements of solidarity and to analyze the creation of a transnational imagined community as a result of mutual Black-Palestinian re-mappings of colonial racism. The use of a transmedia activism - as manifested in social media, open letters, flashmobs, and performances - as a mean of mutual recognition and counter-narration directly attacks the ethnocentric empire, when activists reveal myths and ideologies by taking their personal state-sponsored struggle out of its national and ethnic context in order to compare it to other spaces of subjugation.

Keywords: *African-American; Palestinian; media; subalternity; transnational*

Introduction

American poet June Jordan once wrote, "I was born a black woman and now, I am become a Palestinian," ("Moving Towards Home") implying commonalities in the experience of subalternity among African Americans and Palestinians, which are correspondingly vocalized in Palestinian American poet Suheir Hammad's work *Born Palestinian Born Black*. Hammad feels "validated" by the the "transformation ... rebirth, ... understanding of humanity" (13) that she encounters in Jordan's literature. Adverse junctures of racialized subalternity induce both authors to transcend national or racial limitations of identity and to situate themselves within a more extensive category of humanity. The potential of altering one's national identity stems from transnational linkings of subalternity. As both authors' biographic narrations of oppression exceed geographic, historical, and political classifications, their de-colonial aesthetics, i.e. efforts at expressing (post-)colonial anxiety and countering colonialism, suggest a transnational connection of oppressed people(s).

The simultaneous occurrence of state violence against Blacks and Palestinians in the US and Israel/Palestine in the summer of 2014 and both minority groups' subsequent heightened transmedia exchange led to a reaffirmation of the solidarity between Blacks and Palestinians, based on a perceived similarity of their respective subalternity, which this article seeks to further explicate. This paper will read historic and contemporary Black declarations of solidarity with the Palestinian people as de-colonial aesthetics. Discussing the creation of counter-imaginings through the cultural politics of empathy, this paper claims that continuous political events and iniquitous socio-economic conditions accentuate the apprehension of the Palestinian marginalization, exclusion, and removal

among African American activists. It aims at displaying how activism offers extraterritorial spaces of dialogue where subaltern voices are finally received.

From Ferguson to Nazareth : A Transnational Solidarity

Activists from Dream Defenders and the Black Lives Matter movement organized a creative protest in Nazareth in 2015, proclaiming Black solidarity with Palestine and promoting participation in the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel. Engaging in spoken, sung, and rapped verses of poetic solidarity, the activists exclaimed, "Palestine to Ferguson, end the occupations! Ferguson to Palestine, we fight to free our nations!" (Dream Defenders, *Solidarity*) Their transmedia manifestation moves from recitation of poetic verses to communal chanting, singing, and dancing, culminating in the performance of collective physical embracing, accompanied by drum acoustics. Collectively affirming "they know that we will win," the encouragement develops into a group hug, at the center of which the participants bilingually voice "free Palestine" in Arabic and "Black lives matter" in English (ibid.).

The manifestation in Nazareth protests the disavowal of basic human rights for Palestinians, while suggesting a harmonious parallel between the hegemony's production of subalternity within both Palestinian and Black American populations. The material or prosthetic witnessing of subaltern suffering seems to re-affirm the awareness of one's own subalternity. Immanuel Kant's discussion on *Perpetual Peace* within the frames of cosmopolitanism discerns a transnationalization in the perception of suffering, advocating the desirability of "a law of world citizenship" since "the narrower or wider community of the peoples of the earth has developed so far that a violation of rights in one place is felt throughout the world" ("Perpetual Peace", Mount Holyoke College). Contemporary

African-American and Palestinian expressions of mutual solidarity are informed by both groups' reciprocal awareness of subalternity as they thoroughly illustrate crucial empathy towards the other's subjugation. Protesting various realizations of state violence, Black solidarity with Palestine reveals an always already present distance of being Black and being Palestinian from the mainstream public sphere, and goes beyond merely suggesting spaces of comparison.

Contemporary affirmations of solidarity between the two minorities experienced a revival during and after the summer of 2014, following US and Israeli enunciations of hegemony, in which both the United States and Palestine became localities of repressive state violence. Israel's war against Gaza and the aggregation of police violence against black individuals in the US - metonymically often represented by the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson and triggered by the acquittal of white police officer George Zimmerman in 2013 - alluded to a shared structure of subalternity that became visible in African American articulations of solidarity with Palestine.

Palestinian Subalternity

Deprecated by Israel's colonization, the Palestinians' existence as a nation faces ubiquitous obstacles. Palestinians - most of whom are stateless refugees - appear suspect "almost by definition" (Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* 5) in their restricted ability to cross international borders, serving as "a source of anxiety to governments and their security authorities" (ibid. 4). Palestinians remain colonial subjects to a European-styled white settler-colonial project; or, as Masalha implies, Palestinians in Israel and occupied Palestine are excluded by an ethnocratic elite democracy (*The Palestine Nakba* 45). Accordingly, being Palestinian becomes non-belonging.

In Gaza in particular, and in Palestine in general, the encounter between colonized subjects and Western hegemony is observable in structural state violence. Othered at least since the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and dispossessed since the Nakba of 1948, the experience of ethnic cleansing has historically constituted the very existence of the Palestinian people (cf. Pappé; cf. Palumbo). The Nakba (Arabic for 'catastrophe') refers to the events commencing around 1948, when between 750,000 and 1 million Palestinians were expelled by Zionist - and later Israeli - military forces, which, as Chomsky claims, "carried out extensive terror against Arab civilians," (28) and perpetuated a systematic ethnic cleansing of Palestine (cf. Pappé). Gershon Shafir characterizes the early Zionist colonization in Palestine as similar to European colonialism, arguing that it "established an economy based on white labour which together with the forced removal or the destruction of the native population allowed the settlers to regain the sense of cultural and ethnic homogeneity that is identified with a European concept of nationality." (84). The propagation of Palestine as a "land without people for a people without land" (Masalha, *Politics of Denial* 12), accompanied by a dehumanization of the native population, helped rhetorically legitimize the colonization. Judith Butler claims that Israel's sovereignty depends upon "permanent strategies of expulsion and containment" that define its colonial relation to the Palestinians (211).

The absence of the Nakba from Western historiography further perpetuates the marginalization of the Palestinian people. As mainstream narratives tend to ignore the disparity in power relations between the colonized Palestinians and the colonizing Israeli state apparatus, discourses on Palestine/Israel remain informed by a staunch Orientalism, in which "[t]errorism is invariably on the Palestinian, defence on the Israeli, side of the moral ledger," (Said, "Last Taboo" 46) while "[t]he general picture is that Israel is so

surrounded by rock-throwing barbarians that even the missiles, tanks and helicopter gunships used to 'defend' Israelis from them are warding off what is essentially an invasive force" (ibid. 45). Thus, Israel's access to political, ideological, and historiographic hegemony helps maintain Palestinian subalternity. Consequently, Palestinianness can be defined by the omnipresent and continuous character of the Nakba that reiteratively defines the realities Palestinian people inhabit in the present. As Rosemary Sayigh argues, "the suffering caused by the Nakba has to be understood in terms of a *continuing* state of rightlessness, with all the varieties of abuse and violence that rightlessness exposes people to" (56, emphasis in the original).

Amnesty International's assessment of the situation in Israel/Palestine outlines the continuity of the Nakba:

Israeli forces committed war crimes and human rights violations during a 50-day military offensive in the Gaza Strip that killed over 1,500 civilians, including 539 children, wounded thousands more civilians, and caused massive civilian displacement and destruction of property and vital services. Israel maintained its air, sea and land blockade of Gaza, imposing collective punishment on its approximately 1.8 million inhabitants and stoking the humanitarian crisis. In the West Bank, Israeli forces carried out unlawful killings of Palestinian protesters, including children, and maintained an array of oppressive restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement while continuing to promote illegal settlements and allow Israeli settlers to attack Palestinians and destroy their property with near total impunity. Israeli forces detained thousands of Palestinians, some of whom reported being tortured, and held around 500 administrative detainees without trial. ... Israeli forces

destroyed thousands of civilian homes and internally displaced around 110,000 Palestinians, as well as severing power generation and water supplies, and damaging other civil infrastructure ("Amnesty International Report 2014/15. Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories").

The plight in Palestine/Israel suggests that Palestinian people can be killed with impunity. Within clearly defined power relations, the Israeli state apparatus is exploiting the Palestinian subaltern for a continuous (re-)production of the Nakba. According to Max Blumenthal, the 2014 developments in Palestine/Israel were accompanied by several open calls by politicians, university professors, and military personnel for a genocide of the Palestinian people (5-13). Negative visibility for Palestinians and the desire for forced disappearance of the Palestinian body appear foundational to Israeli existence.

The Hashtag Solidarity

The Palestinian subaltern narrative gained significant attention from African American activists who established a comparison between Ferguson and Gaza as localities of violence in 2014. The magnitude of both the events in Gaza and in Ferguson gained global attention primarily through social media, which helped spread personal narratives and audio-visual material transnationally. Omitted in Western media, Palestinians seized Twitter and Facebook to disclose their political realities. The function of hashtags on Twitter, i.e. the hyper-linking of a personal message to a key word, enabled an agile exchange between protesters in US localities like Ferguson and individuals from Palestine. One tweet directed from #Ferguson to #Gaza exclaimed, "We are being occupied" (Glawe). Another tweet asked, "[w]ill we rise up like the people of Gaza?" (Nazzal).

Simultaneously, a Palestinian hashtagged #Ferguson with a picture of an individual holding a billboard which declares that "[t]he Palestinian people know what it means to be shot while unarmed because of your ethnicity" (Nazza).

The solidarity between African American and Palestinian individuals developed into a dialogue of ideas on how to protect oneself from the police state. One individual from the West Bank advised African American activists to "[not] keep much distance from the police, if you're close to them they can't tear gas," connecting this statement with a hashtag "to #Ferguson from #Palestine" (Abu Khalil). Another tweet recommended that protesters in Ferguson "always make sure to run against the wind/ to keep calm when you're teargassed, the pain will pass, don't rub your eyes!" hashtagging "#Ferguson Solidarity" (Barghouti). Breaking offline limitations of mobility and access to information, social media makes visible the alliance of two marginalized minorities who perform an alternative movement as they remain subjugated through geo-political reality and excluded from political participation.

African American Subalternity

The identification of African Americans with the Palestinian plight points to structures of vulnerability in the US. While this article does not intend to draw a comparative human rights analysis, it is nevertheless inevitable to link the deficits of human rights experienced by both populations and to claim that just like the Palestinian body, the African American body suffers from state violence.

Amnesty International indicates a worsening of human rights conditions in the US, claiming that in 2014, at least 35 people died from consequences of police violence ("Amnesty International Report 2014/15. United States of America"), whereas other

sources ("Killed By Police") document the killing of over 1,100 individuals by US law enforcement officers. In the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown and the subsequent emergence of protests in Ferguson, "the use of heavy-duty riot gear and military-grade weapons and equipment to police the demonstrations served to intimidate protesters who were exercising their right to peaceful assembly while the use of rubber bullets, tear gas and other aggressive dispersal tactics was not warranted." Outlining the wave of police violence against African Americans, Amnesty International proclaims the "need for a review of standards on the use of force in the USA" ("Amnesty International Report 2014/15. United States of America").

Michelle Alexander argues that the Jim Crow laws enforcing racial segregation in the southern US have been replaced by the systematic mass incarceration of Black populations in the US as a "legalized discrimination" (1) and system of control that "permanently locks a huge percentage of the African-American community out of the mainstream society and economy". Alexander elaborates that while the current "system of racialized social control" purports to be colorblind, it operates "as a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs, and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race," and produces, as Alexander conceptualizes it, an "undercaste" for those permanently "barred by law and custom from mainstream society" (13).

Although there might be structural differences in the dimensions of subjugation experienced by African Americans and Palestinians (such as the access to de jure citizenship and basic rights), both groups suffer from inequality and systematic discrimination, while they continue to be victims of state violence that is crucially noticeable in socio-economic negligence, high incarceration, and systematic exclusion.

Both groups remain racialized, othered targets of racist politics that more often than not regard their existence as unwanted.

Statements of Solidarity

While current post-Gaza/Ferguson expressions of social activism empathically associate both populations' sufferings, the formation of an Afro-Arab political imaginary is not a recent phenomenon. The dynamic relations between African American and Palestinian activism and liberation struggles have been visible throughout the second half of the 20th century, since representatives from within the movement for black freedom in the US regularly explored the similarities of their struggle with the situation of Arabs in Palestine/Israel, providing dense support for the Palestinian liberation movement. Malcolm X, who traveled to the Middle East and met with the PLO, took a strong stance against Zionism's treatment of the Palestinians. The SNCC declared firm solidarity with Palestine following the 1967 war. Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party, staunchly disavowed perpetual attacks of US-Israeli imperialism against Palestinians. Often, the situation in Palestine/Israel was considered a struggle against white, American imperialism.

In a key moment of transnational solidarity, African American activists published an open letter in the New York Times in 1970, articulating an intimate understanding of the Palestinian suffering: "We, the Black American signatories of this advertisement are in complete solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters, who like us, are struggling for self-determination and an end to racist oppression." Positioning African Americans as subalterns, the statement opens up a comparison between struggles in the US and Palestine, crucially identifying the State of Israel as "the outpost of American imperialism in the

Middle East," and severely criticizing Zionism's "reactionary racist" ideology, Israeli settler-colonialism, and US-Israeli aid to international colonialism and imperialism. Accordingly, the statement remaps the "Palestinian revolution" onto an internationalist anti-imperialist struggle, as "part of the anti-colonial revolution" throughout third world localities, suggesting that Palestinians and Blacks partake in a wider, transborder struggle. Palestine then appears as a universal symbol of global resistance against imperialism and colonialism in general. The transnationalization of the Palestinian resistance is decisively depicted by a comparison of the exploitation experienced by African Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos, which "is similar to the exploitation of Palestinian Arabs and Oriental Jews" by Israel. Thereby, the statement draws attention to Israel's discrimination against Sephardim and Mizrahim Jews, whom the statement locates within its transnational imagery. The open letter concludes by expressing a capitalized exigency of counter-imperialist resistance, formulating a transnational solidarity: "We call for Afro-American Solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle for national liberation and to regain their all of their stolen land" (Committee of Black Americans for Truth about the Middle-East, "An Appeal by Black Americans").

The statement's connection of subalternity is amplified by the disclosure of the inherent linking of the hegemonic systems that generate conditions of subalternity. The link between the two groups' suffering is mirrored in the geo-political conjunction of the US and Israel. Alex Lubin argues that Palestine has been a laboratory for the US-Israeli security industry in regards to urban combat, surveillance and partitioning. Accordingly, a transnational economy of policing and security technology has spanned wars on drugs, crime and terrorism in the post-9/11 era. Lubin claims that the US-Israeli experience in Palestine "has shaped Israel's approach to the 'problem' of Palestinians *and* the US's

approach to the 'problem' of the urban black poor" ("Disappearing Frontiers"). Consequently, both Palestinians and Black Americans appear as surplus populations that are categorically defined through their deaths.

Beyond being viewed solely as a US-proxy, Israel's strong support for the apartheid regime in South Africa played a major role in African Americans' alienation from Israel. As Robert Newby outlines, "one facet of this imperialist struggle which leads to support of the Arab cause by Black Americans is the apparent link between Israel and the Union of South Africa. Since Black Americans continue to oppose the racist regime of South Africa, any friend of South Africa is likely to be an enemy of Afro-Americans" (57). The Zionist colonial project was regularly scrutinized as an extension of US colonialism and imperialism. Weisbord and Stein argue that "African-Americans and Arabs have a natural bond in that they see White America (and its Zionist counterpart) as their common oppressor" (91).

The exploration of the authoritative US-Israeli link and its historically present analogy is constitutive of the recent "Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine" published in August 2015, in which Black activists, artists, scholars, writers, and political prisoners offer their "reaffirmed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and commitment to the liberation of Palestine's land and people," "wholeheartedly endorse" the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement against Israel, and urge the recognition of the Palestinian struggle for liberation "as a key matter of our time" (Black Solidarity with Palestine, "2015 Statement").

The introduction to the statement frames African Americans and Palestinians - thoroughly expressed in a collective first person plural - as victims of "terror." Suggesting that the heightening of subjugation results in a strengthening of solidarity, the statement is

underlined with many different hyperlinks to research on political events and previous demonstrations of solidarity. After admonishing Israel for its 2014 war, in the light of which the signatories "remain heartbroken," and historically contextualizing the "denial of Palestinian humanity and sovereignty" with the Nakba and current legalized discrimination, the statement's discussion of occupation, refugees, and the denial of rights culminates in the visibility of "connections between the situation of Palestinians and Black people." The physical containment of both populations is highlighted when "Israel's widespread use of detention and imprisonment against Palestinians" is correlated to the mass incarceration of Black people in the US. The justification of lethal force against both groups - expressed as "us" - by soldiers, police, and courts serves as the center of a comparison which eventually materializes into a link, as the signatories "have witnessed police and soldiers from the two countries train side-by-side." The statement affirms that Israel's maltreatment of Palestinians "would be impossible without the US defending Israel" ideologically and financially (ibid.).

While emphasizing a Black-Palestinian imaginary, the statement recognizes the extension of subalternity beyond this bond. By denouncing Israel's brutal treatment of its African population, the statement calls for a unified action against anti-Blackness, white supremacy, and Zionism, and eventually encourages activists to take action through transnational conversations in a "joint struggle against capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and the various racisms embedded in and around our societies" (ibid.).

Media, Hegemony, and Empire

Protesting inadequate visibility in the mainstream public sphere, the Black Solidarity Statement with Palestine outlines that "US and Israeli officials and media criminalize our

existence, portray violence against us as 'isolated incidents,' and call our resistance 'illegitimate' or 'terrorism.' These narratives ignore decades and centuries of anti-Palestinian and anti-Black violence that have always been at the core of Israel and the US" (ibid.). The exclusion of minority groups from the ethnocentric core is often perpetuated through media representations which serve to protect and expand the ethnocentric empire. As Said showed, tactical rules in the media landscape "serve efficiently to reduce an unmanageable reality into 'news' or 'stories,'" (*Covering Islam* 49) thereby producing simplified, homogeneous concepts of complex phenomena.

A marginalization of undesired populations is aided by linguistic means which naturalize ideological myths into alleged historical facts. As "myth hides nothing," but rather functions "to distort, not to make disappear" (Barthes 121), the peculiar use of signifier and signified presents ideologies as "a kind of knowledge, a past, a memory, a comparative order of facts, ideas, decisions" (ibid. 117). The distortion of language through corruption of thought characterizes much of US discourse on the Middle East, evoking concepts of "terrorism" and "security" in reference to Palestine (cf. Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit* 120). Concurrently, propaganda has created an narrative of the "gallant Zionists" who are "like us," in opposition to "a mass of undifferentiated natives with whom it was impossible for 'us' to identify" (Said, "Introduction" 5). The linguistic subjugation of Palestinians serves the perpetuation and simultaneous concealing of the Nakba.

Beyond Afro-Palestinian Alliances

Current forms of social activism extend far beyond the Afro-Arab bond. 2014 saw multicultural crowds engaging in peace marches, when US localities witnessed "a spectrum of skin tone, Arabic and English accents, young and old, white youth, white

progressive Jews, Mexican-Americans and Arabs throwing their collective fist to the sky" (Powers, "The War over the War"). With its decade-long continuity and increasing visibility, the Palestinian plight is supported not just by African American activists. The connectivity of the struggles of Indigenous Americans and Palestinians with settler-colonialism was foundational to the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association's (NAISA) academic boycott of Israel which symbolized a resistance to "the colonization and domination of Indigenous lands via settler state structures throughout the world" ("Declaration of Support"). As Kēhaulani Kauanui argues, the links between settler colonialism in the US and Israel are "not merely analogous," but rather "shaped from many of the same material and symbolic forces." Hence, a US condemnation of Israel would call into question the entire US American project" ("Substantive Erasures").

Furthermore, the Black-Palestinian resistance is increasingly assisted by many Jewish American organizations, such as Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), which "supports peace activists in Palestine and Israel, and works in broad coalition with other Jewish, Arab American, faith-based, peace and social justice organizations" ("Mission Statement"), and thus opposes Israel's hegemonic narrative. While the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) actively seeks to silence critics of Israel by disavowing comparisons between Ferguson and Palestine, which they consider as "assaulting the good name of the State of Israel," (Jacobson, "Don't Compare Ferguson and Palestine") and by countering the comparisons with a general condemnation of Palestinians, JVP openly reveals Israel's interest in domination. Seeing the use of Islamophobia as an instrument for US-Israeli hegemony, JVP argues that "unwavering support of Israeli policies contributes to the characterization of Muslims and all Arabs as the 'enemy' and to the perpetuation of Islamophobia," which appears significant for "building and sustaining public and U.S. government backing for

Israel," and state-sponsored "anti-Palestinian policies adopted and promoted by the US government" ("Network Against Islamophobia"). Concurrently, JVP's activism against anti-Muslim and racist hate speech, state surveillance, racial profiling, and institutionalized racism, is largely informed by the connection of anti-Black and anti-Palestinian sentiment.

Participation in transnational solidarity also encompasses those populations which had formerly been ostracized. Following the 2014 events in Palestine/Israel, 327 Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendants voiced their alarm over the "extreme, racist dehumanization of Palestinians in Israeli society," in an open letter, relating the Palestinians' suffering to the genocide the Jews had experienced, and "unequivocally condemn[ing] the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine." Drawing the explicit link between the hegemonic power of the US and Israel, the signatories blame the US "for providing Israel with the funding to carry out the attack, and Western states more generally for using their diplomatic muscle to protect Israel from condemnation." The statement juxtaposes US and Israeli official failures with the responsibilities of all humans, humanizes Palestinians, and warns that "[g]enocide begins with the silence of the world," and appealing to a collectivity of humankind: "We must raise our collective voices and use our collective power to bring about an end to all forms of racism, including the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people." The plight of the Palestinian people is transnationalized, when the statement demands that "[n]ever again must mean never again for anyone!" ("Jewish Survivors and Descendants of Survivors") This writing represents a strong manifestation of transnational solidarity cultivated by a de-nationalized and de-racialized understanding of subjugation and based on historical comparisons. It displays the possibility to grasp subalternity as a transracial and transnational concept as well as a site for potential dialogue.

Toward a Theory on Transnational Subalternity

In these manifestations, 'African-American' and 'Palestinian' are constructed as two different categories of subalternity. Lubin suggests that a certain interchangeability of both groups' experiences underlies articulations of solidarity:

African American and Palestinian activists . . . do engage in cultural politics that articulate a shared structure of feeling, in which the everyday realities of police brutality, drug wars, racialization and state violence in urban black communities in the United States and in Arab cities in Israel/Palestine are compared. Palestinian and African-American claims that blackness and Palestinianness are interchangeable rests [sic] on a politics of translation, in which Arab Americans locate themselves in a long history of antiblack racialization in the United States and black Americans see the Israeli occupation as an extension of U.S. racial capitalism (*Geographies*, 162).

One can see the alliance between African Americans and Palestinians as a transnational imagined community of sentiment which takes place in a de-territorialized space. While in Benedict Anderson's work, a community is imagined through arbitrariness in visual representation in print capitalism, such as in the linking of events on a newspaper front page through calendrical coincidence (24), subaltern groups at the margins of the white empire might evoke another form of imagined community. The linkage of events in this case is not a coincidence but rather in radical analogy and inter-relation to each other. In Anderson's theory, the simultaneous popular consumption of a newspaper equals a mass ceremony in which each consumer is aware of the existence of other consumers, i.e.

members of the same community, while the novel and the newspaper represent the imagined community, i.e. the nation. (25) In the case of subaltern populations, the mainstream newspaper does not fulfill the same purpose. If the hegemonic media narrative is replaced by alternative subaltern narration, one could delink a society's subalterns from its imagined community.

Instead, a community could be imagined by subalterns through their participation in and exchange through social media - the whole idea of which is based on an exclusion from the imagined community and consequently the apprehension of the othered as part of a transnational community. Social media allows Palestinians, who often live under curfews and in isolation, to articulate their colonial anxieties and to relate to the suffering of other groups, such as African Americans. The use of social media increasingly helps revert the marginalized victims' facelessness that was attributed to them by mass media and allows them to literally share their suffering with audiences worldwide, simultaneously objecting news narratives.

As discussed, Kant suggested a transnationalization in the perception of suffering. While the Black-Palestinian narrative does not materially create a world citizenship, one might still ask whether the expression of empathy as a result of mutual recognition that results from the visibility of rights violations, could serve as a base for a subaltern citizenship, i.e. a citizenship detached from a nation-state? I suggest an expansion of Kant's paradigm to accommodate the possibilities of inter-affiliation that are granted through social activism. This form of community is not grounded in a homogeneous nation or nation-state, but rather in the socio-economic and political circumstances experienced by subalterns in relation to the hegemony.

The Afro-Palestinian context can serve as an example of solidarity among citizens

and non-citizens within a de-nationalized, transnational sphere. If the belonging to one's political state apparatus of residence (in this case the US, Israel or the Occupied Territories) is defined through the distance of one's identity from the state apparatus, that citizenship itself appears fragile. The possibility that African American individuals in Ferguson identify with Palestinians from Gaza rather than with non-black Americans represents a natural alliance of subalterns that exceeds political contexts. As Ayalet Shachar illustrates, birthright citizenship (which represents the most common form of citizenship acquisition) "does more than demarcate a form of belonging. It also distributes voice and opportunity in a vastly unequal manner" (11). Accordingly, the arbitrariness of the locus of birth defines the access of individuals to power and knowledge. Yet, in each system of citizenship itself, there exist inequalities because, as Leti Volpp outlines, "[c]itizenship is constituted through the exclusion of cultural others; the cultural other creates the citizen through contrast and negation" (585). Palestinians and African Americans are holders of fragile citizenship or no citizenship at all. Butler differentiates Palestinians as the second-class quasi-citizen in Israel, the subject of colonial occupation in occupied Palestine, and the exile, claiming that Israel's urge to maintain a demographic advantage presupposes active minoritization and dispossession and necessitates the continuing practices of settler colonialism (213). Thus, Palestinians do not possess nation-state citizenship. Whereas African Americans enjoy access to formal citizenship, that does not protect them from structural inequalities. Steven Salaita opposes US citizenship to race, claiming that "American national identity has never been static, but its one constant is assimilation not into citizenship but into whiteness" (77).

The possibilities of a cosmopolitan citizenship then agitate against the state-sponsored hijacking of possibilities, and the limiting of subalternity within national,

historic, and temporal boundaries. As Michelle Alexander observes, "[t]he popular narrative that emphasizes the death of slavery and Jim Crow and celebrates the nation's 'triumph over race' with the election of Barack Obama, is dangerously misguided" (11). She argues that the prevailing colorblind public consensus has eventually fabricated a new caste system as it ignores the ways in which race still matters (12). The hegemonic production of un/favorable and un/mournable groups aims at perpetuating an exclusiveness of historic crimes and suffering, such as apartheid and other forms of racial supremacy.

Momentously, the analyzed articulations of solidarity indicate the creation of an inter-affiliation that provides for a de-territorialized alliance of subalterns, which appears to be dissociated from a particular national state apparatus, and can thus be conceptualized as a transnational subalternity. One can then suggest that Black Americans and Palestinians enter an imagined community of cosmopolitan citizenship. Although both groups' access to citizenship rights differs significantly, with African-Americans being entitled to US citizenship and the vast majority of Palestinians remaining stateless or/and diasporic, the activists' Kantian awareness of the violation of rights implicates a fragility of the relation between citizenship and nationality.

The historicization and nationalization of struggles often attempted by Western state apparatuses implies a state-sponsored desirability of containing intra-national struggles in time and space. The larger context of the transnational alliance of hegemony, such as the US-Israeli bond, remains absent from the mainstream, for the sake of viewing racial struggles and/or decolonial ones within the national context exclusively. Teaching African-American author Alice Walker in the literature classroom is a widespread practice. However, when established artists, such as Walker, speak out in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, and even when they compare the Palestinian subalternity to their own,

their efforts remain largely ignored in the mainstream public sphere, including corporate media and academia. According to Walker, the way the Palestinians are treated "is so reminiscent of the way black people were treated in the South when [she] was growing up." Walker argues:

And that is how they're supposed to move around, for the most part. And the unfairness of it is so much like the South. It's so much like the South of, you know, I don't know, 50 years ago, really, and actually more brutal, because in Palestine so many more people are wounded, shot, killed, imprisoned. You know, there are thousands of Palestinians in prison virtually for no reason (Harris-Gershon).

Yet, the mainstream remains largely oblivious to prominent expressions of empathy and comparison. One victim is always better than several. A victim in history is always better than a victim in the present.

Activism among transnational subalterns, however, poses a significant threat to the hegemonic production of racial supremacy and subordination. The transnational Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) Movement, based on the Palestinian civil society's appeal to the global civil society to help overcome the oppression of the Palestinians, claims to be "inspired by the struggle of South Africans against apartheid" and to agitate "in the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency and resistance to injustice and oppression", while recognizing that "people of conscience in the international community have historically shouldered the moral responsibility to fight injustice" ("Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS"). Consequently, the BDS movement is largely perceived as a threat by those whose existence is based on the very perpetuation of subalternity. Hillary Clinton

finds it important "to make countering BDS a priority." In an open letter designed in an Orientalist manner that paints Israel as an alleged sole democracy in the Middle East, Clinton emotionally expresses her personal admiration for Israel, demonizes any possible opposition, evokes a situation of alleged omnipresent anti-semitism, and seems disturbed by comparisons of Israeli state violence with the former apartheid regime in South Africa ("Letter to Haim Saban"). Clinton finds herself among several supporters of the Israeli colonial project who aim at silencing resistance, which again potentially produces new forms of subalternity and perhaps a radicalization of both hegemony and activism.

Conclusion

The transmedia manifestations of activism analyzed above create an extraterritoriality for the formulation of agency, resistance, and liberation struggles among subalterns who are removed from the mainstream public sphere and positioned as an antipode to the white Western empire. The African American solidarity movement with Palestine takes struggles such as colonialism, slavery, apartheid, and occupation (which seem foundational to the contemporary perpetuation of racial politics) out of their ghettoed contexts and maps them onto transnational dimensions, transcending ethno-national categories of identification imposed by hegemony, and providing the politically voiceless with active and passive possibilities to participate and create counter-imaginings. Comparing the segregation in occupied Palestine to the historical apartheid in the southern United States, Angela Davis articulates the necessity to "expand and deepen our solidarities with the people of Palestine. People of all genders and sexualities" (Barrows-Friedman, "Angela Davis: 'Support BDS, and Palestine Will Be Free'").

When individuals and collectives from different marginalized groups declare their

solidarity with others who seem to be placed within similar spaces of subalternity, the concept of subalternity itself becomes transnationalized through the very expression of solidarity which counters the ideology of a racialized white-dominated empire. Through a comparative perspective, solidarity makes visible the criminalization of populations by the state apparatus and allows for a denationalized view of a group's suffering.

This article showed the dynamic forms of African American and other articulations of solidarity with Palestine that can be understood as an imagined community through a de-colonial poetics of liberation. This article also suggested that alliances built on the framework of transnational subalternity can and occasionally do pose a danger to the white-majority state apparatus. In situations where intra-national race relations are vulnerable, other subalterns become a primary source of socio-economic identification through transnational links. While the (self-)perception of groups like Palestinians and African Americans as collective subalterns might be evident, their inter-relation to other groups' suffering and their declaration of proximity to and identification with the others' suffering lead to an awareness of a transnational subalternity that creates meaning and reformulates resistance, allowing Blacks to become Palestinians and vice versa due to similar experiences of (post-)colonial subjugation.

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