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Silenced Suffering

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This paper examines the ways in which Palestinian suffering from the 1948 Nakba and the 'ongoing Nakba' has been silenced. Silencing has taken multiple forms in different historical moments, from the description of Palestinians as 'non-Jews' in the Balfour Declaration, to under-reporting of Palestinian losses in 1948, to exclusion from academic studies of trauma and genocide, to the absence of Palestinian history from UNRWA and Arab school text books. Thus the memories that Palestinians transmit to each other and to their children offer an important compensatory source of history. Given that a substantial proportion of the Palestinian people live in refugee camps, and given that they suffer most from insecurity and hardship, I propose that popular history writing should be rooted in their experience and their consent. Adopting a decolonization of methodology approach, I turn to the people of the camps with the question: should Nakba suffering be recorded for history, or should it be transcended by other aspects of popular experience? What for them is retrospectively important? What do they want to be passed on to their children and grandchildren?

A long and wide life we spent telling our reality and we are no nearer Palestine.ⁱ

Introduction

This paper starts from the position that suffering is a core element in the modern history of the Palestinian people; and that this suffering has been silenced by an exceptional concatenation of forces. I will attempt to define the major forms of silencing within a perspective that silencing is itself a cause of suffering, deepening the pains and losses of what Pappe has called 'incremental genocide' (Pappe 2014). It is symptomatic of my topic that the 1948 Nakba [catastrophe] that

deprived Palestinians of the independent statehood promised them by the Mandate system is minimally represented in dominant history and social studies texts (Masalha 2012, pp. 11-12).ⁱⁱ Nakba histories have never been systematically collected; even though some have been published by independent scholars, while yet others are scattered in local archives, there is still no central collection. There is thus no holistic view of the Nakba experience, and Nakba stories are minimally available for history-writing, or school books, or public knowledge. Further there is little understanding in the 'international community' or even the Arab world, of how the original Nakba created conditions for the Palestinian people that they name 'the ongoing Nakba', a state of crisis that continues to mutate into new forms of the 'unendurable', an apt description of what is happening now, as I write, in Gaza.ⁱⁱⁱ

An essential step in approaching suffering as topos is its unequal distribution. Those who suffer, whether through dispossession, exclusion, or poverty, suffer more intensely from the flagrancy of injustice, and the knowledge that others enjoy what they are deprived of. This universal truth has a particular edge for Palestinians who suffer loss of home and nationhood, as well as continuing violence through Zionist colonialism, and whose suffering remains unacknowledged by global power centres; not only this but their resistance to suffering is criminalized by the power centres and labeled 'terrorism'. Further, inequality between the fate of 'disposable' people, those whose suffering is greatest, and the others who enjoy security, comfort and freedom, is growing exponentially under 'late liberalism'.^{iv} It is within the logic of late liberalism that the silence of power centres towards Israel's policies in Occupied Palestine—the death-siege of Gaza, and daily violence against Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel—find its explanation. Since its beginning Zionism has been preparing Palestinians for a 'slot' of economic irrelevance, to be used as pretext for dispossession. This can be read in descriptions of Palestine as 'empty' and its inhabitants as 'primitive' that abound in Zionist literature, as well as in Western traveler descriptions. An even more potent image of barrenness and neglect has been produced by photography: captioned 'Transforming the bare landscape', a photo in the Jewish National Fund collection exhibits rolling hills stretching to the horizon without any apparent crop or tree. Only close examination shows that the hills are covered with a dense network of terracing, the unacknowledged, hence invisible work of Palestinian farmers.^v Here lies the logic of Western states' tolerance of Israeli violence, in that Palestinians are irrelevant to the 'development' of the Middle East as favoured zone of free trade, raw materials, and open markets.

It is here that Palestinian refugee camps offer fora of resistance to both Israeli hegemony and late liberalism's vision of the future 'development' of the Arab region. Though not currently in a state of militancy, Palestinian refugee camps form nonetheless 'communities of memory' in that they incorporate stateless people who trace their origins back to Palestine. The very existence of camps

commemorates the 1948 Nakba, and the 'bad life' they enfold pushes their members to struggle for restoration, as such camps form an evident obstacle to the disappearance of self-identified Palestinians. To paraphrase Abu-Lughod and Sa'di, the 'stubborn dissidence' of the memories of ordinary Palestinians form a 'crack in the wall' of Israel's narrative' (Abu-Lughod & Sa'di 2007, pp. 5-6). Daily life suffering is an ever-present constituent of memories of sufficiency and self-respect in a past from which the refugees have been violently separated. Anthropology as study of 'mankind', with its claims to universal concepts, might have been expected to take greater account of colonialist-caused suffering, yet, as Lila Abu-Lughod points out, anthropologists in this region have privileged the topics of social segmentation, the harem and Islam, and have avoided places where conflict and dispossession are concentrated (Abu-Lughod 1990, pp. 81-129). Apart from the expansion since the 1990s of 'Palestine studies' as a field of specialization, little has occurred to change Abu Lughod's observation. Indeed anthropology's tendency to revert to its colonial origins is well illustrated in a recent article by Joel Robbins, where he argues that while suffering unifies people across cultures, it cannot replace cultural difference as anthropology's real topic and *raison d'être* (Robbins 2013). Whereas the 'suffering subject' was anthropology's dominant topos in the 1990s, replacing the earlier dichotomy between 'civilized' and 'savage', yet 'traumatic suffering may be beyond culture' and therefore outside anthropology's true domain (Robbins 2013, p. 454). The human basis that Robbins uses to support his theoretical argument is a small group of Papuan New Guinea highlanders, the Upramin, recently converted to charismatic Christianity. Robbins' representation of the Upramin is entirely a-historical, excluding from consideration their possible suffering from colonization and the loss of their pre-contact culture. Such excision of the past characterizes much Western anthropological work among Palestinians; for example Michael Fischer, writing on instances of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in the early 2000s, justifies elimination of Palestinian testimonials—always history-based—by claiming that 'subjectivity ... is not usefully located merely in the enunciative function, particularly where traumatized can mainly articulate laments' (Fischer 2008, pp. 260-262). Yet laments could be an object of anthropological interest if suffering is admitted as a legitimate topos, and colonialist anthropology's preference for synchronicity set aside. Anthropologists who work in the Arab east might take a contrary position that this is a region where 'the politics of suffering'—as caused, experienced, and silenced—calls out for engaged study.

In considering the Nakba it is important not to treat it as a one-time event set safely in the past, but as a continuing state of displacement, exclusion, rightlessness, and insecurity. Thus I extend the Nakba's temporality from the mass expulsions of 1947-56 up to the present day and into the future, and, further, include ways that survivors dealt and deal with it. Though the cultural resources through which disaster-struck people cope with suffering are hard to articulate, they are surely a kind of cultural property that needs to be recorded so that the dispossessed are not forced into an appearance of helpless victims

but rather as agents of their own physical, cultural and political survival.^{vi} To focus exclusively on suffering would have the effect of emphasizing dependence on external aid, and risk erasing practices of endurance that embody agency and values.

An initial position I adopt is that any project to record suffering should be initiated with the people of the camps. Though the percentage of the total Palestinian population that lives in camps is not more than 15% I consider this segment to be critical for resistance to Israeli and US silencing.^{vii} Camp memories serve their inhabitants as both relational bond and existential explanation. Their histories offer a resource for self-organization and greater autonomy. To quote the author of a recent research paper on the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared camp: 'Collectively held knowledge is one of the most precious resources available to populations who have little more than memory to affirm their existence as political subjects and group' (Halkort 2014). Moreover the people of the camps live under regimes of juridical suspension; they are marginalized both in host societies and also, since the Oslo Accords, in national movement politics. As bounded areas of 'difference' with high population density they are magnets for attack, as their histories in Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and now Syria have shown.^{viii} Moreover, because of low levels of out-migration, the marginality of camp populations is reproduced trans-generationally. Compared with the middle classes, only a small minority of camp-based Palestinians achieve access to higher education, social mobility, emigration, and alternative citizenships.

In accordance with the movement to de-colonize social research, I propose that agreement on any topic chosen for research, in this case suffering from the past and ongoing Nakba, should be sought from the research community (Smith 1999; Al-Hardan 2014). Further, the recordings should remain under camp control as cultural/political resource, and to enhance leverage in negotiations with the various authorities that control life in camps. Problems that will arise with this approach are clear from the beginning. Who should a researcher consult over choice of topics? Who can be taken to represent camp populations, given the decline in authority and relevance of the Resistance factions? To whose control should the eventual recordings be entrusted? Dispute is inevitable. But since dispute will animate popular discussion about how Palestinian history should be written and for whom, I regard such debates as a critical part of the actual project. Awareness that their memories have been undervalued by national movement leaders is likely to stimulate memory and speech. When I ask the director of a camp children's library whether he supports the collecting of the stories of ordinary people who lived through all the wars he answers with anger in his eyes, 'Our people were trodden down twice, once by the Nakba and the second time by the national movement leaders who didn't listen to them'.

Silencing Palestinians and Nakba suffering

External silencing of Palestinians may be said to have begun with the designation of Palestine's indigenous population as 'non-Jews' in the Balfour Declaration—a form of silencing through purposeful misnaming—and to have continued throughout the British occupation in military, legal, economic and ideological forms. The Mandate refused to allow a representative Arab Palestinian national institution on an equal footing with the Jewish Agency; and for all its claims to 'even-handedness' the British used every method of repression to silence Palestinian resistance.^{ix} In a final betrayal of its commitment in the Balfour Declaration to protect the rights of 'non-Jews', Britain opted early in 1948, through a secret Anglo-Jordanian 'understanding', to divide Palestine between Israel and Jordan, leaving the Palestinians without any territory on which to raise a recognized national 'voice' (Pappe 1988, pp. 10-13). With the Nakba, dispersion became a primary silencing machine in dividing Palestinians among multiple host states as disenfranchised 'refugees' or second-class citizens. The exclusion of Palestinian representation from the truce negotiations of 1949, and failure of the 'great powers' to pressure Israel to accept refugee repatriation was yet another moment of silencing, this time with the complicity of the Arab states (Gabbay 1959). The discourse of the humanitarian organizations, as exemplified by UNRWA, disconnected the expulsees from their homeland and history Palestine by naming them the 'Arab refugees', and administered camps without representation (Abdallah 2005). To these silencings we should add 'great power' refusal to listen to Palestinian claims to justice after 1948, a refusal that added its share to suffering.^x Yet another example is the control exercised over textbooks used in UNRWA schools by influential Western donors that effectively suppresses national history.^{xi} In Israel Palestinian modern history is excised from school textbooks, and Arab country history schoolbooks are hardly better.

International media and academia have played a central part in silencing Nakba suffering. Palestinians have long raised evidence of bias in mainstream Western media, from 1948 when the expulsions were hardly covered, to the Six Day war of 1967, when the media mirrored Israel's self-presentation as victim of Arab violence, to the latest attack on Gaza. Yet while media bias has been the topic of numerous blogs and studies, less attention has been paid to bias in the academic sphere. Writing on the 1948 conflict, military historians such as Edgar O'Balance paid no attention to methods of expulsion or Israeli war crimes. It was not until nearly forty years after the Nakba, in 1987, that Michael Palumbo gave details of massacres other than Deir Yassin through which Palestinians had been terrorized into flight.^{xii} A striking indicator of this silencing is the fact that it was not until 2014 that a detailed account was published of the labour camps in which the Israeli military held Palestinian civilians during 1948 (Abu Sitta & Rempel 2014). Conventional histories have also minimized Palestinian casualties by limiting them to 1948; in fact given that the mass expulsions began in late 1947 and continued until 1956, no

complete count has yet been made.^{xiii} It was not until 2009 that Jo Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza* revealed a previously unrecorded massacre carried out by the IDF in Khan Yunis in 1956 (Sacco 2009). As a corollary, the suffering of the expulsees in the exceptionally harsh winter of 1948/49, before the regular distribution of aid and shelter, when large numbers died from cold and starvation in Wadi al-Raqqad [Syria], and in the Bekaa valley [Lebanon], has only been recorded through oral transmission (Al-Hardan forthcoming). Academic silencing is further exemplified by the exclusion of the Nakba from the 'trauma genre', a long line of studies focused on national catastrophes such as the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, and Hiroshima (Sayigh 2013) as well as from 'genocide studies'.^{xiv}

Common, too, in discussions of the Nakba is the silencing of kinds of suffering not covered by casualty lists. For example, Gilbert Achcar notes that Palestinian deaths in 1948 were 'much lower than those of the Algerians during their struggle for national independence ...' and adds 'The Palestinians cannot ... advisedly and legitimately apply to their own case the superlatives appropriate to the Jewish genocide' (Achcar 2010, p. 31). This comment errs not just by ignoring the full extent of Palestinian losses in 1948, but more seriously by ignoring the Nakba's ever-extending aftermath, as for example in the strangulation of Gaza, or the absence of protection for Palestinians exposed to attack in Iraq or Syria. It also errs by neglecting Nakba-derived, daily life forms of suffering, such as host society hostility, rejection at national borders, or fear for one's children's future. Such forms of suffering do not cease to proliferate, as communities such as the Palestinians of Syria, long considered the most favored in terms of civic rights and integration, have been unwillingly drawn into a vortex of civil war. Whether as refugees in third countries of exile, or thrown back at the borders, they form part of a community in process of destruction.

The methods used by Israel to silence Palestinians before and after 1948 are too complex to be dealt with in a single paragraph, constituting certainly the most planned and comprehensive colonialist system ever devised. It includes surveillance, censorship, and terror; removing material signs of Palestinian habitation; changing landscapes; renaming places; imposing Jewish archeology over the remains of other civilizations; appropriating records, libraries, food preparation, habitat, and costume (Zureik et al. 2011; Masalha 2012). Uniquely among colonizers, Zionists could use the Bible to cast their appropriation of Palestine as a story of rightful return, producing what Abu-Lughod and Sa'di call 'the thundering story of Zionism' that has prevailed over the 'halting oral testimony of the defeated' (Abu-Lughod & Sa'di 2007, pp. 6, 12). Voicing the case of a small, non-Western, mainly Muslim people has always been a harder task than echoing support for Israel, especially that the idea of Israel as recompense for Jewish suffering appeased Europeans' guilt over their history of anti-Semitism. Western complicity in the erasure of Palestine—a complicity that pervades majority politics, educational

systems, publishing, and the media—has supported the dominance of the Israeli narrative and the silencing of the Palestinian one.

Not only external structures but also internal ones have silenced the suffering of the people of the camps. A class structure characterized by the unequal provision of schooling between urbanites and the rural population in Mandate Palestine was deepened after the Nakba through dependence on qualifications for salaried employment. This was a structuring force that neither free UNRWA schooling nor the Resistance movement did much to alter. During the PLO period in Lebanon [1970–1982], Palestinian national cultural programmes in camps were limited to nationalist ‘consciousness-raising’ and *munasabat* (commemorative occasions). Apart from borrowing a few symbols from the mainly peasant Revolt in Palestine such as the *kefiyya* and the *abu* naming system, the Resistance leadership ignored the importance of national history and culture in long term struggle, and failed to encourage research into national or social struggles, whether before or after 1948.^{xv} An oral historian from the village of Lubyā, Mahmoud ‘Issa, writes that ‘The narrative of the refugee and the marginalized is almost totally absent from Palestinian historiography’, and attributes lack of interest in the experience of rural Palestinians to the domination of the national narrative by an urban elite (‘Issa 2005).

Political oppression and cultural deprivation has silenced the histories of the people of the camps except in rare instances of the formation of autonomous, self-expressive institutions, such as Lajee in Aida camp, Dheisheh’s Ibdāa and Campus In Camps, and Jenin’s Freedom Theater, all in the West Bank. Others in Syria, linked to the Haq al-Awda [Right of Return] movement, celebrated pre-1948 village culture (Al-Hardan 2012). Though in decline, Resistance organization patterns of mobilization remain the template of public activism in camps in Lebanon, marked by commemorations of the Nakba and the birthdays of the Resistance groups. As several researchers have observed, these rituals often arouse fatigue and boredom, especially among youth.^{xvi} Stagnation in the overall national situation and the continuing closure of the Lebanese labour market leaves young adults in the camps with nothing to hope for except migration, an escape almost impossible to achieve given that entry visas to most countries require marketable qualifications such as capital or professional skills. The poignancy of their immobility is well conveyed by Allan, who describes Shatila young men’s obsession with migration:

... hours spent on the roof beneath circling birds predisposed young men to thoughts of travel and futures elsewhere. Despite the tremendous risks and costs involved in emigration (now mostly by irregular or ‘illegal’ means), many have come to see it as the only route available to a happy and productive life. For Ali and his companions, planning their journeys was an exercise in geography and imagination. Routes and logistics were mapped out with the zeal (if not the rigor) of a military campaign ... Just as dream talk enables prospective thought, broadening horizons of possibility in

everyday life, emigration (*hijra*) or 'travel' (*safar*)—as it is euphemistically termed—has become a metaphor for the social mobility and citizenship denied Palestinians in Lebanon. (Allan 2014, pp. 166-167)

The pressure on young adults to migrate in search of a 'life worth living' works to silence camps through reducing their most active elements. Incremental dispersion adds to the suffering of those left behind.

Camps within the perspective of Israeli necropolitics

Achille Mbembe's analysis of Israeli necropolitics suggests that the Zionist project can *only* be fully accomplished by the elimination of all robust manifestations of Palestinian 'peoplehood' (Mbembe 2003). This is because assertions of Palestinian origins and identity subvert the foundational myth of indigeneity through which Zionism strives to transform its colonialist take-over of Palestine into a return to origins. Israeli necropolitics has not taken a once-for-all genocidal form, but rather works slowly and inconspicuously to destroy all fields in which Palestinian peoplehood is reproduced. Violence must be measured in doses, and concealed through multiplying its channels and formats. Such 'rationed violence' makes it easier for governments of the West to sustain their complicity in Israeli colonialism. In the ironic words of Ilan Pappé, 'As long as the Israelis do not do to the Palestinians what the Nazis did to the Jews they are within the legitimate and moral boundaries of civilized behaviour' (Pappé 2008). Through such a uniquely complex and incremental form of colonialism, space within which Palestinians can subsist *as Palestinians* is being reduced meter by meter, day by day. In spite of deprivation, insecurity, and migration, camps remain areas of Palestinian self-awareness and memory, hence a challenge to Israel's complete control. Like plantations, and unlike natural habitats, camps can be terminated at will by those who established them.

Analysts of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict have often focused hope of a settlement on the coming to power of a left-liberal Israeli government ready to cede territory for a nominal Palestinian 'sovereignty'. Even if such a government were to arrive, such an analysis ignores the capacity of Zionism immanent in Israeli state and society to generate new forms of violence. In analyzing Israeli necropolitics Mbembe focuses on a current phase of direct colonialism exercised in occupied Palestine, where Israel is waging 'infrastructural warfare' through advanced technologies such as spatial fragmentation, targeted killing, bulldozing, and aerial surveillance.^{xvii} But there is no guarantee that such violence will be contained within Israel's borders, which in any case have never been finally declared. Though most of the 58 registered refugee camps lie outside Israel's current boundaries, in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza, they must also figure in Zionist colonizing horizons as outposts of 'Palestinianness', a term I use to indicate the assertion of belonging to a specific national or ethnic group linked to historic Palestine.

Mbembe's discussion of Israeli necropolitics focuses on a material machinery of repression—bulldozers, helicopter gunships, targeted assassinations—without assessing ideology or intentions. There is, however, no lack of verbal evidence of Israeli intentions to 'disappear' Palestinians, whether by insisting on their non-existence, as Golda Meir once did, or by de-humanizing them, as when Prime Minister Menahem Begin referred to them as 'beasts walking on two legs' (New Statesman 1982). Genocidal intentions are clear in the expression 'mowing the lawn' that has spread from the IDF to the broader Israeli public. During the 2008 blitz on Gaza, Israeli deputy defence minister Matan Vilnai threatened Gaza with a 'holocaust', while in 2007 Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu ruled that 'there was absolutely no moral prohibition against the indiscriminate killing of civilians during a potential mass offensive on Gaza...' (Abunimah 2008). Israeli 'hate speech' reached new heights during the 2014 attack on Gaza, including encouraging the IDF to use rape as tool of repression (Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al. 2014). Such expressions have accompanied an unprecedented escalation in settler and police violence in the whole of Occupied Palestine.

Let us note that control of the regional skies guarantees Israel's ability to attack 'terrorist cells' wherever they may be alleged to exist, while 'great power' permissiveness ensures minimal censure.^{xviii} Israel has often applied sovereignty outside its territorial boundaries, in setting up external prison camps, in extra-territorial kidnappings and targeted killings, in maritime attacks, and in instigating massacres. An example of softer measures available to Israel through its influence in Western political arenas is the campaign in the United States Senate to reduce American aid to UNRWA, led by Republican senator Mark Kirk.^{xix} The US is the largest contributor to UNRWA so that even a small reduction in its aid would seriously add to the Agency's chronic deficit. The increasing difficulty that UNRWA faces in raising funds is likely not merely due to donor fatigue but also to Israeli campaigning.

From a Zionist perspective camps form a latent threat. As direct consequence of the expulsions of 1948, they are commemorative sites in themselves, not only as material remnants where quarters and schools have Palestinian place names, but also as framing conditions of misery that remind inhabitants of the good life their forbears enjoyed in pre-1948 Palestine. Palestinians in camps and their descendants are those whose property rights Israel excised unilaterally, starting with a census in November 1948 that differentiated Palestinians into 'citizens', 'present/absent', and 'absent/absent' (Saidi 2010). The claims of the expulsees to repatriation and restoration under international law stand whether or not particular leaderships support them (Boling 2007). Camps are milieus where Palestinianness is reproduced both transgenerationally and as a state of abnormality, where children's first question is often 'Why are we here?' As containers of claims to restoration, distinctive cultural practices, and memories of resistance, camps form a resonant strand within the narrative of a Palestinian peoplehood that extends far beyond Occupied Palestine to an ever-widening diaspora.

Camps from the perspective of inhabitants

Camps as sites of judicial suspension existed throughout the colonies of the Americas, in the form of reservations and slave plantations, long before they were imported to Europe (Lloyd 2012). Segregation, surveillance, cheap labour reproduction and the suspension of law are aspects of Palestinian refugee camps that align them with such colonial antecedents rather than with the post World War 2 camps in Europe. Palestinian refugee camps have not offered their inhabitants security. The rising incidence of military attack against them over the last two decades, and their destruction in several instances, means that, rather than places of 'safe waiting', they have become zones of high anxiety. The destruction of Yarmouk camp in Syria occurred in spite of persistent efforts on the part of its inhabitants to maintain neutrality in the civil war (Bitari 2013). In Lebanon, only twelve out of an original 17 camps remain. History's unfolding in a turbulent region continually creates new political contexts for camps and their inhabitants, as well as new meanings attached to them by host populations and state elites. Alliance can quickly mutate to aggression, as demonstrated by the Battle of the Camps in Lebanon [1985 to 1987] when Amal militia, a former ally of the Palestinian Resistance movement turned ally of the Syrian government, attacked camps in Beirut and the South. As the current conflict in Syria demonstrates, camps can become targets of both parties in a civil war. Another point to note is that Israel's status as regional hegemon establishes it as model for certain Arab political actors in ways of viewing and dealing with Palestinians. The collaboration between Israel and Lebanese Rightist militias in producing the Sabra/Shatila massacre is one such instance, graphically illustrated by the massacre perpetrators' use of bulldozers, a central signifier of Israeli colonialism, to demolish camp homes.

Among UNRWA camps those in Lebanon are unquestionably the worst in terms of material, social and security conditions. These camps have been the most often subjected to attack, and are currently threatened by an over-spill of Sunni-Shi'ite conflict. State policies limiting spatial expansion create an ever-increasing population pressure, exacerbated by the Lebanese law prohibiting stateless persons (i.e. Palestinians), from owning property. Narrow streets and crowded housing are compounded by polluted drinking water, inadequate electricity and sewage services. Rain on dangling webs of exposed electricity cables take children's lives each winter. Conditions like these, with their propensity to compromise health, social relations, and security, have been made infinitely worse by the inflow since January 2013 of over 50,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria, most of whom have sought sanctuary in camps (UNRWA.org 2014). In brief, camps may be said to function for the Lebanese state as a tool of coercive emigration, and as barrier to relations between Palestinians and Lebanese.

Verbal expressions of suffering are no longer commonplace in Palestinian refugee camps. More than six decades of refugee existence has banalized words used to tell about the pains of separation from the homeland, statelessness, and exclusion from normality, as well as individualizing the multiple forms suffering takes. It can be read on faces and bodies, heard in silences, felt in the loneliness of old people whose children are somewhere else. A young migrant to the Gulf writes that he has to pinch himself when he wakes to realize that he is no longer in a camp. New violence re-awakens collective pain: the 2014 attack on Gaza evokes this double suffering in Shatila. Abu Hasan says, 'Our blood is boiling over Gaza but also over our conditions here—we can barely move or breathe. We're dying everywhere' (Allan 2014). Caught between Israel's refusal of repatriation and Lebanon's refusal of integration, camp people's horizon here contains no prospect of release. In addition to exclusion and structurally-created poverty, they suffer from the awareness that their educational environment silences Palestinian history. 'This generation, if their family hasn't told them about Palestine, they don't know anything' a young mother said recently.^{xx} Deprivation of their class and national history means that young camp Palestinians do not know why they suffer.

What kinds of history for the people of the camps?

First among the principles of decolonized methodology is the necessity of consulting with the research community on topics of research (Smith 1999, pp. 115, 125, 177, 185). My starting point that Nakba suffering needs to be written into popular histories of *and for* Palestinians may well conflict with the desires and values of people of the camps, even though they live its consequences in more extreme ways than other strata. The Nakba is a problematic topic on more than one count. Questions have been raised about the term itself, first coined by an Arab nationalist scholar, Constantin Zureik, and not used until recently by people of the camps, partly because it comes from *fus-ha* [classical Arabic], and perhaps also because of its suggestion of irreversibility.^{xxi} Further, it recalls a moment of catastrophic loss, so that to evoke it in research twists a knife in the wound. As topic it is likely to arouse boredom, especially among third and fourth generation refugees. When recording testimonies for a Nakba archive in 2001/2002, anthropologist Diana Allan also encountered this critique:

What will come of this for us? Foreigners like you come to the camp and do research. They ask us questions about the past, about the Nakba, who died, what we felt, about the massacre, about our sadness, and it's like a thrill for them. We cry and they profit from our tears, but things stay the same for us...^{xxii}

Questioning the relevance of national commemorations of the Nakba and the Right of Return for people barely surviving miserable living conditions, Allan asks whether '... the heroic narrative of suffering also conceals the fact that the intensity of longing for nation may now

be coming more from the elite echelons of the Palestinian diaspora than from its impoverished base' (Allan 2014, p. 45).

To discover how people feel about writing Nakba suffering into Palestinian history I began carrying out some preliminary interviews in Shatila camp, Beirut. The choice of Shatila is problematic given its status as 'probably the best-known and most widely researched of any of the refugee camps in the Palestinian diaspora' (Sukarieh & Tannock 2013, p. 6). Another problem Shatila poses for research is its mixedness. Once emblematic of the Resistance movement because so many factions had their headquarters in or near it, Shatila today is reckoned today to contain only a minority of Palestinians. This camp has been over-researched, and its people have come to resent researchers because talking to them has brought no change in their situation, and has introduced new social inequalities. But Shatila contains a small museum [Mathaf al-Dhikriyat] that offers a politically independent space already involved in public issue discussion and story recording. The museum's founder is a retired UNRWA doctor who established a cultural club after the evacuation of the PLO to encourage discussion among young people. This kind of cultural activism was necessary, he explained, because 'the Resistance factions only taught people to clap' [i.e. to be loyal followers, not to think]. His sponsorship of a chess club points in the same direction, i.e., the need for young Palestinians to learn to strategize, if they are not always to remain intellectually limited and naive.

Responses to my inquiries have so far been ambivalent. People are not rejecting the project of recording stories of suffering but they are suggesting other topics. For example, Dr Muhammad replied that he prefers to record memories of pre-Nakba Palestine. To my question why, he answered, 'To remember suffering isn't bad but we have to remember the good days so that people can compare the good days with the bad days. It will make people desire Palestine more'.^{xxiii} He added, 'I remember how my grandfather and my mother compared living then and living now. This will be a lesson for new generations'. This response sheds fresh light on the Palestinian village histories that have been interpreted as attempts to 'salvage the past' but may be more truly interpreted as claims to a future. This response suggests that in Dr Muhammad's view knowledge of the 'good life' in Palestine will awaken the people of the camps to their class as well as their national subjugation in exile.

Um Khaled's response was equally ambivalent. On an earlier visit when I had asked her if she approved of the idea of recording Nakba suffering, she had answered '*Mish ghalat*' [It's not a mistake], and offered to take me to record with Um Saleh, one of the few surviving members of the *jeel Filasteen* in Shatila, who could remember the expulsions of 1948. Born in 1948, Um Khaled herself could remember neither Palestine nor the Nakba, but I assumed that her mother would have told her children stories about the Nakba, and expressed grief over the loss of home, as others have described to me. For example

Dr Muhammad, who was four or five years old in 1948, clearly remembered the early years after the Nakba:

My mother was always speaking of home. She worked on a sewing machine, and I was always next to her. She was always crying, always depressed. 'Why Mama?' 'I remember my country, my father's place, the mountain where he had a farm ...'. She worked in the fields, cutting wheat. Once she aborted from the hard work. Sometimes she said, 'I'm tired' ...

The testimonials that Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian presents in this issue, recorded with Palestinians who left their homes during the conflict and later managed to return in spite of IDF orders to kill 'infiltrators', are expressions of suffering in the fullest sense of the word [Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015]. However, asking Um Khaled about her mother's suffering produced no memories. Or rather, my question—which I linked to the need of the children of the camps for history books, which we had talked about before—evoked Um Khaled's repeated insistence that *what* her mother had spoken of repeatedly and in detail, was life in Palestine, and not the Nakba.

Perhaps with more time, and out of generosity, Um Khaled would have vouchsafed me some scraps of Nakba postmemory, but soon her sitting room was filled with visiting daughters and grand children, and with all the happiness that such visits give rise to. One family segment had walked all the way from Bourj Barajneh camp, some six kilometers distant, to avoid the traffic crush; another was making a rare visit from Ain al-Helweh camp, currently under extraordinary Army siege. There was much to talk about: four of Um Khaled's grandchildren would soon be taking the Brevet exam; and a son-in-law who works abroad was 'home' on his annual two weeks' leave. Then one of the daughters asks me about my latest project. My answer—recording Nakba suffering—produces a sudden hush. Their expressions shift from happiness to anxiety as they recall current threats to the camps. I put away my recorder, guilty at having reminded them of fears they had suppressed through rituals of sociability. The incident reawakens me to the thinness of the line separating Palestinians in camps from new violence. It is this kind of suffering that is so hard to articulate.

Pondering Um Khaled's reticence I conclude that she may simply have been reminding me that because her generation did not live the Nakba she cannot speak of it with proper authority. Her longstanding role as mentor to 'outsiders' to the camps has made her as skilled as any history teacher at correcting misunderstandings of Palestinian history. A disciplined self-awareness in this role might make her scrupulous about what she could—and could not—report. Maybe she had not been as close to her mother as Dr Muhammad was to his—'I was always next to her'—or perhaps her mother didn't gather her flock at bedtime and tell them stories. Or it could be resignation. Once well-known locally as an active supporter of the Resistance, Um Khaled told me recently in confessional tones that today she only cares for

her children and grandchildren: gone are the days when she would daily traverse a large radius to sustain social and Resistance group relationships. A hard life of bearing and caring for eleven children in camp conditions has affected her heart, and like many other women who have spent their lives in camp habitat all her bones ache. Her reticence may also be a way of declining a 'nationalist conversation', as she did during a visit in 2012 when I was telling her of a campaign, Kamel al-Sawt, to enfranchise Palestinians in exile. She had commented then that such ideas are all very fine but 'it's the poor who always pay the price'. I understand her words as formed by experience specific to Palestinians in camps in Lebanon, of having suffered without gain or hope of gain, only to be abandoned to an unending insecurity of existence.

An open discussion in the Memory Museum produces unexpected new vistas: an older man, a refugee from Syria, discourses on the importance of the ancient history of Palestine, raising archeological evidence to refute Zionist claims to prior origins in Palestine. This challenges my notion that teaching ancient history is inherently conservative. Another of the older men asserts that writing history for Palestinian children is a matter for specialists, meaning that the current group, heterogeneous and nonprofessional, cannot make any useful intervention. Even more surprising is an assertion by another man in his 60s that valid history books can only be produced through an organic link between state, school, and family, a position that postpones the task of writing Palestinian history until the achievement of a sovereign state. This is puzzling given that struggle has always been a central element in the informal transmission of history in camps, and that the National Authority is constrained by the 'international community' in the production of school textbooks.^{xxiv}

I have been engaging friends in conversation about this, an exercise that has opened up new and interesting perspectives. I feel that the suffering of the Nakba and post-Nakba should be there, but several discussants disagree. Dr Muhammad thinks memories of Palestine before 1948 are more important because they give people a baseline for demands for a better future; Mayssun fears that a history of defeats and tragedies will discourage young Palestinians from identifying with it; and Diana thinks that national commemorations of the Nakba bear unfairly on the people of the camps. Nidal, an UNRWA teacher, says 'We need to understand our mistakes, why are we so disunited?' She wants to know more about agriculture in pre-1948 villages because she would have liked to be a farmer. Rabi'a says there should be more about the tool-making skills that men like his grandfather had that show that pre-1948 Palestine had a manufacturing sector. Raji says, 'We should know more about the struggles of other peoples who were colonized'. Such voices are a necessary input to safeguard future Palestinian histories from over-zealous nationalist 'policing'. Since knowledge and power are linked, the self-respect of silenced and oppressed strata cannot survive without knowledge both of their oppression and their resistance.

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Notes

ⁱ From Um Kassem's life story, recorded in the basement of the ruined American Embassy, Beirut, March 18, 1982.

ⁱⁱ '... the Palestinian Nakba is rarely acknowledged in Western academic discourses and never mentioned within the context of Trauma Studies or Genocide Studies' (Masalha 2012, pp. 11-12).

ⁱⁱⁱ In early July 2014 Israel launched a massive attack against Gaza's captive population, codenamed 'Operation Protective Edge', using the uninvestigated killing of three Jewish settlement youths in the West Bank as pretext. The attack lasted for seven weeks. See Pappé (2014).

^{iv} In late liberalism's combination of market domination and state 'multiculturalism' peoples not directly linked to business enterprise/productive economy are killed or let die (Povinelli 2011, pp. 22, 29).

^v The photo is reproduced in Bardenstein (1999, p. 160).

^{vi} 'Peoplehood' and 'cultural property' are terms used in work with Native American Indians and native Australians that are applicable to Palestinians. See Cornthassel (2003). Common Palestinian use of the term '*al-sha'b al-Filastini*' [the Palestinian people] to refer to themselves reflects both social and territorial belonging.

^{vii} In 2011, 25.6% of Palestinians registered with UNRWA lived in 58 official camps, but there were also around 200,000 who lived in 17 unofficial camps between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and OPT. The global Palestinian population for that year was 11.2 million. Available at: <http://www.badil.org/en/press-releases/142-2012/3638-press-eng-53>

^{viii} Seven camps in Lebanon have been completely or partially destroyed: Nabatiyeh, Dbeyeh, Jisr al-Basha, Tal al-Zaater, Sabra and Shatila, Bourj al-Barajneh, and Nahr al-Bared. In Jordan Wihdat, Baq'a, Irbid; in Gaza Rafah; Jenin in the West Bank; Yarmouk in Syria...

^{ix} See Ghandour (2010). The violence of British repression has only recently been exposed, e.g., by Hughes (2009); and Norris (2010); also Khalili (2010).

^x 'The debilitating factor in the ability to tell their stories and make public their memories is that the powerful nations have not wanted to listen' (Abu-Lughod and Sa'di 2007, p. 11).

^{xi} In relation to Occupied Palestine, see Moughrabi (2001).

^{xii} Palumbo (1987); Palumbo quotes survivors' testimonials. In fact a Palestinian scholar, Nafez Nazzal carried out interviews in the early 1970s with expulsees from Galilee, published as *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee 1948* by the Institute of Palestinian Studies in Beirut in 1978, but his study made little impact on the scholarly world.

^{xiii} Salman Abu Sitta notes that in 1956 the IDF carried out massacres in Khan Yunis and Rafah, as well as air raids against camps. He estimates that there were 10 major and 60 minor massacres during 1948 bringing Palestinian casualties to around 3,200 or 1% of the population in areas attacked by the Zionists/Israelis. To this one should add the killing of 'infiltrators' between 1948 and 1956, estimated by Morris (1993, p. 137) at between 'upward of 2,700 and perhaps as many as 5,000'. Saleh Abdel Jawad (2007) has used corroborated accounts to establish a 'conservative' estimate of 68 massacres between December 1947 and November 1948. Most of these massacres have remained unreported by Western media or academic studies.

^{xiv} Classic definitions of genocide have not included variant forms such as sociocide, spaciocide, politicide, memoricide, or the use of multiple methods over extended time. See Rashed et al. 2014.

^{xv} Khalili (2004) notes that Resistance discourse held up villages in Vietnam and China as models of resistance but neglected Palestinian popular history.

^{xvi} Khalili reports, on the occasion of a DFLP celebration of its thirty-third anniversary in Bourj al-Barajneh: 'I asked a friend from the camp whether she was going ... At first she wasn't certain ... 'These things are so boring' she said' (Khalili 2007, p. 86). See also Allan (2014, pp. 59-64).

^{xvii} 'While the Apache helicopter gunship is used to police the air and to kill from overhead, the armoured bulldozer (the Caterpillar D-9) is used on the ground as a weapon of war and intimidation' (Mbembe 2003, p. 29).

^{xviii} After Israel's brutal attack on Gaza in 'Operation Cast Lead' [December 2007-January 2008], in which white phosphorous was used, European heads of state who attended the truce talks in Sharm el-Sheikh had no qualms about attending a state banquet offered them by Premier Tzipi Livni in Jerusalem.

^{xix} In May 30, 2012. Senator Mark Kirk succeeded in passing an amendment in the Senate Appropriations sub-committee to limit aid-entitled Palestinian refugees to those who left Palestine in 1948, eliminating their descendants.

^{xx} F.M., resident of Ain Helweh camp, recorded in Sabra, 8 March, 2014.

^{xxi} The term most used by people of the camps was *hijra* (migration); they would refer to 1948 as *lemma hajarna* [when we left, or migrated]. Fatma Kassem notes a gender as well as class element here: 'The term 'Nakba' is part of the intellectual, masculinist discourse of Palestinian nationalism' (Kassem 2011, p. 61).

^{xxii} Allan (2014, p. 64). Research is increasingly resented by Palestinians in camps because of its failure to bring about change: also see Sukarieh & Tannock (2013).

^{xxiii} Interview Dr Muhammad, Shatila, April 1 2014.

^{xxiv} Recorded in Shatila, 23 June 2014.

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