WAR AND REMEMBRANCE: *AL-NAKBA* AS A STRUCTURE IN THE PRESERVATION OF IDENTITY AND PALESTINIAN CONCIOUSNESS

by

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ABSTRACT

ADAM M HASIAN. War and Remembrance: *Al-Nakba* as a Structure in the Preservation of Identity and Palestinian consciousness. (Under the direction of DR. ELLA FRATANTUONO)

The Israelis recognize the 1948 Arab-Israeli War as a war of independence. For the Palestinians, it is known as *al-Nakba*—the "Catastrophe". The war helped create the state of Israel while displacing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. However, *al-Nakba,* in the Palestinian consciousness, is not a singular event. It represents all that has encompassed the Palestinian struggle for justice since 1948. *Al-Nakba* is comprised of a set of shared beliefs, myths, commemorative practices and memories that form a functioning social structure that Palestinians utilize to preserve identity. Building on the structural theories of Raymond Williams and Patrick Wolfe, and by using oral testimony from Palestinian refugees and their descendants, this paper demonstrates that the ideas, themes and tropes that Palestinians use in order to understand, practice, maintain, and create identity, are part of an underlying social structure known as *al-Nakba.*

DEDICATION

To my niece Eman, whose indomitable spirit was an inspiration to all she met.

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INTRODUCTION

On November 29th, 1947, the United Nations adopted a partition plan (Resolution 181) for the division of Palestine into three areas: an Arab state, a Jewish State, and an international area that included Jerusalem and Bethlehem. This plan was to take effect in May of 1948. The Arabs in the region believed that the plan was unjust, and a shooting war began almost immediately. Palestinian irregulars and Jewish militias, including the Haganah, the LEHI (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel)[1] and the Irgun, began operations against each other in order to secure territory ahead of the partition. Following the implementation of the UN resolution, the civil war became a full blown conflict between the Arab states and Israel. This war became known to the Israelis as the War of Liberation, and to the Palestinians, as *al-Nakba* (Arabic: النكبة, al-Nakbah, "disaster", "catastrophe", or "cataclysm").

The 1948 Arab-Israeli War created hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Most of them never returned. It created the state of Israel while at the same time displacing many of its Arab inhabitants. The 1948 war was a catastrophe to the Palestinians not only because of the military defeat, but also because it signaled the loss of their land, the end of their way of life, and any political or national aspirations they may have had. Although the term "*al-Nakba"*, the event, originated as a label for the 1948 war, *al-Nakba*, as a structure, has a broader meaning in Palestinian identity and history. It encompasses the entirety of the struggles and adversity Palestinians have faced

[1] J.B. Bell, *Terror out of Zion-Irgun Zvai Leumi, LEHI, and the Palestine Underground, 1929-1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), xvii. The LEHI was also known as the Stern Gang. It was named for its founder, Avraham Stern and was known as one of the most violent Zionist Military organizations.

since the beginning of the modern political Zionist movement in the late nineteenth century.

Al-Nakba, the event, is an important moment in a process of identity formation that had begun many years before. Historians, in describing the significance of this event, must tread carefully to avoid erasing a longer history of Palestinian identity. To propose that Palestinian identity only formed in relation to the 1948 war would incorrectly suggest that Palestinian Arabs did not exist before then. There has been a Palestinian identity and connection to the land long before the 1948 war.

There has also long been a Palestine, though those looking to dismiss Palestinian claims to its territory ignore this history.[2] The first historical naming of the land as Palestine are the Roman references to it as "Palestina". At this time it was an imperial province of Rome. It later came under Byzantine rule which lasted up until the seventh century. After the Byzantines, various Arab and Muslim empires such as the Mamelukes and Seljuks (except for the brief period of time when occupied by Christians during the Crusades) controlled the land. Early documentation of the region identified in a geographical context can be seen in the opening sentence of the section entitled "Filastin" from the book "Dictionary of the Lands," written by Muslim geographer Yaqut ibn Abdullah al-Hamawi in 1225: *"Filastin: It is the last one of the regions of Syria in the direction of Egypt. Its most famous cities are Ashkelon, Ramle, Gaza, Arsuf, Caesaria, Nablus, Jericho, Amman, Jaffa and Beit Guvrin."*[3] In 1517 the Ottoman Empire gained

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[2] Zvika Orr and Daphna Golan "Human Rights NGOs in Israel: Collective Memory and Denial," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 18, no. 1, (2014): 70-71.

[3] Ofri Ilany,"Israel Systematically Denies 1,400 Years of Muslim History: The education system, the media and the tourism industry all collaborate in erasing the country's Palestinian past", *Haaretz*, May 26, 2016, https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-israel-systematically-denies-1-400-years-of-muslim-history-1.5388059.

control and ruled for four hundred years. Their rule lasted up until their defeat in World War I, at which point the region came under British control via the Mandate. After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, or "*al-Nakba",* the event, the land became the state of Israel.

Al-Nakba, the structure, is a concept or an idea. It is a collection of themes or tropes that Palestinians use in order to understand, practice, maintain, and create identity. Distinguishing between *al-Nakba* the event, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and *al-Nakba*, the structure reveals the processes, ideas and events that influence the maintenance and transformation of Palestinian identity across time and space. When we reference *al-Nakba* as an event, we discuss something that is particular to a time and place of its occurrence (i.e. the 1948 Arab Israeli War). When we discuss *al-Nakba* as a structure, we refer to a continuous series of events that have influenced a pattern of social organization through space and time. *Al-Nakba* the event, a year of traumatic rupture in the continuity of historical space and time in Palestinian history[4] —is an important part of *al-Nakba*, the structure.

In this paper, the term *al-Nakba* defines a structure or a concept, except when it specifically references the event. Following the 1948 war, *al-Nakba*, in the absence of a nation-state and strong leadership, became the concept that has helped the Palestinians preserve their identity. For people directly involved in *al-Nakba*, the event, the concept extends through *al-Naksa* (the 1967 Arab-Israeli War) and beyond. This helps explain why al-Nakba is more than a singular event. In spite of not having a nation-state of their own, the Palestinian people have sustained their identity through more than 70 years of oppression, expulsion, marginalization, erasure and a systematic attempt by the Israeli

[4] Nur Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (New York: Zed Books Ltd., 2012), 3.

government to deny their very existence. It is important to understand how this identity persists and how the commemoration, experiences and perception of *al-Nakba* have contributed to that maintenance. *Al-Nakba,* the event, is not exclusively constituent to the identity of the Palestinians, but *al-Nakba* as a concept and a structure, is central to the maintenance and preservation of that identity through time, distance and space.

Al-Nakba contains many facets of Palestinian identity. *Al-Nakba* is the daily marginalization and suffering of the Palestinian people; it is symbolic of the struggle against the Israeli occupation and the denial of fundamental human rights and the right of self-determination in the form of a Palestinian State; *al-Nakba* contains the belief in the "right of return", a right granted to Israeli settlers, but denied to the previous inhabitants of Palestine; *Al-Nakba* is the occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967, the military rule in the West Bank, the blockade on Gaza, the ongoing forced exile of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes; it is the racist and brutal policies applied towards all Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied territories; *Al-Nakba* describes the deliberate destruction and erasure of the Palestinians as a people by the Israeli government. All of these elements are part of the structure of *al-Nakba.*

I present this paper during a time when the United States has implemented an executive order targeting perceived anti-Semitism on college campuses. The order empowers the Department of Education to potentially withhold funding from campuses for insufficient action on any perceived anti-Semitism if they fail to combat anti-Israel rhetoric.[5] This order considers any criticism of Israeli government policy or Zionism anti-

[5] Peter Baker and Maggie Haberman, "Trump Targets Anti-Semitism and Israeli Boycotts on College Campuses," *New York Times,* December 10, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/10/us/politics/trump-antisemitism-executive-order.html.

Semitic. It is *also* a moment when the international community increasingly recognizes the status of Palestinians and protests Israel's treatment of them; a time when the BDS movement has gained traction across college campuses and a time when two sitting US Representatives endorse it.[6] It is also a time when a policeman's knee on an African-American suspect's neck inspires a national movement in the United States, but barely registers in the news cycle when the IDF uses the same tactic on Palestinian protesters in Israel. It is also a time when the U.S. moved its embassy to Jerusalem, angering not only the Palestinians but also the collective Muslim World; and a time when the Israeli government is openly advocating the annexation of large parts of the West Bank. It is a time when Israel has passed legislation declaring itself a "Jewish State", further alienating its non-Jewish population while disregarding Palestinian identity.

A strong desire to understand the crisis facing the Palestinian people motivated my research on *al-Nakba*. This paper contributes to the scholarship on Palestinian identity at a critical time when that identity is under assault. The understanding and recognition of that identity is integral to the Palestinians ever achieving basic human rights and freedoms.

Argument and Significance

The significance of this project is in its examination of *al-Nakba* as a structure and its relationship to the preservation of contemporary Palestinian identity, primarily through the use of oral history and memory studies. Interviews by the Author focused on the *Nakba* Generation (Palestinians who lived through the expulsions and displacements of the 1948 war). T. Hastings in *Oral History as a Tool to Defend against Displacement*

[6] Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. It is a Palestinian-led movement promoting boycotts, divestments and sanctions against the Israeli State.

notes that "While recording stories of Palestinian elders who witnessed the Nakba is more urgent than ever, oral history also has the potential to amplify community struggles to defend against current displacements by documenting protests, legal battles, and cultural expression."[7] This paper is also significant in that it argues that rather than *al-Nakba,* the event, being central to Palestinian identity itself, *al-Nakba,* the structure, is central to the maintenance of that identity through time and space. *Al-Nakba* can be classified as a structure in that it is characterized by patterns observed in the commemorative practices and memories of the Palestinian people since 1948. By distinguishing *al-Nakba* as a structure rather than an event, it allows us to understand the centrality of *al-Nakba* to Palestinian identity without reducing its composition to only that of the 1948 war.

Patrick Wolfe, in *Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,* identified the settler colonial perception of presumed empty land as a social construct, or a theoretical framework that obfuscates the native existence on the land.[8] Wolfe describes a social structure that begins with settler "invasion" and the formation of a political entity (modern state) that replaces indigenous ways of life. Wolfe's central defining feature of this theory is the "elimination of the native", which generates power through the destruction of native people and their culture. Wolfe's settler colonialism model and what he calls "elimination", continues for Palestinians as it does for all indigenous peoples in settler colonial societies. However, elimination is not the same for different indigenous

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[7] T. Hastings, "Oral History as a Tool to Defend against Displacement", *Al-Shabaka,* September 15, (2016), quoted in Rosemary Sayigh, "Nakba Silencing and the Challenge of Palestinian Oral History" in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 128.

[8] See Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409.

groups. For instance, assimilation is a form of elimination in the case of Australia, but is not true in the case of the Palestinians. Wolfe notes that rather than assimilation, "Renaming is central to the cadastral effacement/replacement of the Palestinian Arab presence".[9] According to Wolfe, dispossession and displacement are key components in what he calls "elimination" of the Palestinian people. Building on the theorizing of Wolfe, I suggest that *al-Nakba,* although created through circumstances of settler colonialism, is not a structure of elimination—but rather one that gives Palestinians agency through structural components of memory and commemoration.

Within *al-Nakba's* contours, there exists a set of shared beliefs, myths, commemorative practices and memories forming a functioning social structure that Palestinians utilize to preserve *al-Nakba*. This is similar to what Raymond Williams (*The Long Revolution* and *A Preface to Film*) calls the "structure of feeling". Williams defines it as "a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected—people weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than of thought—a pattern of impulses, restraints, tones."[10] The structure of feeling is a framework for the analysis of change in society or culture.[11] Sean Matthews, in *Change and Theory in Raymond Williams's Structure of Feeling*, notes that the structure of feeling is often apparent in the experience of deadlock, obstruction and failure, or in the struggle which attends them.[12] All of which are factors in the Palestinian condition. The structure of feeling is also a tool for the understanding

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[9] Patrick Wolfe. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 388.
[10] Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews with the New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), p. 159.
[11] Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom, *A Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama, 1954), p. 22.
[12] Sean Matthews. "Change and Theory in Raymond Williams's Structure of Feeling." *Pretexts* 10, no. 2 (November 1, 2001): 189.

and judgement of contemporary culture, and for the study of whole societies or formations, providing a method by which greater varieties of evidence can be analyzed.[13]

When historians discuss *al-Nakbah* in terms of actual events—restrictions, erasure, displacement, violence and so forth, they are describing settler colonialism, or the structure of elimination. In contrast, *al-Nakbah*, the structure, emerged as a reaction to settler colonialism. It does not comprise the actual events themselves, but offers perspectives of those events from Palestinian commemorative practices and memory. Wolfe also notes that settler colonialism can have positive effects.

> …settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base—as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event. In its positive aspect, elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence. The positive outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism.[14]

Al-Nakbah as a structure is a positive force as it continues to create. In this form, the logic of elimination, as a structuring force, is repurposed and used to give agency to an indigenous people. It is positive in that it produces items of connection with *Al-Nakbah* as the outcome, and is an instrument of transformation and opportunity for the Palestinian people. Elimination creates the conditions for the structure of *al-Nakba.* Characterized by continuity with an underlying coherence, it has been constructed through time and geographic space. However, Wolfe's structure, while providing an

[13] Matthews. "Change and Theory," 189-190.
[14] Wolfe. "Settler Colonialism," 388.

analytical framework to understand the struggles of colonized peoples, lacks agency for those same peoples. Williams's structure of feeling, in contrast, provides a template for the analysis of changes in a society or culture, giving native peoples a voice within a structure. This paper is important in that it expands on the combined theories of Wolfe and Williams in studying and analyzing *al-Nakba* as a structure. By incorporating concepts from both theorists in this study, we can better understand complex Palestinian narratives in understanding the collective cultural mechanisms and structures that might otherwise become obscured.

Additionally, this work is important as it examines the Palestinian people through a human geographic lens, a concept not often applied to Palestinian studies. By applying the concept of human geography to the Palestinian condition, it allows scholars to better understand the centrality of *al-Nakba* to the Palestinians and the interactions of their communities, cultures and environment across space and time. The purpose of this research is to determine how the memories, events and artifacts of *al-Nakba* have influenced the subject population's perception of this tragic event, examine what structural strategies have been employed to preserve it, and how that perception has helped Palestinians maintain their identity through 70 plus years of adversity, trauma and oppression.

There are a number of questions that this paper hopes to answer while contributing to the existing literature on the Palestinians and *al-Nakba*. What is *al-Nakba* to the Palestinian people and how do we define it? What is the difference between *al-Nakba* the event and *al-Nakba* the structure? How are the two terms interrelated? Palestinians are not a homogenous group. Just as in other cultures, there is a variation in

Palestinian cultural and political perspectives within the al-ghurba (exile or diaspora). By studying and comparing the memories, both autographical and collective, of Palestinians living abroad, in the West Bank, Gaza, in the refugee camps, and in the State of Israel, it is possible to achieve a greater understanding of what has sustained Palestinian identity. Due to a lack of empirical evidence lost or destroyed by Israeli forces after the 1948 war, collecting oral histories from the memories of the Palestinian people, and in particular, the "*Nakba* generation" (those born in 1948 or before), are vital in answering these questions.

This paper is comprised of 3 chapters. The first chapter lays out the foundation and underpinning of *al-Nakba* and its use as a structure and conceptual framework for understanding Palestinian identity. The nationalist aspects of this structure have persisted since the 19th century, as have most *modern* nationalist movements. As a structure for understanding Palestinian identity, it is not surprising that *al-Nakba* shapes Palestinian nationalism because it is the inherent experience for the last two centuries. This chapter lays out the implications for the "trauma" of the Palestinian experience and elaborates on historiography, theory, and methodology. Chapter Two, using oral histories from the author and other primary sources, introduces components of Palestinian identity and identity practices within the structure of *al-Nakba*. This chapter investigates spatial components of those practices. Palestinian identity is something that is practiced, and something that Palestinians attempt to maintain, but also is something that is mutable. Facets of that identity include trauma and commemoration. The third chapter of this work expands on the themes in Chapter Two, but with a focus on the experiences of refugees from the *Nakba* generation interviewed by the author. This chapter also presents that the

respondent's strategies in Palestinian identity preservation are representative of those in their demographic group (*al-Nakba* survivors). Experiences and narratives of the land; the right of return; the trauma of the Nakba; the experience of camps; commemoration, generational interactions; emotion and loss; how they interact with spaces and human geography, are all looked at as a part of a structure presented by individual Palestinians in this chapter.

Al-Nakba is better understood as a structure. By examining it as a structure rather an event reveals how Palestinians maintain and preserve their identity through the challenges, oppression, marginalization and adversity they have faced since the 1948 war.

CHAPTER 1: THE LONG NAKBA: A STRUCTURE FOR UNDERSTANDING PALESTINIAN IDENTITY

"Just as the ripples of a stone thrown into a pond will spread further and further away from the source, so the ripples of the disaster in 1948 hit my parents first and then spread to us and to our children long afterwards. Seeing only the ripples, it was easy to confuse the original cause with its effects."

— Ghada Karmi [15]

The term, "*al-Nakba"* was originally used by the Palestinians as a means to define the tragedy of the 1948. However, over time its meaning transitioned into a defining symbol of the continuous Palestinian struggle against colonial oppression originating from the geneses of the Zionist movement up until the present time. *Al-Nakba* is a structure, encompassing nearly every aspect of that experience. Important historical events within and outside of Palestine have facilitated, preceded and followed the war in 1948. Palestinian identity became a national identity in the 19th century. If we take as a given that all *modern* nationalisms emerged from the context of the late 18th and 19th century, as Rashid Khalidi has argued, then there is nothing less valid about Palestinian identity. It is just as valid as other nationalisms, including Zionism.[16]

This chapter examines the history and formation of Palestinian identity. It is important to locate the Palestinians historically and geographically in order to understand how situating *al-Nakba* as a structure allows us to recognize the concepts and strategies

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[15] Ghada Karmi, *Return: A Palestinian Memoir*. Verso Books, 2015.
[16] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), *xxiv.*

employed in the maintenance and preservation of Palestinian identity. This chapter also contains sections covering the historiography, theory and methods employed in this paper.

1.1 Zionism, Palestinians and Nationalism in Palestine

By the late eighteenth century, the idea of Zionism began as a nationalist project. This was an era in which nationalism as a belief about how to organize of people was becoming widely held. Modern political Zionism as a nationalist ideology, was an outcome of that nationalist moment that ultimately led to the establishment of the modern state of Israel in historic Palestine. Theodore Herzl, realized that the best solution to anti-Semitism in Europe was the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. In 1897, Herzl headed up the First Zionist Congress, which established a mass organized Zionist movement for the first time with the explicit goal of establishing a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel (the land of Israel). The Zionist movement needed to acquire land for Jewish settlement in Palestine and soon established a fund, known as the Keren Kayemet Le Israel (Jewish National Fund), in order to do so.[17]

Nationalism and colonialism influenced the Jewish settlers that arrived in Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th century. European national and colonial models influenced the Jewish community in Palestine. It was national in the sense that it offered a solution to the growing anti-Semitism in Europe and fulfilled a perceived biblical foundation in Jewish Identity. It was colonial in that Zionism's technocratic élite used

[17] Sabri Jiryis. "The legal structure for the expropriation and absorption of Arab lands in Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2 no. 4 (1973): 82-104. The Sixth Zionist Congress founded the Keren Kayemet Le Israel in 1903 in order to facilitate the purchase and settlement of land in Palestine.

European models in formulating strategies for Jewish nation-building in Palestine.[18] The results have followed the familiar colonialist patterns of dispossession, displacement and refugeehood of settler colonialism described by Patrick Wolfe.[19]

The progressive loss of Arab land to the Zionist movement alarmed the Palestinians. Early Jewish buyers took advantage of flaws in the Ottoman Land Code of 1858, the Tabu Law of 1858, and an 1867 law that facilitated the foreign purchase of land in Palestine and other Arab regions.[20] The *fellahin* (essentially Arab farmers) did not understand the code, nor saw a need to register land that they understood, through oral and customary contracts, was already theirs. In many cases, wealthy merchants and officials registered these lands to their selves, and in turn sold them at a profit, often to Jewish immigrants.

In 1917, the issuance of the Balfour Declaration dealt a blow to Arab aspirations of self-determination. This declaration originated from a letter from the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, to Baron Rothschild, indicating English support for a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. This affirmation of English support for the Zionist Movement further eroded Arab trust of the Western and European powers. It was born out of fortuity and contingency related to World War I and the concerns and agendas of

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[18] Derek Jonathan Penslar, "Zionism, Colonialism and Technocracy: Otto Warburg and the Commission for the Exploration of Palestine, 1903-7." *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, no. 1 (1990): 143.
[19] Truth Commission Report on the Responsibility of Israeli Society for the Events of 1948-1960 in the South. By: The commission members: The commission has seven members, Israeli Jews and Palestinians, all active in civil society and academia: Huda Abu-Obaid, Prof. Avner Ben-Amos, Wasim Biroumi, Adv. Shahda Ibn Bari, Dr. Munir Nuseibah, Dr. Nura Resh and Dr. Erella Shadmi. The truth commission was established the Israeli NGO Zochrot.org 31/12/2015, https://zochrot.org/en/article/56371.
[20] Ruth Kark, "Consequences of the Ottoman Land Law: Agrarian and Privatization Processes in Palestine, 1858–1918," In *Societies, Social Inequalities and Marginalization*, ed. Raghubir (Cham: Springer, 2017), 101-119.

the British politicians involved.[21] Palestinians often cite this declaration as a central reason for their current predicament and is an important element in the history of *al-Nakba* itself.[22]

Another contributing factor to *al-Nakba* and to the advance of Zionism was the Sykes-Picot Agreement. This agreement was a political arrangement between France and England which divided former parts of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East into spheres of influence under French and British control. This agreement contradicted promises of Arab sovereignty and self-determination promised to the Arabs by the British in return for their aid in the war against the Ottomans. The impact of this reneged agreement and perceived betrayal still reverberates in Palestinian and Arab consciousness today as an example of Western Imperialism.

Today Palestinians are dispersed throughout the world, with the largest concentration living in Israeli occupied territories and the surrounding Arab countries. Contrary to Western and official Israeli narratives, the Palestinians as a people did not suddenly appear in 1948. Although there was never a Palestinian "nation" in the modern definition of the word, Palestinians today believe they have a connection and a legacy with the land of Palestine that goes back hundreds, if not thousands of years. They have always considered themselves a part of the Arab world with a shared culture, history, religion and language.[23] Palestinian cultural and social norms, which appeared during the beginning of Muslim rule in the seventh century A.D., have survived for more than

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[21] William M. Matthew, "War-time Contingency and the Balfour Declaration of 1917: an Improbable Regression," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 2 (2011): 26-42.
[22] From interviews conducted author in West Bank, July-August 2018.
[23] Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 5.

thirteen centuries, only interrupted during the crusades.[24] Haim Gerber in *Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present*, argues that Palestinian articulations of identity had its social beginnings in the Crusades.[25] Gerber asserts that certain aspects of Palestinian identity pre-dated the British Mandate including the term, Palestine. As early as 1250, on the socio-local level, locals commonly used the term "Palestine" and it was often found in a part of the formulation of 'our country' or 'the country'.[26] Therefore, the local inhabitants employed the term 'Palestine' in a non-political manner before either British or Zionist aspirations in the region ever emerged.[27]

In recent years there still remains a dismissiveness of Palestinian identity and Palestinian national aspirations. This is in light of the modern Jewish Identity, fashioned by Zionism and Israel's claims as a nation-state within the contemporary world order. This sentiment ignores the constructed and extremely recent nature of all modern national identities, including that of Israel.[28] Palestinians desire a homeland that they believe was 'theirs' by a historic right, the land of their ancestors; a culture that was theirs as a heritage, passed down through the generations, and therefore an "expression of their authentic identity".[29]

Following the end of the First World War, the League of Nations granted Britain

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[24] K. Furani & D. Rabinowitz, "The Ethnographic Arriving of Palestine," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *40* (2011): 477.
[25] Haim Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.
[26] Vivian Ibrahim, "Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present by Haim Gerber." *Nations and Nationalism* 15 no.3 (2009): 548.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, *xxiv*.
[29] Hutchinson, John, and Anthony D. Smith. *Nationalism* (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 1994. Print), 4.

a Mandate in Palestine and Transjordan. Rashid Khalidi, in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern Nation Consciousness,* argues that the years of Palestinian nationalist struggles in this Mandate, including riots in 1929, the Arab Revolt (1936-39), and culminating with the British withdrawal prior to the Arab-Israeli War in 1948, influenced the creation of Palestinian identity.[30] Hillel Cohen, in *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1929,* concurs with Khalidi about the influence of the Mandate years in the nationalist aspects of Palestinian identity. Cohen uses a non-linear approach in arguing that the 1929 Riots in Palestine, the first large scale violent clash between Arab and Jew during the Mandate, were the beginning of the modern Arab-Israeli conflict. Drawing on the memories of both sides of the riots, Cohen asserts that both parties came to the realization after the unrest, that they now lived within an unbearable bloody conflict with each other, and this assessment now became a fixture of their consciousness.[31] Gerber also concurs with the importance of the Riots of 1929. He argues that popular nationalism in Palestine already existed, and the riots had been a reaction of the inhabitants of the country to a threat, and an illustration of religious nationalism.[32] Gerber and Cohen's work both demonstrate that the nationalist aspects of modern Palestinian identity, so often associated with *al-Nakba,* were part of an ongoing process before 1948 with each pointing to a moment when that national identity began to emerge.

Important events affecting the Palestinian diaspora and refugee status occurred after 1948. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War (*Al-Naksa*-setback or defeat in Arabic), also can be considered part of *al-Nakba.* Often while in interviews the in the West Bank during

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[30] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity:* 177.
[31] Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1929 (*Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2015), *xi.*
[32] Ibrahim, "*Remembering and Imagining Palestine*", 548–549.

discussions of *al-Nakba,* interviewees often ask if they can also talk about *al-Naksa*. Israel, during the 1967 war, seized the rest of Palestine, or what was left of it after 1948. Palestinians view *Al-Naksa* as an extension of the 1948 war and a continuing part of *al-Nakba*. In 1967, after the Six Day War, Israel occupied the West Bank and Jerusalem. Many more Palestinians, expulsed or fleeing out of fear, added their numbers to those already dislocated from the war in 1948.

Most Palestinians believe that the Zionists did not seize all of Palestine in 1948 only because of Jordanian collusion with the Zionist forces. Patricia Cohen in the New York Times noted that "In the Arab world the prevailing opinion about Abdullah (King of Jordan at the time) is that he was a greedy villain whose collaboration with the Jews and the British had robbed the Palestinians of their land."[33] This happened again in 1967 as King Hussein of Jordan tried to follow his grandfather's strategy in an unsuccessful attempt to retain control of the West Bank. Betrayal by Jordan in both wars is a common theme in interviews with Palestinian refugees. Today many Palestinians regard *al-Naksa* as a part of the ongoing struggle of *al-Nakba*.

By the 1980's the Palestinian national movement in Tunis was weak and ineffective. In 1987 the first *intifada* created a clear shift in leadership. This was especially true of the political center of Palestinian identity which was now reestablished from the "inside" (Palestine itself) rather than the "outside", where it had been for many years.[34] The first *intifada* galvanized the Palestinian people, in some cases helped them gain international support and made many in Israel believe that maintaining a military

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[33] Patricia Cohen, "Palestinians in Dispute: Was Jordan Ever a Friend? To Many, New King Is a Villain's Namesake" *New York Times,* February 13, 1999, https://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/13/arts/palestinians-dispute-was-jordan-ever-friend-many-new-king-villain-s-namesake.html.
[34] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 200.

occupation over the territories was not a sustainable option. It also led to the Madrid Peace Conference in October of 1991 which produced no real results, but was significant because for the first time, Palestinians (albeit as part of the Jordanian delegation) sat at the negotiating table with Israelis, a symbol of recognition for Palestinian national identity.[35] A second *Intifada,* beginning in 2000 was much more violent and less effective than the first and led to the dismantling of much of the PA's (Palestinian Authorities) infrastructure. Fatah and Hamas divided Palestinian loyalties and the disunion of the parties is still the status quo today.

As Edward Said noted "Perhaps the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been over the right to a remembered presence, and with that presence, the right to possess and reclaim a collective historical reality, at least since the Zionist movement began its encroachments on the land."[36] In this conceptualization of the term, "the battle" referenced by Said includes the struggle against the dispossession of Arab land, the Balfour Declaration, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the British Mandate, the war in 1948, the 1967 War, the recent *intifadas,* and the struggles the Palestinians face on a daily basis. These struggles are all are part of *al-Nakba*, the structure. *Al-Nakba* has not ended as the components that comprise its structure continue today in the memories, hearts, and minds of the Palestinian people.

1.2 Historiography

Scholars such as Rashid Khalidi and Edward Said have explored numerous facets of the connections between memory and Palestinian identity. Khalidi in *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness,* explores the origins and

[35] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 201.
[36] Edward Said, "Invention, Memory and Place," *Critical Inquiry,* Vol 26, No. 2 (Winter 2000): 184.

numerous aspects of Palestinian identity formation. Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, describes Palestinian cultural identity as a "dynamic, multifarious, and actively spatial process."[37] Said addresses geographical and special components of Palestinian identity his work noting that "none of us is beyond geography".[38] This paper hopes to add to the scholarship on Palestinian identity by identifying not only what comprises that identity, but the importance of identifying the components that underpin *al-Nakba* as a structure and the role that it plays in the preservation of that identity through time and space.

Patrick Wolfe describes settler colonialism, containing both complex social formations and continuity through time, as a structure.[39] Settler colonialism is a structure that propagates the erasure of indigenous people in order to expropriate land and resources. A key difference in the defining how Wolfe describes a structure, and how it is conceptualized in this paper, is that Wolfe describes a system or social organization designed to exploit native people and their land. It is what the indigenous peoples oppose or struggle against. In contrast, *al-Nakba*, the structure, is a framework created in reaction to settler colonialism. It is comprised of distinctive arrangements of social mechanisms, social interactions, memories, commemorative events and institutions, that Palestinians use to preserve and maintain their identity. *Al-Nakba* is not only a structure born of erasure, but a path to remembrance and commemoration—it is productive in maintaining presence, thereby creating a dialectic.

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[37] John Antranig Kasbarian, "Mapping Edward Said: Geography, Identity, and the Politics of Location." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14, no. 5 (October 1996): 529–557.
[38] Edward Said, "Representations of the intellectual: the 1993 Reith Lectures, part 1", quoted in John Antranig Kasbarian, "Mapping Edward Said: Geography, Identity, and the Politics of Location." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14, no. 5 (October 1996): 531.
[39] Patrick Wolfe. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 390.

Early work on the 1948 war from both Israeli and Palestinian scholars focused on their own respective nationalistic and political themes. Palestinian historiography in the 1960's categorized the 1948 War as the climax of a long and heroic struggle against the Mandate British and Zionism.[40] Following these nationalist works, came those based on historical accounts and memoirs, surveys of pre-1948 Palestine, and causes and solutions for the catastrophe.[41] Authors such as Nimr al-Hawwari, *The Secret of the Nakba (Nazareth, 1955)* and Mustafa Murad, *Our Country Palestine* (Beirut, 1973), produced the early scholarship on these nationalist themes.

As'ad Ghanem in "Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview" asserts that Palestinian nationalism is ethnic nationalism. Ghanem defines ethnic nationalism as values shared by members of the national group, primarily comprised of the group's historical heritage and primordial ethnic values.[42] Ghanem also agrees with Rashid Khalidi [43] in stating that the development of Palestinian nationalism went through several formative stages in the drive for an independent state. Khalidi takes this hypothesis a step further by including nationalism as a part of the process, or evolution of Palestinian identity. This concept will be looked at closer in Chapter 2.

Israeli historical accounts of the Arab-Israeli War in 1948 have presented it as a heroic war of liberation while denying the opposing Palestinian narrative of *al-Nakba.* Israeli historians, both old and new, have long emphasized privileged Israeli government papers and official documents while downgrading the voices of the indigenous

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[40] Avraham Sela and Alon Kadish, preface to *The War in 1948: Representations of Israeli and Palestinian Memories and Narratives*, ed. Avraham Sela and Alon Kadish (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016) 9.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ghanem. "Palestinian Nationalism: An Overview." *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 11.
[43] See R. Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. (New York: Colombia University Press, 1997).

Palestinians.[44] Furani and Rabinowitz note how in the 1940's, Israeli intelligence researchers working for the Haganah forces, mainly orientalists, interacted with Palestinians through what came to be known as "village files."[45] Within these studies, phrases used such as the hamula (clan) became a tool in order to label Palestinians as "backward" and "traditional."[46] In spite of these efforts to marginalize the Palestinian people, Israeli revisionist scholars expanded upon and created new interpretations of the historical record.

The release and declassification of official Israeli Government documents in the 1980's containing relevant source material inspired these scholars who attempted to change these long standing official narratives. This new generation of Israeli scholars known as the "new historians", began to push back against the Israeli Government's official record of events since 1948 by gaining access to these previously classified documents from government and military archives. These historians presented a more balanced view of events and most acknowledged the disaster that had befallen the Palestinian people.

These "new historians" such as Avi Shlaim ("The Iron Wall"), and Benny Morris ("1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians ″) have relied on these documents in order to push back against official Israeli historical narratives and to present a more balanced perspective of Palestinian-Israeli history. Morris is one of the most prominent of these Israeli revisionist scholars. In *Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948,* Morris states that "…the newly opened material generally tends to reinforce the version of events of

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[44] Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha, *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018) 8.
[45] K. Furani & D. Rabinowitz, "The Ethnographic Arriving of Palestine." 480.
[46] Ibid.

those who would stress the Yishuv's [47] and Israel's part in the propulsion of the Palestinian out of the areas that became the State of Israel rather than that of those who would reduce Israeli responsibility for what happened."[48] Although Morris tends to dismiss Palestinian oral evidence from 1948, he cited oral histories from Nafiz Nassal (1974), and Elias Shoufani (1972) in *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*.[49] Ilan Pappé is another Israeli historian who has contradicted official Israeli historical narratives. He has used empirical as well as oral history methods in an attempt to bring attention to what he calls the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.[50] However, most of these new historians, while recognizing the catastrophic nature of the 1948 Arab-Israeli-War, assert that *al-Nakba*, the event, was the principal factor in the formation of Palestinian identity. Pappé states, "…the Zionist movement is one of the most successful national movements in history for it started with the aim of forming one national group, and it ended up with forming two"[51]. Morris concurs with Pappé noting that "The crucial experience in the forging of Palestinian nationalism was, of course, the Nakba or catastrophe of 1948."[52] These views contrast with the argument that the *al-Nakba*, the event, was not the principle factor in the formation of Palestinian identity, but an important part of its structure.

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[47] The Yishuv were the body of Jews living in Palestine prior to the 1948 War.
[48] Benny Morris, "Revisiting the Palestinian Exodus of 1948," in *the War for Palestine,* ed. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 38.
[49] Benny Morris. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. Vol. 1948 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
[50] For more on Ilan Pappe, see *Ten Myths about Israel*. (London: Verso, 2017) and *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2006).
[51] Ilan Pappe, 1998. Personal communication. (Remarks attributed to Israeli historian Meir Pa'el.)Quoted in Nassar, Issam. "Reflections on Writing the History of Palestinian Identity." *Palestine-Israel journal of politics, economics, and culture* 8, no. 4 (April 30, 2002): 24.
[52] Benny Morris, "Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness (review)," *Israel Studies (Bloomington, Ind.)* 3, no. 1 (1998): 270.

Unlike the new historians, the Israeli government does not recognize *al-Nakba*, and still makes most documents concerning it inaccessible, even for these Israeli historians. Some have become re-classified. This makes empirical evidence of *al-Nakba* difficult to locate for these historians, and near impossible for non-Israelis. The Israeli authorities do not welcome outside academics conducting research on *al-Nakba* in the Palestinian territories. Israeli historians and researchers hoping to collect oral histories are hampered by the fact many of the Palestinian refugees are in area A (Jewish citizens forbidden to enter) or area B (entry discouraged), which in effect, makes it almost impossible for them to conduct any anthropological or ethnographic studies of *al-Nakba* survivors or their descendants in the West Bank. Most "old" and "new" Israeli historians have limited ability to research and conduct oral interviews with the Palestinians in the occupied territories and refugee camps. These "new historians", overly reliant on privileged state documents, are limited in their ability to interview *Nakba* survivors, and consequently, give little credence to Palestinian oral histories.[53]

Around the same time as the new historians began to emerge, Palestinians and other outside scholars increasingly employed anthropological and ethnographic methods in order to show a "bottom up" perspective of *al-Nakba*. Oral histories have proven a valuable tool in these studies in recent years and have allowed interpretations of events based on the lived experiences of those who experienced them to participate in the discussions of what Palestinians identity and *al-Nakba* are. These ethnographic studies have steadily increased since the 1980's following decades of virtual silence by

[53] Masalha "Decolonizing Methodology, Reclaiming Memory: Palestinian Oral Histories and Memories of the Nakba" in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 8.

anthropologists regarding Palestinians.[54] This historical neglect is reflected in data from a survey conducted by K. Furani and D. Rabinowitz on ethnographic publications on Palestine since the mid- nineteenth century:

> The survey shows that; between 1870 and 1970, proto-anthropological, anthropological, and ethnographic publications on Palestine appeared at an average rate of 0.6 items per annum; the figure rose to 1.6 pa in the 1970s and to 3.25 in the first eight years of the 1980s. Then in 1988—the first full calendar year following the outbreak of the 1987 Intifada—the rate climbed to 8 items pa. It grew further in the 1990s, with an annual rate of 9.9, and doubled in the following decade (2000-2010) to 18.8 items pa.[55]

This survey demonstrates that before the late 1980's the study of Palestine was almost non-existent in the social sciences and the humanities.[56] Nevertheless, since the late 1980s, historians have begun to understand the value and use of these "bottom up", or cultural methods of research. By incorporating anthropological and ethnographical techniques, and utilizing oral histories and memory, historians are able to examine the histories outside of Israeli official narratives.

Scholars can utilize memory studies and oral histories collected throughout the Palestinian diaspora, in order to study the maintenance and preservation of Palestinian identity. There are several excellent academic works conducted with memory studies and oral histories in the Palestinian refugee camps outside of Israel. Diana Allan, in *Refugees of the Revolution*, examines life and memory in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut Lebanon. Alan, an anthropologist, conducts her research through a phenomenological lens rather than an ideological one, a method that allows her to examine the Palestinian consciousness and the experiences of *al-Nakba* through a subjective point of view. Allan

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[54] K. Furani & D. Rabinowitz, "The Ethnographic Arriving of Palestine," 481-482.
[55] Furani, "The Ethnographic Arriving," 481-482.
[56] Ibid.

uses the method of participant-observation which combines objective observation, (outsider's viewpoint) followed by a close interaction or participation in the subject's social life, with the intention of producing "subjective" understanding from the inside.[57] Immersion in the culture of marginalized groups can take the anthropologist out of their own cultural universe and enables them to potentially see the world through the perspective of another culture.[58] This is an important facet in the research and understanding of the components that make up the structure of *al-Nakba*.

Anaheed Al-Hardan in *Palestinians in Syria*, examines how the *Nakba* remembrance influenced first, second, and third generation Palestinian refugees in Syria. Al-Hardan calls this first generation the "Guardians of Memory". Al-Hardan also found that the second generation, more closely linked to the first generation and with some memories of their own, is sympathetic with the first generation's views of *Al-Nakba.* However, the third generation, further removed from the event by time and distance, focuses on the event's patriotic and nationalist significance in their own understanding of 1948.[59] I also found this to be true in the conversations and interviews that I conducted in the West Bank. Socio-economic factors influence the level of importance attached to *al-Nakba* and nationalist themes, with those in poverty and in the refugee camps the most involved and active in resisting the occupation. This is similar to what Raymond Williams called the 'structure of feeling'. According to Devika Sharma and Frederik Tygstrup, this structure can be defined as "an elusive stratum of reality, evanescent in its

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[57] Carol Upadhya. "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Anthropological Knowledge." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 48 (1999): 3362. Accessed August 25, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4408654.
[58] Ibid
[59] Anaheed Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria: Nakba Memories of Shattered Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016) 181-182.

manifestations, but nonetheless important in the making of historical facts we contemplate."[60] Williams notes that "we are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension"[61] By studying *al-Nakba,* and expanding on structural concepts developed by Wolfe and Williams, we can chart the cultural physiognomies of the Palestinians, their ideas, memories, events, and other less perceptible components that make up the structure.

Susan Slyomovics uses microhistory in *The Object of Memory,* by exploring the memories of Palestinians who remained in Palestine after they lost their village of Ein Houd in 1948. [62] The villagers moved only two kilometers up the road, creating a new Ein Houd, hoping to one day have the right to return. Slyomovics' study gives insight into the formation of the Palestinian historical narrative through the study of the memories through space, land, architecture and what the author calls "environmental memory". Walid Khalidi expands on Slyomovics' narrative in his meticulously researched work, *All That Remains,* by documenting hundreds of Palestinian villages depopulated after *al-Nakba* through the use of documents, maps, photographs, statistics, and oral testimony. Although Slyomovics and Khalidi both use Palestinian memoirs and oral histories to validate ideas of collective memory, Khalidi's is able to employ a significant quantity of empirical data in his work in a field that has traditionally struggled to do so.

In spite of these difficulties, historians, sociologists, anthropologists and

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[60] Devika Sharma and Frederik Tygstrup, *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Culture*. *Structures of Feeling*. (Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 1.
[61] Raymond Williams. *Marxism and Literature*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 132.
[62] Ein Houd is not important in the study of pre 1948 Palestine, but is important in the history of Palestinian identity as the people of this village traced their ancestry back to one of Saladin's generals who was granted the territory as a reward for his prowess in battle.

ethnographers, have filled this empirical void by using memory studies and oral histories in order to document and study the Palestinian people and their history. In justifying using Palestinian memories (or counter-memories), researchers have responded to Foucault's appraisal of Nietzsche.[63] Foucault advocates using "genealogy" to overcome the historian's traditional disdain of "unpromising places…without history".[64] The importance of collecting these histories is also noted by Nur Masalha and Nahla Abdo as "…the memories and narratives of the specific calamities and horror inflicted on the Palestinians during the months of the establishment of the state of Israel have carved and continue to carve a deep space in the memory of those who lived it and the generations that followed."[65] As a source of knowledge and understanding, oral histories have become a major facilitator of new practices and interpretations in history-related fields and in the creation of alternate histories and the reclaiming of memories of lost practices.[66]

1.3 Theory

We can trace modern structuralism back to Karl Marx. Marx believed that a structure underpins social reality. This foundation of his theory was primarily economic, comprising natural resources, means of production and means of distribution. William Roseberry notes that "Given this general framework, Marx devoted most of his analysis to the inner workings of capitalism."[67] Claude Lévi Strauss was important in the

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[63] Michel Foucault. *"Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," In Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews,* edited by E. F. Bouchard, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139.
[64] K. Furani & D. Rabinowitz, "The Ethnographic Arriving of Palestine." 483-484.
[65] Nur Masalha and Nahla Abdo, introduction to *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 1.
[66] Ibid, 8.
[67] William Roseberry. "Marx and Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (October 1997): 31.

development of structuralism and structural theory. Strauss presented the idea of structural agency and believed that the structures that comprise the human mind are universal. Omar Lizardo notes that "Following Levi-Strauss's intervention, the idea of structure went from being an idle terminological stand-in for the older organicist notion of "social organization" in the Durkheim-Schaffle-Spencer line to a productive source of formal representations of social reality."[68] Alfred Radcliffe-Brown expanded on Strauss's work, arguing the importance of a 'total social structure'. Radcliffe-Brown's theory demonstrates that we can advance our understanding of human societies if we examine systematically the inter-connections amongst the geographies of social life.[69] These theorists, along with Wolfe and Williams, are foundational in the structural concepts employed in this paper in identifying the memories and commemorations of the Palestinians as components within *al-Nakba.*

What is the link between memory and history, and to memory and identity? These are questions scholars have tried to answer for hundreds of years. In the late 1700's John Locke suggested that identity extended only as far as human consciousness, which is also associated with memory. According to this premise, memory is an essential condition of identity. Today Scholars still debate Locke's ideas, also known as the Lockean Memory Theory.[70] Richard Atkinson and Richard Shiffrin in 1968 presented a theory called the "Multi Store Model" which fundamentally broke down memory into three distinct phases; sensory, short-term and long-term. Long-term memory contains crucial

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[68] Omar Lizardo. "Beyond the Antinomies of Structure: Levi-Strauss, Giddens, Bourdieu, and Sewell." *Theory and society* 39, no. 6 (November 1, 2010): 652.
[69] Adam Kuper. *The Social Anthropology of Radcliffe-Brown. The Social Anthropology of Radcliffe-Brown.* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 33.
[70] Marya Schechtman, "The Truth about Memory," *Philosophical Psychology* 7, no. 1 (1994): 3-18.

information and life-changing events. Repeated thoughts, or even written accounts of events, preserve these long-term memories. Researchers studying oral history are most concerned with this last stage.

Three important elements of memory in this study are commemoration, collective memory, and self-reflexive memories. As modern scholarship strives to keep memory and history in balance, memory studies and commemoration have been in the forefront since the publication of Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de memoire* (7 volumes, 1984-92). Pierre Nora's description of the 'age of commemoration' has been important in determining the way that we understand memory in historical methodology. In discussing commemoration, Nora notes that a concept explaining the notion of a nation or social group, importance of physical or conceptual sites, *lieux de memoire*, is "…any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which, by dint of human will or the work of time, has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[71] The *Nakba*, has become, what Pierra Nora calls, the most important Palestinian 'site of memory'; a site of trauma, dispossession and anger.[72] The 'sites of memory' that are within the structure of *al-Nakba* are created through commemoration, anniversaries, celebration and eulogies. Nora notes that, "The defense, by certain minorities, of a privileged memory that has retreated to jealously protected enclaves in this sense intensely illuminates the truth of *lieux de memoire* -that without

[71] Pierre Nora, "Preface to the English Language Edition" in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) *xvii*.
[72] Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 3-4.

commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away."[73] Palestinian identity, without the structure that is *al-Nakba,* is in danger of being 'swept away'.

The two anniversaries of the Nakba Day on May 15th and (since 1976) the Land Day on March 30th are the most significant days on the Palestinian popular calendar of commemorations, of strikes, demonstrations, defiance and resistance. These two commemorative days are important sites of memory within the structure of *al-Nakba.* Respondents often mention these dates in interviews as important days of commemoration.

Andrea Cossu notes that in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* Emile Durkheim theorizes the connection between commemoration and performance. According to Durkheim, rituals are both mimetic and poietic; they attempt to represent a reality they continuously create from scratch on particular occasions in the collective effort to represent and create the past.[74] Paul Connerton, in *How Societies Remember,* notes that the images and recollected knowledge of the past are "conveyed and sustained by ritual performances."[75] People individually or in social groups relate to the past in three ways: with their brains (memory), their heart (identity) and their hands (commemoration). These three relations connect intrinsically as societies or social groups use commemoration to present their collective memories and their identity.

Collective memory is the active past that helps form our collective identities.[76]

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[73] Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations (Berkeley, Calif.),* no. 26 (April 1989): 12.
[74] Andrea Cossu, "Durkheim's Argument on Ritual, Commemoration and Aesthetic Life: A Classical Legacy for Contemporary Performance Theory?" *Journal of Classical Sociology* 10, no. 1 (February 2010): 34.
[75] Paul Connerton. *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3-4.
[76] Ronit Lentin, *Co-memory and Melancholia: Israelis mMemorializing the Palestinian Nakba* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2010) 24.

Scholarship on collective (or cultural) memory can involve concepts and methods from such varied fields as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and also include individual memories, group memory, and national memory with its "invented traditions".[77] Oral history "from below" and "shared memories" are integral in historical writing, defining shared values and the construction of multi-layered and multicultural identity.[78] Collective memory involves the agency of groups and it works via the interaction of individuals within particular narratives of the past that give individuals a sense of mutual identity and belonging. These narratives of the past are the property of social groups and are often reproduced within social institutions.[79] They can be at variance with aspects of documented history and geographies, while mobilizing narratives of the past from diverse sources and helping to structure attitudes to and understanding of the present.[80]

To have individual memory, one must have firsthand experience of an event. Collective memory can contain agents who do not have this direct experience. Additionally, It has been have shown that the construction of collective memory involves a dynamic combination of remembering and forgetting.[81] The inclusion of these factors has been an accepted facet of memory studies since 1992. In that year, Maurice Halbwachs' developed the Durkheimian theory of collective memory and commemoration, which asserts that collective memory occurs when those without direct experience of an event, identify with those that have— defining both groups as sharing

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[77] Astrid Erll. "Introduction" in *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nunning (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2010) 3. "Invented Traditions" attributed to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-2.
[78] Masalha, "Decolonizing Methodology", 11.
[79] Chris Weedon, and Glenn Jordan. "Collective Memory: Theory and Politics," *Social semiotics* 22, no. 2 (2012): 146–147.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 8–9.

participants in the same social group. Halbwachs' main point in this theory is that memory can only function within a collective framework. Scholars consider the association between individual and collective memory intimate. Memories from the past are often comprised of experiences shared with others.[82]

Neurologists, psychologists and historians define autographical memories, (individual and self-reflexive), as memories that we experience personally. Autographical memories are self-reflexive in that they draw upon one's self in order to explain, distinguish, reinterpret, criticize, censure, control, surpass, and receive.[83] These memories are also reflexive of one's own image insofar as it mirrors the self-image of a group through a concern with its own social order. The idea of cultural memory entails the body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each era, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image as a collective identity. [84]

1.4 Human Geography

There is a lack of scholarship looking at the Palestinians through a human geographic lens. This paper proposes this concept as an alternative to traditional geographic studies of the *al-Nakba.* The type of geography that most people are familiar with is traditional geography, which relies on the idea that physical and material geographies emanate from transparent space. Katherine McKittrick defines transparent space as "…the idea that space 'just is', and the illusion that the external world is readily

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[82] Amanda J.Barnier and John Sutton, "From Individual to Collective Memory: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives," *Memory* 16, No. 3 (2008): 177.
[83] Jan Assmann, and John Czaplicka. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German critique* 65, no. 65 (1995): 132-133.
[84] Ibid.

knowable and not in need of evaluation, and that what we see is true."[85] Traditional geographies and historical narratives give precedence to transparent space that reduces marginalized peoples to being irrelevant and ungeographic (unseen historically). Traditional geography assumes that all space is knowable using the Cartesian Coordinate System[86] as its basis. This assumption is inaccurate, as all space is not knowable. Space not only contains traditional physical elements, but also elements of social life. It is a part of the three dimensions of space-time-culture within human life is "immersed and variously conceived and experienced by various cultures."[87] Space is mutable as it takes on cultural meaning through naming, lived experiences, memory and spatial components of the body. Therefore "human geography" as well as traditional geography is necessary in the study of *al-Nakba* as a structure.

Human geography is the study of people between space, place, temporality, and the interactions of these factors within their environment including their culture, community and economic standing. These geographies McKittrick defines as "subaltern or alternative geographic patterns that work alongside and beyond traditional geographies and a site of terrain and struggle" that are connected with the history of slavery, colonialism and modernity.[88] Julie Peteet in *Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora* notes, "In this cultural and political orbit, a new spatial world took shape. Violently

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[85] Katherine McKittrick, Introduction to *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xv.
[86] The Cartesian Coordinate System is a system of defining space in the use of coordinates in order to define the position of a point on a graph or space
[87] Pauline Aucoin, "Toward an Anthropological Understanding of Space and Place." *Researchgate* , March 2017, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315860117_Toward_an_Anthropological_Understanding_of_Space_and_Place, 396.
[88] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 7.

crafted and maintained borders that locked Palestinians in and kept them out became features of quotidian life."[89] These borders served as a foundation for the structure of *al-Nakba.* As is true with other subaltern groups, Palestinian oral histories are vital in recovering the voice of the ungeographic: peasants, women, the urban poor, refugees and members of the Bedouin tribes.[90]

An import space for both the Israelis and the Palestinians is Jerusalem and its holy sites. A terrain of struggle occurs then when the "other" has access to a holy place and has a perceived effect on the sanctity of the place itself. Hillel Cohen notes that the struggle between Jews and Muslims on the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa began with the dawn of Islam and continues today.[91] The modern age of nationalism brought a facet to the struggle incorporating both religious and nationalist aspects.[92] For many Jews, it is forbidden for Jews to go up to the Temple Mount for religious reasons. For others, use of the Temple Mount by Arabs defiles it. Baruch Ben-Yosef [93], wrote, "every Jew is obliged to go up [to the Temple Mount] in order to nullify the desecration of God's name that has been created by Arab access and control of the site."[94] At the Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif, religious rights to sacred space intersect. For Jews, the Western Wall was a place of religious ritual for centuries, while the Temple Mount is still the holiest site in Judaism. Muslims revere the Temple Mount compound, which they refer to as Al-Haram

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[89] Julie Peteet. "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 4 (2007): 627. Http: //www.jstor.org/stable/30069491.
[90] Masalha "Decolonizing Methodology", 23.
[91] Cohen, Hillel. "The Temple Mount/al-Aqsa in Zionist and Palestinian National Consciousness: A Comparative View." *Israel studies review* 32, no. 1 (June 1, 2017): 15.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Baruch Ben-Yosef was a follower of Rabbi Meir Kahane--who was considered a right-wing extremist and whose political party was deemed illegal in Israel-- and a suspect in the assassination of the activist Alex Odeh.
[94] Reiter Yitzhak, Leonard Hammer, and Marshall J. Breger. *Sacred Space in Israel and Palestine: Religion and Politics*. *Sacred Space in Israel and Palestine* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 2.

al-Sharif, as as the location of Islamic prophet Muhammad's night journey to Jerusalem and ascent to heaven.[95] During a research trip for this project in 2018, the Temple Mount, as a terrain of struggle, was evident as clashes and protests occurred with regularity and at times, access was limited.

This paper advances the idea that geographic concepts can be used in order to analyze and expand discussions of *al-Nakba* as a structure. Through the lens of social theory and concepts such as traditional and human geography, poetics, space and place, sites of memory, and geographic expression, we can identify the spacial and geographic components that comprise the structure of *al-Nakba.* By crafting alternative geographies through practices of Palestinianess and commemoration, we can challenge erasure and the idea that space is "just is". In order to understand and study *al-Nakba* and the current cultural state of the Palestinian people, researchers can use theoretical models and concepts employed in other works with similar subject matter in order to analyze the Palestinian condition.

Although McKittrick's Demonic *Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* focuses on black history, diaspora and feminism, many of the concepts and theories presented in her book apply in the study of *al-Nakba*. The basis for much of McKittrick's work is in the discipline of geography. Black people, as well as Palestinians and Jewish people in their respective diasporas, are considered ungeographic, or outside of traditional geographies which diminishes knowledge, experiences and mapping in the historical narrative. McKittrick describes Black geographies as "the terrain of political struggle itself," or where the imperative of a perspective of struggle takes place."[96]

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[95] Reiter Yitzhak, *Sacred Space in Israel*, 4.
[96] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 6.

Additionally, *Demonic Grounds* presents the argument that by studying history through a humanist geographic lens, we can provide a method of understanding marginalized peoples in how they negotiate space and place. Palestinians are considered irrelevant and ungeographic in the official historical narratives of Israel and the West. In the formulation of "a land without a people for a people without a land" Palestinians are literally "unseen", in the geography of settler colonialism and erasure. McKittrick's model provides a means to study *al-Nakba* through human geography and its related concepts.

McKittrick incorporates Sylvia Wynter's work in order to understand race, colonialism, and how ethnicity, place, and time together dictate what it means to be human. McKittrick examines Wynter's reconceptualization of the human in relation to blackness, modernity and space. Sylvia Wynter investigated human constructed sociospatial arrangements, asserting that the invention of the modern Man ("Man 1") or the human came out of the Renaissance period as *homo politicus* and recreated itself after encountering the humans during the colonization of the Americas through economic and territorial expansion. In "Man 2" or *homo oeconomicus.* The ideology of the human shifted from a socioreligious agenda to an imperialist political citizen agenda. Unlike the invention of Man 1, which stemmed from evangelical theology, the invention of Man 2 developed in conjunction with the establishment of the biological sciences, transatlantic slavery, and land exploitation. As Wynter asserts, the reconfigured version of Man 2 created the rise of Europe and its structures in the 'world civilization', while ushering in

African enslavement, Latin American conquest, and Asian subjugation and representations of "the other."[97]

Frantz Fanon (*Black Skins, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*) was an Africana existential philosopher and revolutionary from the French colony of Martinique. Fanon's work was influenced by his lived experiences in the French Caribbean, France, and colonial Africa during the mid-twentieth century. He was highly influential in the work of McKittrick and other scholars in the fields of post-colonial scholarship, anti-colonial struggles, racism, Marxism and critical theory. Fanon made his original philosophical contributions through existential phenomenology in order to investigate the existential conditions of black subjects.[98] Fanon fits squarely within Africana existential philosophy tradition as he engaged in philosophical mediations that are concerned with the lived experience (human geography) of black subjects in the colonial condition, and the manner in which they should react to such an existential condition and threats to their existence. [99] While the present may not literally reflect the realities of colonization and imperialism in the past, the continuities between Fanon's time and our own rest in the less obvious ways certain groups and peoples (including Palestinians) are subordinated to the demands of neoliberal capitalist economies.[100] Israel's political economy transformed from a developmental model to neoliberal one in the 1980's.

'Judaization' 'Israelization' and 'deArabization', are terms that Palestinian geographers call the attempt to obliterate the Arab identity of Palestine within the realm

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[97] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 no. 3 (Fall 2003): 263.
[98] Tendayi Sithole, "Frantz Fanon: Africana Existentialist Philosopher," *African identities* 14, no. 2 (2015): 177.
[99] Sithole, "Frantz Fanon: Africana Existentialist", 177-178.
[100] Harrison, Sheri-Marie, "Introduction: Fanon in the Present," *College literature* 45, no. 1 (2018): 2.

of scholarship: not on the level of actual landscape, but in human landscapes or human geographies through the work by Israeli geographers on Palestine/Israel. [101] There are three significant imagination-linked processes in geographical thinking, each shaped by subjectivity: promotional, intuitive and aesthetic imagining. Promotional imagining has shaped the cognitive approach of the mainstream of Israeli human-geographical research, particularly among those writing on the Arab landscape.[102] Promotional imagining, recognized as one of the building blocks of myth, is theorized as a collective accord with the world not as it is but as it wants to be.[103] Waterman notes that the 'mythical landscape' and the powerful battery of 'filters', governmental and academic, are involved in the transmitting of 'distorted' and 'idealized' images of the human geographical landscape.[104] In Palestine, within these Israeli mythical landscapes, the human geographies of the Palestinians (the others) are rendered invisible or transparent as a function of the 'massive', still ongoing colonial settler enterprise aimed at erasing and displacing the indigenous Arab population.[105]

"Sites of memory" serve as space for resistance by the "other". The origin of thought for the Palestinian's role as the "other", in the views of settler-colonialist and nationalist Zionist reasoning, can be seen as far back as the papal bulls from the 1455 Romanus Pontifex, which provided the theological (in this case Christian) based framework in whose terms their supposedly "lands of no one/terra nullius" had been

[101]Ghazi Falah, "Israelization of Palestine Human Geography," *Progress in Human Geography* 13, no. 4 (December 1989): 535.
[102] Falah, "Israelization of Palestine Human Geography", 537.
[103] Ibid.
[104] S. Waterman, "Ideology and Events in Israeli Human Landscapes," *Geography* 64, no. 3 (July 1, 1979): 171.
[105] Falah, "Israelization of Palestine Human Geography." 537.

seeable as justly expropriable, and they justly enslavable as pre-classified populations.[106] In order to give voice to "the other" Toni Morrison suggests that "sites of memory" make it possible to reimagine and create a world of new historical narratives, new memories, and new geopolitical possibilities.[107] A site of memory does not have to be physically recognized, and in some cases should not be. For the Palestinians, there can be an intrinsic difference between a village being a site of memory or being a site of return. In an article on Lubya, one of many depopulated and destroyed Palestinian villages, Shmuel Groag explains: "Defining the village as an official site of memory or preservation is like acknowledging that it is a monument to something that has passed from the world and is not designated for return and revival."[108] The sites of memory to most Palestinians are the sites of return prior the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Denial of the "right of return" has been part of a systematic effort by the Israeli government to suppress Palestinian identity by disremembering acts of violence and displacement and denying access to geographical space.

Édouard Glissant in *Poetics of the Americas: Race, Founding and Textuality,* demonstrates that geographic expressions and poetics are important to space, uneven geographies: geographical boundaries, material/non-material, colonial/ decolonial, are boundaries that one must negotiate as any object has a relation to the world at large. According to Glissant, geography and the naming of space and place intersect with bodily

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[106] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality", 292.
[107] Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory." In Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minhha, and Cornel West, eds., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991), 299-305.
[108] Shmuel Groag, (architect and conservation and heritage consultant),*Zochrot*, transcript of interview by Laura van Rij, May 12, 2013, Interview location: Albee coffee shop, Tel Aviv, https://zochrot.org/en/testimony/54898.

sense, imaginings, language, and poetry, which he terms the "poetics of landscape". Within this concept, naming of space and place for the Palestinians advances complex respatializations from a human perspective. In Neil Smith's *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*, the concept of "deep space" is the "…the production of space, intensified and writ large, ideological and political shifts that impact upon and organize every day in multiple contexts and scales."[109] Investigating deep space may demonstrate how sociopolitical and economic factors can affect the lives of marginalized peoples including those of the Palestinians.

Mobility is important to the access and affirmation of place—geographical place as the site of specific configurations of power, identities, and meaning in a modern settler-colonial context.[110] Mobility for Palestinians living in the West Bank is limited as the Israeli authorities deny them access to territory, land and even roads. Settlements, walls, barbed wire and checkpoints, where identity cards are required to pass through hem the Palestinians in. These limitations radically constrain Palestinians' mobility, impeding their ability to create and give meaning to place. In this active relational geography of inclusion and exclusion, managed chaos has become the norm for daily life in Palestine.[111]

The geographies of bondage, slavery and racism influences Black identity. The trials of *al-Nakba* help define, preserve and maintain Palestinian identity. Certainly, both groups' respective oppressors marginalize them and deem them ungeographic. Both groups have found creative ways to express their individual struggles. Mckittrick notes

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[109] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 15.
[110] Julie Marie Peteet, *Space and Mobility in Palestine* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 2.
[111] Ibid.

that "geographic expressions and poetics are important to uneven geographies, in that 'saying', imagining and living geography locates the kinds of creative and material openings traditional geographic arrangements disclose and conceal."[112] It is important to locate the Palestinians through these concepts and expressions, and not rely on traditional geographies that attempt to hide and erase them from the historical record. The spatial aspects of the Israeli colonial-settler project in Palestine are a part of oppression that the Palestinians endure. Spatial claims about the "right of return" and the emphasis on land ownership are central to the Palestinian's ideas and maintenance of their identity.

1.5 Methodology

Studying memory through oral histories is an integral part of my work. Primary source material in this paper contains oral histories obtained from my own research, supplemented by additional interviews obtained from online archives. The methods employed in this study draw upon the memory work of scholars and theorists such as Maurice Halbwachs and Paul Ricoeur. Similar oral history projects influential in researching this paper include Homeland*: Oral Histories of Palestine and Palestinians,* edited by Staughton Lynd, Sam Bahour and Alice Lynd. The oral histories in this edited volume contain interviews conducted with Palestinians holding differing political views, living in diverse social and economic circumstances, and from various geographical locations, including the United States, Gaza and the West Bank.

Another work more recently published using Palestinian oral history projects is Nur Masalha and Nahla Abdo's *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba.* This volume is an edited collection of oral histories with contributions from the editors, as well as

[112] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 144.

established anthropologists and researchers such as Diana Allen and Laura Khoury. This work demonstrates how to develop from oral testimonies, a cohesive narrative, and how to initiate dialog that encourages further research on the topic. It is one of the most recent and relevant works in this field. Nur Masalha uses a critical and analytical framework for using oral histories and memory in order to study *al-Nakba* as a process. Masalha "…explores ways of experiencing and remembering the Nakba, with emphasis on oral accounts and within the context of the powerful oral cultures of Palestine."[113] Nahla Abdo identifies *al-Nakba* as a cultural genocide that began before 1948 and continues today[114]. Leora Bilsky and Rachel Klagsbrun describe cultural genocide as the methodical attempt to destroy a group's identity and culture.[115]

A similar type of oral project that I looked at for a precedent was an article by Alistair Thomson titled *Anzac Memories Revisited: Trauma, Memory and Oral History.* In this work, Thomson reexamines interviews conducted in the 1980's including World War I veteran Fred Farrall. The interviews had been published in 1994 in *Anzac Memories-Living with the Legend.* New sources of information and research about these veterans and new ideas about oral history prompted Thomson to take another look at the interviews. The author examines the relationship between collective mythology and its relationship with individual memory. Thomson's interpretation of Fred's war, its consequences and the complex interactions across time is important to the studies individual and collective memory and is influential in understanding the construction of

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[113] Nur Masalha, "Theorizing the Nakba and Oral History" in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 9.
[114] Nahla Abdo, "Feminism, Indigenous and Settler Colonialism: Oral History, Memory and the Nakba" in *An Oral history of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 54.
[115] Leora Bilsky and Rachel Klagsbrun, "The Return of Cultural Genocide?" *European Journal of International Law* 29, no.2, (May 2018): 373-396.

narratives in oral histories. This work had an influence on how I found people to interview, how I collected the data and I conducted my interviews. It made me realize that it was important for silence to be a part of the interview, allowing the interviewee time to think or reflect, and to carefully analyze the data collected.

Many of the "new historians", including Benny Morris, skeptically viewed the reliability of research involving Palestinian memories, and in particular those from 1948. Morris believed gaps in memory, age, distortions, selectivity, prejudice, political beliefs and self-interest influenced these interviews.[116] However, later research has revealed the limitations of Morris's work. Ilan Pappe notes that "Had Morris and others used Arab sources or turned to oral history, they might have been able to get a better grasp of the systematic planning behind the expulsion of the Palestinians in 1948, and provide a more truthful description of the crimes the Israeli soldiers committed."[117] Palestinian oral interviews, when supported by independent sources, have been internally and externally consistent, thus providing a credible means of reconstructing past events.[118] These accounts, recorded as the product of individual and collective memory recollection, occur in the theoretical literature and are documented in Palestinian memoirs.[119] Thus, the oral histories recorded from the author's and other researcher's interviews with Palestinian refugees are critical in understanding the evolution, preservation and maintenance of Palestinian identity through the structure of *al-Nakba*.

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[116] Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2.
[117] Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2006), xv.
[118] Rosemary Esber. *Under the Cover of War: The Zionist Expulsion of the Palestinians.* (Alexandria Va.: Arabicus Books and Media, 2008), 34.
[119] Terri DeYoung. "The Disguises of the Mind: Recent Palestinian Memoirs," *Review of Middle East studies (Tucson, Ariz.)* 51, no. 1 (February 2017): 5.

I refined my research questions and methods by not only by looking at the oral histories and methods mentioned above, but also from recommendations from Tina Wright (Oral history interviewer form UNCC library) and Dr. Diana Allan (aforementioned author and anthropologist). Both Ms. Wright's and Dr. Allan's advice was extremely helpful in conducting my interviews and developing my interview questions and methods. Ms. Wright directed me to several resources including the *Oral History Association* website, the Baylor oral history site (UNCC uses their guide for transcriptions), and to a book that serves as a guide for conducting oral histories, *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History,* by Donna M Blasio.

Using the method of oral history to illuminate/better understand memory was integral to my structural analysis of the Nakba. Studying the memories of Palestinians who were alive in 1948, their descendants, and all of those that remained in Palestine after 1948, is central in answering questions of how Palestinians preserve and maintain their identity. All of the semi-formal interviews I conducted were Palestinian refugees from the war in 1948. The field sites were representative of Palestinian refugee life and located in towns and the refugee camps in the West Bank, with the one exception of one interview conducted in the United States with refugees from Jaffa. Most of these sites were in or near Ramallah, Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

I conducted the semi-formal interviews in the subjects' homes as well as in the community centers that serviced them. This was a multi-sited ethnography study, with most of the research time spent in and around Ramallah and Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. My contacts, along with taxi drivers, were the primary means of transport during my research in the West Bank. This trip was achievable logistically due to my Palestinian

heritage and local connections. The Pharr/Bucheneau Grant and my own personal financing made the research trip financially possible.

Anthropological methods employed include participant observation; interviews; life histories; archival work and photographs. These methods of data collection occurred during oral interviews, daily interaction with the local population, and archives at local universities and resource centers. Taped semi-structured interviews were conducted primarily with the "*Nakba* Generation" (those that were alive in 1948 or before), and unstructured interviews with those people that I interacted with on a daily basis. My goal was to have as many semi-structured interviews as possible, along with daily field notes (hand written) from daily conversations and participant observation in order to conduct my analysis.

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study as the Palestinian people are an "at risk" population with not only the fear of reprisal from the Israelis for being critical of their policies, but also a fear of their own Palestinian Authority. I followed AAA guidelines including those citing: "Do no harm" and "Be open and honest about your work". I made it clear why I was there, and always asked for permission before I taped. I obtained informed consent and necessary permissions in my formal interviews. My results "will be accessible", both to participants, and researchers once published. I will "protect and preserve my records". I uploaded the files not only on my computer, but on a flash drive and the cloud as well. I "maintained respectful and ethical relationships" with my subjects as well as my colleagues. Also during the time that I have conducted this research, I have completed the CITI training (Research, Ethics, and Compliance training).

It is imperative to record the memories and histories of the Palestinians as many of the older generation are now in their eighties and nineties. Nur Masalha, notes the importance of this record in *The Palestinian Nakba.* "Storytelling and memory accounts have always been central to the struggle of internally displaced Palestinians inside Israel."[120] The idea of recollection as a fluid process enriches our understanding of what the recording of Palestinian history can achieve. Once the members of the "Nakba Generation" have all passed, the opportunity to record those histories will be lost. It is also important to answer the question of how *al-Nakba* has affected the culture and identity of subsequent generations of Palestinians, how has its perception and commemoration changed over the years, and to compare those findings with those studies conducted in the refugee camps of surrounding countries. It is equally essential to position the idea of the Nakba as either an event of the past, or as an on-going event, as many Palestinians contend it has not ended and hope for an enduring solution.

[120] Nur Masalha, *The Palestinian Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (New York: Zed Books, 2012), 246.

CHAPTER 2: AL NAKBA AND IDENTITY: COMPONENTS OF PALESTINIAN IDENTITY AND IDENTITY PRACTICES, SPACE AND SPACIAL PRACTICES

"The quintessential Palestinian experience which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint: in short, at any one of those modern barriers where identities are checked and verified. What happens to Palestinians at these crossing points brings home to them how much they share in common as a people."

—Rashid Khalidi [121]

Khalidi's eloquent quote about Palestinian identity captures the archetypal Palestinian experience of living in or visiting Israel and/or the Occupied Territories. While on a layover in London's Heathrow Airport on my way to Israel for my research trip in the summer of 2018, I had heard that the Israeli authorities had increased security and had been interrogating Palestinians. Tensions remained high as it was the seventieth anniversary of *al-Nakba*, the event. In some cases, the Israeli security personnel turned around individuals supporting the BDS movement, there to report on or research *al-Nakba,* or critical of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. Even a prominent Israeli donor had been detained and questioned for having in his bag what they deemed a pro-Palestinian pamphlet.[122] When I arrived at the Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv, They

[121] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 14.
[122] Isabel Kershner, " Israeli Airport Detention of Prominent U.S. Jewish Journalist Prompts Uproar," *New York Times,* August 8, 2018. Meyer G. Koplow, chairman of Brandeis University and a pro-Israel philanthropist, was interrogated at Ben Gurion airport in July of 2018 on his way back to New York because, after attending a bridge-building meeting in the West Bank, he had put a Palestinian promotional brochure in his checked luggage. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/14/world/israeli-airport-detention-of-prominent-us-jew-prompts-uproar.html.

directed me to a security line for non-Israelis. Once determined that I was of Palestinian descent and there to visit the West Bank, and not an American tourist, the Israelis identified me as a Palestinian and I remained identified as such in all interactions with Israeli security forces for the duration of the research trip.

This chapter combines oral histories from the author and other primary sources in order to examine components of Palestinian identity and identity practices. It also looks at these mechanisms as a part of *al-Nakba*, the structure, and how they contribute to the maintenance and preservation of Palestinian identity. It is important to explain something about Palestinian identity, what it comprises, and how it fluctuates, and whether or not variations in identity are related to different lived experiences, and understandings and narratives of the past. Palestinian identity has roots going back to biblical times and like many other cultural or ethnic identities, has undergone a process of evolution and change over space and time. Many different facets, both political and cultural, have fueled this evolution. Since 1948, *al-Nakba*—the event, Palestinian identity has been preserved and maintained by national, political, cultural and, commemorative, and traumatic facets, related to and employed as a part of *al-Nakba*, the structure.

As a specifically collective phenomenon, "identity" represents a fundamental and substantial "sameness" among members of a group or classification which may be understood objectively or subjectively.[123] This sameness results in unity of shared beliefs, consciousness, or collective action. Identity can also be understood as a central aspect of (individual or collective) selfhood or as an essential condition of social being and as something to be valued, cultivated, supported, recognized, and preserved.[124] Identity

[123] Rogers Brubaker. *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004), 29.
[124] Ibid, 30.

relies on memory. According to Locke's "memory theory", our identity is comprised of what we remember. Identity is nebulous, changing and context-driven. There are different elements of Palestinian identity. Modern Palestinian identity is inherently civic and state-driven. It is something that is practiced, something that Palestinians attempt to maintain, but also it is something that can be mutable.

Because the world around changes and because even the act of preservation is a mode of creating change, in order to study Palestinian identity, it is important to understand who the Palestinians are and where they came from. Palestinian identity is interrelated with Arabism, Islam and other regional factors. These aspects along with other elements, including nationalism, contribute to the identity of the Palestinian. Those who conceive national identity in a historical, unidimensional terms, following models taken from an idealized and simplified version of a Western European identity, cannot simply explain Palestinian identity.[125] The lack of a national history or narrative, or a cohesive education system to propagate that narrative, makes the comparison unworkable. Instead, Palestinian identity is composed of multiple foci, as are other Middle Eastern states, with the difference being that the other states have achieved independence (most fairly recently) with at least several generations that can have a sense of place in their given nations.

Palestinian identity since the inception of Zionism, more than most other Arab nations, (Israel has had an outsized importance for say, Lebanon, complicated by the fact that so many Palestinians live in Lebanon), is intertwined with that of Israel and the Jewish people as "the other". The Zionist political project has been successful in melding

[125] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 146.

a version of Jewish and Israeli history that gives the perception of continuity between ancient and modern narratives. Palestinian identity conversely has had to focus on acceptance and maintaining its very existence as a legitimate entity. Remembering and commemorating *al-Nakba* is not only a way to preserve Palestinian identity, but it is also significant as a means of symbolizing a struggle for basic human rights and self-determination. The preservation of Palestinian identity and understanding Palestinian identity's perseverance through oral histories and memory studies of *al-Nakba* is important in understanding the Palestinian's place in the Middle East. It is important to understand the concepts and strategies that Palestinians employ to preserve their identity in the face of an oppositional narrative that strives to erase that identity. Since 1948, many factors have been important in the formation of *al-Nakba* as an identifiable structure.

2.1 The Formation of Palestinian identity

Shay Hazkani states "Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister at the end of the 1950s, understood the importance of controlling the historical narrative. Just as Zionism had created a new narrative for the Jewish people in a short period of time, he knew that the other nation that had occupied the country before the advent of Zionism would also formulate a narrative of its own."[126] For the Palestinians, their historical narrative after 1948 centered on *al-Nakba* and the continued evolution of an identity that preceded Zionism. The outcome of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war changed existing special patterns and the geography of the Palestinian people.

[126] Shay Hazkani, "Catastrophic Thinking: Did Ben-Gurion try to Rewrite History?" *Ha'aretz*, May 16, 2013, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-ben-gurion-grasped-the-nakba-s-importance-1.5243033.

Khalidi calls the period between 1948 and 1964 (when the PLO emerged) the "Lost years" of Palestinian identity. Most came under the rule of Jordan, but also Egypt and Syria. Those that remained in Israel came under Military rule until 1966. During that time the Palestinians did not have a real central government to propagate an official approved historical narrative, or an educational system or control of influence of the media- no national network of museums , archeological exhibits, national parks or cultural manifestations to tell their version of their history. However it was able to accomplish some of those things through newspapers, periodicals, publishing houses, research institutes and radio stations including *Sawt Filastin*, "The Voice of Palestine".[127]

In 1993 the PLO signed Declaration of Principles in Washington under the auspices of the U.S. Government where United States and Israel recognized them as an accepted entity. Although legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, they did not control the settlements army bases, roads borders. The Palestinians feared that these "interim agreements" would become permanent. There was much dissatisfaction with the leadership and a re-centering of Palestinian society.[128]

Once denied and scorned, Palestinian identity has come full circle as it is now analyzed and studied by mainstream Israeli scientists and scholars.[129] Although negotiations in some form or another have been going on since 1991,there are few signs of progress and the situation for Palestinians on the ground gets worse, The number of settlers in the West bank has grown exponentially. Palestinians are afraid of never having a state of their own. The expansion of Israeli settlements, fences and checkpoints in the

[127] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 199-200.
[128] Ibid, 202-203.
[129] Ibid, 204.

West Bank are designed to prevent the establishment of such a state. Palestinian leadership is considered in the face of such oppression is regarded as ineffective and corrupt. Palestinian NGO's such as BADIL, ADRID, and Al-Awda step in to fill the vacuum in order to preserve the memory of 1948 and demonstrate why engagement with *Nakba* is crucial for the future. Ilan Pappé notes "The '90s witnessed a powerful political and cultural revival among Palestinian citizens of Israel as the third generation since the Nakba began to discover and assert their Palestinian identity as the indigenous people of the land."[130] The ideals of democracy that they learned in school did not match the oppression and discrimination that they faced in their daily lives.

2.2 Nationalist and Political Facets of Palestinian Identity

Palestinian identity is similar to other national identities in the Arab world and elsewhere. Its boundaries are fairly recent, but have elements of identity from a time well before the creation of those boundaries including local, religion and national narratives. Like other "unsuccessful" national identities, this identity emerged without the power of the nation-state to propagate it. Like the Kurds, the Armenians before 1991, and the Jews before 1948, the Palestinians had to assert their identity without the benefits of an independent state and against powerful countervailing currents.[131] Although Palestinian identity existed long before 1948, the collective consciousness of the *Nakba* was pivotal in the construction of Palestinian identity. It was the refugees themselves who preserved identity through nationalism and shared cultural and social memory. This section explores the different political and nationalist aspects of Palestinian identity and how those factors help preserve that identity through the structure of *al-Nakba*.

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[130] Ilan Pappé, *Ten Myths About Israel* (London: Verso, 2017), 67.
[131] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 194.

Palestinian political consciousness preceded the1948 war by several decades. Many Palestinians' sense of connection to their villages, towns and lands extends back even further, but nothing forged Palestinian political identity as surely as the loss of Palestine in 1948.[132] The traumatic nature of *al-Nakba* remains entrenched in Palestinian collective consciousness; memory of pre-1948 life and the shock, devastation, humiliation and misery wrought by the mass exodus and expulsions of 1948 and 1967 continue to shape Palestinian politics.

In the formation of a political and national identity in the 1960's, various Palestinian nationalist organizations including the PLO, used a narrative of a triumph against unsurmountable odds. One example is the battle of al-Karama ("dignity" in Arabic) on March 21, 1968 when Israeli troops crossed the Jordan River to attack the town of al-Karama. Although expected to flee, the Palestinian forces decided to stay and fight. Although not considered a victory militarily if one looked at the casualties, the Palestinians had held their ground with the help of Jordanian artillery- something few Arab forces had done in the 1967 war. This symbolic battle became a rallying cry for the Palestinian resistance and allowing them to expand their ranks. Rashid Khalidi states "Thus the battle of al-Karama was a case of failure against overwhelming odds brilliantly narrated as heroic triumph."[133] This narrative of heroic efforts against impossible odds has helped the Palestinians sustain their identity.

With millions still living under Israeli domination, oppression, occupation and in exile, the Nakba remains at the heart of both Palestinian national identity and political

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[132] Nur Masalha. Introduction to: *The Palestine Nakba : Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 14.
[133] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 194.

resistance.[134] This is even true of the Palestinians that live as second class citizens within the Israeli state. Hillel Cohen notes that the Israeli state moved very quickly after the Nakba to 'de-Palestinize' the minority, officially acknowledged as 'minorities' (me'utim) or 'Israeli Arabs': it tried to 'change the consciousness' of the Palestinian minority through the use of schoolteachers, village mukhtars, collaborators and local sheikhs, with the goal of creating a 'new Israeli Arab identity'.[135] The Israeli educational system, while working with the security agencies, tried to hinder the development of an Arab national memory. The effort was almost a complete failure. Israeli Arabs succeeded in resisting these efforts and worked to retain a historical narrative while retaining their collective memory and a connection to Palestinians outside of Israel. The resistances shown above demonstrated that Israel's Arab citizens were not passive compliant citizens of the state. They were active agents with substantial influence over their own fate.[136]

However, the efforts by the Israeli government not only endeavored to distance the Israeli Arabs from their Palestinian identity, but to also to discourage a consolidation of that identity in areas under their control. Nur Masaha notes that since 1967 Israel has fostered further Palestinian splits: between East Jerusalem and the West Bank; between the West Bank and Gaza; and between the main rival political movements, Fatah and Hamas; and since the Oslo Accords, between the leadership of the Palestinian Authority and refugee and diaspora communities.[137]

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[134] Masalha. Introduction to: *The Palestine Nakba*, 14.
[135] Nur Masalha, referencing Hillel Cohen (2010) in *The Palestine Nakba : Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 14.
[136] Hillel Cohen. *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967*. *Good Arabs*. 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 6.
[137] Masalha. Introduction to *The Palestine Nakba*, 14.

Ashraf Zaghal, a Palestinian living in Toronto highlights the divide between those living in the diaspora abroad and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. "The reality is the occupation and the military power of Israel. That reality scares me. The surreal – the fake Palestinian state on the West Bank – makes me sad."[138] There is clearly a political divide between the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinians they claim to represent, not only from Palestinians living abroad but those living in the refugee camps as Yusef, a refugee living in the Dheisheh refugee camp, originally from Deir Aban states:

> One final word. Abbas, if Ismael Hanniya[139] came and said to him I give up all the missiles and weapons and everything and you be in charge, he would agree by morning. He would agree. But no! I won't reconcile with you while you have missiles and I'm not allowed to throw a rock? Look, what prevents you (Abbas) from saying "I don't want the security coordination (with Israel)" and end it? End the security coordination between you and the Jews. If someone is arrested by the (Palestinian) Authority, the next day the Jews come and take him away. He is giving up the young men of Palestine! And I would say this in front of Abbas and in front of the whole world.[140]

The disengagement and distrust of the PA is a reoccurring theme in interviews from correspondents, and represents a shared political facet that is part of the structure of *al-Nakba*.

Many Palestinians live in fear of not only the Israelis, but also of their own government in the West Bank, who many correspondents noted that they did not represent Palestinian needs, but merely a political entity manipulated and used by the Israelis to maintain control. However, some members from the *Nakba* generation,

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[138] Ashraf Zaghal Interview by Frank Ostyn, *Memories of Palestine*,Toronto Sep 10th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/ashraf-zaghal/.
[139] Ismail Abdel Salam Ahmed Haniyeh is a senior political leader of Hamas.
[140] Yusef Hussein Daamssa, from the village of Deir Aban, Interview with the author in the Dheisheh refugee camp, July, 2018.

emboldened by their age and nearly lifelong refugee status, have no such fear as they spoke openly about the PA's weakness. Yusef continues:

> This is what happens when we follow the leaders, we are asleep and being stepped on. When a Jew comes to my house he opens the door, he breaks it down. He doesn't knock. He blows it up. He enters the house where a man's' wife and children are, he takes the daughter and leaves. He can't say one word. Why? Because of our Arabs that want things this way… But people are afraid of our government to say the things I am saying. I am saying these things, I am eighty years old now. How much longer am I going to live? Another year or two? Another day or two? I'm going to die. I can say the truth. I can say what's right. And every word I have said, no one told it to me. I saw it with my eyes. I saw all these things with my own eyes. I lived it.[141]

Yusef's testimony demonstrates that modern Palestinian political identity often links itself to opposition and distrust of the PA (Palestinian authority). This, according to Edward Said, has happened "because the Palestinian leadership has selfishly put its self-interest, its over-inflated squadrons of security guards, its commercial monopolies, and its unseemly persistence in power, its lawless despotism, its anti-democratic greed and cruelty, before the collective Palestinian good".[142] Um Musa from Kufr Aquae noted that "… people don't care, they just continue on."[143] When Um Musa says "people don't care", she conveys frustration that some Palestinians feel about the PA and outside perceptions of the Palestinian condition. They feel abandoned, not only outside the Palestinian world, but within their own. There are schisms – animosity or distrust of the PA, and a general belief that others of the community have "given up".

Another common narrative voiced by some interviewees was a complete lack of the PA's ability to achieve Palestinian aspirations of statehood. They are widely viewed

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[141] Yusef from Deir Aban, Interview the with Author, July 2018.
[142] Edward W. Said. "Introduction: The Right of Return at Last." in *Palestinian Refugees*: *The Right of Return*ed. ed. Naseer Aruri (Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2015), 4-5.
[143] Um Musa, Interview with the author, Kufr Aquae, July 2018.

as puppets of the Israeli government and unlikely to achieve the dreams of an independent Palestinian state. There was a shift in the confidence in the Palestinian leadership after the first intifada. Ashraf Zaghal, a Palestinian now living in Toronto noticed the difference.

> Anger and violence stay with us for a long time… The second Intifada came when I just graduated from my studies in Ramallah. It was a lot more violent than the first. I tried to be in denial for a few years, I would go drink while the F16's would fly over our heads. During the second Intifada, most people were in denial. That was the big difference with the first Intifada, where most were committed. After the first Intifada (and the Oslo agreements installing the Palestinian Authority– note) the situation in Palestine became surreal.[144]

Ashraf Zaghal's description of the two intifadas shows the changes in the perception and confidence of the Palestinian people in the PA that developed in the intervening years between the two uprisings. Change is an important component of William's "structure of feelings", and also is significant in understanding historical and social processes within the structure of *al-Nakba*.

Siham El Masou, a Palestinian from Santiago De Chile gives an example of how Palestinians living abroad try to stay involved in what is going on in Palestine and maintain their Palestinian identity through political activism:

> The Union of Palestinian Students on the other hand is a political organization. It is connected to the Palestinian Embassy and has branches all over the World. It dates from the PLO era and the days of Yasser Arafat. We typically focus on activities that inform people about the injustice in Palestine. There is so much disinformation if it comes to what happens in our homeland. We run all kinds of campaigns. At the moment, the one that is most visible is BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel). We are working very hard to make the Universities sign the BDS charter.[145]

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[144] Ashraf Zaghal Interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Toronto, Sep 10th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/ashraf-zaghal/.
[145] Siham El Masou interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Santiago De Chile, Oct 17th, 2015 , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/siham-el-massou/.

Siham discusses the need to keep people informed about what is going on in Israel and the occupied territories, and his involvement in the BDS movement. Hilmi Dabbagh from Sydney agrees with Ashraf and Siham and shows that being involved politically and seeking justice is a motivating factor in maintaining Palestinian identity in the diaspora. "Maybe I would feel less involved if there would be justice in Palestine. All I can say is that the injustice is there and that it reminds me every day about my roots. In Australia, I became an activist for the Palestinian cause. Even if I am very far away, I feel that I can do my share from where I live."[146] Hilmi notes that the injustice he that he sees in Palestine helps him remain involved and connected through time and space with his Palestinian heritage. Samah Sabawi from Melbourne notes that even abroad in the diaspora, the intergenerational aspect of Palestinian political activism is apparent.

> Last year, during the Gaza war, I was standing on stage, reliving this moment when I was thirteen, sitting in the crowd, looking up to my father at the stage, talking about the atrocities happening in Sabra and Shatila during the Lebanon war of 1982. Now, I was holding the microphone instead, protesting the same kind of atrocities done to the Palestinians thirty years later. I stood there hoping that my children would not be standing in the same spot, telling the same story to their children. The history is part of us and we are part of the story.[147]

Samah shows that not only did Palestinians share cultural memories with their children, but also instilled the ideals of remaining politically active.

Palestinian political identity is not unified and has evolved over time. Efforts to preserve and maintain that identity through time and space has shifted in recent years from a primarily nationalist and political effort, to one that includes cultural foci

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[146] Hilmi Dabbagh interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Sydney, Nov 15th, 2015, , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/hilmi-dabbach/.
[147] Samah Sabawi interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Melbourne, Nov 18th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/samah-sabawi/.

underpinned by "bottom up" cultural methods of research. The cultural changes that the Palestinians have faced since 1948 are a process of experience and an affirmation of political, moral and intellectual agency in the face of outside oppressive forces.[148]

2.3 Cultural Facets of Maintaining Palestinian Identity

One of the key components of *al-Nakba,* the structure through which Palestinians maintain their identity, is cultural practices. Archeology, food, and poetry are some of the cultural elements that occur within the spaciality of Palestinian human geography. Identities are progressively more fluid and hybrid in today's world and the Palestinian reality has always been one of diversity as Palestine is, after all—the last remaining colonized outpost in the postcolonial world.[149] Retaining symbols and narratives of self-representation and participating in a cultural practice of resistance, are important in the effort to maintain Palestinian identity. Narrative and cultural facets of self-expression and representation are effective in that maintenance rather than exercises of internal or external propaganda.[150] One of the most important cultural aspects of preserving identity for a people is evidence of its historical existence proven through the field of archaeology.

Israeli authorities ignore much of the archaeological evidence of Arab Muslim cultures, as precedence is given to digs considered to have Roman historical significance and/or support biblical and Jewish narratives. There is no desire to find evidence of Palestinian culture before 1948. The Israeli government, through the office of the Staff Officer for Archaeology (SOA), decides what sites to excavate, what can be published

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[148] Sean Matthews. "Change and Theory", 182.
[149] Adila Laidi-Hanieh. "Arts, Identity, and Survival: Building Cultural Practices in Palestine." *Journal of Palestine studies* 35, no. 4 (July 2006): 34.
[150] Laidi-Hanieh. "Arts, Identity, and Survival", 34.

about the finds, the disposition of any artifacts, and the official narrative of the finds. The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and Israeli sources estimate that between 1967 and 1992 about 200,000 artifacts are removed from the occupied Palestinian territory every year, with nearly 120,000 removed every year since 1995.[151] This loss of Palestinian cultural property occurs in an environment where archaeology has been used by the Israel State "as a pretext to gain territorial control" and exercise sovereign rights "over Palestinian lands as a way to further its settlement enterprise" and exploit natural resources.[152] Most archaeological sites that would support evidence of Palestinian or Muslim histories in Palestine are unmarked and nondescript. They are either unknown or disregarded by most archaeologists and scholars working in Israel.

Archaeological sites near the Palestinian villages of Dardebwan and Beitin (two adjacent villages located approximately 5km northeast of Ramallah and 14km north of Jerusalem in the West Bank) are abandoned and appear desolate with no markers identifying the site. Mohammed[153] noted this neglect when we visited a site near Beitin known as "al-Burj Beitin" ("the Tower of Beitin"). This site, like many others that archeologists ignore in the Palestinian territories, is significant not only to Palestinian history, but Biblical and world history as well. Beitin, thought to be the ancient town of Bethel in the Bible, is significant in Jewish and Christian history. In Beitin, there is an archaeological complex containing an ancient tell (archaeological mound), necropolis from various periods, the "al Burj" ruins, water reservoirs from the Byzantine period, and pre-modern agricultural facilities providing a broad overview of the history of the region

[151] David Keane and Valentina Azarova, "UNESCO, Palestine, and Archaeology in Conflict," *Denver Journal of International Law & Policy* 41, No. 3 (2013): 309-343.
[152] Keane "UNESCO, Palestine, and Archaeology in Conflict", 309-343.
[153] Mohammed, a guide from the village of Dardebwan, West Bank, summer 2018.

from around 3,500 BC to a hundred years ago.[154] Mohammed notes; “They do not want us researching our history, and they do not want any tourism here.”[155] Mohammed is referring to the SOA, and the lack of interest or funding from The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. He also noted the only interest in the site in recent years came from Japanese archeologists in 2013, who have never returned.

Another important cultural facet of maintaining Palestinian identity is food. Lila Sharif, in "*Savory Colonialism: Land, Memory, and the Eco-occupation of Palestine,* notes that Palestinian olives are representative as part of Palestinian dispossession, and that tasting, eating, and cooking provide alternative ways of narrating history and reconnecting Palestinians to their land and villages depopulated during and following the 1948 Nakba. [156] Fatena Al Ghorra, a Palestinian from the diaspora living in Antwerp, describes the connection between memory and food and land:

> But of course, this is part of memory, things will never taste the same, even if somebody would bring them. It is about the whole atmosphere around it. One of the things Israel stole from us is our culture and food. They pretend that humus or falafel is Israeli food. For me, claiming our food back is a way to fight. Our food was stolen, as our land was stolen.[157]

Isidora Guttierez from Santiago De Chile describes the connection of space, food and culture.

> There are many and they go deep. The early memories are actually from Chile. When my grandmother cooked lamb she always talked about how the tail was the best part, full of juicy fat. I always thought that the lambs in Palestine had big tails. Cooking traditional dishes together is part of these memories. Many Palestinians in Chile decorated their houses with

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[154] Japan Consortium for international Cooperation in Cultural Heritage, “Archeological Excavations and Development of Resources for Tourism at Beitin (Bethel).” https://www.jcic-heritage.jp/en/project/middle_east_palestine_201312/.
[155] Mohammed, 2018.
[156] Lila Sharif, "Savory Colonialism: Land, Memory, and the Eco-occupation of Palestine," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 2 (2015): 256-257.
[157] Fatena Al Ghorra Interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Antwerp, Dec 27th, 2014, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/fatena-al-ghorra/.

> Palestinian objects. I think about the intimidating setup of their living rooms, with the sofas in a circle so that you can drink tea and talk while looking at each other.[158]

Many narratives from all parts of the Palestinian world *al-Nakba* include food as an essential part of Palestinian identity. Food becomes part of who you are and how you identify with a culture. The food from the land from which you came is the best. The Palestinian Kousa (stuffed squash) made by a villager in Beitin was incredible. The figs and peaches from the orchards and grapes plucked from the vines were the most succulent and flavorful that I have ever experienced. I was assured that the falafel sandwich from a stand in the Old City of Jerusalem would be the best I had ever eaten….and it was.

Poetry is perhaps the most expressive means of preserving Palestinian identity and culture. A pervasive theme in Palestinian poetry and resistance is the term "summoud", meaning "persistence. Palestinian poets employ it commonly in order to evoke resilience in the occupied, and fragility in the occupier. This sensibility in Palestinian poetry "claims an ethical form of power (and freedom) through powerlessness, once at home in a Sophoclean life, yet largely foreign to a modern life that equates the sovereignty of the self with its power (arche)."[159] This is one way Palestinians make themselves relevant and visible socially, politically and geographically.[160]

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[158] Isidora Guttierez interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Santiago De Chile Oct 14th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/isidora-guttierez/.
[159] Furani, Khaled, introduction to *Silencing the Sea: Secular Rhythms in Palestinian Poetry*. *Silencing the Sea*. 1st ed. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012), 3.
[160] See Ralph Ellison, "Invisible Man". New York: Vintage, 1952, described in McKittrick *Demonic Grounds*, 18.

Édouard Glissant's , "poetics of landscape" is a concept that the Palestinians can use in their humanization and liberation by the naming of space and place and by interacting with their environment using dance (*dakbe*-Palestinian folk dance), song, literature, language, art and cinema and poetry. Fayez Jom'a's uses the "poetics of landscape" to interact with space and place.

> Go to Ayn el-Tina village. Our love is old. It isn't from today….this our country. My dear, I couldn't leave you…Leave the house and I will be waiting. I will send you a message. Just wave a sign or signal me. For you my beloved, I accept any risk that is needed. Oh bird, fly and give greetings to my beloved. Wherever you find her…. I swear by God my love for you is stronger than time.[161]

Palestinian poetry has been an important space and place for Palestinians in creating their own geographies. Re-affirming an existence using language and art has become a matter of a cultural imperative. The threat of Palestinian culture disappearing has made Palestinian artists well aware of what Palestinian poet and writer Mourid Barghouti cautions: "When Palestine disappears as a word, it disappears as a state, as a country and as a homeland." [162]

Writing of the "right of return" has become synonymous with Mahmoud Darwish, whose poetry has been internationally recognized as the cultural voice of the Palestinians since his work was first translated into English in the 1970s.[163] "Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, especially when he recited it, conveyed the same sense of seeing the entire course of the inexorable fate of his people, even as his words gave voice to the indomitable spirit

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[161] Fayez Jom'a interview, *Nakba Archive*, Year of birth: 1931, From: 'Arab al-Harb, Palestine, Residence in Lebanon: El-Buss Refugee Camp, Duration: 2:59 min, http://www.nakba-archive.org/?p=13.
[162] Salmi, Charlotta. "'A Necessary Forgetfullness of the Memory of Place' Mahmoud Darwish's Poetry of No Return," *Interventions* 14, no. 1 (2012): 57.
[163] Ibid, 56.

of ordinary Palestinians."[164] Darwish's poetry speaks of resistance and the strong inseparability of identity and land poems such as "Identity card", "The passport", and "To My Mother". These poems portray aspects of Palestinian scenery where identity and land are intermingled as Darwish himself declared that his poems do not deliver mere images and metaphors of Palestinians, but deliver landscapes, villages, fields and even deliver a place. [165] Ashraf Zaghal gives an example of how Palestinians preserve identity and agency through the use of poetry as a political conduit.

> I am from the generation of post-Oslo poets; we did not talk about politics in an explicit way. Instead we wanted to use a new vocabulary: about love, about what happens on the street, about existential themes… but not about politics. Only recently, the political situation is invading my rhetoric, even if it is in a symbolic way. But that evolution is there. I was recently invited to speak about my poetry in Paris and that is because the organizers noticed that I speak about Palestine in a different way.[166]

Abdul al-Majeed, a resident of the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem was also a poet and chose to express his space and place within the "poetics of landscape". Abdul al-Majeed dedicated this poem to me before I left the Aida refugee camp after the interview:

> *The soul is healed with happiness, by you, oh noble gentleman!*
> *Welcome! Be at home and at ease, Oh great majesties!*
> *You came to us, despite our difficulties, welcome! Your place is most high!*
> *Your origin is well known; Your favor humbles us;*
> *There is no one like you; Perfect, like the full moon!*
> *Your presence honors us, Out of your kindness, get to know us;*
> *When you sit with us, we attain our aspirations. Inviters of skins (great hunters);*
> *The parade of mothers went out after them, and the fathers.*
> *They spoke and they sang remnants of happiness, and despite their sadness, they smiled:*
> *"Oh you people who are off to war, for whom they have lost the priceless homeland,*

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[164] Rashid Khalidi, "Remembering Mahmud Darwish (1941—2008)," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 38 no. 1 (Autumn 2008), 74-77.
[165] Ahmed, Hamoud Yahya, Ruzy Suliza Hashim, Zalina Mohd Lazim, and Ravichandran Vengadasamy. "Identity and Land in Mahmoud Darwish's Selected Poems: An Ecopostcolonial Reading." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature* 1, no. 6 (2012): 7–8.
[166] Ashraf Zaghal Interview.

> *Take me with you to the unknown, a gentle nurse for your wounded.*
> *If you will not, then take my cloak, and with it tie your wounds if you should bleed."*[167]

The human geographical where of place and location in Palestinian poetry and art affects the "what, why and how of their cultural meanings."[168] For a people traumatized by the oppression of colonialist power, culture, arts and in particular, poetry—preserve identity and locate them in relation to a specific space.

2.4 Self-conscious maintenance of Palestinian identity in the face of a structural Nakba

The commemoration of Al-Nakba is a *self-conscious* strategy in maintaining a sense of self for Palestinians. Those living in the occupied territories and in Israel have challenged the official Zionist historical narratives and official attempts to silence any commemoration of the Nakba. The early efforts to resist the Israeli ban on commemoration of the 1956 massacre of Kafr Qasim ushered in a new era of popular resistance to the suppression of Palestinian memory.[169] Since that time, *Al-Nakba* Day (the commemoration of the 1948 Catastrophe) on the 15th of May has become the most important date on the Palestinian calendar of anniversaries not only for the Palestinians inside Israel and the occupied territories, but throughout the diaspora. The commemoration of *Al-Nakba* Day connects the previously isolated Palestinian community inside the Green Line with other Palestinian communities inside and outside historic Palestine, while the associated collective memory of commemoration helps to

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[167] Poem dedicated to the author at end of interview with Abdul Al Majeed in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, July, 2018.
[168] Neal Alexander and David Cooper, *Poetry & Geography : Space and Place in Post-War Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1.
[169] Masalha. *The Palestine Nakba*, 242-243.

consolidate national bonds, common solidarity and shared history, memories and daily struggles."[170] Commemoration is a key practice of Palestinian identity – an identity as something activated, practiced, and maintained. Nearly all Palestinians remember, discuss, and commemorate *Al-Nakba*, the event. 1948, the year of *al-Nakba*, is the most seminal year of the continuous struggle to maintain Palestinian identity throughout the diaspora.

In the Zionist narrative, Israel exists; Palestine does not. According to McKittrick, "To challenge something that 'just is' as many subaltern subjects have, can be a very threatening geographic act; it is punishable, erasable and oppositional." [171] Commemoration and maintaining sites of memory in Palestinian culture and identity are an important form of resistance as long as the sites are not forgotten and relegated to the past. The study of commemoration and ritual has been the subject of anthropological and sociological research ever since Durkheim's (1912) pioneering study in the often-cited text, "The Elementary Forms of Religious Life".[172]

The early days of *al-Nakba* commemoration inside the refugee camps was always something that happened at the community level. People from a certain background, or those from a certain community, would organize an event in order to commemorate their own forced displacement.[173] In the period following the 1948 war, 'official' or state-sponsored commemorations rarely occurred, given the fact that the entire Palestinian struggle for statehood and liberation based itself on the reversal of events that took place

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[170] Masalha. *The Palestine Nakba*, 242-243.
[171] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 145.
[172] Browne Brendan. "Commemoration in Conflict Comparing the Generation of Solidarity at the 1916 Easter Rising Commemorations in Belfast Northern Ireland and the 1948 'Nakba' Commemorations in Ramallah, Palestine," *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2013): 144.
[173] Ibid.

in 1948. As the years passed and it became more obvious to the Palestinian people that a reversal was not near at hand, commemoration of *al-Nakba* and other important dates on the Palestinian calendar has become a more important part of maintaining identity.

Brendan Browne notes that annual commemoration has become a potent tool of the downtrodden, an important method for highlighting the ongoing plight of Palestinian refugees.[174] "Commemorations such as the Nakba day event in Ramallah on the 13th May are thus important rituals at the disposal of marginalized groups, in this case the expanding refugee community, who wish to promote a specific political or ideological message. Importantly, they are ritual events which are viewed as opportunities to galvanize a group of people, in this instance all Palestinians, through the collective remembering of a shared traumatic or defining event in their history."[175] In the face of continued attempts to annihilate Palestinian identity, commemorations present a crucial means reaffirming their existence as a people and their human geography.

Palestinians have learned about their history and identity first and foremost through the intergenerational narrative of their parents, grandparents. Education, both formal and informal, is a critical way that Palestinians maintain their identity. Education for Palestinian youth provides a wide range of functions. It alternates between being a place of safety; a distraction; a source of normality; a site for the development of identity and social belonging; to a credential with the potential to affect certain futures.[176] Elders, religious figures, parents and grandparents often provide an informal education. Ziad

[174]Browne Brendan. "Commemoration in Conflict", 144.
[175] Ibid, 153-154.
[176] James H. Williams and Michelle J. Bellino, *(Re) Constructing Memory: Education, Identity, and Conflict* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2017), 1.

Abbas, a Palestinian living in San Francisco talks about this intergenerational factor of education and the self-conscious activation of identity:

> My mother talked often about her village. She always repeated the same nice stories, the same warm memories. That is how I built an image of how her village must have looked like, it was the place I dreamed about. Her history was my future. For this reason, we started a program to show the kids in the camp the villages of their parents. It was about giving them dignity and a perspective. The program worked well for many years.[177]

Ziad's learned of his historical past and Palestinian heritage from his mother. He cites these memories as a motivation to instill and preserve Palestinian identity into the youth of the camps through education.

In the period after the Second World War an entire generation of Palestinian refugees was educated in the camps by UNRWA; something never achieved under the Mandate and was a great leveler for Palestinian society for those traumatized by the war and it's after effects.[178] Many Palestinians see education, as not only an important opportunity for their children, but also as an answer to the social, political, cultural and economic suffocation of *al-Nakba*. Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan from the Al Jalazone Refugee Camp discusses the role of the UNRWA in education:

> UNRWA supported the education, it's true. They support education. They opened schools in the beginning of Nakba. Afterwards, it was in the beginning, tents. Then they constructed, they built schools in the end of Jalazone Camp. In 1954. For both, boys and girls. This is a fact, that they, you know, contribute and improve the education for both, academic and vocational even. There were-there was one vocational uh, The Central Vocational School in Qalandia Refugee Camp in Ramallah. And, yes, it was most of the refugees they were, you know, eager to, to study and to learn because it was the only, only resource for them.[179]

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[177] Ziad Abbas, Interview, *Memories of Palestine*, San Francisco Oct 25th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/ziad-abbas/.
[178] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 193-194.
[179] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan, Interview with author, Al Jalazone Refugee Camp, July 2018.

Khalid discusses the importance of education, primarily provided by UNRWA after *al*-Nakba, to a generation that viewed it as a valuable resource in an otherwise bleak future. Um Musa, from Kufr Aquae, also describes education as an opportunity for the refugees, not only after 1948, but also after the 1967 War:

> After the war of 1967 the people stayed and lived, they educated themselves, became doctors and engineers. Despite the poverty, people learned. They never abandoned education at all. That was a good thing. Even though our parents were illiterate, they couldn't read or write, but every single one of us became educated.[180]

Nicolas Majluf Sapag, a Palestinian from the diaspora in Santiago De Chile, concurs with Um Musa and Khalid in noting the importance of education in Palestinian culture, even for those living abroad:

> The second generation of Palestinians in Chile focused very heavily on education. My mother was 16 when she married; I was born when she was 17. She always insisted on our education. It was her way to create opportunities for us. … My parents were not alone in this: I see it everywhere in the Palestinian community in Chile. The focus on education is another characteristic of our Diaspora.[181]

Education has been paramount to for the children of the *Nakba*, and as Nicolas notes, an important facet maintaining identity in the diaspora.

However, the educational opportunities are limited for most Palestinian youth in the occupied territories. Schools run by UNRWA are often crowded and operate on double shifts. Although the overall literacy rate for Palestinians is high by global standards, the youth of the refugee camps are at an economic and academic disadvantage in regards to a higher education. Khalid states:

> There's no future. For most of the people refugees, they were, you know, didn't finish high schools, it was even at that time, you know, finish - the,

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[180] Um Musa Interview.
[181] Nicolas Majluf Sapag Interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Santiago De Chile, Oct 20th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/nicolas-majluf-sapag/.

> eh, elementary schools. And some of them, I attest, until the 9th grade, …Because it was a British system, called Metric, as a system of education. And after finishing this, they pass it, so they would go to work, you know, as a teacher.[182]

The lack of opportunity for Palestinian youth noted by Khalid is one aspect of the current generation's identity that feeds into a sense of hopelessness for the future--thus fueling the need for resistance by the disaffected youth. Khalid continues:

> One of the schools was in Jerusalem and he was standing in the front of the school. So the kid who wearing the sandals in the winter he told him, get back in. In the winter, they just try to heat themselves, you know? To get the blood in the circulation to to...because there was no food. Most of the boys were, you know, suffering malnutrition. They spent just fifteen minutes before going to the class to try to heat...just to be able to break the ice.[183]

Khalid notes that although they received an education, the Palestinian youth remained impoverished and still suffered from hunger and other forms of deprivation.

If Palestinian youth get to a University and are active politically, they run the risk of being arrested by Israeli authorities. Students at at Birzeit University near Ramallah told me that men in Black SUV's had arrested other students on campus who had posted anti-occupation posts on social media. The students weren't sure if they were Israelis or from the PA acting on their behalf. The poverty and hopelessness in the refugee camps fosters a youth that is just as likely to focus their efforts on protests and resistance as it is to value an education. The education provided by UNRWA's unintentionally provided a structure crucial not only for the continuation and growth of Palestinian personal identity but also for the reconstruction of national identity among Palestinians in refugee camps

[182] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.
[183] Ibid.

through cultural outlets such as poetry.[184] In addition, UNRWA has hired teachers and administrators almost solely from the refugee community helping nurture a sense of 'self' and 'other' in the schools and the refugee camps at large. [185]

However, as Nadia Naser-Najjab in *Palestinian Education and the 'Logic of Elimination* notes, the effort to preserve a Palestinian sense of identity through education has met harsh resistance from the Israeli government:

> Resistance finds renewed impetus and purpose within oppression. This is the key lesson to which settler colonialism must continually blind itself. In the Palestinian context, Israel has sought to restrict Palestinian education through a variety of interventions, both direct and indirect. In acting thus, it has implicitly acknowledged the potential of education as a driver of social change and transformation. Ultimately, however, it continues to inspire forms of popular resistance rooted within formal and informal education. This is the essential paradox that Israeli colonialism can scarcely grasp, much less overcome. [186]

Israeli authorities have sought to indoctrinate Palestinian youth through education into accepting their version of historical events. Israel has sought to ban books outright and alter the contents of textbooks by deleting references to Arab unity; resistance and Zionism; historical events (the liberation of Arab countries from colonial and foreign rule); statements of fact ('people in Arab countries speak Arabic'); and evidence of progress (mentions of established Arab universities). [187]These efforts have only intensified the determination of educators in the occupied territories to preserve identity and teach Palestinian perspectives, and the narratives of struggle and resistance in the schools and universities.

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[184] Shabaneh, Ghassan. "Education and Identity: The Role of UNRWA's Education Programmes in the Reconstruction of Palestinian Nationalism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 4 (December 2012): 492
[185] Ibid.
[186] Nadia Naser-Najjab, "Palestinian Education and the 'Logic of Elimination,'" *Settler Colonial Studies* 10, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 325.
[187] Ibid, 317.

Addressing questions on how the generations, past and present, perceive and interpret the narrative of the *Al-Nakba,* many without having experienced it, or having no experience of it, are key to understanding it and its structural significance in maintaining Palestinian identity throughout the diaspora. Do the children of the *Nakba* see the "right of return" the same way that their parents and grandparents did? How do they remain connected? Diana Allan notes that "The introduction of the internet and satellite television to the camp (Shatila), which roughly coincided with the start of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, has enabled diverse forms of community online, less bound by village or kin or even nation."[188] How much has mass media and the internet influenced the identity of the current generation of Palestinians and their view the *al-Nakba*? How do young Palestinians living abroad in the diaspora and in neighboring Arab countries, while only seeing images of events and locations in Palestine through the media and through the memories and photos of older generations, maintain their identity? Creating the impression that the viewer was "there" when iconic events occurred, visual media conveys an authenticity to images that unmatched by mere spoken words.[189] This is especially true for those from the diaspora who live abroad. Daniel Jaar, A Palestinian living in Santiago De Chile describes these impressions:

> As a Palestinian in the Diaspora, my image of Palestine was heavily influenced by the news. The only thing you get to see on TV are Hamas militants firing rockets, children throwing stones, people who are dying. All Israeli's seem to be soldiers with guns. It was unreal: the media only talk about Palestine if people die. It is only about the confrontation; nothing else matters.[190]

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[188] Diana Allen, *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Palestinian Exile* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 62-63.
[189] Mary Ann Tetreault, "Divided Communities of Memory: Diasporas Come Home," in *Muslim Diaspora: Gender, Culture and Identity* ed. Haideh Moghissi (New York: Routledge, 2006), 83.
[190] Daniel Jaar interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Santiago De Chile Oct 14, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/daniel-jaar/.

Daniel's testimony demonstrates that the advent of social media and information and communications technologies have impacted Palestinian society in various ways, affected by both global and domestic contexts.[191]

Social media also provides Palestinians an essential space for discourse and organization due to restrictions on movement and communications caused not only by Israel but also by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.[192] These factors and others are shaping the various ways in which social media impacts Palestinian society and how groups within it utilize the technology. [193] Having access to the outside world through media has given current generation of Palestinians a sense of visibility in a world where they believe their struggle has been invisible. Lama Abdulrahman from Toronto demonstrates the dialogue that Palestinians from all over the world can now have with one another. "Thanks to Skype and Facebook, at least there are no boundaries anymore that can stop us from talking to each other. I am in touch with friends and family in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine on a daily basis."[194] Lama's statement reflects how technology has changed how Palestinians connect with one another and understand space, recognize the past, comprehend the present and imagine their future.

As the Nakba Generation begins to die out from old age and are no longer around to share their memories, media, and in particular, social media have provided Palestinians worldwide with a means to connect and maintain their sense of shared identity through

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[191] Halewa, Harel Chorev. "Collectivindualism and Shadow Players: Palestinian Youth, Social Media, and Hamas's Communications Strategies," *International Journal of Communication (Online)* (January 1, 2020): 1.
[192] Halewa, "Collectivindualism and Shadow Players", 1.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Lama Abdulrahman interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Toronto, Sep 15th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/lama-abdulrahman/.

time and space.

2.5 Shared Trauma and Spatial practices

For three generations and for over seventy years, the trauma of *al-Nakba* and the progressive loss of land has threatened the Palestinian people's very existence. *Al-Nakba*, the event and as a key component of structure, in the words of French memory theorist Pierra Nora, has become the key Palestinian 'site of The Palestine Nakba de mémoire' — a site of trauma, dispossession and anger."[195] The belief that the state of Israel wants their erasure as a people, and to confiscate all of their lands deeply traumatizes the Palestinian people. This existential crisis torments them, largely due to the traumatic experiences suffered at the hands of the state of Israel and Zionism over the last century.[196] Fatena Al Ghorra: a Palestinian from Antwerp describes a time when she lived in Gaza:

> Absolutely. Actually, these days, I live in my memory most of the time. I have no television and like to hear Arabic at home. On YouTube, I can look at old movies or series from when I was a child or teenager. That is my memory. An opening song of a series can make me cry because it reminds me of these beautiful days. Every day, I walk in Palestine, in Gaza. Sometimes, when I am sitting by myself, images come to my mind, one after the other. Sometimes I think that I know a place, not by memory but by the power of my imagination. I can walk through Gaza, from corner to corner. During the recent war, it felt as if my mind was not here at all. My body was here, but my soul was in Gaza. Part of my pain was that my memories, a huge part of it, are now gone. They will never come back.[197]

Fatena, in a human geographical context, while trying to connect the past to the present, discusses the connection between pain and memory.

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[195] Nur Masalha. Introduction to: *The Palestine Nakba : Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London : Zed Books, 2012), 3-4.
[196] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, *xxvi*.
[197] Fatena Al Ghorra interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Antwerp, Dec 27th, 2014 , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/fatena-al-ghorra/.

Hassan Abdel Jawad, a second generation child of *Al Nakba* and a resident of the Dheisheh refugee camp corroborates the testimonies of trauma's effect on Palestinian identity and the hardships that continued after the war from the elements, lack of health care and unemployment.

> I am Hassan Abdel Jawad, a refugee, one of the residents of Dheisheh camp. I was born in 1958. My family fled from — after the war of 1948, like other people scattered from their villages in Palestine after the Nakbah of 1948, waiting for a solution to their case, and at the same time to be able to get some of the international aid offered by [inaudible] against the cold of winter. Years of hardship! No work, no jobs were available for those people, who were in their thousands. Not only in Dheisheh camp but in many other camps. We lived our childhood in very harsh circumstances, educational and health. The new generation, children, separated from their families who left after the Nakbah, scattered and homeless in many different regions. …Many children died due to the unavailability of health care, the unavailability of food, and because of the climate, the cold, the harsh winter, and because they were living in tents. There wasn't sufficient aid. Everything was lacking to these families…[198]

Hassan's testimonial of the hardship and trauma of *al-Nakba* and the resulting chaos inflicted on the Palestinian people, demonstrate the impact it has had on Palestinian human geography and identity. Still traumatized by the sounds of war, Fatena Al Ghorra from Antwerp stated:

> In Gaza: when I grew up and became a teenager, the first Intifada started. During the nineties, I was in college and since then, the memories changed. Since then, the sound of Gaza is the sound of war, gunfire and rockets. I still hear the boots of the soldiers or the knocking on the doors of the houses at night. I have nine brothers and all of them were arrested by the Israeli army and put in jail. At a given time, four of them were in prison at the same time. We used to live in the Sabra neighborhood and moved later to Telel Hawa, now a very famous area but at time (1987), it was almost a desert and close to the sea. From the roof of the house, we could see Israeli military ships. At a given moment, we spotted a group of military coming in small boats from the ship. Everybody knew they were coming for my brothers. … We were always prepared for the next arrest. My brother had three suits with masks to go out and paint graffiti against

[198] Hassan Abdel Jawad interview, "Voices: Palestinian Women narrate Displacement," Dheisheh refugee camp, June 4, 1998, http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/Westbank/hassan_abdel_jawad.html.

> the occupation. If these were found during a search, he would be arrested. I remember how he told me that his clothes were on the third floor and how I quickly ran to his room to put on his three suits, one over the other and hid them under my long dress. They would not search under my clothes. They always came at night. I can also still hear my nephews and nieces scream. It is really frightening when that happens, the guns, the lights… It feels like: "what is going on?" Another sound is the sound of the bullets when you are running away.[199]

Fatena's painful testimony describes the memories of her brother's confrontations and subsequent incarcerations by the Israelis, demonstrating that trauma and resistance are an important part of her identity. Nellie Bannayan from Toronto notes the fear of Zionist terrorism by her father:

> I have little memories from Jaffa but my father always described it as a place of harmony and peace, until the Zionist terrorist groups started killing people after World War II. My mother's brother was killed in Jerusalem, when Zionists threw a bomb at the balcony of their house. When my father witnessed how a murdered British soldier was pulled behind an armored Zionist truck through the streets of Jaffa in 1947, he decided it was time for us to move…[200]

The interviews above convey the enormity of the trauma of *al-Nakba* and its continuance as an ongoing cause of suffering, and source of commonality in maintaining identity for the Palestinian people. Traumatic events are integral to one's identity as they can become defining moments in their life and reference points in their expectations about the future.[201] They also demonstrate that al-*Nakba* is a structure because of the residual effects of trauma and the ongoing lived experience of oppression.

There is a pattern of continuing mutual distress and oppression from the respondents in discussing this kind of continuous hardship. Yousef, a refugee and

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[199] Fatena Al Ghorra interview.
[200] Nellie Bannayan Interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Toronto Sep 21st, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/nellie-bannayan/.
[201] Montgomery Berman, "Trauma and Identity: A Reciprocal Relationship?" *Journal of Adolescence (London, England.)* 79 (February 2020): 276.

survivor of the the 1948 war from Deir Aban who lives in the Dheiseh camp in Bethlehem stated “It's ongoing and continues. The people live it daily and suffer misfortune daily-100%.” Mohammed from Aida camp in Bethlehem said “, it's engraved in my heart----engraved.” Yahia from Jalazone camp near Ramallah states—“we live it every day, it’s our lives”. The oppression and trauma Palestinians face is merciless, with each new site of trauma adding to and transforming the experiences and memories of the original site of trauma, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Oppression is traumatic. Those that live in the West Bank and Gaza see reminders of *al-Nakba* daily. You cannot travel anywhere in the occupied territories without seeing walls, fences, barbed wire, check points, guard towers, Israeli soldiers and Israeli settlements (which are almost always visible in the distance, usually on the high ground overlooking the Palestinian villages). One interesting note is that when I arrived in the West Bank, I asked my driver how I could tell which houses belonged to Palestinian villages, and which ones belonged to Israeli settlements. He told me beside the fact that the Israeli settlers lived behind fences and walls, you could tell because they looked new, well organized and well maintained. However, the most interesting way you could tell is that they lacked the characteristic black water towers on top of every Palestinian building and house used to store water for the times when the Israelis cut the water supply.

Memories containing nostalgia inherited from family and experiences of home and community elsewhere, facilitate collective memory. It is also based on the reality, immediacy and circumstances of homes and villages lived in and lands worked.[202] The reality of the Palestinian existence in the occupied territories is one of oppression. When

[202] Julie Peteet, "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 4 (2007): 633, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30069491.

Palestinians outside the occupied territories come back to visit, the oppression reminds them of their identity as Siham El Masou from Santiago De Chile describes:

> For me, the occupation means injustice. It is what my anger and commitment is all about. The images that come to mind are the separation wall, the 8hour long questioning by the border police when I enter the country, the feeling of despair and powerlessness that reigns in my other homeland. … Most people only see the violence in Palestine and have no idea how people suffer from the occupation on a daily basis. Palestinians face so many restrictions: it is impossible for them to lead a normal life. … It is impossible to talk about this without becoming emotional. It is beyond reason.[203]

Palestinians living under the occupation and other oppressed groups are "non-intentional, or "ascriptive"—formed and maintained by external forces—and limiting, rather than enabling of the freedom of their members."[204] Christopher C Sonn and Adrian T. Fisher not that oppression can lead to deculturization, cultural estrangement and interference with the reproduction of tradition—"thus threatening the healthy development of the individual and of the community as a whole."[205] Carlos Abusleme from Santiago De Chile demonstrates the cultural interference, and lack of freedom and control when visiting Palestine.

> In fact, I never felt more Palestinian than during my first confrontation with the border control in Israel. As all people from the Diaspora who visit Palestine, I was interrogated intensively. Even if I presented my Chilean passport, the border police refused to recognize that side of me: once a Palestinian, always a Palestinian. It was a very confronting experience. This may sound strange but I never felt more Palestinian than during these moments. Their interrogation reduced me to only a part of myself.[206]

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[203] Siham El Masou interview, *Memories of Palestine,* Santiago De Chile, Oct 17th, 2015 , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/siham-el-massou/.
[204] Andrew J Pierce, Introduction to *Collective Identity, Oppression, and the Right to Self-Ascription* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2012), 2.
[205] Christopher C Sonn and Adrian T. Fisher, "Identity and Oppression: Differential Responses to an In-Between Status," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 31, no. 1 (March 2003): 118.
[206] Carlos Abusleme interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Santiago De Chile, Oct 2nd, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/carlos-abusleme/.

Maurice Khamis, a Palestinian from the large diasporic population in Chile notes that seeing the oppression when visiting the occupied territories strengthens group identity.

> You should also see this in the context of the occupation of our homeland. The injustice that our families in Palestine suffer from is omnipresent and ongoing. Everybody who gets the chance to travel to Palestine is confronted with it in a brutal way. The injustice mobilizes us and makes us even more determined not to forget our roots. We stay focused on Palestine not only because of our cultural heritage but also because of the ongoing injustice in our other homeland.[207]

Maurice Khamis's testimony is an example of how oppression meets preservation which in turn through the use of memory and commemoration creates changes in the meaning and practice of Palestinianness. The Palestinians living in the towns of Gaza and the West bank are in limbo—neither citizens nor refugees. When they resist, the Israelis respond with overwhelming brutal force. Arabiyya Shawamrah, from Umm Shaqqa, near Hebron recalled:

> We built the house. We lived in it. My husband worked on the house and he laid its foundations. We came to Palestine and we bought this land and we built the house on it. We stayed in it for five years. After five years, they came to destroy it…The Jews used to threaten us... They came at 1.00pm, we were sitting down at lunch. Suddenly they surrounded the house. They came in, they forced us out, the Israeli Army. They came in, inside the house. They threw out the children, they hit them as well. They hit me hard on the head with a gun. I fell unconscious. They hit the kids hard, those women soldiers. They were there to kick us out of the house.[208]

What's the best they can hope for when they comply with the severe restrictions on movement, the harsh realities of occupation ---then they may be able to work in Israel,

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[207] Maurice Khamis interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Santiago De Chile, Oct 16th, 2015, , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/maurice-khamis/.

[208] Arabiyya Shawamrah,Interview, "Voices: Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement," Anata, April 1, 1999, http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/Westbank/salim.html.

in some areas have some level of autonomy? [209] Those that live in the occupied territories of the West Bank face the reality of the *Nakba* on a daily basis. The Israeli government controls almost all aspects of their lives. The Palestinian economy is not a true economy. It is a political construct, designed to feed and support the economy of Israel. All goods coming in and out of Gaza and the West Bank are tightly controlled. The Israeli government controls the water supply, electricity and fuel needed for survival. Palestinians build at their own peril, while Israeli settlements continue to grow all around them.

Checkpoints and discriminating license plates restrict travel for Palestinians in and out of the West Bank. The walls, fences and barbed wire not only keep Palestinians that live behind them in, but those that live outside of them from returning. Abu Mohamud describes how Israeli soldiers insult and demean Palestinians when they come into the camps. “I swear. I don't want to tell you what we are. Come to the camp and see. Every day the soldiers are coming and going in the camp. "Open up, you dog!" [They say] "Open up, you jackass!" "You dog!" When did we become dogs? Is it not enough that you took away our whole country?! You want to take this away too?”[210]

The fight against the oppression and the injustice of the occupation is integral to Palestinianess. Palestinians live within the existentational circumstances of exile and contend with the consequences of being statelessness every day. Policies implemented by Israeli authorities are not only are ones of confiscation, destruction and erasure, but also are designed to make Palestinian existence untenable as “the other” through the control of all basic needs including: durable goods, transportation, the internet, food, natural

[209] Ilan Pappe, *Ten Myths About Israel*, 81.
[210] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun, interview with author, Aida Camp, summer 2018.

resources, power, water and money. The constant infringement of Palestinian geography by the Israeli settlements, make these needed resources and commodities even scarcer for the Palestinians.

2.6 The Settlements' Impact on Palestinian Identity and Geography

The expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories is part of Israel's long term plan to remove and replace the Palestinians. The encroachment on Palestinian land by Israeli settlers is what McKittrick calls "rational spatial colonialization and domination: the profitable erasure and objectification of subaltern subjectivities, stories and lands."[211] A resident of the village of Beitin said "there are now four settlements around our village. Soon they will want more land, and I fear for that time." Even if Israelis don't build new settlements, Palestinian homes and crops would still be destroyed. Palestinian wells run dry, as Israeli authorities direct water resources in the West Bank to the settlements and to Israel itself. Israel denies the Palestinians access to the Jordan River and hinders the effort to dig new wells. Israel, according to the World Bank, uses more than 80% of the West Bank's groundwater.[212] When I first arrived in the West Bank, I was trying to get my bearings in the landscape and asked how I could tell which houses and land belonged to Palestinians, and which belonged to Israeli settlements. I was told first and foremost, "look for the black water barrels on the buildings. If you see those, they are Palestinian, for that is where they store the water when they are cut off by the Israelis."

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[211] McKittrick, Introduction to *Demonic Grounds*, x.
[212] World Bank report, April 8, 2009, http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/775491468139782240/pdf/476570SR0P11511nsReport18Apr2009111.pdf.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the barrier walls make co-existence impossible. Since the 1967 military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government has allowed the settlements to be built on previously occupied Palestinian land and allowed Israeli citizens and industries to move into them. Israeli civilian and commercial construction is an important enterprise in the appropriation of occupied land and natural and infrastructure projects intended for Israeli use only. Um Musa notes how settlers seized crops they had harvested from their own land:

> My parents spoke so much about our town, as soon as Israel came in '67 the first thing we did was go visit our town. We picked figs, we picked grapes. It was still unchanged, see? Then as soon as we got to the car and started putting things in the car, they came and took everything away from us. Imagine! In your town, you're eating from your own land, and they come and they took it away from us, I swear to God. And now the olives! Now I'm married. My husband is from Attara. We have a home in Attara and olive trees and we have land and everything. They let them harvest the olives-how sinful! They let them pick everything and finish the harvest, then they come and take it all.[213]

The settlements have infringed on the agricultural livelihood of the Palestinians living close to the settlements. The settlers, by interfering with the essential means of agricultural production for the Palestinians, have altered the spacial relationship of power and capital between the two parties.

Memories of the ability to travel freely are replaced by restrictions of boundaries, walls, barriers, fences checkpoints. Many are unable to travel beyond their localities due to imposed restrictions, special ID's, passes and permissions, while Israelis travel freely on apartheid inspired settler-only roads. Freedom of movement is unimaginable to the younger generation. The Fortress like Israeli settlements sit atop the high ground and are

[213] Um Musa Interview.

designed to pen the Palestinians in.[214] Hilmi Dabbagh, a Palestinian from Sydney Australia stated:

> My job allowed me to travel to Jerusalem on a regular basis. …Six years ago, I visited it for the last time and met a very good friend from Damascus University who came from Jerusalem and still lives there now. His house is close to the wall. In my recent memories, the wall is omnipresent. To visit his mother who is on the other side of the wall, 300 meters away, he needs to drive half an hour and cross several security checkpoints.[215]

I had the same experience when traveling from Ramallah to Bethlehem. The taxi I hired for the trip did not have the correct license plates to take the direct route, so the driver took a more circuitous one, which took us on a road known Wadi an-Nar or the "Valley of Fire." It is a long winding mountainous road with a major checkpoint in the middle. Hilmi describes the walls and checkpoints designed to protect the settlers, "Ramallah is growing rapidly, there is so much construction going on. The checkpoints were awful when I worked there but now they look like dark fortresses. Many objective observers have described the wall and the checkpoints as symbols of an apartheids regime."[216]

What Hilmi Does not mention is that not only do the walls and the checkpoint look ominous and forbidding, but there are cameras everywhere. Along the main roads and between the villages, there is barbed wire, restricting access to land and roads designated for the Israeli settlers only. Siham El Masou, a Palestinian living abroad in the diaspora from Santiago De Chile gives us a perspective on identity, memory, space and place impacted through the harsh travel restrictions imposed on Palestinians due to

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[214] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, xxv-xxvi.
[215] Hilmi Dabbagh interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Sydney, Nov 15th, 2015, , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/hilmi-dabbach/.
[216] Ibid.

the proximity of Israeli settlements. His 92-year old grandmother could not visit Jerusalem, purely because she was Palestinian and did not have the proper travel permits.

> It is hard to think of Palestine in terms of memories; at home we talk about it every day. We talk about its culture and history, about specific events. There are some stories that my father has told us so many times already (smiles). How he played in the fields with his friends. How he was almost arrested. How they smuggled my 92-year-old grandmother in the trunk of their car to Jerusalem because she did not have the right permit to travel.[217]

The settlements are part of the various structures of oppression that colonial-spacial forces impose in the attempt to render Palestinians "ungeographic". Restricted access to land that was once Palestinian accentuates the oppressive condition Palestinians live under in the West Bank, mapping and giving new meaning to the land itself.

2.7 The Importance of Land

The loss of land has been one of the most traumatic experiences of the Palestinian experience. The Importance of land has been paramount to Palestinian identity and a sense of space and place. Israel has repudiated Arab claims to the lands as Michael Prior notes, "one of the most successful propaganda campaigns in modern times has succeeded in masking the fact that the creation of the State of Israel resulted in the dispossession and dispersion of another people"[218] The myth that the land was largely empty before the beginning of the Zionist movement, and that there was a large Jewish population living there at the time, is not supported by the evidence. Research has shown that in the preceding centuries, Palestine was not a desert but a thriving, mostly Muslim Arab society. It was part of Bilad al-Sham (the land of the north), or the Levant of its time,

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[217] Siham El Masou interview, *Memories of Palestine,* Santiago De Chile, Oct 17th, 2015 , https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/siham-el-massou/.
[218] Michael Prior, *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 186.

containing a rich agricultural industry along with vibrant urban centers. Furthermore, in 1878, Ottoman records showed that in what is now Israel/Palestine, there was a total population of 462,465 residents---403,795 (87 percent) Muslims, 43,659 (10 percent) Christians, and 15,011 (3 percent) Jews.[219] Many had already lived there for centuries. Others immigrated in during the Ottoman period.

Ali Hamoudi from Ayn Ghazzal states that the people from his village had been there at least 200 years. "In 1948 there were 2,726 people living in Ayn Ghazzal. They lived well, in concrete houses. All the surrounding hills were houses of the village, all the way down. People started settling in Ayn Ghazzal two hundred years ago. They came by boat in the direction of Beirut to look for work and they got stuck here, so they went up to settle in the hills."[220]

An important component of Palestinian identity was a focus on the land, and in part a direct response to Zionist revisionist history that describes the early Israeli settlers as "making the desert bloom" from an empty desert.[221] Before *al-Nakba,* Palestinians note that they owned the land, it was not a desert, and life was good. Hajji Turfa from 'Jahileen camp' narrates the quality of their lives before 1948:

> We, in our country, our life was good. We had herds and money. We used to sow seeds in our country, grow plants and harvest them. Our life was good. We were taken by surprise when Israel came upon us. We said, Will we give it up? Our life was good, our country was good [healthy], and so were our children. We sowed and we harvested. Our land was in an oasis, Tell Arad, far. We lived well. We were satisfied, may you enjoy health. [Can you remember your childhood?] Our life was good. We sowed, we

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[219] Jonathon Mendel, *The Creation of Israeli Arabic: Political and Security Considerations in the Making of Arabic Language Studies in Israel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 188.
[220] Ali Hamoudi interview by , *Zochrot* by Eitan Bronstein May 1st, 2003, https://zochrot.org/en/testimony/51340.
[221] William Gray Dossett, "New Growth in Ancestral Lands: Agricultural Development in Palestine, 1880-1948", (A Thesis in International Relations, University of Pennsylvania, , 2016). Gossett measured the growth rate of Palestinian agricultural output by year and crop then compared those results to the increase in the Jewish population to determine how the two trajectories correlated.

> harvested, we ate, and it was good. We had herds. We milked them and took the milk and used it. We lived the best of lives...[222]

Yusef from Deir Aban concurs with Hajji Turfa and notes that they made their livelihood from the land. The Palestinian economy at this time was largely agri-based. "We lived on agriculture. On trade and agriculture we lived and we were happy and were content with our sustenance. All our life was full of abundance and there was love among our families and people."[223] Abdul al-Majeed from the Aida refugee camp agrees with Yusef and tells us that the Palestinian farmer was largely self-sufficient:

> The place where a person grows up is dear to a person; the place where he grows up, it's dear to him. It's dear to us. Of course this generation doesn't know like yours or whatever; they don't know how we lived, how we used to live. We did not live off of the government; we used to live by our hands. We would plant and eat. There was no money or anything, but we used to live, how? By our land, we would plant and eat. If you had sheep, you could slaughter and eat. You had everything. I mean, there was no need for money, to go buy anything from outside or anything. Of course, mostly it was clothes. You had to buy clothes, but one outfit would last you all year, see? (Laughing)[224]

The importance of place attachment and identity is an important topic in indigenous scholarship as it underscores the centrality of land and place in indigenous cosmologies, lifeways and identity.[225] If we are to believe the Israeli government's official narrative, Palestine's only significant population in the 1800's was Jewish. The Jewish resident's Arab neighbors were all tenant farmers, working a land that was not theirs, following destructive Ottoman policies, ruining the land and turning it into a desert. As Golda Meir famously said, "There was no such thing as Palestinians…they

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[222] Hajji Turfa interview, 'Jahileen camp', "Voices: Palestinian Women Narrate Displacement",Outside Jerusalem's Municipal boundary, Interview June 16, 1998, http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/Westbank/bedouin_women.html.
[223] Yusef Hussein Daamssa Interview.
[224] Abded al Majeed, Abu Srour, Interview with author, Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem July, 2018.
[225] Manulani Aluli Meyer. "Our Own Liberation: Reflections on Hawaiian Epistemology," *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no. 1 (April 1, 2001): 124–148.

did not exist." It was up to the resident Jewish population and incoming Zionist settlers to reclaim the land and return it to its former fertile state. The Arab farmers, merely usurpers and immigrants from surrounding Arab territories with no historical connections or legal claims to the land, had no moral right to resist. From the beginning of the Zionist movement up until Israel's creation in 1948, the settler's leadership attributed Palestinian resistance to an acute hatred for Jews rather than from a fear of Zionist colonial policies.

The correspondents in this paper, along with other *al-Nakba* oral histories and empirical sources, debunk these myths. They note that Palestinians lived on the land before the Zionists arrived, had a good life, and almost all universally got along with the Jewish settlers when they arrived. In many cases they cooperated, helped and even worked the land alongside them. Resistance was not anti-Semitism, but in reaction to the existential threat of Zionism.

2.8 The Right of Return

The inability to return to their land and homes, the denial of "the right to return" has also been a traumatic aspect of Palestinian existence and an integral component of the structure of *al-Nakba*. Since the expulsions of 1948 and 1967, the Palestinians' 'right of return' ('Haq al-Awda') has been integral to their identity and an essential facet of maintaining that identity through their struggle against dispossession. Only by understanding the centrality of *al-Nakba* is it possible to understand the Palestinians' sense of the right to return."[226] Although recognizing that a mass return becomes more

[226] Masalha, Nur. "The Historical Roots of the Palestinian Refugee Question." In *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, edited by Aruri Naseer, (Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2001), 36.

unlikely as time moves on, the right of return as a concept remains central to Palestinian politics and collective consciousness.[227]

The right of return is also central to the Nakba generation's sense of self. Abu Yasser, a refugee from Jaffa notes the unjust barriers placed upon Palestinians and their rights of return. "As Palestinian refugees, we can never go back. That's what so unfair about it. To the homeland, no. As a Palestinian citizen, as a refugee from Syria or Lebanon or Jordan, you can never go back…"[228] Mahmoud Abobakir, a Palestinian living in Barcelona expresses the intergenerational teachings of the right to return. "But for us Palestinians, it is really different. From the moment of our birth, nobody would give up the idea to go back. After 3 generations in Syria, we never stopped teaching our children that we have the right to go back to Palestinian."[229]

Ghada Karmi, whose parents moved to England following the *Nakba*, belonged to the diaspora. They always hoped one day they could return, and built social mechanisms around them to connect them with their Palestinian past.

> My parents did not choose to leave Palestine and they never willingly acquiesced in its loss. They did not see England as a place of the future, but as a staging post on a route that only pointed back-to a place, of course, where they could never return. My father's finest achievements-the English-Arabic dictionaries he was to write and the reputation he earned as one of the foremost savants of the Arabic language-were in fact the bridges he built to connect him to the past, to Palestine and the Arab world. And the large Arab social circle that my mother managed to gather around her was a bridge of the same kind.[230]

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[227] Julie Peteet. "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora", 628.
[228] Tayseer, Abu Yasser interview with author, Kansas City, February 2019.
[229] Mahmoud Abobakir, Interview by Frank Ostyn , *Memories of Palestine*, Barcelona, May 5th, 2018, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/mahmoud-abobakir/.
[230] Ghada Karmi, "After the Nakba: An Experience of Exile in England, " *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 28, no. 3 (Spring, 1999): 60.

Intergenerational spaces or sites within the structure of *al-Nakba* formulate as territories of meaning, empowerment, and negotiation.[231] Josef Haeier from al-Qubab, also a third generation Palestinian who states that his belief in the right to return was instilled by his grandmother:

> When we were young we'd sit with my grandmother as she told us about the land, our ancestors, the houses in the village, its families. A necklace rested on her bosom: a black string on which she'd tied the key to our house in al-Qubab village. She remembered the village as if it had been the palm of her hand — its people, houses, groves, children and adults, the sky, the stream, its olive and almond trees and everything that happened there and in the neighboring villages. … Her words strengthened us, gave us hope, reaffirmed our belief in our right to return. Those were the moments of my childhood I most enjoyed, my most beautiful memories. Grandmother planted love for the village in our souls, promised we'd return someday. She kept saying: we're going back tomorrow. …We still have the key. The house awaits our return.[232]

In some cases, those that still had a home after the wars, were not allowed to return after visiting family abroad. Rand Askalan, a third generation Palestinian from Nablus living in Toronto said that was the case with his parents and grandmother. "My parents happened to be working in Yemen when Israel occupied Nablus in 1967 and they were never allowed to go back including my grandmother who happened to be visiting her son. Consequently we have lived in different countries since then, mainly in the Arabian Gulf."[233] For Palestinians living outside of Israel, Gaza or the West Bank, historic Palestine is untouchable as a center of gravity, as most are unable to travel there

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[231] Brettell Nibbs, *Identity and the Second Generation: How Children of Immigrants Find Their Space*. *Identity and the Second Generation*. Tennessee: (Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016), 3.
[232] Josef Haeier interview, "I come from there, for the first time Josef visits the village his parents have been uprooted from", *Zochrot*, al-Qubab December, 2013, Translation to English: Charles Kamen. https://zochrot.org/en/article/55191.
[233] Rand Askalan interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Toronto, Sep 21st, 2015. https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/rand-askalan/.

as the displaced have a deep and everyday connection to past time, place, and social relationship.[234]

The Palestinians who live in the occupied territories experience *al-Nakba* on a daily basis. The Israelis control everything from such basic necessities as water, electricity and fuel to the economy and the ability to travel within and out of the West Bank and Gaza. This was important to them because many of these same subjects left their homes in 1948 believing that they could return one day. Retaining land is important to Palestinians and the "Right of return" is an integral part of Palestinian discourse as well as a central element in the memory and commemoration of *al-Nakba.*

2.9 Betrayal

A unifying theme of the Palestinians is that they feel betrayed: by the outside world for not recognizing their plight; by the Arab countries, and in particular Jordan, for inept and the half-hearted defense of Palestine in 1948; by the failed leadership of the PA; and the perceived British betrayal by handing over their land to the Zionists. The British promised the "Promised land" of Palestine to both the Arabs (McMahon-Hussein correspondence), the Jews (Balfour Declaration), and to themselves (the Sykes–Picot Agreement). This was a land that Palestinians believe was not the English people's to give.[235]

When I was a little boy my father liked to watch westerns and war movies. While he always cheered for the Americans in these films (He served in the U.S. Army in

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[234] Julie Peteet. "Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 4 (2007): 633. http: //www.jstor.org/stable/30069491.

[235] That the British had no right to give away land which was already occupied by an indigenous people, was a common criticism of The Balfour Declaration during interviews and discussions during the author's research trip to the West Bank and many of its refugee camps.

Germany during the Korean War), he always seemed to have disdain for the British. One day I asked him why? Weren't the British our allies? He replied that when he was growing up in Palestine (during the British Mandate), the British did no treat him well and always remembered being kicked for no reason by a British soldier. Surprisingly, most of the respondents felt the same way about the British and blame them nearly as much as they do the Zionists for *al-Nakba*. Ghada Karmi says his father felt the same way.

> Although my father appreciated full well the Zionist plans for Palestine to which we had fallen victim, he placed the primary responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the British. "If you let a thief into your house and he robs you," he was fond of saying, "who is to blame, you or the thief?" It was the British who were in power, he would continue, and they had a sacred trust not to abandon us. Their callous betrayal rankled my father to the end. "If you ask me why I was not too bothered about the Jews of Golders Green when you were growing up," he told me later, "that was the reason."[236]

Abu Yasser concurred that it was ultimately the British who bore the brunt of responsibility for *al-Nakba* by supporting the Zionist settlers. "Whoever had a pocket knife or a kitchen knife or something like that-to jail. On the other hand, the Jew had a gun, or whatever and no one would even say to him, "where are you going?" The source of our Nakba was the British.[237] Abdel Qader also believed that the British ultimately held responsibility for *al-Nakba*, giving the Zionists weapons and destroying the Palestinian farmer's livelihood by bringing in seed from Australia and reducing the prices Palestinians received for their livestock (goats and sheep). "The British were complicit, and helped the Irgun by giving them weapons. They also helped destroy the Palestinian

[236] Ghada Karmi, "After the Nakba: An Experience of Exile in England," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, No. 3 (Spring, 1999): 61.
[237] Tayseer, Abu Yasser interview.

economy by driving down the price of food."[238] Yusef agrees with Abdel Qader, citing that the British, in collaboration with the Arab armies, as the reason they left their home in 1948:

> I was 10 years old, or 11 years old. We were living in Deir Aban. We were happy. And among us were our family and we got along in after aspect of our social lives. Until Britain came and gave the rights to the Jews. The rights that are based on lies and trickery and fraud. They brought the Jews and put them in Deir Aban and gave the Jews the Palestinian lands, with the cooperation of the Arab armies, mostly the Egyptian army and the Jordanian army. They conspired against the Palestinian people and moved us out under the pretense that they were moving us to prevent the Jews from killing us and after a week, you will return after a week and on the hope of the people.[239]

Ali Abdullah from Lydda speaks of the perceived betrayal and British collusion with the Zionist forces by the Arab Armies in 1948:

> Your army, the Salvation Army came to Palestine to give to the Jews. They would say, "The Arabs have seven kings. And they were stepped on by the Shertok. Mr. Fawzi[240] you are a maniac. Your army came to give Palestine away. And they gave Palestine away-you understand?[241]

Jennifer J. Freyd notes that "Betrayal trauma occurs when the people or institutions on which a person depends for survival violate that person in a significant way."[242] Mahmud Abu Haija, from Haifa, lays blame on Jordon for the loss of the land—specifically on its leader—King Abdullah:

> We killed enough of their forces that couldn't continue, and we didn't allow them to reach Safad. However orders came from the high command of the Arab league-from King Abdullah, informing us that we should

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[238] Abdel Qader Hassan Munjid Al- lahham, from Beit Itab, interview with author in Dheisheh camp, July, 2018.
[239] Yusef Hussein Daamssa Interview.
[240] Fawzi al-Qawuqji was the field commander of the Arab Liberation Army in 1948.
[241] Ali Abdullah interview, *Nakba Archive*, Year of birth: 1930, From: Lydda, District of Ramla, Palestine, died in: Amman, Jordanië, From Loubiyeh, Recorded in Ayn el-Hilweh Camp, Duration: 4:25 min, http://www.nakba-archive.org/?p=119.
[242] Jennifer J. Freyd, Anne P. DePrince, and David H. Gleaves, "The State of Betrayal Trauma Theory: Reply to McNally-Conceptual Issues, and Future Directions," *Memory (Hove)* 15, no. 3 (April 1, 2007): 297.

> withdraw from Safad. Look…., analyze if you want. This act was between nationalism and betrayal.[243]

The blame of losing Palestine is well founded. Avi Shlaim notes that Ernest Bevin (British Foreign Secretary at the time) endorsed an agreement between King Abdullah and the Zionist leadership to "partition Palestine between themselves and leave the Palestinians out in the cold."[244] Um Musa also did not trust King Abdullah of Jordan and noted that the Palestinian people had no faith in him:

> Hahaha, and when King Hussein would come here, they would throw rocks at him. Because his grandfather, King Abdallah told people, one or two months and you'll return. So people were, you can say, holding a grudge. They realized that he was lying, so they hated him.[245]

Abdul al-Majeed also blames the Arab armies for the loss of the war and the land, but like Mahmud Abu Haija and Um Musa, also singles out the Jordanians:

> Of course, they (the Arab countries) had a hand in this. For example, Egypt and Jordan and all the Arab organizations had a hand and they even helped them! The proof is that they would fight us when we used to try to sneak back to get our things or whatever, they were standing guard. I'm talking about Jordan. Their dealings with us were very bad. The point is, they had a hand in this thing.[246]

According to Nur Masalha, these claims of betrayal are legitimate as Israel and the Jordanians benefited immediately in of the division of Palestine, its erasure from the political vocabulary, the 'redistribution' of the Palestinians (Jordan annexed the West Bank in April 1950) and the eradication of their leadership; "both countries refused to recognize the existence of the Palestinian people or a separate Palestinian identity; both

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[243] Mahmud Abu Haija, interview, *Nakba Archive,* Year of birth: 1928, From: Haifa, Palestine, Residence in Lebanon: Burj al-Barajneh Refugee Camp, Duration: 7:18 min http://nakba-archive.org/?p=111.
[244] Shlaim, Avi. "The Debate about 1948." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (1995): 293.
[245] Um Musa interview.
[246] Abdul al-Majeed interview.

granted citizenship to Palestinians under their jurisdiction, while seeking to eliminate Palestinian identity through Israelisation/Hebrewisation and Jordanisation/ annexationism; both took measures to prevent the Palestinians from commemorating Israeli and Zionist massacres"[247] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun believes that the betrayal by Ararb countries continues today. This belief seems justified in the light of the Gulf States (United Arab Emirates and Bahrain) making peace with Israel without the Palestinian question being addressed.

> The world. I say to my Lord, judge the world that sees and does nothing. And the sin of what happened to the Palestinian people is a burden around the neck of every person. Every Arab. Forget about the foreigners, have not benefitted us for the past seventy years. We are talking about the Arab nations that are governing and planning, they are the ones who bear the burden of our sin from now until Judgment Day. [248]

Abu Mohamud also believed the betrayal was a conspiracy against the Palestinians:

> A conspiracy. All the nations conspired against the Palestinian people and I am one of the people who is a witness to that. One thing was the strength, the Jews had more weapons. And their weapons was not the strength of men, no! Strength of weaponry. Here we had Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Jordan... against Israel. Sounds good. Then the '67 war happened. You were not born yet in '67. No. In '67 when the Jews entered the Dome of the Rock there was not a single soldier left. They cleaned it out. They caught up with the last troops of the Jordanian army at that mountain... Abu Ghneim.[249]

Betrayal, remembrance, bitterness, the space between nostalgia, the beauty of being Palestinian, the land and the bitterness, the sense of betrayal, and experience of oppression—are all components of *al-Nakba* the structure. These different elements of

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[247] Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 6-7.
[248] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun, interview by the author in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem, July, 2018.
[249] Ibid.

Palestinianness activate through memory and the lived experiences of Palestinians throughout the Diaspora.

2.10 Erasure – processes that render Palestinians "ungeographic"

An essential aspect of Palestinian experience is erasure – geographically *and* conceptually. Sari Hanafi describes what is happening to the Palestinian people in a legal sense as a 'spacio-cide': a term that describes the loss of land and place.[250] Nur Masalha argues that the Palestine Nakba is an illustration of both 'politicide' (the erasure of Palestinian identity as a political activity) and 'cultural genocide'. The ethnic cleansing and politicide of 1948 were immediately followed by Nakba memoricide: The systematic erasure of the expelled Palestinians from Israeli collective memory and the erasure of their history and deeply rooted heritage in the land, and their destroyed villages and towns from Israeli official and popular history.[251] One of the key tools of the de-Arabisation of the land has been 'toponymicide': the erasure of ancient Palestinian place names and their replacement by newly created Zionist Hebrew toponymy (the study of naming place, origins, meanings and use of typology)."[252] Moshe Dayan once described this elimination of Palestinian space:

> We came to this country which was already populated by Arabs and we are establishing a Hebrew that is a Jewish, state here. In considerable areas of the country [the total area was about 6 per cent], we bought land from the Arabs. Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages, and I do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you, because these geography books no longer exist; not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahalal [Dayan's own village] arose in the place of Mahalul, Gevat – in the place of Jibta, [Kibbutz] Sarid – in the place of Haneiofs and Kefar Yehoshua – on the

[250]Sari Hanafi, "Explaining Spacio-Cide in the Palestinian Territory: Colonization, Separation, and the State of Exception," *Current Sociology* 61, no. 2 (September 14, 2012): 191.
[251] Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 10.
[252] Ibid.

> place of Tel Shaman. There is not one place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population. [253]

Eitan Bronstein Aparicio from Zochrot (an Israeli NGO supportive of Palestinian rights) notes that another example of this erasure are the KKL[254] forests and sites – more than two-thirds, 46 out of 68 – conceal or are located on the ruins of Palestinian villages demolished by Israel.[255]

Erasure and 'Cultural genocide' are part of the structure of *al-Nakba*, and a unifying theme in maintaining Palestinian identity. Patrick Wolfe uses the idea of "structure" to describe settler-colonialism. The settlers come to stay. They invade the place they colonize. He says "invasion is a structure not an event." Focusing on the settler-colonialist and genocidal aspects of *al-Nakba* as a structure enables us to appreciate some of the concrete empirical relationships between spatial removal, mass killings and biocultural assimilation.[256] During, and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Israeli forces destroyed or seized much of the Palestinian record including personal and public records. Whole villages and towns have been erased, either through demolition or confiscation. Villages, streets and even buildings have been renamed and/or removed from official records. The seizure of Palestinian records, documents and cultural artifacts by the Israeli government made it possible for Israeli historians ("old and new") to assert that no Arab documentation on 1948 of the sort historians must rely on exists.[257] Indeed,

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[253] Moshe Dayan quoted in *Ha'aretz*, 4 April 1969, quoted in Edward W. Said, "Introduction: The Right of Return at Last," In *Palestinian Refugees* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 1.
[254] Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund, Is a land development organization in Israel.
[255] Eitan Bronstein Aparicio, *Zochrot*, "Most JNF - KKL forests and sites are located on the ruins of Palestinian villages" April, 2014, Translation to English: Charles Kamen, https://zochrot.org/en/article/55963.
[256] Wolfe. "Settler Colonialism", 403.
[257] Benny Morris. *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 42-43.

Edward Said noted in 1979 that Palestine no longer existed except as a memory.[258] Although he meant this figuratively, in many places it is also true literally.

Anuar Majluf from Santiago De Chile notes how farmlands worked by his ancestors have disappeared—replaced by Israeli settlements. "What struck me most of all was to see that the agricultural fields of our ancestors in Beit Jala have disappeared. The settlement of Gilo is built there, you can see the houses from Beit Jala. It is hard to explain how this hurts."[259] Denial and erasure of Palestinian property, rights, culture, history and even their very existence, has enabled Israeli Authorities to pursue policies designed to remove the Palestinian narrative from the Israeli historical record. The Israeli state memorial at Yad va-Shem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Institution, is based on oral histories and millions of pages of testimony.[260] The Israelis built Yad va-Shem on the lands of Deir Yassin.[261] The location of this these memorials and museums is astounding; any Israelis and foreign visitors that go to Yad va-Shem are also going to Deir Yassin, yet no one that looks to the north remembers Deir Yassin.[262] Only a mile from where Jewish martyrs from the Holocaust are memorialized, the bodies of Palestinian civilians, killed by Israeli forces in one of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war's most notorious massacres, lie in unmarked graves.

The Zionist Settler-colonialists not only sought a home, but a homeland. The problem was that the land was already occupied. Settler-colonialists always argue that

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[258] Edward Said. *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1979) 5.
[259] Anuar Majluf interview, *Memories of Palestine,*
Santiago De Chile Oct 6th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/anuar-majluf/.
[260] Masalha "Decolonizing Methodology", 19.
[261] Deir Yassin was a village that was the location of a massacre of Palestinian civilians that occurred just before the end of the British Mandate in April of 1948. It was, and still is important as a symbol of dispossession of the Palestinian people.
[262] D. Mcgowan and M. H. Ellis (eds.), *Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1998), 6-7.

that the land belongs to them due to a divine or moral right, even if in cases other than Zionism, they did not claim to have ancestors who lived there thousands of years ago.[263] Often the customary method for overcoming the complications of colonizing occupied lands is the erasure of the indigenous locals.[264] It is a process that is, and has been occurring in Palestine since 1948.

Traditional geography only tells part of the story. It can tell you where the Middle East is located. Within the Middle East, it can show you where Israel, the West Bank and Gaza are. It can show you where the refugee camps and the Israeli settlements have been built. However as McKittrick has noted, traditional geography can be used in an attempt to methodically destroy or ignore physical locations, and destroy the knowledge and culture of a people. Many disciplines favor traditional geography, as William Kirk noted, "…it behooves us to remember that we are creatures of a particular culture or intellectual environment in which great importance has been attached to the empirical study of objects in our external environment."[265]

Traditional geography defines space using a historical narrative that often ignores or subordinates marginalized peoples' knowledge, histories and place leaving these peoples outside of the geographical order. Human geography is important to the production of space, and by creating alternate productions pf space and place, it can complicate traditional geographies. The narratives include traditional as well human geography. One of the most poignant examples from the diaspora came from Issam Al Yamani. "As for most of the Palestinians who lived in the refugee camps, our Palestinian

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[263] Ilan Pappe, *Ten Myths About Israel*, 42.
[264] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism", 388-399.
[265] William Kirk, August Lösch, and Isaiah Berlin, "Problems of Geography." *Geography* 48, no. 4 (1963): 357. www.jstor.org/stable/40565711.

identity was not defined by geography but by the fact that we were different from our Lebanese neighbors. If we talk about memories of Palestine, we talk about things that are related to the geography."[266] Younger generations of Palestinians conceptualize narratives of space and place of a land never seen. Issam continues:

> But of course we did talk about memories and geography a lot. We heard stories from our parents and grandparents all the time. Even amongst the children, most of them were born in the camp; the most popular fantasy game was to tell stories about our hometowns. Even if none of us had seen them. I learned about all the villages surrounding Suhmata via the stories of my friends. We rebuilt these towns in our imagination. I even knew about the inhabitants: who was rich, who was a good fighter and who was fair and honest. I drew maps in the sand and explained my friends where to find the best bakery, where to hide and where to play. Within the refugee camps, people did live per village and kept on talking about where they came from. You could learn about the whole geography of Galilee just by moving through the camp and listen to the stories.[267]

Memory is a part of Palestinian mapping and geography as they engage with space and place. Ghada Karmi explores the kind of mapping done by Palestinian refugees as they attempt reconnect and remember the past. "It took me years to realize that after 1948, establishing a person's origin became for Palestinians a kind of mapping, a surrogate repopulation of Palestine in negation of the Nakba. It was their way of recreating the lost homeland, as if the families and the villages and the relations they had once known were all still there, waiting to be reclaimed."[268]

Human geographies can occur in traditional, as well as non-traditional space, having distinctive characteristics, while showing the errors in this assumption of

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[266] Issam Al Yamani interview, *Memories of Palestine*, Toronto Sep 18th, 2015, https://memoriesofpalestine.com/portfolio/issam-al-yamani/.
[267] Issam Al Yamani interview.
[268] Ghada Karmi, "After the Nakba: An Experience of Exile in England", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, No. 3 (Spring, 1999): 55-56. Ghada Karmi, a medical doctor and medical historian, has lectured and written widely on the Arab-Israeli conflict. She also is an associate fellow of the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London. This article is from chapters 5 and 6 of her memoir about her family's flight from Palestine and experiences of exile.

transparent space. The power of transparent space hierarchically positions individuals, peoples, regions, and nations, "it is also contestable – the subject interprets, and ruptures, the knowability of our surroundings." [269] These connections make clear how the world is bound up with a human geography narrative that is not just, yet geography demonstrates a workable terrain through which respatialization can be and is imagined and attained.[270]

Oral histories are one of the most important ways that Palestinians can share their human geographic story and respatialize their narratives.The terms 'West Bank' and 'occupation' contain strong spatial connotations: the separation-wall, checkpoints, the complex zonings, the maze -like enclaves; and the shrinking map of the West Bank.[271] Mikko Joronen, asserts that even the waiting that Palestinians experience at queues at checkpoints, workers corralled into corridors like cattle, daily detours caused by roadblocks, moving checkpoints, traffic jams – all kinds of movements controlled by all kinds of visible borders, is never merely about obstructed movement entwined around spatial obstacles and border conditions of different kinds; it is also temporal, a delay, postponement, or a restraint, preventing things to come about. [272]

McKittrick notes her interest in human geography came about "because these philosophical, conceptual, and empirical approaches to race and geography remain somewhat oppositional: these knowledges are rarely described as overlapping, despite the axiomatic connections between traditional geopolitical objectives of inclusion, exclusion, land possession, and imperialism."[273] Israeli geographies, based on the work of white,

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[269] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds* 6.
[270] Ibid, xxxi.
[271] Joronen, Mikko. "Spaces of Waiting: Politics of Precarious Recognition in the Occupied West Bank." *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space* 35, no. 6 (2017): 994–995.
[272] Mikko, "Spaces of Waiting", 994-995.
[273] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 9.

European-based or colonial geographies with long history of "mapping, exploration, conquest and domination,"[274] give little credence to Palestinian production of space. One qualitative difference in how refugee camps are different from other geographies: they are products of discursive and spatial practices that coincide with displacement and denationalization.[275] Abdul al-Majeed describes the spatial practices defining the existence in the refugee camps:

> They would try to constrict us, they would put fences up, they used blankets in the winter to sleep under. Three years. After the three years, whoever found himself a room, whoever found himself a cave to sleep in, and what happened, happened. And we lived through hard conditions. Truly, we lived through difficult conditions. What are we going to do? What are we going to do?[276]

In the production of space, social frameworks within ever-changing local, national, regional and global contexts influence life in a refugee camp. Regardless of historical and geographical neglect, Palestinian life goes on. Through ordinary living practices, they have integrated social, organizational and cultural practices in the refugee camps.

[274] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 10.
[275] Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, 94.
[276] Abdul al-Majeed Interview.

CHAPTER 3- THE NAKBA GENERATION

And they lived in the tents. And they waited for news when they could return. It never came. [277]

—Um Musa

When I traveled to the West Bank in the summer of 2018, it was the seventieth anniversary of the 1948 War. Trump had recently moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. While the move was unexpected by many, the announcement was not a total surprise: in fact, the decision was consistent with a long history of bias in Israel's favor, and constitutes a shift in the earlier U.S. pretenses of impartiality."[278] Although moving the embassy was clearly a blow to any hopes of a two state solution, the move only seemed to strengthen the Palestinians' resolve to resist the U.S. backed Israeli government. Tensions remained high throughout the summer as protests increased in both Gaza and the West Bank.

During this research trip, I felt it was important to prioritize my formal interviews with members of the *Nakba* generation before their narratives are lost due to old age. In these interviews it was apparent that the members of the *Nakba* generations had employed various strategies in order to not only preserve their own Palestinian identities, but those of the generations that followed them. They told about their experiences of the 1948 war, the 1967 war, and their life as refugees. The oppression they have witnessed and experienced has only served to help preserve their identity and create changes in the meaning and practice of being Palestinian. Many of the interviews contained common

[277] Um Musa interview.
[278] Rashid I. Khalidi, "And Now What? The Trump Administration and the Question of Jerusalem," Journal *of Palestine Studies* 47, no.3 (2018): 93.

themes of the land, the right of return, trauma, life in a refugee camp, commemoration, emotion and loss—all components of *al-Nakba* structure. Some addressed how the younger generations have managed to maintain their identity. Scholars can look at many of these themes through a human geographical lens. The interviewees in this chapter are representative of the refugees created by *al-Nakba* and of the strategies employed by that generation to preserve Palestinian identity since the 1948 Arab Israeli War. This chapter focuses on the human geographies and identity preservation strategies of the Nakba Generation interviewed by the author.

Palestinian identity is preserved, practiced, maintained, activated, and changed through components that comprise *al-Nakba,* the structure, such as commemoration, memory, and spacial practices. This identity hasn't remained static and has gone through changes as I have shown in the previous chapter. The interviewees have had to respond to these changes. All of the interviewees, even after seventy years since the 1948 war, were still driven by a desire to return to their homes and see a free Palestine. They considered themselves Palestinian, and had always been. They understand that the struggle has changed over the years. In their advanced years, they have realized that their role had become one of preservation; to share the memories of what once was and what could be; to teach the younger generations their heritage and what it meant to be Palestinian; and to share their stories with all who would listen with the hope that their story in some small way would help their people.

During my time in the West Bank I made it a point to engage everyone in conversation about *al-Nakba* I possibly could, including my guides, cab drivers, teachers, students and shop owners. I conducted all of my formal interviews with refugees from the

1948 war. All but one of the interviews in the West Bank occurred in the camps (Um Musa lived in Kufr Aqab).[279] I conducted the Abu and Um Yasser interview in the United States after my return. The refugee camps themselves were cramped. The refugees built their homes haphazardly, and in a lot of cases, built in place of tents as people began to realize they weren't going to be allowed to return home any time soon. The streets were narrow, hilly and winding in most cases, (my guide saw great humor at my labored breathing as we walked through the maze-like pathways). Most of main roads in the camps are not wide enough for two cars to pass.

The refugee camps are overcrowded. Dheisheh camp in Bethlehem for example, originally intended to hold 3,000 people, now contains over 15,000. Another camp I visited near the Dheisheh camp is Aida camp, located between the municipalities of Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Jerusalem. It is located in a small area (0.71 square kilometers) is also congested like the other camps, and suffers from poor infrastructure. The barrier wall surrounds the camp and it is also close to the main checkpoint between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. It has two large Israeli settlements close by. This location frequently makes it the target of IDF raids, one of which occurred just a couple of days before I visited, resulting in the death of a 14 year old.

The population in the camps is young. Children under 18 make up nearly 40% of the population and in some cases 60% are under the age 0f 25.[280] This was most evident to me when I was leaving the Jalazone camp near Ramallah. I had entered the camp during the day, and did not see the large numbers of youth I expected to see. However

[279] Kufr Aqab is a suburb of East Jerusalem cut off by Israel's separation wall.
[280] Unicef, "The Situation of Palestinian Children in The Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon." https://www.unicef.org/oPt/PALESTINIAN_SITAN-final.pdf.

this changed as the sun set, and by the time we left, the streets had filled with large numbers of youth. The issues facing the future (the children) of the Palestinians as a people and their ability to maintain their identity is not only the poverty, lack of infrastructure, and lack of educational opportunity, but also the fact you have an entire generation growing up in the West Bank who in most cases, only have contact with Israelis through the barrel of a gun at checkpoints and violent confrontations. This isolation, marginalization and lack of opportunity for the Palestinians not only accentuates the importance of geographical relevance in the structure *al-Nakba*, but also demonstrates the importance of the youth in any imagined future—a future envisioned with justice, basic human rights and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

Many of these structural strategies can be studied through a human geographic lens. Since 1948, Palestinian refugees and internally displaced persons have been struggling to preserve the memory of their land, towns and villages through traditional and human geography in various ways; these include collecting and archiving oral histories, documents and photos, and writing their pre-Nakba histories in articles, booklets and books.[281] A related cultural practice highlighting human geography is portraying the village based on the memories of older refugees and drawing mental maps that complement the professional maps produced by experts.[282] The land is important to the Palestinian consciousness in recognizing their sense of space and place.

3.1 The land

There is an emphasis on the land in the respondent's *self-conscious* opposition to the official Israeli narrative. Owning land in Palestine is important to the Palestinian

[281] Zochrot, "Refugees drew their destroyed villages and cities", 2016, https://zochrot.org/en/article/56406
[282] Ibid.

psyche. It is the basis of a native people's sense of community, identity and the space where social organization happens, as well as a source of pride, honor and sense of nation.[283] Those who have a stake in maintaining the myth that the Arabic and Hebrew cultures must inevitably clash have easily forgotten or dismissed this organic connection to the land for the Palestinians, as well as the Jews.[284] It is where important spatial components of Palestinian human geography occur—where *al-Nakba* is respatializied, reimagined and remembered as sites of memory. Often interviewees and contacts asked me if I had owned land there and I responded that I had inherited some of my father's and that I had no intention of selling it. Upon hearing that, and without exception, they were extremely pleased.

The Palestinians' interrelationship with the land strengthened in the years before World War I. One of those factors was religious, as those who lived there felt a religious attachment. The Muslim perception of Palestine as the "holy land" (*al-ard, al-muqad-dasa*) developed over time in the Qur'an and other literature as it praised Jerusalem, Hebron and other parts of Palestine before, and particularly after the Crusades.[285] The elevated position of the *Sanjaq* of Jerusalem, which existed for nearly half a century within the Ottoman Empire, contributed to the perception that Palestine was an administrative entity within that empire.[286] Yehoshua Porath notes that "…at the end of the Ottoman period the concept of *Filastin* was already widespread among the educated

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[283] Nahla Abdo "Feminism, Indigenousness and Settler Colonialism: Oral history, Memory and the Nakba" in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 40.
[284] Mazin B Qumsiyeh. *Sharing the Land of Canaan : Human Rights and the Israeli-Palestinian Struggle* (London : Pluto Press, 2004), 5.
[285] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 151.
[286] Alexander, Schölch, *Palestine in Transformation, 1856-1882* (Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2006), 15.

Arab public, denoting either the whole of Palestine or the Jerusalem *Sanjaq* alone."[287]

In the nineteenth century, Palestinian Christians as well as Muslims, shared a fear of European Imperialism, as many Christians were among the first inhabitants affected by Western ideas of nationalism and patriotism obtained in missionary schools and contact with Europeans.[288] Palestinians have always had a powerful attachment to local space. In the cities there was a strong urban attachment to those cities. Jerusalemites, Nabulsis, Gazans and Khalilis (inhabitants of Hebron—*al Khalil*) all took pride of those cities and villages and had a strong attachment of space and place which can be seen from the local histories of those and other regions of Palestine.[289] The land and local geography is intrinsic to Palestinian life—more so than say in the United States, where mobility is an important part of Identity. Palestinians and Israelis, as well as people from other Arab countries, are well rooted with a strong identity with the localities they are from. Often a name is associated with a place, even with those multigenerational individuals living in refugee camps who have never seen such places.

In the camps, land is one of the most important connections to Palestinian identity. Before 1948, Abdel Qader Hassan owned 100 dunams (approx. 25 acres) of land. He says he still owns the papers. "The land provided all our needs. We lost our land, we lost all our crops. The Israelis took most of my sheep and the rest I was forced to sell for a loss."[290] There was a genuine sense of loss and despair with the realization that they had lost their land and no one was going to help them. Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan

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[287] Yehoshuah Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1919-1929* (London: Frank Cass 1973), 8-9.
[288] Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 153.
[289] Ibid, 153.
[290] Abdel Qader Interview.

Zboun lives in the Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem and two large Israeli Settlements known as Har Homa and Gilo. The camp is overcrowded and due to its proximity to Jerusalem and the Settlements and is often the scene of raids and violent clashes with Israeli defense forces. Abu Mohamud notes that UNRWA helped the Palestinians with their basic needs, but was no help with issues of returning the refugees to their land:

> We turned to the Agency (UNRWA) Record how much land you own! What is your name? They recorded everyone's names and how much land they had with the Agency. What's your name and where you are from. Okay. And we gained nothing. That was a day and today is a different day. Seventy one years and we've been saying, "Oh beloved, where is the land?"[291]

Abu Mohamud, in the quote above references Mahmoud Darwish's Passport poem. Darwish, known as the cultural and poetic voice of the Palestinians, explores what it means to be a Palestinian through themes of land, identity, home and exile.[292] The *Nakba* generation who have actual memories of their homes that had been lost, cling to a hope of one day returning to their land.

The removal of the Palestinians from their homes and lands did not just occur in 1948 and 1967, but is part of an ongoing process of land confiscation that still occurs today. According to GW Falah, "The Israeli state is utilizing its legal system and all other feasible means (occasionally including its huge military and police) in order to appropriate remaining lands from the Palestinian Arabs (a portion of whom are its own citizens) and then to pass this "liberated" turf on to full ownership under Jewish use and title."[293]

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[291] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun interview.
[292] Tawfiq Yousef,. "Mahmoud Darwish and the Quest for Identity." *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences* 48, no. 711 (2011): 1.
[293] GW Falah. "Dynamics and Patterns of the Shrinking of Arab Lands in Palestine," *Political Geography* 22, no. 2 (February 1, 2003): 180.

The Palestinians are victims of what McKittrick calls “white European masculine mappings” interwoven with an altered sense of place with attendant geographies that are hidden by rational spatial colonization and domination.[294] This is essentially the practice (by European white men), of mapping "race" based on the widespread collection of anthropometric measurements by European anthropologists and geographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[295] Many Palestinians associate Zionists with European settler colonialism and the accompanying racial policies. These mappings have been used in the attempt to protect the culturally (and not simply racially) white character of the settler population, while destroying the indigenous population in the process.[296] The Palestinians have been victims of this mapping and the resulting spacial domination associated with settler colonialism.

Attachment to land is a part of *al*-Nakba, the structure. The loss of one’s home and land was, and still is a traumatic experience brought on by the sudden nature of expulsion through *al-Nakba*. Um Musa notes the importance of the land in not only Palestinian consciousness, but also in their right to it in religious terms. “The most important spot in the world is Palestine. Exalted is God. He put us here. God put us here. Now they are trying and trying and trying to remove us from our house that’s in the Old City and we are like this.”[297]

Um Musa’s intense attachment to Palestine demonstrates the powerful relationship between the land and lives of the indigenous Palestinian people. Um Musa

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[294] McKittrick, Introduction to *Demonic Grounds*, x.
[295] Heather Winlow. “Mapping Moral Geographies: W. Z. Ripley’s Races of Europe and the United States,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 119.
[296] Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen. *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century Projects, Practices, Legacies* (London: Routledge, 2005), 3.
[297] Um Musa interview.

was fearful of losing her current home in Kufr Aqab to Israeli confiscation; a fear shared by most Palestinians who are fortunate enough to own one. My father lived with the same fear until the day he died. Palestinians living under the PA are restricted in the rights to own or lease land.

Those who have already lost their land, cling to the hope one day returning to what they lost. The Palestinians sense of place not only connects them to the land in a traditional geographic sense, but also in a humanistic geographical sense, reminding us that "geography is always human and that humanness is always geographic"[298]. The relationship between the local narratives of land is integral to Palestinian consciousness in the wider perception of the homogenous, horizontal, and imagined space of the nation.[299] The connection to the land and the ability to re-imagine space and place is a key part of the structure of *al-Nakba*. Integral to the loss of the land is the "right to return".

3.2 The right of return

What does it mean to be a Palestinian today? Historians of *al-Nakba* almost universally cite the "right of return" as central to maintaining Palestinian identity. Remembering life before 1948 in Palestine, real or imagined, through individual and collective memories, drives the belief in the right of return for the Palestinian people. Laleh Khalili argues that by insisting on a series of rights under the umbrella of the "right of return", including compensation and the recognition of injustices, the Palestinian

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[298] McKittrick, Introduction to *Demonic Grounds*, ix.

[299] In this sense I'm describing the connection with culture, nationalism and commonality with the land that the Palestinians share. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso books, 2006. Anderson describes "homogeneous, empty time," as large imagined sociological entities (such as the nation) as conceived of moving through time and emerging in conjunction with other phenomenon in the world. This "homogeneous, empty time" Anderson argues, was an important precedent to modern nationalism.

people are insisting that they belong to a "larger Palestinian polity".[300] Survivors pass on recollections, of not only the *Al-Nakba*, but the memories of village life before 1948 and the right to return to successive generations through oral history and narrative commemoration. Abdul al-Majeed was clearly emotional in his interview. He was thankful to be able to share his story and memories of time long past but not forgotten. Khalili notes that "It has long become a performative trope of Palestinian commemoration that grandparents pass the stories and memories of their childhood down to future generations." [301] Although a stranger on that day, as far as Abdul al-Majeed was concerned, I was a part of the next generation whom he needed to pass his knowledge and belief in the right to return to. "You are here, reminding me of my hometown. And I thank you for this. You say "my hometown" and I hear you. I cry that someone would take me home to see my town. I swear to God Almighty."[302] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun, as well as most of the Palestinian people, connects the right of return to their identity:

> My friend, I am now 86 years old, see? And we still have hope-of course 86 means I'm an old man-we still have hope that Allah the Almighty can change our situation because this country has been ruled by many peoples. Many people have ruled it. And they are gone. This land remains, and changes the people on it, see? And we are still hoping, even though I am old, I mean, everyone my age is gone, there is no one left. Seldom, you may find one or two or three, see? And we still have hope that we may return.[303]

To Abu Mohamud, in spite of his advanced age and the disparate circumstances the Palestinian people in the refugee camps find themselves in, still retains hope of one

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[300] Laleh Khalili, "Commemorating Contested Lands," in *Exile & Return: Predicaments of Palestinians & Jews*, ed. Ann M. Lesch & Ian S. Lustick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 19.
[301] Khalili," Commemorating", 27.
[302] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun interview.
[303] Abdul al-Majeed interview.

day returning to his home. Yusef from the Dheisheh refugee camp, but originally from Deir Aban concurs. Until today, after 70 years, and we are still hoping to return to Palestine and to our evacuated villages."[304] Yusef was determined that one day he would go back to what was rightfully his.

> I mean, if I were to come to you, grab you and your children and kick you out of your house and live there instead of you. Would you forget your home? You won't forget your home. You won't forget that one day your son will come back to it. So he can't come and kick me out of my home, live there and then I not return to it. I must return to it by any means.[305]

I have yet to see evidence from anything that I have read, or from anything said in my interviews that any Palestinian actually left their home of their own accord in 1948. There were those that had been expelled from homes, and there were those that left due to fear of the war and/or concern for the safety for themselves and their families. All that I interviewed believed that they would be allowed to return, regardless of the outcome of the war. Several of the interviewees discussed the fact that many of those that had been expulsed or left their homes do to fear, attempted to return during and after the 1948 war. When asked about these attempts Khalid from the Jalazone refugee camp responded:

> So yes, some people try to get back to get some food before the ceasefire. So there were two ceasefires. The first one and the second one. After the first one, they were able to get back by sneaking and getting back to the village. For this village, yeah, five sneaked and they were killed there. The second ceasefire in 1949, the Jordanian army, yeah, the Jordanian army, were committed to the Israelis that they will, you know, stop this.[306]

Uri Avnery, in his article "Crying Wolf?" confirms that many of those attempting to return were killed. "After the war, some of these refugees tried to secretly return home by crossing the Jordan by night. One day a soldier came to me in a state of shock, and

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[304] Yusef Hussein Daamssa Interview.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.

told me that all these returning refugees were being executed on the spot."[307]

Tayseer, or Abu Yasser was born in Jaffa in 1937. Abu Yasser and his family left their homes in order to avoid the fighting, but were never allowed to return. Jaffa, more than any other place in Palestine[308], epitomizes the destruction of Palestinian society in 1948; it transformed from a leading nationalist, cultural and commercial center, and a major and cosmopolitan export–import port, into a slum.[309] Abu Yasser describes a harrowing departure from Jaffa, in which they took few possessions with the expectation that they would return. "They said, one week and that's it, we'll return. Fifteen days, we'll return. Just until they free Palestine. We left at that time and we left everything behind. I don't know what happened to it."[310] Yusef describes a battle he witnessed as a ten year old boy. At its conclusion, he hoped he would soon be allowed to go home. He describes not only the loss of his home, but regret in relying on the hope in returning:

> There was, eh,.I remember a battle that took place in an area called Wadi Illeen. They descended upon us with tanks. Tanks and weapons and everything. We charged at them with knives. With knives and swords and clubs and so forth. We killed some of them, and they killed some of us, and they withdrew and ran away. This is a battle I witnessed when I was about ten years old. After this battle, to avoid terrorism, they told us to leave and after a while we could come back. You can come back in a week. And that was the hope that killed us.[311]

Um Yasser tells how her father tried to return to Jaffa to recover some valuables and only managed to lose his clothes and dignity. "My father. He tried to return to Palestine and he was trapped in the house ... After they trapped him in the house, the

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[307] Uri Avnery interview, "Crying Wolf?" *Zochrot*, March 16, 2003. https://zochrot.org/en/testimony/56403, Uri Avnery was a former member of the Irgun and later founded the Gush Shalom Peace movement.
[308] Before 1948, Jaffa was known as Palestine's gateway to the world. Its demise is symbolic to the loss of Palestine as a whole to the Palestinian people.
[309] Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, 7.
[310] Abu Yasser interview, Kansas City in February of 2019.
[311] Yusef from Deir Aban, Interview with Author, Summer 2018.

Jews came and made him leave the house naked."[312] Israelis labeled Palestinians that attempted to reenter the land and reclaim their possessions and homes as infiltrators. Military, social and legal tools were used to maintain control over space and place.[313] Yusef personally knew people who had attempted to return to collect valuables and lost their lives:

> There were some people who snuck back...they snuck back to get clothes or some of their belongings that were still in the village. And if they were caught, they were killed. They killed, I mean, I know one man, his name was Afana, from our village, they killed him. He returned and they killed him. Afana and two others, they killed them. And two others from Jerash, they killed them.[314]

Khalid also notes that the Israelis killed many of those who tried to return, "And some of them tried to go back to some of the lands. …So there were two ceasefires. The first one and the second one. After the first one, they were able to get back by sneaking and get back to the village. For this village, yeah, five sneaked and were killed there."[315] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian notes that in spite of Israeli laws designed to prevent Palestinians from returning after 1948, 10,000–15,000 still tried to return to their land each year from 1949 to 1956 and during this period, approximately 5,000 Palestinians attempting to reenter Palestine and reclaim their property were victims of Israel's 'shoot to kill' mandate along the border.[316]

Thus the people who had a land that had been inhabited by their ancestors in most cases for at least hundreds of years, and in some cases for more than a millennium, were

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[312] Um Yasser in interview with author, Kansas City, February 2019.
[313] Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Criminalizing Pain and the Political Work of Suffering: The Case of Palestinian 'Infiltrators," *Borderlands e-Journal* 14, no. 1 (2015): 5.
[314] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview.
[315] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.
[316] Kevorkian, "Criminalizing Pain", 5.

expected to give the ownership to a people without a land, whose sole claims to such property were based in religious claims of a right to return to Zion. The inability to return to a land remembered underlies the traumatic history where a colonial power has stripped the people of their land and resources and labeled those that have tried as "interlopers", "intruders", "infiltrators" and "terrorists".[317] Once it became evident that the Palestinians refugees could not return, and the artificial borders created, the expulsion became more traumatic. Sean Anderson notes, "The spatializing of history has rendered new forms of thinking through and "in" imprisonment or stasis as a complex terrain in which the negotiable boundaries of bodies and spaces are conveyed."[318] The right to return corresponds to narratives of fugitive geographies and human geographies in asserting the return.

3.3 The Trauma of the Nakba

Al-Nakba is a site of trauma. The trauma not only affects effects individuals but expands to a collective and even national context lacing trauma into the fabric of Palestinian society.[319] Shared traumatic experiences are part of the Palestinian identity. Behind the painful events of the last 70 years (the 1948 war, the 1967 war, the intifadas, etc.) lies the combination of oppression, frustration, and humiliation that exists in everyday Palestinian human geographies. Perhaps remembering and experiencing the trauma of *al-Nakba*, helps the Palestinians maintain their identity more than any other factor. The sudden catastrophic assault on Palestinian identity is what made *al-Nakba*, the

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[317] Lena Jayyusi "The Time of Small Returns: Affect and Resistance During the Nakba" in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (London: Zed Books, 2018), 103.
[318] Sean Anderson. "Fugitive Borders: Estrangement and Violence at the Centre of Temporary Permanence," *Fabrications: In-between: Spaces for Border-thinking* 25, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 351.
[319] Nicholas Peddle, "Trauma and the Palestinian Nakba," Submitted to the University of Exeter as a dissertation for the degree of MA Middle East and Islamic Studies,09/2015, https://zochrot.org/en/article/56412.

event and a part of the structure, a key date for the Palestinian people — a traumatic rupture in the continuity of historical space and time in Palestinian history.[320]

A society that had existed long before the 1948 catastrophe disappeared in a few months. The homeland; the places of residence, the land — a vital source of wealth, dignity, influence and identity; the physical and cultural environment-- the legitimacy and durability of which Palestinians had never questioned, turned out to be most uncertain. [321] Uncertainty, loss and the unknown breed fear, and fear can lead to trauma. Abu Yasser remembers being a child when he was afraid to go to the cinema to avoid the threat of violence:

> We went back home, there was nothing, I mean at that time, after dark-we weren't out long after we went to the school and they told us not to go, because at that time there was Al Hamra Cinema, they had made an explosion in it, with people inside. There were many people killed, and it was a very unusual thing. And that was in the same area, in Al Manshiya, next to Tel Aviv. At that time, 20 or 30 people were killed. It was a movie theatre and they blew it up.[322]

The loss of home is more just a disaster for the Palestinians, as it evokes traumatic memories of experiences of becoming a refugee.[323] Abu Yasser continues and indicates that his family also fled Jaffa out for fear, taking what possessions they could:

> After that happened, I mean after areas were closed off and people couldn't go, places were chaotic, there were explosions etc. Of course, my father was already deceased. My mother along with the neighbors and some relatives brought a big car, a truck. And how many should I tell you? On top of that Ford truck, 50 or 55 people from old and young. They put their furniture. Some people took a mattress, some people took something else. My mother took nothing. She didn't take anything. Those who took something, so there would be enough room, where did the people sit?[324]

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[320] Masalha. *The Palestine Nakba*, 3-4.
[321] Ibid.
[322] Tayseer, Abu Yasser interview.
[323] Eyad El-Sarraj, and Samir Qouta. "The Palestinian Experience," in *Disasters and Mental Health,* eds. Juan José López-Ibor and George Christodoulou, (New York: Wiley, 2005): 231.
[324] Tayseer, Abu Yasser interview.

Abu Yasser describes his families' traumatic experience that continued with uncertainty and humiliation in exile. "We lived in Jordan among the livestock. In a big camp, Jordan was a little better, honestly. When we arrived in Syria, they sent us to the mosques. We slept in the mosques, I swear. This is enough of a humiliation." (Note: typically, only beggars sleep in mosques).[325]

Perhaps the most devastating traumatic experiences for Palestinians were the massacres. Not only for those who experienced them, but for those who collectively heard about them and feared the same fate. Um Musa describes one such massacre:

> About '48, you know, we were so small. And eh..one of my sisters was still in the swaddle. Newborn, yeah. So people came from Al Ramleh and Al Lid and the countries around it, villages, many villages around Al Lid and Al Ramleh and they came to the West Bank direct to our country and they told them 'what happened?' They said, 'they destroyed us, and they killed us.' Somebody killed her husband, somebody killed her brothers, sisters, they killed and they ran away. [326]

Khalid, from the Jalazone camp, describes the Al Lid and Al Ramleh massacre in more detail:

> Al Lid and Al Ramleh had Jordanian forces in them before 1948. The army had English officers. They ordered them to withdraw during the night. The next day, the Jewish forces, the Haganah-, they were wearing Arab clothes, hattas and uqal (traditional men's headdress) and they entered as if they were Arab Army. Dressed as Jordanian Army.--They committed a massacre. They went to the people in the mosque. They gathered a large number of people and they opened fire on them. Around 250-300 people were killed in the mosque. They took the bodies out and burned them.[327]

Um Musa tells of another massacre of civilians in Gaza:

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[325] Tayseer, Abu Yasser interview.
[326] Um Musa interview.
[327] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.

> In Gaza, if someone so much as shot a single, solitary bullet, just one, they would collect people from all the houses-Ah! After '67 people ate air [an expression in Arabic meaning 'they were in very bad shape'] they would enter the homes, tear down the houses. By then people had built houses, after '67...They used to line people up against a wall and shoot them all. 300 people, they shot. One girl who was a nurse with us, her father was among them. She said, "I swear, there shot three hundred people, and my father was among them." He was the father of 14 boys and girls.[328]

Amnon Ben Zeev, A soldier in the Palmach's First Battalion corroborates Palestinian testimony of massacres in 1948. "Our directive was go in the houses to tell the women and children to stand on one side, and the men on the other, and shoot the men-simple."[329]

McKittrick notes that "reconstructing what has been erased…requires confronting the rationalization of human and spatial domination…What you cannot see, and cannot remember, is part of a broader geographic project"[330] This process of "erasure" has been central in the debate of whether or not what has happened to the Palestinians constitutes "genocide", or a more recent term, "incremental genocide". This concept of genocide includes: "toponymicide", the erasure of place names in Palestine and replace them with Hebrew names; "cultural genocide", the erasure of hundreds of villages and towns: "memoricide", the erasure of Palestinian identity from Israeli (Jewish) memory; and "politicide", the erasure of Palestinian identity as a political activity.[331] These "genocidal" and "erasure policies" have made it difficult for researchers and to study *al-Nakba* from empirical, or evidence-based methods. However, recent testimonials from

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[328] Um Musa interview.
[329] Amnon Ben Zeev, A soldier in the Palmach's First Battalion, *Zochrot*, Interviewed by Yehudit Yahav on 25.12.16 at Kiryat Ono,Combatant First Battalion,Hebrew https://zochrot.org/en/testimony/56368.
[330] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 33.
[331] Nahla Abdo, "Feminism, Indigenousness and Settler Colonialism: Oral History, Memory and the Nakba." In *An Oral history of the Palestinian Nakba*, eds. Nur Masalha and Nahla Abdo (London: Zed Books, 2018), 59.

members of the Palmach in 1948 such as Amnon Ben Zeev noted above, have validated many of the Palestinian claims of violence and erasure. Yerachmiel Kahanovich, a former Palmach soldier testified on how the Palestinian villagers had been expelled.

> At first, yes. The idea was to expel them – these were the orders given by our bosses, Yigal Allon and Yitzhak Sadeh. Sometimes we had to shoot one or two, and then the others got the message and took off on their own. You have to realize, if you did not demolish the Arab's house, he would always want to go back. When there's no house, no village, he has nowhere to go back to. It's that simple. [332]

Yerachmiel recalls his role the battle that took place in Lod and Ramla in 1948. Kahanovich acknowledges he took part in the expulsions and murders of Palestinian civilians. He freely admits firing an anti- gun into a crowded mosque (the Dahamsh Mosque in Lod). When asked about the incident, he responded, *"I don't like remembering this… We fired shells into a mosque where plenty of people were hiding. We had no choice."* He then admits he was the one who fired the weapon, *"…I did. With the PIAT [anti-tank gun]. It has an enormous blast."* When asked about the result, he stated, *"…Not pretty. They were all smeared on the walls."* How many, roundabout? *"I don't know. Plenty. I didn't count. I opened the door, saw what I saw, and closed it behind me." [333]* Kahanovich also notes that he also "*blew up houses everywhere. It was no big deal*." He admits firing at fleeing civilians….. *"Later, I stood with my Browning above the riverbed through which the remaining townspeople fled. Whoever strayed off the path got shot*. [334]

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[332] Yerachmiel Kahanovich From Kibbutz Degania Aleph interview *Zochrot*, by documentary filmmaker Eyal Sivan, tells About His Part In The Independence War, This article was published first at Yedi'ot Hakibbutz on 15.2.2013,documentary filmmaker Eyal Sivan Translation to English: Ami Asher https://zochrot.org/en/testimony/54658, 31/01/2013.
[333] Ibid.
[334] Yerachmiel Kahanovich interview.

Assassinations or unlawful killings committed by Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) continued after the 1948 war. Statistics show that about 15000 Palestinians have been killed "unlawfully" by Israel since 1967, including over 2000 children.[335] Just from the period 19, January 2009 to June 30, 2020, Israeli forces killed 3529 Palestinians and another 47 in Israel itself.[336] Khalid describes how the massacres and the trauma of 1948 remained a part of the Palestinian consciousness when the 1967 war arrived:

> Ok. So when they occupied the West Bank during the 1967 the refugees, still in their minds, the massacre and what happened. So they were terrifying from the Israelis, from the Jewish. So some families who has, you know, at that time, girls, they let them to wear a long, a long dress, like old women. Just, you know, to hide them, to look like old women. So it was very terrifying to them. So the psychology, you know they work on the psychology. And this as well affect their self-esteem, for the Palestinian. And their self-confidence. So they lost their confidence you know? They will become less confident and you know, hesitate and even they don't have the motivation for the life as well.[337]

Human trauma is not always visible. Khalid describes the "hidden wounds" that the Palestinians endure. Hidden wounds are emotional, psychological and psychosocial suffering often overlooked, but can be just as painful as physical wounds.[338]

The collective memory of the Nakba, both of the 1948 calamity and the subsequent suffering of its people, bonds all Palestinian communities profoundly and emotionally: constituencies disconnected by geography and politics; by division and the boundaries enforced by the Israeli state; and by dissimilarities resulting from different legal and political conditions in Palestine-Israel and host Arab countries.[339] If not for the

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[335] B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, Statistics page, "Fatalities Since Operation Cast Lead." Accessed July 13, 2020, https://www.btselem.org/statistics/fatalities/after-cast-lead/by-date-of-event. 7-13-2020.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.
[338] The International committee of the Red Cross, "World Mental Health Day: Healing hidden wounds" https://www.icrc.org/en/document/mental-health-healing-hidden-wounds.
[339] Masalha, "Decolonizing Methodology", 9-10.

preservation of Palestinian identity transferred through oral histories and memories, *al-Nakba* would have been only remembered historically only as a part of the process of dismantling the Ottoman Empire into a set of nation-states based on the Western Model.[340] Um Yasser said, "Once we came to America and we passed through Jordan. While we were passing over in the plane and they said, "There is Palestine below us." And I started to cry. They said, "There's Jerusalem. Here's Palestine, here's Jaffa." (crying).They had it on the map to show us. Everyone in the plane was crying."[341]

Um Yasser and Abu Yasser, refugees from Jaffa, eventually went to Jordan and then finally to Syria. Um Yasser (above) is describing the scene on a flight from Syria where there are Palestinian refugees present who are overcome with emotion as they fly over a home they can never return to. The experience of Um Yasser and Abu Yasser demonstrate how emotion and sense of loss are of the shared identity of a Palestinian. Yusef from Deir Aban shares the trauma of the loss of his father:

> My father was martyred in 1948, the Jews killed him. Not just him, many people from the village, and villages next to our village. And most of the people left their villages due to the false rumors they would tell people. The rumors weren't completely false. Some of them really killed children, they killed women, and they would do things no people, no religion, etc. would accept.[342]

One of the most traumatic experiences for Palestinians and a shared narrative in preserving identity are the expulsions that have occurred since 1948.

Most historians today − Zionists, post-Zionists and non-Zionists − agree that in at least 120 of 530 villages, the Palestinian populaces were expelled by Jewish military

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[340] Rosemary Sayigh, "Nakba Silencing and the Challenge of Palestinian Oral History," in *An Oral history of the Palestinian Nakba* eds. Nur Masalha and Nahla Abdo (London: Zed Books, 2018) 115.
[341] Um Yasser interview.
[342] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview.

forces, and that in half the villages the inhabitants fled because of the battles and blocked from returning. Only in a few cases did villagers leave at the directives of their leaders or village mukhtars (headmen).[343] For Palestinians the expulsions experienced in 1948, 1967 and today are one of the most traumatic experiences in Palestinian consciousness.

Yusef, a first generation refugee and *al-Nakba* survivor from the depopulated village of Deir Aban, now lives in the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, He describes how he and his family became refugees during *al-Nakba.* After fighting broke out in 1948, Jordanian and Egyptian soldiers warned the villagers of Deir Aban that Israeli troops would soon attack their village. These same soldiers also told them that fighting with the Israelis, "was an army from Senegal that have tails and eat human beings."[344] Fearing another massacre such as the one that occurred at Deir Yassin, Yusef and his family fled their village. The Jordanian and Egyptian soldiers promised them they could return in a week after the fighting was over. Yusef's father stayed behind and was killed by the Israelis in the fighting that ensued. His family was only able to return to the village long enough to bury their father before being forced to leave and find refuge in Lebanon.[345] Yusef was one of the small numbers of Palestinians that managed to return to Palestine. However, Yusef did not return to his original home, but to his current residence in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp.

Expulsion and the process Ilan Pappe calls "urbicide" (destruction of urban space and expulsion of its residents), happened in April of 1948 and concluded with the forced

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[343] Shay Hazkani, "Catastrophic thinking: Did Ben-Gurion try to rewrite history? The file in the state archives contains clear evidence that the researchers at the time did not paint the full picture of Israel's role in creating the Palestinian refugee problem," The Taub Center for Israel Studies at New York University, in *Ha'aretz* on May 16, 2013, https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-ben-gurion-grasped-the-nakba-s-importance-1.5243033.
[344] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview.
[345] Ibid.

departure of more than 200,000 Palestinians from their homes up and down the land. The process continued when another 70,000 Palestinians were expelled (with hundreds dying during the expulsion) from Ramla and Lydda in July of 1948."[346] In spite of this evidence, the government of Israel continues its official denial of the expulsion of the Palestinians — that the Palestinians left of their own accord.

Abdel Qader Hassan Munjid Al- Lahham from the Dheisheh Refugee camp, pushes back this narrative indicating that his family was expulsed from their home in 1948. He was born in 1922, making him the oldest member of the Nakba generation that I interviewed, and from what I was told, the oldest survivor in the camp. He originally was from the now destroyed village of Beit Itab near Jerusalem. The Dheisheh Refugee camp's narrow streets, lined with box-like houses, felt like a maze as we headed to Abdel Qader's house. When we reached his home, he was not there yet as he was still at the camp mosque, which he later said visits several times a day. We waited outside on a patio for him to return as one of his daughters offered refreshments. When he arrived, I noticed that he got along well for his age, walking unaided, but stooped and with the aid of a cane. In the interview, Abdel Qader discussed the trauma of leaving his village, the expulsion of his family, and temporarily losing them in 1948. "I was tending my sheep when they began to bomb the villages. I passed through empty villages and found that everyone including my family had been expelled from Beit Itab. We were separated for several days and I eventually found them in Artas."[347] Abdel Qader and his family eventually moved to Bethlehem when it became obvious he could not return to Beit Itab.

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[346] Ilan Pappe, "Haifa: planned death of a city - Palestine's past remembered," *Palestine Remembered,* March 22, 2010. https://www.palestineremembered.com/Haifa/Haifa/Story17116.html.
[347] Abdel Qader Hassan Munjid Al- lahham interview.

In expulsions, oppression and deaths do not end with the fighting. Many die from starvation, thirst, exhaustion and the elements. The winter in 1948 was one the harshest that Palestine had witnessed in almost 50 years. Um Musa noted:

> And they lived in the tents. And they waited for news when they could return. It never came. They stayed there in the tents. If it snowed, the snow would collapse the tent on top of the family. And they would drown. The children would die just like that. It was truly a calamity. Those who could work would build a house, a room...a room that thirty people would live in. When it would snow, and the snow would destroy a tent, they would go to the room that his brother built, or his uncle. They lived like that till about '56 My sister died at the time of the snow.[348]

After being expelled from their land and homes, many Palestinian men were arrested and imprisoned. Often the Israelis used them for forced labor and denied them even the most basic human rights. Khalid notes that in some cases the Israelis kept the prisoners for three years after the war was over:

> They took them (prisoners) and put them to work. I conducted an interview with a neighbor from Al Ramleh. They took him and he said "we were imprisoned for about two weeks they didn't bring us food. Every two days a piece of bread. Every two days, a piece of bread." He said, "they made us work outside in the desert" In 1951 they load them in the truck and drop them in Jerusalem. You didn't know if your family had remarried. You didn't know where your family went. Yeah, the problem … they hold only the men and released the women and the kids. And then after they released them after three years or four years they lost each other. They don't know where, you know, their relatives went.[349]

Sami Hadawi, a Palestinian scholar and author, notes that "Among those who the Israelis forcibly expelled inlcluded the inhabitants of the towns of Ramle and Lydda estimated at about 60,000 persons. I happened to be paying a visit to Ramallah soon after the expulsion and the arrival of these unfortunate people in the city and saw with my own eyes the pathetic state in which they were. They had no shelter, no clothes, no food, no

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[348] Um Musa interview.
[349] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.

money, and no water as they went from door to door begging something for their children. I saw little children carrying small tins and begging for water, others were stretched on the ground as if awaiting their fate."[350] Expulsions, during and after the 1948 war, have been an integral part of the Palestinian collective memory. These sites of expulsion become sites of trauma, and important components of *al*-Nakba, the structure, that create, maintain, enact, and shape Palestinian identity.

3.4 The Experience of the Refugee Camps

Is the perspective or importance of *al-Nakba* different for the Palestinians living in refugee camps in the West Bank from those living outside of them in the towns and villages? The dire circumstances and economic outlook of these camps has been apparent since their inception. It has been noted by researchers such as Georgiana Stevens, that the camps were "a reservoir of smoldering antagonisms", full of human suffering in the struggle for food and shelter, while fostering hate and hostility.[351]

The refugee camps are traumatic and exceptional spaces. Today, there is a socio-economic divide between those living in the refugee camps and those living outside of them. Unemployment is high and there is a sense of frustration in the lack of progress, both politically and economically. Many of those fortunate enough to live outside of the camps usually manage to eke out a modest living, while those that live within them struggle with high unemployment and overcrowding. In some cases, family members have taken jobs in other countries and in Israel in order to supplement their family's household income.

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[350] Sami Hadawi, "Catastrophe Overtakes the Palestinians: Memoirs, Part II," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 59 (Spring 2014): 107.
[351] Georgiana G. Stevens, "Arab Refugees: 1948-1952," *Middle East Journal* 6, no.3 (1952): 281-282.

The homes I visited in the refugee camps in the West Bank varied in size and furnishings from small one room living areas to some that resembled small 1 or 2 bedroom apartments you might in other crowded urban areas—but none you would consider spacious. Some of the respondents lived in abject poverty, while others had marginally better living conditions with outside help from the outside or family. Those that do not any have outside income struggle financially, especially the elderly. Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun, who was 90 years old at the time of the interview. He lived in a small cramped one room apartment by himself, and was clearly impoverished. He showed frustration in of the lack of financial help from the PA in the camp:

> They asked me what did the government that you live under do for you? I said, our government did not do anything. I am a 92 year old man, almost 93, does anyone give me a single Shekel? Stay with me, forgive me for saying this. They do not give me anything. Why do you not give anything to your elderly?[352]

Abu Mohamud's location and his living conditions inside the small room inside the refugee camp represents the Palestinian relationship with geography; the connection between identity and space; displacement due to racial differences; and sites of resistance and community.[353]

How important is *al-Nakba* to Palestinian identity in the camps? *Al-Nakba* is the glue that holds the Palestinian people together. Its importance to Palestinian identity is in its symbolism and representation in the narrative of the ongoing struggle for the right of self-determination and the right of return.[354] Those that live in the camps experience *al-Nakba* in person on a daily basis. Palestinian society in general, is in a perpetual state of

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[352] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun interview.
[353] McKittrick, Introduction to *Demonic Grounds*, xxi.
[354] In the interviews and conversations I had in the villages, towns and refugee camps in the West Bank in the Summer of 2018, the right of return was a common theme.

emergency, as the weight of settlers, closures and land confiscation constantly reduced their geographical space.[355] The human geography of those living in the camps is configured by the spatial organization, and the processes and interactions with space and place within those camps that shape their lives.

Khalid describes the generations born in the camps after the 1948 war as impoverished, doing what they could to support their families. They worked hard, often taking jobs that the Israeli immigrants did not want:

> For the labors, the laborers, they were looking..uh..yes, yeah, they were earning..16 Qirsh. Qirsh is the Jordanian Paister. One Jordanian Paister is one Jordanian Dinar is 100 Paisters. … They were getting twenty Paisters, its one-fifth of the Dinar. It's nothing. During the holidays the refugees were not able you know, to buy new clothes. The oldest is giving his clothes to, you know, to the one following him, the youngest, then he will buy the new clothes. The household, the head of household at that time, not able to buy for all his kids. Only one, the oldest. Then he, you know, the second year, they pass it to another one.[356]

Although many scholars credit UNWRA with saving the Palestinians from hunger, thirst and the elements after the war, on the other hand, Palestinians associate it with a United Nations that was intrinsically involved in the their displacement. Many refugees in the camps lament their dependence on UNWRA and the NGO's for their basic needs, Um Musa:

> That was it, there was no water, no electricity, and they had nothing. For example if they wanted a tank of water, a person would have to wait all day for her turn. They put the Agency in charge. They installed spigots,… people would stand in line until they could get water to carry home. They would wait for a loaf of bread, so when the end of the month would come, they would wait for it to have the aid and the flour passed out. We had to wait until flour was distributed. Sometimes it would have worms in it. They would give lentils, they would give rice, whatever. It was a tragedy. But people would eat it. Yes, and there were no, you could say, toilets.

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[355] Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair,* xii.
[356] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.

> They would go to the hills. For those who couldn't, they would use a pail. Really, it was a tragedy.[357]

Abdel Qader tells a similar story of hardship in the camps. "Life was bitter, it was cold, we had very little food and some tents had four or five families in them."[358] Yusef agrees that UNWRA helped with the Palestinian's basic needs, but was also instrumental in trying to get the Palestinians forget about their land and identity. Thus the Palestinians looked at the relief from UNWRA in both material and political terms:

> Then when they established the Arab League..the big conspiracy was with the Arab League. Then the United Nations established the Relief Agency. What do they call it? UNRWA. The establishment of the UNRWA so it can feed people and help people, and give to people, but in reality, it did not help people. It preoccupied them. I mean, it made people feel that there was food and drink and everything. I mean, it took people away from the land so they would ask about it again. It made them think, "I'm eating, I'm drinking, I'm alive and everything, what do I need the land for?" So the UN had a hand in letting the people forget about their land.[359]

In 1951, UNRWA's annual report seems to confirm Yusef's assessment:

> The United Nations, in particular certain of the great Powers, are considered by the refugee to be entirely responsible for both his past and present misfortunes, and for his future fate. They say that they have lost faith in United Nations action since, after more than thirty months, the General Assembly resolution recommending their return home, although not revoked, has never been implemented and no progress has been made towards compensation. The relief given by the Agency is therefore considered as a right, and as such is regarded as inadequate. Individual efforts to explain the situation to them are usually in vain; the refugee will listen politely but in the end remains convinced both of the bitter injustice done to him, and the fact that little or nothing is being done to rectify it (UNRWA 1951).[360]

For Palestinians, being labeled as a refugee renders them "ungeographic". It also

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[357] Um Musa interview.
[358] Abdel Qader Hassan Munjid Al- lahham interview.
[359] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview.
[360] Ilana Feldman, quoted in "The Challenge of Categories: UNRWA and the Definition of a 'Palestine Refugee,'" *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, no. 3 (September 2012): 389.

identifies them as victims and dependents of charity in ways that feel humiliating and degrading. Palestinians associate being a refugee both with the absence of rights (of citizenship, to homeland) and with access to rights (to relief, of recognition).[361] Khalid describes the humiliation of depending on the U.N. for survival:

> In the beginning most of the people, you know, depend on UNRWA for the living. They would distribute monthly among the people; they had ration cards. They have the card, the UNRWA card for the food support…Ok. Only the one who are 15 and above eligible to be registered, to be supported. But less than 15 years, no. Only for the 15 years and up a long queue of people waiting for food and it was on monthly basis. It was a humiliating situation. Some committed suicide because of this situation. After having owned orchards of oranges and olives in Haifa and Jaffa and Akko, now they become beggars? A beggar with a ration card? Waiting for rations like a beggar.[362]

Traditional geographies are three dimensional including a corresponding language of "insides and outsides, borders and belongings, and inclusions and exclusions."[363]Abu Mohamud discusses that many Palestinians have become used to the spatial limitations of the occupation and life in the camps, but not accepting of it:

> The Arab nations were defeated. What about us? Where were we to go? We lived under occupation. The word "occupation" became so easy on our tongues. "Occupation! Occupation! The occupiers entered! The occupiers confiscated! The occupiers took! The occupiers killed! We got used to it. It became a word so sweet on our tongues. We got used to it. We got used to our situation. We got used to being insulted. We got used to poverty. But we are not content with it. Not content. We are not accepting of this situation. But safety is in the hands of the Lord of all people.[364]

The residents of the camps employ various approaches in order to preserve their sense of self such as oral histories and commemoration. These strategies work with the geographical process and provide a conduit to the construction of Palestinian identity.

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[361] Feldman, "The Challenge of Categories", 389.
[362] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.
[363] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, xiv.
[364] Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun interview.

3.5 Commemoration

One of the most significant examples of memories sustained through commemoration is *Nakba Day (Yawm an-Nakba* or "Day of the Catastrophe"), held on May 15th of every year by Palestinians in Israel, the Occupied Territories and in the refugee camps. This event occurs on the same day that Israelis celebrate their independence. During interviews held with respondents responses shared with the author, questions about *al-Nakba* suggest the need for the Palestinian image to be one of unity against the oppression, hostility and policies of erasure and marginalization they face every day. Khalid notes that the P.A. cooperates with the Israeli authorities in attempting to suppress these commemorations:

> We do for every occasion, we do activities and we go out in protest. But our Authority that is here now suppresses these protests and that's under the excuse of the security agreement with Netanyahu. Yes we do commemorate the Nakba, we do always since the time, that time until today, activities and events to commemorate the Nakba despite its ongoing process and ongoing events that we are living through. But the PA, our PA, is also stopping us (horn honking) from doing what we want and arresting people and not allowing us to continue due to the reason of the reasoning is the organization or the relation(the PA) with the Israelis and the talks between both of them. This is why they don't want us to be in direct confrontation with the Israelis.[365]

Abdel Qader Hassan Munjid Al-lahham refers to another day recognized by Palestinians in the camps. He is referring to what is known as "Land Day"; a day in which six Palestinian protesters were killed in an attempt to prevent thousands of dunams of land from being expropriated by the Israeli government. Although conducted by Israeli Arabs in the Galilee, this event was seen as unifying for all Palestinians. "We commemorate days that are important to the struggle. We also recognize March 30,

[365] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview.

where we remember the martyrs killed by the Israelis while protecting their land"[366] Commemorating these events demonstrates how "Palestinianess" communicates through space and place.

Another symbol commemorating the *Al-Nakba* is the "Key of Return". Many Palestinian refugees have kept their house keys from before 1948 and 1967, believing that one day they will return. As the elders pass away they pass these keys on to successive generations. I saw some of these keys during my interviews in the refugee camps. In addition there is a large symbolic key placed over the main entrance to the Aida Refugee Camp near Bethlehem. Abu Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun has carried the key to his house since 1948. He showed me the key and was emphatic that his family would continue to carry it after he was gone. "This key here that I am carrying is a memory for me and for — if I live any longer it will remain with me, if I don't t live, it will stay with the children. And this key will be held in esteem and guarded from here until the last one in our family."[367]

3.6 Generational Aspects

The current generation, beneficiaries of the same oral histories that their parents heard, and further removed by time and/or distance from *al-Nakba*, focus on the event's patriotic and nationalist importance in their understanding of the events of 1948.[368] These views are often fueled by socio-economic and educational factors. Aspects of which became evident in the conversations and interviews that I conducted in the West Bank. Resistance has become essential and one of the critical factors in Palestinianess, as

[366] Abdel Qader Hassan Munjid Al- lahham interview.
[367] Mohamud Ali Hamdan Zboun interview.
[368] Anaheed Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 181-182.

expressed by the oral histories presented in this paper. Um Musa has confidence in the younger generation's commitment to the struggle against the occupation. "They're surviving, they're working. But no, they have very good loyalty. They have good affiliation. So if something were to happen right now, you'd see them all go out to the checkpoint, they'd go out, they would throw rocks."[369] Yusef concurs with Um Musa while addressing his duty as an elder to make sure the youth know their history and their heritage:

> The young generation that was born here doesn't know the land and the village and all that. We, the older ones who know the village, it's our duty- and I consider this a type of resistance, as a way to get our land back- every young child in my house, in any house, knows the story completely, because his father makes him aware, his father makes him understand. And it's impossible for this young generation, even the generation that hasn't been born yet, to forget our country at all. They will not forget our land because he knows that he is called a refugee, and the name "refugee" is unacceptable to any Palestinian. So I must return to my land, or my son, or my son's son until whatever generation it is. They will not forget their land at all.[370]

Many of the protestors seen at the checkpoints battling Israeli soldiers with stones are children from these camps.[371] The Palestinian youth of the refugee camps not only have a stronger sense of *al-Nakba* than their counterparts living outside of them, but are more active in the resistance of the occupation. Often cited as key causes of the conflict with Israel, extensive and long-lasting economic and political inequalities commonly describe the Palestinian experience.[372] Palestinians living in poverty and in the refugee camps are the most engaged and active in resistance to the occupation. This is significant

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[369] Um Musa interview.
[370] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview.
[371] This was pointed out to me as we crossed through the main checkpoint to Ramallah on a Friday. Signs of an earlier protest marked the sides of road, while a small group of Palestinian youth gathered a couple of hundred yards away from the Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint.
[372] Phillip L. Hammack, "The Cultural Psychology of Palestinian Youth: A Narrative Approach." *Culture & Psychology* 16, no. 4 (2010): 507-537.

to a generation that has, in spite of the inherent difficulties of space and distance, maintained a strong Palestinian identity. Throughout history, youth have been regularly involved in warfare, resistance and political activism.[373] Political activism, by definition, "is a high risk behavior that is performed in a context and is intentionally conducted by young people as part of commitment to a social agenda". [374] This is the case and the experience of today's Palestinian youth, their parents, and their grandparents. Yusef describes that experience from an incident the occurred just a few days before:

> Three or four days ago, four days ago, they shot a 13 or 14 year old boy. What did he do? Because he had a rock in his hand? He maybe didn't even have a rock in his hand. They shot him. Why? Do we go to them, or do they come to us? They come to us here and shoot us.[375]

Many of the current younger generation of Palestinian's only interactions with Israelis, and in particular those that live in the refugee camps, have been negative encounters with Israeli soldiers. Because of this isolation, there is a generation on both sides of the fence growing up with no idea on how to interact with the population on the other side of the fence. This is not only from what I observed in my own personal experience, but also what I was told during interviews and conversations with Palestinians living in the West Bank.

The current generation of Palestinian youth learn about their history and identity from their parents and grandparents. However, in receiving a more formal education, the

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[373] Brian K. Barber, and Joseph A. Olsen. "Adolescents' willingness to engage in political conflict: Lessons from the Gaza Strip," *Tangled Roots: Social and Psychological Factors in the Genesis of Terrorism* 11 (2006): 203-226.

[374] Carolyn R., Spellings, Brian K. Barber, and Joseph A. Olsen. "Political Activism of Palestinian Youth: Exploring Individual, Parental, and Ecological Factors," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 74, no. 5 (2012): 1085.

[375] Yusef Hussein Daamssa interview. Yusef is describing an incident in the Aida camp that occurred just a few days before I arrived there. Israeli soldiers raided the camp and killed a boy who was throwing stones at them.

Palestinian refugees in the camps have benefited educationally from "state-like" entities organized and funded by the PA and UNRWA When asked what the younger generation thought about their Palestinian identity, Khalid stated that they have retained their identity and do not let the refugee camps define them.

> Now you can ask anybody, ask him "where are you from?" He will reply, he will not say, "I'm from Jalazone Camp." He will say the original land, the village. But the story is that the Palestinian people, the Palestinian people, if they lose the spirit of steadfastness, if they lost the empowerment regarding this they will become like any other people.[376]

Khalid is stating that the younger generations have to remain steadfast and not to lose their commitment to place, position or community. Steadfastness (*sumud*) has a great deal of significance in Palestinian Arabic and contains ideas of personal and collective resilience and commitment. It is also a socio-political idea and refers to ways of surviving in the occupation, through adversity, the lack of resources and limited infrastructure. The concept of 'resilience' has deep roots, going back at least to the 10th century when Arabic scholars suggested strategies to cope with life's adversity."[377]

3.7 The Nakba Generation and Human Geography

Palestinians can share their human geographic experience and respatialize their narratives of land and their interactions with space and place. One of those interactions comes from Um Musa. In 1948, she was a small child and lived in a small village near Bethlehem. She, her family, and other villagers were harvesting olives in an orchard. Her mother had stayed home to breast feed the baby. Soon her mother came rushing to the orchard to spread word of an Israeli attack on their village, and that at least one girl had

[376] Khalid Abed al-Aziz Wahdan interview.
[377] Marie, Mohammad, Ben Hannigan, and Aled Jones. "Social Ecology of Resilience and Sumud of Palestinians." *Health (London, England : 1997)* 22, no. 1 (2017): 20.

died:

> They picked themselves up, they left everything in the house and ran away. They left the olives, they left the ladders, they left their children. Some people left their children! I mean, because there was a lot of gunfire and you know, it was a calamity. A big calamity. They told them, "a few months and you will be back to your country. Back to your village, to your city…" Everybody tell them like this. So, they put up tents. Here in Qalandiya Camp.[378]

Um Musa's story pushes back against the Israeli narrative that the Palestinians left of their own accord and that their suffering has been exaggerated. Additionally, Um Musa rebuffs the false description of Palestine in that it was a desert before the Zionist settlers came. One of Israel's popular national myths asserts that, after finding Palestine a desert wasteland, the early Jewish settlers "made the desert bloom."[379] They claim that native Arabs had been poor stewards of the land, and therefore the Israelis have a greater right to it.[380] Um Musa talked about the land before the Israelis came:

> Yeah, all in all those villages there, it's full of water. Water and you don't. How much..ehh...They would plant vegetables, fruit. It was full, our country was. Full, full of springs of water. There were tons of springs, water, plants, and vegetables, like everything. It was all filled with that.[381]

Um Musa, by pushing back against this narrative, is demonstrating geographic ownership of herself and the land. The legacy of the dispossession of her childhood home, the land and her humanity, have influenced how she sees space, place and the events and powers that have deemed her ungeographic. Um Musa's body helps tell her story, giving knowledge of the most important historical event in her lifetime. Colonialism has left marks on her body as only living under colonialism can.

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[378] Um Musa interview.
[379] William Gray Dossett, "New Growth in Ancestral Lands: Agricultural Development in Palestine, 1880-1948." *Zochrot* University of Pennsylvania 2016. Accessed https://zochrot.org/en/article/56424, 2019, 1.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Um Musa interview.

Palestinian women live in what Fanon calls the "zone of non-being" but can tell their history through the body and bodily images. One cannot forget the image of Palestinian women's clothing displayed at the museum at Birzeit University in the West Bank from *al-Nakba.* They had been fashioned with any material that could be found. One dress had been altered with material from Burlap from bags of rice donated from the U.N. The body and bodily images, provide an alternative narrative oppositional to the hegemonic Israeli one, thus becoming subversive sites of resistance and commemoration for the Palestinians.[382]

> They stayed there in the tents. If it snowed, the snow would collapse the tent on top of the family. And they would drown. The children would die just like that. It was truly a calamity. Those who could work would build a house, a room...a room that thirty people would live in. When it would snow, and the snow would destroy a tent, they would go to the room that his brother or his uncle built,. They lived like that till about '56. They built tents, but as the winter came snow started falling and tents started collapsing. People started dying, freezing to death. So they started building tiny rooms, smaller than this that twenty to thirty people would live in. People would like, stay in the the tents until their tents collapsed, then they would go to their brother's house, where it's like, tiny, you know? People struggled to find jobs. They were waiting for the news to say "the Israelis left their towns, they can go back." That never happened…..My sister died at the time of the snow. [383]

Understanding *al-Nakba* as a structure allows us to better see this melding of past and present. As Um Musa tells her story, she respatializes the history of *al-Nakba.* She brings past and present together with a account that does not "neatly replicate or privilege traditional geographic patterns of geometry, progress, cartography, and conquest."[384] Um Musa, by narrating what happened to her as a child during this tragedy, takes us back to

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[382] Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory* (New York: Zed Books, 2011), 131.
[383] Um Musa interview.
[384] McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds* 2.

an otherwise inaccessible place. Understanding al-Nakba as structure allow us to better see this melding of past and present.

CONCLUSION

"The earth is in effect one world, in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually do not exist. Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings."

—Edward Said [385]

Al-Nakba is essential to Palestinian identity. Not as a singular event, but as a structure integral to the maintenance of that identity. This is in contrast to the literature that places *al-Nakba* (the event) at the forefront of Palestinian identity. Researching and recording oral histories and the memories of *al-Nakba* is also essential in that it gives agency to a people who have been marginalized, and for a large part forgotten by the Western World. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes about indigenous peoples, "It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying."[386] *Al-Nakba* was not just the 1948 Arab Israeli War. It is a process that began long before 1948 and continues today. Through the trials of *tahjeer* (forced expulsion), massacres, the seizure and destruction of their homes, and cultural and literal erasure, Palestinian identity has endured as a part of *al-Nakba*, the structure.

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[385] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 7.
[386] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 2012), 29-30.

For most Palestinians living in the Middle East, time is polychromic— a fluid approach to time that focuses more on tradition and relationships rather than time-oriented goals. However, the Palestinians are running out of time in the quest for justice. Nearly every day that passes brings the Israelis closer to the dream of Eretz-Israel, and the Palestinians closer to a becoming a footnote in Middle Eastern history. What is happening to the Palestinians equates to a quote from Charles Dickens, "it is like being stung to death by single bees".[387] It is a death by a thousand paper cuts or a cultural genocide of endurance. The Palestinians endure through sufferance, and the Israeli government patiently wait them out, while denying to the world and their own people what is happening. Slowly, methodically, and deliberately, Israel is grinding an entire people into oblivion.

How to define and understand *Al-Nakba* has been a conundrum for many scholars in recent years. Each individual has their own geography and their own story of struggle to tell. How to hear these voices and give them spatial agency through all of the white noise of traditional geographies, requires theories, methods and concepts not commonly found in recent scholarly works. The Palestinians are a group in need of such scholarship as they have been denied basic human rights for nearly seven decades. The "right of return", a right granted to Israeli settlers, but denied to the previous inhabitants of Palestine, may be soon out of reach. It very well may be already.

When scholars talk about Wolfe's idea of settler-colonialism as a structure, social justice requires dismantling that structure through processes such as decolonization. Although this is true in the case of the settler colonial policies that the Palestinians have

[387] Charles Dickens. *Bleak house*. Vol. 11. Getz and Buck, 1853.

endured, *Al Nakba*, the structure, created in reaction to rather than a part of settler-colonialism, must be dismantled only as a result of social justice for the Palestinians. By identifying *al-Nakba* as a structure, using examples of testimony from first generation Palestinians of *al-Nakba* and their offspring, and by studying Palestinian geographies, we hope to find that they are indeed, alterable and may provide a chance for cultural and social change. By examining *Al-Nakba* through a human geographical lens and as a structure, this paper demonstrates how ritual, traditional, social and cultural patterns, preserved through memory and commemoration, provide the Palestinian people with agency, and help maintain and preserve their identity.

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