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# A people without: personal and political American histories of Palestine

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Sophia Steinert-Evoy

A People Without  
*Personal and Political American Histories of Palestine*  
<https://apeoplewithout.wordpress.com/>

First Reader: Professor Tyrone Simpson II  
Second Reader: Professor Joshua Schreier

April 7, 2017

ABOUT: *(from the website)*

*This project was born out of a desire to share knowledge and experiences from some of my favorite thinkers and people. In the past four years of college I have often found myself frustrated by the finite time we have to explain our ideas, and how this time feels especially constrained when trying to have a nuanced discussion about Israel. I've found that we've often learned different things from different people and places, and that this usually has to do with our families, our geographies, and our teachers. I wanted to present what I've learned through the medium of an audio documentary in order to capture the thoughts and feelings of my various teachers, friends, and family members. My hope is that this serves as a foundation for Americans who wish to know more about Israel and Palestine, and why college students seem to be especially engaged on the issue. I know that some of these ideas are contentious, but I tried to present as decent an argument as I could in three 45-minute episodes. Feel free to reach out to me on the contact page with questions or concerns, please do not reach out to me with hate mail.*

*This project is dedicated to all of students who have worked in the past or are currently working to educate people about Palestine and other social movements, sometimes risking their standing at school, their ties with family, and their freedom of movement. Most of what I have learned has been the result of the labor of these students in organizations including but not limited to Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), and most importantly the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM). With acknowledgement of all the radical movements that came before us, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Students for a Democratic Society, and students involved in the Free South Africa Movement and divestment campaigns of the 1980s.*

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## EPISODE 1: Origin Stories

This project is about many things...it's about Palestine and Israel, it's about America, it's about history, wars, political movements, resistance, boycotts, divestment, and sanctions, it's about college and the "real world," it's about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, it's about the ways in which people are strong and resilient and full of love, and it's about how people can be cruel and hateful. It's about how each of our pasts effect all of our presents, and it's about the future.

My name is Sophia Colin Steinert-Evoy and this is also a podcast about me, and it starts in October 2016 in Baltimore, Maryland with a conversation I had with my friend Tarek.

SSE: I think so right? you guys were like practicing for battle of the bands or something

TK: Yeah that was really nice...

Once I decided that I wanted to make a podcast about Palestine for my senior thesis, I knew that I had to talk to TK, because it was a conversation with him during my sophomore year of high school that started my wheels turning on the subject.

In May 2011 when we were both sixteen, TK's cousin was shot at a [protest in Lebanon](#) at the Israeli border. I remember stopping by his house to check in with him.

TK: Were you crying?

SSE: Why would I have been crying?

TK: I don't know, I feel like I might have been crying, no I don't think I was.

I had never been to a protest, and I had never thought that much about Palestine or Lebanon, or why someone might be protesting at the Israeli border, mostly because I'm a non-Jewish white American who wasn't raised to think about these things.

Tarek, or TK, and I became friends at the [American School in London](#), where I spent a year of high school. For me, that was a year of many firsts: living in a foreign country, going to an international school, and having friends deeply and personally affected by the geopolitical climate. I had just turned sixteen and the most significant topic in *my* mind was which parties I would be invited to that weekend.

That started to slowly change when I saw someone I cared for feel deeply hurt by something I thought had nothing to do with me...

TK: My cousin was a student at AUB, American University of Beirut, and it was [Nakba Day](#), the commemoration of what Palestinians call "the Catastrophe" when in 1948 when Palestinians were expelled from Palestine and the State of Israel was formed and so he went down to Southern Lebanon where a protest had been organized, -there was a big rally kind of thing and there was such a big show of support because it was during the era of the [Arab Spring](#) and the wars on Gaza so there was particularly a lot of people and it got to the point where the authorities who were there to control the people couldn't keep them from going down and running to the valley where the border was, which was like a bunch of barbed wire, jagged rocks, and then two really high security fences, and that was just the border to Historical Palestine, so all these young kids, Palestinians who'd grown up in camps and around Lebanon

and had never seen their homeland, it was such an emotional experience for them, so they rushed down to the border and they continued the demonstration down there and it was just like, there was music, there was crazy views of people coming down the mountain, there was greenery, and all these people so emotional, and then, the Israeli military starts sniping from the other side of the border, into the unarmed protesters...

([Audio](#) from YouTube of Nakba Day Protests 2011 at Lebanon Border + [Music](#))

...and I believe 105 were injured, 7 people were murdered, and my cousin Munib was one of the people who was shot, he was injured, he was shot in the back, he was rushed to hospital near the border, they did some initial surgery on him, they managed to get some of the debris out, the bullet had shattered on his spinal cord I believe, He lost a kidney and a spleen, but he's been paralyzed ever since, and hasn't been able to move his lower body since then.

Growing up I've always had kind of like a really strong connection to the Palestinian cause, and that's obviously true, I mean that's true of all of my family, it's a big part of our lives and like how we shape our outlook onto the world. But you always feel so sheltered just because we're privileged like I grew up in the UK my whole life, so I'd go to Palestine and visit occasionally, the worst I'd get would be like interrogations at the airport, but having someone so close to me be directly affected in this way was pretty strange, it didn't feel, it just felt like really, I don't know jarring, overwhelming, I didn't really know how to deal with it. I don't know it was really kind of intrusive almost, but at the same time it's like this happens every day in Palestine and like for this to happen to my cousin, I don't know. It feels like we're so removed from it but...I don't know...

I don't think there's really an "objective" way to approach this topic, [or really any topic for that matter](#), so it's best to be upfront about what you've been exposed to. My goal with this project is to expose people to my experiences, try to have them see things how I see things, and explain why I, and others, have felt the need to act.

After hearing Munib's story, I did a little research on my own, but I'll admit, it wasn't very substantial and it didn't lead me to any action. In fact, I largely forgot about it, especially after moving back to the United States where I've mostly remained for the past five years.

Now that *you* have heard Munib's story, I don't want you to forget about it, so I've done the research for you, and I want to share what I've come to learn about the history of the State of Israel and what that means for the people of Palestine.

So, where do we start? Many times, the question of Palestine is presented as an ancient religious conflict with no beginning and no end. I think it's more helpful to understand it as a modern conflict stemming from European ideas of nation-building in the nineteenth century. Most of the countries in Europe that we think of as concrete nation-states with distinct cultures and languages, didn't become solidified until the 1800s, and [some](#) European borders remain contested to this day.

I start with this to suggest that in order to think about a conflict that we might not have learned about in school, it's important to put it in context with conflicts we did learn about in school, and to pick apart the ways in which conflicts in non-Western parts of the world are often presented as inherently different, when in reality, they're not so different at all.

Then where do we start? I'll tell you where I started, in my advisor's office at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie New York. He teaches a class called "The Roots of the Palestine-Israel Conflict"

JS: My name is [Josh Schreier](#) and I'm Professor of History at Vassar College

SSE: So where do you start? What are the roots of the Israel-Palestine conflict? First day of class, what do you do?

JS: For all intents and purposes I really start in the nineteenth century, I give a little bit of background but first lot of readings start in the modern period, and I start talking about the different kind of transformations that the Ottoman Empire experienced over the course of the nineteenth century, because I see that as ultimately not only as ushering in a period of far more intensive European influence over the Middle East, but also of the kind of economic transformations that are going to lead to the sorts of reforms that are going to allow for yet increased intervention, specifically in Palestine later on.

The Ottoman Empire, something I haven't learned about since tenth grade Western Civilization class when we talked about World War I. To learn about this I'm going to introduce you to a second professor.

ZL: My name is [Zachary Lockman](#) and I teach modern Middle Eastern history at New York University.

Professor Lockman is an established academic in his field and has written numerous books on the socioeconomic, cultural, and political history of the modern Middle East, such as "[Comrades and Enemies](#): Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine 1906-1948." After reading Lockman's book in Professor Schreier's class, I thought I needed to speak with him, but figured he was way out of my range. Luckily enough, Lockman had advised Schreier in graduate school, so now that Schreier was advising me, he sent off an e-mail and Lockman agreed to let me come down to Manhattan and ask him some questions about Palestine during the Ottoman Empire.

ZL: it was overwhelmingly an Arab country, the vast majority of the population was Arabic speaking, largely Muslim with a Christian minority, and a small Jewish population as well, maybe 5% of the population was Jewish. It was relatively under developed, as a part of the Ottoman Empire, it certainly wasn't the richest or most populous part of that empire, and it itself was undergoing changes in the course of the nineteenth century, being integrated into the economic orbit of Europe, growing numbers of European and eventually American tourists and visitors, the Ottoman government was busy in Palestine as well as elsewhere developing infrastructure, a railway, roads, schools, hospitals, so it was a place that was undergoing important changes during the same period, and in the early twentieth century you begin to get the first glimmerings of a sense of Arab nationalism, still undeveloped but people there thinking themselves increasingly as Arabs who deserve at least a better status within the Ottoman Empire, a few people were even imagining a future Arab nation, which Palestine would be part of.

At this point, two forces came on the scene that changed the course of history: Zionism and the British.

Zionism is a politically ideology which began to grow in popularity in Eastern European countries as early as the 1880s. The basic idea of Zionism was that if other ethnic groups in Eastern

Europe were building independent nation-states, then the Jewish people should have a nation-state too, especially in light of the historic and continuous violence against Jewish people since the rise of Christianity in Europe. There was a good deal of diversity in [early Zionist thought](#), not everyone agreed on how the Jewish people should achieve emancipation, or where this should happen, but for many Jews, staying where they were was simply not an option.

ZL: There were various ideas proposed, in the late nineteenth century, about where Jews should go. Again Jews, in and of themselves were picking up and leaving, going to the United States, going to other places in the Western hemisphere, and elsewhere. There were ideas about creating some kind of Jewish State in Argentina, which was also envisioned as an empty land. But it became clear of course, to the Zionist movement, that Palestine, the land of Israel, had a lot of emotional historical resonance for Jews. So if you want to engage in a state building project, Palestine was the place you could mobilize people around.

Jews weren't the only people leaving Europe around this time, and they weren't all going to Palestine. Throughout the 1880s and 90s hundreds of thousands of people left countries like Poland, Italy, Ukraine, and Hungary for Western Europe, Britain, and of course, the United States. So while *some* Jews went South East to Palestine, over ninety percent of those who immigrated from Eastern and Central Europe chose to go to West to the Americas.

So people when they had a choice to make, Palestine was generally not at the top of their list, again reflecting the fact that Zionism was very much a minority movement. And people chose to go where they thought they could have a better life, and not necessarily for ideological reasons.

Zionist thinkers remained relatively disjointed until 1897 when a young Jewish journalist named Theodor Herzl wrote a pamphlet titled "[Der Judenstaat](#)" in English the Jewish State, where he laid out a plan for a Jewish state to form in the twentieth century. Herzl had been deeply affected by the [Dreyfus Affair](#), and became convinced that Jews could never fully assimilate into European society.

ZL: Well Zionism sort of was beginning to get off the ground before Herzl appeared on the scene in the 1880s/1890s, there were a number of Jewish agricultural establishments in Palestine, but it was Herzl who was a journalist based in Vienna, very good at public relations, very good at political organizing, who really turned Zionism from a sort of dispersed movement, to a really well organized, coherent political movement, embodied in the Zionist Organization which was founded at the First Zionist Congress in 1897 which brought together Zionists from across Europe and focused its goal on the establishment of a Jewish State, they didn't quite use that language early on but they were thinking of a Jewish State in Palestine, and turned it into an effective movement with regular congresses, with institutions, with a land purchasing agency, financial arms, etc. and it then went out and tried to convince the European powers to support Zionism.

The most important European power quickly became the British, and once the Zionist movement caught the attention of the British in the early 1900s, its scale grew rapidly. Now let's return to Professor Schreier.

JS: Zionism developed in different ways but elements of it caught the interest of the British and it caught the British in the early twentieth century for various reasons and these are continually discussed. The idea that a Jewish state in Palestine would be politically advantageous for the British who wanted to maintain some degree of influence in the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman empire. Some thought that the [1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia](#), that the new



revolutionary government would be easily appeased if they appeased the Zionists, because they thought that the Bolsheviks were ultimately controlled by Jews. Others thought simply that there was this incredibly powerful biblical resonance with the Jews coming back to the Holy Land, this after all is part of a Christian eschatology. That ultimately in the [end of days](#), things that are gonna happen that presage the coming of Christ is the Jews coming back to the Holy Land. So it kind of resonated among certain Christian, Protestant, lawmakers, the idea of bringing the Jews back to the Holy Land.

So at the beginning of the twentieth century, European Jews started heading to Historic Palestine to make a new home for themselves. But nothing very substantial happened until the [end of World War I](#) when Britain stepped in as a colonizing force and declared Mandatory rule in Palestine. However, just before the end of the war, in 1917, the British had made an agreement with several Zionist leaders, this document, titled the [Balfour Declaration](#) read:

His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

Britain supporting the Zionists in Palestine may not have been a huge deal at first, but once the British became the official ruling power and included the Balfour Declaration in the documents claiming that power, indigenous Palestinian Arabs began to get nervous.

JS: So that declaration which was made before the end of World War I, actually was written in, was cut and pasted right into the Mandate which obviously made any number of Arabs extremely uncomfortable with the idea that the very mandatory authority that's over their land is saying that one of their jobs, one of their primary jobs is the establishment of a Jewish national home, it set them against the mandatory authority, as if they weren't already because it was a colonial power and they wanted independence. So from the very beginning of the interwar period, you have the British essentially encouraging and I'd say aiding and abetting the establishment of pre-state institutions among the Zionists in Palestine, so even if Zionism still only appealed to a very small minority of world Jewry, because plenty of Jews had very little interest in this, it was still encouraged by what was still a very powerful country in the world and the power in Palestine at that time. Now Palestinians and the Arab institutions, were not encouraged in the same way.

While the British saw the Arabs as a threat, they saw the Zionists as almost their clients or allies, so during the interwar period Zionist institutions were far more encouraged and allowed to prosper in ways that Arab institutions weren't. During World War I, much of the agriculture in Palestine had been devastated, and in that interwar period, it was Zionist settlements that received outside support, which began to shift the power dynamics in their favor, even though they remained a small minority. Here's Professor Lockman again:

ZL: Palestine was largely, in terms of its Arab population, an agrarian country, the great bulk of the population were peasants, living on farms in the countryside, often landless peasants and landlessness was a growing problem, but there were developed cities which were growing very rapidly and growing middle class, and a national movement which again had its divisions, had its factionalism, would not turn out to be the most effective national movement in the long run and ultimately was defeated in 1948, but did seek to mobilize people by a variety of means,

ranging from petitions and lobbying of the British government to in the late 1930s armed revolt, to oppose British rule, to demand independence, and to oppose Zionism, which again from their point of view was taking over their country, it was an alien immigration infiltration from Europe, of Europeans, against their will, who were trying to make themselves a majority in their country and they understood very well early on that this would lead to their dispossession, their displacement, ultimately their physical displacement.

At this point in time, the 1930s, you can think about there being three main groups in Palestine:

First there's the indigenous Arab population, which is actively trying to oppose Zionist immigration and British occupation, Second, there's the Zionist presence, which is growing with the help of the British, but not as fast as some Zionists would like, among whom there's also a growing opposition to the mandatory power of the British and a desire for an independent Jewish state, especially due to the rise of the Nazis. Third, there's the British colonial power which is attempting to limit Jewish immigration to Palestine while remaining allies with the Zionists.

Eventually these tensions came to a head in 1936 with the [Arab Revolt](#), which was brutally defeated by 1939. One of the policies to come out of that was a document called the [White Paper](#), in which the British went back on some of the promises they had made in the Balfour Declaration. The Paper called for limited Jewish immigration and an independent Palestinian state to be established within ten years, governed jointly by Arabs and Jews.

This document was generally well-received by Arab officials but largely rejected by Zionists on the premise that it went back on previous promises, and came at a time when Jews were in greater danger and more in need of a national homeland than ever.

Oftentimes, if we do learn about the history of the founding of the Israeli state, we learn that it was a direct reaction to the [Holocaust](#), the systemic genocide of six million European Jews. But the state building project was already well underway before 1945, and even before the 1930s when European Jewish refugees began immigrating en masse to Palestine.

However, the Holocaust is no doubt an important historical moment in the story of Israel and Palestine, because world powers finally saw what the Zionists had seen for decades, a need for a Jewish homeland to be institutionalized into a Jewish State. Here's Professor Schreier:

JS: One of the horrible stories after World War II was there were people in displaced persons camps for years, and these places had barbed wire around them and I think a lot people, if we're talking specifically, they weren't just Jews, a lot of people were displaced,-obviously there were Zionist activists working in those camps,-I think a lot of Jews after the war didn't see a future for themselves in Europe, obviously a lot of Jews stayed in Europe but a lot didn't. It was not only unappealing but downright dangerous to return to where a lot of the Jews had come from, notably Poland. Many did not want to go back to Stalinist Russia, if they were not already there, so I think that the idea of immigrating to Israel was very appealing to them whether or not they, I think that has to be separated from the question of what immigrating to Israel implied politically, globally, for the Palestinians, I think for a lot of the incredibly desperate people leaving Europe at that time, it was seen as, emancipation, these are people who had experienced unfathomable trauma and tragedy and lost their entire family or at least parts of their family, and the notion of at least going to a Jewish country that was in their interest was a redemption of sorts, obviously others would have just rather gone to France or Britain or the United States, so obviously Israel wanted to welcome them in, there were also controls on

immigrations, this was also a period of illegal immigration, that Zionist groups tried to organize because Britain didn't want them to immigrate because they were trying to reduce the possibility of another great rebellion, so these are the kinds of tensions that are going on after the war in 1945, 46, 47.

Professor Schreier mentions the unimaginable horrors which many European Jews and others suffered under Hitler's Third Reich, and how their desperation lead them to Palestine. Schreier uses the word "emancipation" to describe how many Jews felt about coming to Palestine, and I think it is important to further note that while some Jews *were* aware of the population they would be displacing in Palestine, many were lead to believe by some that Palestine was truly "a land without a people for a people without a land."

With this in mind, let's take a moment to look closer at Mandatory Palestine in 1947. While the Jewish population continued to grow throughout the 1930s and 40s, Palestinian Arabs remained the majority; however, leading Zionists still sought to establish a Jewish state in the land that was still under British rule, but not for long. Here's Professor Lockman:

ZL: The British by this point after the second world war were ready to give up on Palestine, the cost of maintaining order, of keeping things under control were beyond them, this was the onset of the period of decolonization, this was also when the British were pulling out of India which achieved its independence in 1947 so in 1947 the British turned over the issue to the United Nations, to the newly established United Nations which investigated and ultimately the general assembly endorsed a resolution calling for the division of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The argument was that if Jews and Arabs couldn't live together in a single state, the land should be divided, that was a huge victory for Zionism, they'd been struggling for this goal for a long time, of course the Zionist movement would have liked to have all of the land of Israel, all of Palestine, but since that wasn't attainable, better half of it than none of it.

This UN decision by the General Assembly in late 1947 is [UN Resolution 181](#), and as a resolution, it's legally nonbinding. While this decision pleased the Zionists, the Palestinian Arab majority completely rejected the right of outsiders to decide the fate of their land, and insisted that as the indigenous population they had the right to self-determination. Civil war broke out between Zionists and Arabs, and when the British withdrew their troops on May 14, 1948, Zionists declared the State of Israel.

This day, the months leading up to it, and the months following it, are incredibly contested history. And depending on who you are and where you're from, you may have learned something completely [different](#), OR you may not have learned about May 1948 at all. A lot may be revealed by how May 15th is commemorated by Israelis and Palestinians to this day. Every May, Israelis [celebrate](#) their "Independence Day" to mark the signing of the [Israeli Declaration of Independence](#) on May 14th, 1948, and every year on May 15th Palestinians observe [Nakba Day](#), which you may remember from the beginning of the episode as the day in 2011 that Munib went to a protest.

As TK noted, al-Nakba means "the catastrophe" in Arabic and refers to May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1948 and the following months when Zionist forces expelled more than 750,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes past the partition lines set by the UN General Assembly, leaving the Kingdom of Jordan in control of the West Bank and Egypt in control of the Gaza Strip. It was necessary for Zionists to gain an ethnic majority within the state of Israel, because they sought to create a liberal democracy. Without a Jewish majority, it would be difficult to get a majority in favor of a Jewish

state. These two ideas, that the state must be Jewish and that the state must be a democracy, are two of the most important ideological principles for Israel.

JS: Keep in mind that by the mid 1940s, between the political parties that had formed, the Zionists in Palestine had a reasonably powerful proto-state apparatus, they also had a military, they had competing militaries, but their different militias, which would eventually have to be combined under the banner of the Israel defense forces, so when the British decided to hand over the problem to the UN, the UN essentially decided on partition November of 1947, and the British decided they were gonna just pull out in May 1948 by the time between late 1947 and May 1948 when the British actually pulled out, it gave the Zionists a time to prepare, to essentially secure the territory that was designated to them according to the partition plan, it gave Palestinians also a time to prepare as well but they didn't have nearly the sorts of materials or access or training, keep in mind that the Hagana were allowed to train under the British, not the Palestinian forces, the Palestinians were considered subversive forces, not the Hagana, the Hagana at times cooperated with the British occupying forces in Palestine, so the difference between the militias that were going to become the Israeli army and the forces that were gonna work to defend Palestine against the British and the Zionists, was radically unequal, so other states sent forces to help the Palestinians but these weren't necessarily coordinated, there weren't very many people, and keep in mind this is 1947, places like Egypt are technically independent, but not really independent, there's still a powerful British colonial presence there so it's not like they can send whole armies, its not like they're necessarily interested in sending whole armies. So the Zionists were capable of putting more soldiers on the ground than the various Arab states combined despite the narrative where all these different Arab states invaded Palestine in 1948. SO that's essentially what happened. Immediately upon the British pulling out, Ben-Gurion, who was the first Prime Minister of Israel issued the declaration of the founding of the state of Israel at that time, and it worked.

SSE: So when you say "it worked" what do you mean?

JS: Well it worked in the sense that despite the extreme fractiousness among different Zionist groups, the different political parties and even the different militias, there was enough internal cohesion to keep the state together, it also worked in the sense that there had been enough coordinated action among the armed forces that not only defeated the Palestinian defenders that managed through Plan Dalet, or Plan D, about which a certain amount of mystery still pertains, what's the right word? There's still a certain amount of mystery as to the ultimate articulation of the goals of Plan D, but what it clearly succeeded in doing is expelling 700-750,000 people from Palestine which gave the Zionists, the young Israeli state, an ethnic majority of people they claimed to represent, notably Jews, because before this, Arabs were still the majority of the state, so it worked in the sense that they formed a government, it worked in the sense that the divisions with the militias were overcome, and it succeeded in creating a state with an ethnic composition that this newly defined state they could work with, it was obviously tragic and horrific on a number of levels. It was tragic for the Palestinians it was an absolutely horrific defeat, it involved massacres it involved rape it involved displacement, it involved disenfranchisement, it made a lot of people refugees, and at the same time it also kind of crushed at least for a long time the possibility of wide-scale cooperation on non-ethnic lines. Where the definition of the new state was essentially for one group that was there, there wasn't mean to be a universalist state, it was meant to be for the Jews, and given the incredible plurality of people who lived there before it's kind of a human tragedy on that level too, I would say.

While this is the story of the Nakba that I have come to know, the mainstream narrative charges Arab states with calling for the exodus of the Palestinian people so that the other Arab armies could come in to Palestine and defeat the Zionists. The difference between the few letters in the words exodus and expulsion makes all the difference in how you look at the history. One implies a people willingly getting out of the way, and another implies a people being violently removed from their homeland. Thus the difference in the celebration of Independence Day and the mourning of Nakba Day.

The Nakba is a perfect example of how knowledge can be politicized in order to promote a certain historical and political narrative. In his book "[Contending Visions](#)" Professor Lockman uses the term "[politics of knowledge](#)" to describe this, so I asked him about it.

ZL: In anything we look at, the way we frame the question, the way we approach it, the model we use, the vision we're coming at it with will often shape how we see things, will tell us, which facts are important and which other facts to ignore, will produce a certain narrative, a certain interpretation, it's a way of saying that we can never get away from interpretation in a sense, that everything we look at will have an interpretive element to it.

Lockman provides a more academic and eloquent way of articulating what I said at the beginning, I don't really think we can be "objective" when looking at conflicts like this, and our persistence in believing that we can, or that we've been taught an apolitical version of history, can do some serious damage.

So even if you're already not sure you agree with me or the people I have interviewed, and you're not sure we are right about the history or the politics, I want you to be open to the idea that there might not be a right, or there may be multiple rights depending on how you look at it.

I want to acknowledge that I'm young, but I've thought about this a lot, and at this point in time given what I've been exposed to, the following episodes will further explain what I believe, why I believe it, and how I got there with the full acknowledgement that I'm still learning, and if you are also open to learning I'd like you to keep listening.

I wanted to start by providing a thorough account of the decades leading up to the founding of the State of Israel in order to challenge some of the common narratives and to make sure my listeners have a solid foundation. The idea to start here came when I was talking to my friend TK. I was curious as to why he identified as Palestinian before anything else, despite having grown up in London and going to American schools:

TK: I don't know, I think I've always thought of myself as Palestinian, but it's more of a solidarity thing than an actual, I feel kinship with Palestinians, but more with the Palestinian cause rather than the actual Palestinian culture or whatever it is to mean Palestinian who lives in occupied Palestine...I guess the kind of whole, the looseness of what the identity means, mostly around having the connection to the Palestinian cause, allowed me to be Palestinian and feel Palestinian primarily regardless of all of the kind of inputs.

SSE: So what is "the Palestinian cause" as you're using it, what does that mean to you?

TK: It's a shared memory of injustice, I feel like it's based around injustice, but it's rectifying that injustice is a part of the cause, and a part of that kind of community but it's also a community in its own right in the sense that it's always kind of like, especially with [Palestinians in the diaspora](#) if you're born in the diaspora as well, I feel like being a Palestinian in the diaspora is a very

unique experience because you feel like you're not, especially in certain Arab countries, Palestinians were never accepted as that so they had to regardless of what they wanted to be, it was something that was enforced upon them, to maintain this identity, but well yeah I feel like that whole recognition of, I don't know it's a big question.

This feeling of a shared injustice is one that is continually repeated by Palestinians, and one that characterizes the movement for Palestinian rights. The idea of justice is what got me personally interested.

I remember the summer after my freshman year at Vassar I was working two internships, one on a [campaign](#) in the 2014 Massachusetts gubernatorial race and one at an underfunded women's center in Cambridge. Because of the campaign, I began reading the local and national news obsessively, and by attending briefings and debates and panels I learned more about my home state than it had ever occurred to me to ask. During my days at the women's center I mostly spent my time with the homeless women who stayed around Central Square and frequented the converted old house for community meals and computer hours. In other words, I spent half of my days with passionate people trying to elect a new leader who would best address the current injustices in the Commonwealth, and the other half with the people most directly affected by such injustices.

Every day in the news I read about new instances of injustice, new ways in which it seemed that the state was hurting rather than protecting its citizens. I remember following the [water shortage](#) in Detroit, Michigan and then following the [events](#) in Ferguson, Missouri following the murder of Mike Brown, then I began to follow the Israeli [attacks on Gaza](#), I wasn't sure what connected these events, except that in the face of them I felt absolutely helpless. I didn't have the language to describe these as instances of "state violence" but something seemed to tie them together, to make them unjust on a larger scale.

When I say the Israeli attacks on Gaza, I'm referring to what Israel named "Operation Protective Edge" it's fifty day military attack in the summer of 2014. Operation Protective Edge is what started my wheels turning again, more than three years after my conversation with TK. At the time, I didn't know much about Israel except that it was founded after the Holocaust and if I wanted, I could go on a free trip there because I have a Jewish grandfather. However, seeing [the videos](#) and listening to [people talk](#) about Gaza that summer made me very uncomfortable. I read a lot about Israel's justifications, but I couldn't imagine anything justifying the violence I was witnessing.

Thus began my interest and involvement. But, I'm getting ahead of myself. We still have sixty-nine years of history to unravel before we can talk about the present day. Now that you've heard about the beginning of Israel and the beginning of my interest, I hope you'll want to know more.

I'm Sophia Steinert-Evoy and this has been the first episode of "A People Without"

Thank you to everyone who made this episode possible. I would like to especially thank my interview subjects, Professors Joshua Schreier and Zachary Lockman, and my friend Tarek. Thanks also to Professors Tyrone Simpson and Hua Hsu from the American Studies Department here at Vassar, Lars Odland and the rest of WVKR's Audio Picnic for broadcasting this episode in its early stages, my family for listening to everything I send to them, Darcy Gordineer for helping me with travel, and Jesse Shuman for giving me a place to stay in Baltimore. For more information on the content and music featured on the episode you can go to my website [apeoplewithout.wordpress.com](http://apeoplewithout.wordpress.com)



## Sources for Episode 1:

### Music:

[I Don't Have Freedom](#) – DAM

[Fight](#) - Habib Al Deek

[El Kofeyye Arabeyye](#) - Shadia Mansour feat. M1

[Someday I'll like you but before let me rest in my solitude \(Lonely character's theme\)](#) – Komiku

[Rule, Britannia!](#) - HM Royal Marines

[Fouler l'horizon](#) – Komiku

### Texts:

**Anouar Abdel-Malek**

"Orientalism in Crisis"

**Michelle Campos**

[\*Ottoman Brother: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth Century Palestine\*](#)

**Michel Foucault**

[\*The Archaeology of Knowledge\*](#)

[\*The History of Sexuality\*](#)

**Abigail Jacobson**

[\*From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule\*](#)

[\*Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine\*](#)

**Rashid Khalidi**

[\*Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness\*](#)

**Zachary Lockman**

[\*Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism\*](#)

[\*Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine 1906-1948\*](#)

**Alexander Lyon Macfie**

[Orientalism: A Reader](#)

**Edward Said**

[Culture and Imperialism](#)

[Orientalism](#)

**Sherene Seikaly**

[Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandatory Palestine](#)

**Articles:**

The Guardian: [Thirteen killed as Israeli troops open fire on Nakba Day border protests](#)

+972: [Nakba Day attest to the power of our grandparents' stories](#)

AlJazeera: [Nakba Day: A 'clear challenge' to Israeli establishment](#)

AlJazeera: [Erasing the Nakba](#)

**Resources:**

Site: [Jewish Voice for Peace: Facing the Nakba](#)

Video: [Zachary Lockman – A Brief History of Zionism](#)



## EPISODE 2: The Stars and Stripes and the Star of David

JS: but I think growing up Jewish, strongly identified Jewish, that for many, for me at least, I don't mean to speak for everyone who grows up Jewish in the United States but for me at least, Israel is interesting, Israel is compelling, Israel is in certain ways very seductive, right? It's a very powerful, resonant idea of Jewish sovereignty, after the kinds of horrors that Jews have been subject to, and the ideas that motivated many Zionists were many of them were very admirable, having to do with being able to develop culture and pride in a post-enlightenment age, offering safety and freedom for people who once again had been very much marginalized in Europe. So I think the story of Israel is very compelling, what happens as one grows older and learns more things is hard to predict. Some people stay very attached to a Zionist narrative, for me, I became more attached, honestly, to a Zionist narrative into my late teens and early twenties, than I was as a young person, I actually became more interested and more almost in love with Israel and learning more about it I guess my interest transformed, to call it *disillusioned* kind of misses the point, I realized that one's involvement with it and one's emotional attachment to it doesn't necessarily have to suffer for developing a critical perspective...right? So I'm not trying to offer "I love Israel I'm doing this for Israel" it's not that, I'm not even talking about that, I'm not saying it's not true, I'm just saying that's not what I'm talking about. I'm saying you grow up with this attachment to the notion of Israel and this interest in Israel and you're taught about Israel, if you go to Hebrew school, and you talk about Israel with other people, you visit it, it becomes part of your lived experience that's emotionally important for you, you learn more about it, you see what goes on there, you learn more about the history about why it's going on there, and different things happen. For me what happened is I became extremely critical of it. I became critical of the society that developed there, I became critical of Zionism as an exclusionary, an exclusivist ideology, I became far more, well I became educated about and sensitive to Palestinian experiences, and so in certain ways, certain things change and certain things don't change, I've stayed interested in Israel, I have been since I was a kid. I've wanted to learn more, I've always wanted to learn more about it, it's become interesting to me, but now it's become a far more critical perspective, it's not like my relationship with the Boston Red Sox, you know? It's not a sports team that you just support and you want them to win, it's very different, it's, you're interested in it and it's fascinating and it occupies different parts of your consciousness, you care about it, it's part of your Jewish identity, it's part of my Jewish identity, you know? I really think about it as part of my Jewish identity, it's important to me, but it's not uncritical and it's maintained that place despite my total disenchantment with Zionism.

That was Professor Joshua Schreier, who you may remember from my first episode, talking about his own journey through Zionism and back again

This is the second episode in a series on our personal relationships, histories, and geographies with America, Israel, and Palestine.

My name is Sophia, and so far I've taken you through a little bit of my personal journey of learning about the history of Israel-Palestine, and in this episode I want to further explore the relationship between the United States and Israel, and how it can be affected by media, because I think that just growing up in this country, you develop some sort of relationship with Israel and the Middle East.

I want to start off by introducing a new professor:

MM: [Melani McAlister](#) associate professor of American Studies and international affairs at George Washington University

I read Professor McAlister's book "[Epic Encounters](#)" during my second year at Vassar in a class about America's relationship with the rest of the world. In the book, McAlister outlines different ways in which American perceptions of the Middle East have been shaped by popular media since 1945. Something that has really stuck with me from the book, was her use Michael Shapiro's term "[moral geographies](#)," so when I got to talk to her in DC that was the first thing I asked about.

MM: Moral geographies is a term that I use to talk about how we imagine the political spaces we encounter, and by we I mean anybody, so everyone exists with moral geographies about what their privileged spaces are, what are the others or the spaces that are unclear or unknown to them. I grew up as a southerner, so in the South the South is kind of sainted moral geography and everybody else is a little bit outside of it, and so I wanted to talk about moral geographies as a way of saying that when we think about the Middle East we aren't just thinking about an objective space, but something that we have values and histories and ideas attached to.

I would say that in his earlier comments, Professor Schreier talked about a moral geography of some Jewish Americans, and how Israel holds a particular place within that geography. Last episode TK spoke about a moral geography of the Palestinian diaspora, and how Palestine represents a shared memory of injustice.

For me, growing up in New England, I think I was raised with a feeling of superiority of my area, especially intellectually. With Massachusetts being the landing place of the Pilgrims, the birthplace of the American Revolution, and the home of Harvard and MIT, people from the Bay State definitely think it's special.

Our personal moral geographies get complicated, because they're not only influenced by where we grew up or where we have lived, but also by our parents, their parents, our schools, our friends, the news we watch, etcetera, etcetera.

Israel has a confusing place in my own personal geography, partially because I'm still figuring out my relationship to Judaism and my ancestry.

In my personal moral geography, the country that feels the most significant besides the United States is probably Germany. Since all of my mother's and some of my father's ancestors came from what's now Germany, it's the closest place I have to a motherland. My mother's father, who I'll call just my grandfather from now on, represents the Steinert in my last name. His family came to the United States from Germany in the 1830s to seek a better life away from Jewish oppression. My grandfather doesn't practice Judaism, but he agrees with Zionism. His wife, my late grandmother, had a German mother who left in the early 1930s to marry my German-American great grandfather who was studying in Munich at the time. Therefore, my great grandmother avoided World War II, but her brother died fighting for the Germans, and her father, a Lutheran minister, hid Jews in his Church.

I had never been that interested in my ancestry, but learning more about Israel made me look at the way my past has shaped my present. In particular, it struck me as interesting that I could go on [Birthright](#), a free trip to Israel for young Jews, and potentially secure [Israeli citizenship](#) since I have one Jewish grandparent, when many Palestinians are not allowed to return to their homes

in what is now Israel. It's also not lost on me that this one Jewish grandparent could have cost me my life in Nazi Europe.

This confused Jewish identity is something I've been trying to understand and embrace and define for myself, I've been told that me identifying as Jewish is "problematic" and I've also been called a "self-hating Jew" along this journey. I never explicitly identify as Jewish, because I was raised in a Protestant household, my mother is ordained as a minister, but I also do think there's significance to my Jewish ancestry and my Jewish last name.

I'd say I'm ethnically part Jewish which makes me part of the Jewish diaspora, even if I don't totally understand what that means to *me* yet. I think that this gives me a responsibility to Israel, and implicit in that is a responsibility to Palestine. I might even say that every American, given the [exorbitant amount of aid](#) this country gives to Israel, has a responsibility to learn and care about what happens there.

Israel hasn't always been part of the American consciousness, and different scholars have different ideas about when this intimate relationship first began. As I talked about last episode, the State of Israel was founded in 1948, but most Americans weren't aware of its significance until the 1960s, and certainly not in the way we are today.

Here's Professor McAlister again:

MM: I think that before that 1967 War, most Americans didn't think that much about Israel, they knew the story of its founding, maybe they had seen the movie [Exodus](#), which told this very glorified story of the founding of Israel as a kind of frontier, with all that implies. But for most people who weren't Jewish Americans, Israel was another interesting country far away, most of the time. There were two exceptions to this, one as I mentioned were people who grew up Jewish, they still might not have that much of a connection to Israel, it wasn't in the forefront of most American Jews thinking, or their own interests, but they would have known more about it, they would have heard about it growing up, maybe had a family member who was particularly invested, and then Evangelical Christians did have an investment in Israel, some more than others, but who saw Israel as the place where Jesus would return, the battle of Armageddon would be fought, and the end times would arrive, and so Israel had a kind of sanctified place in the minds of many Evangelical Christians, but they too were a minor key, there were many people going to church who were not thinking about that, so before 1967, mostly Israel was an interesting other country for most people, and not much more than that.

So, the 1967 war, if you've read or heard anything about the Israel-Palestine conflict, you know that this was an important event, not only as a piece of history, but also as a marker as the beginning of a new relationship between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

The [1967 Arab-Israeli War](#), also known as the Six-Day War or the June War, was a result of growing tensions between Israel and the surrounding Arab states, particularly Egypt, which had never really been normalized since the 1948 war. Since being expelled in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees remained in the surrounding Arab countries, unable to fully assimilate into society, while all of these countries, including Israel, continued to heavily prepare for an imminent war. From June 5<sup>th</sup> to June 10<sup>th</sup> 1967 Israel swiftly defeated forces in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and [occupied](#) the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the West Bank. Thus began the military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights that continues to this day. Another reason why 1967 is such an important moment is because it

marks the end of any sort of Arab sovereignty over territories deemed as “Palestine.” Before this, Egypt was in control of Gaza and Jordan ruled over the West Bank.

Another result of the Six-Day War is the beginning of Israeli [settlements](#) in the West Bank. These settlements have become an important [talking point](#) in American foreign policy surrounding Israel, mainly because they are such an obvious example of the ways in which Israel breaks international law. Starting in 1967, the Israeli government began helping citizens to build Jewish-only residential settlements in the military-occupied West Bank. Despite countless efforts by the international community, which continue to this day, these settlements are still expanding and encroaching on what is supposed to be Palestinian territory, all while taking [natural resources](#) away from Palestinian residents of the West Bank. Israeli settlers in the West Bank are continuously colonizing Palestinian land, showing that the Nakba may not have ended in 1948.

Back to 1967, Israel had just had an astonishing victory against the Arab forces and at the same moment, the United States, which was supposed to be **the** global super power was in its second decade at war against a small country on the other side of the world.

MM: Many people saw Israel’s victory as the kind of success that the US did not have and would not have in Vietnam, and so there was admiration on the parts of a lot of people, in some ways jealousy, that Israel was so militarily successful and the US was not in Vietnam. And that contrast remained for a decade or two decades after, that was present in the American minds, in how Americans thought about Israel, the other thing was that many American Jews who maybe had not paid that much attention to Israel, believed that it was in danger, and the war was frightening to many people, there was a build up to the war, people knew it was coming, and for the first time many folks really began to worry about what Israel’s fate was, and therefore began to associate themselves more or identify more with Israel, and so it was a kind of political identification with the underdog that many Americans feel, but also a way of articulating and reframing American Jewish history, one of my friends once said, that as American Jews secularized, Israel became the religion for many American Jews.

This was a significant shift in the way Americans viewed Israel. Before the war, most Americans saw Israel as a vulnerable state created in the aftermath of the Holocaust surrounded by its enemies, so this victory signaled a challenge to that, even if it didn’t change the view altogether.

MM: I think Israel was seen as an underdog in the 67 war and in its immediate aftermath in that the underdog had won the war, and people were very excited about that, or proud of that, Palestinians were all but invisible in this story, they were the refugees, they were the other side, but since Israel had fought Arab states, they were seen as the, the Palestinians were seen as the victims, not as real political actors in the 67 war, in the most part in US media, but then after 67 it became a mixed image, because on the one hand, Israel is militarily successful and it becomes known for its military success, but on the other hand, the 67 war, a mere five years later the Israeli athletes are killed in Munich and that really horrific story, which was reported live on US television because of the sports coverage of the Munich Olympics, really brought home the idea of Israel as a victim, so they maintained this remarkable duality of image of people who were very powerful, militarily successful tough guys and people who either were constantly in danger of being victimized.

Hosting the Olympics for the first time since 1936 when Hitler was in power, West Germany was eager to show the world that they were a new and truly democratic state with the 1972 Summer

Olympics in Munich. And with the Cold War between the US and the USSR still raging, all eyes were on the athletic spectacle. I had the opportunity of speaking with someone who watched these Olympics live on television in the United States, and I got the full American perspective:

SSE: OK, so, were you gonna say something? Do you want to start by saying your name and who you are maybe?

SE: Scott Evoy, I'm Sophia's father, 51 years old, born in 1965.

SSE: OK great, so what is your memory of the 1972 Munich Olympics?

SE: Well I think, I was only 7, I don't even remember, it ends up being, it was in the summer, right? But that's only cause I've looked at it recently, but I remember four things: the one thing I remember is [Olga Korbut](#), cause she was one of the first gymnasts to ever get a perfect ten in I don't even remember, it might have been the balance beam but that was pretty incredible to watch that, and then there was a lot of hype about [Mark Spitz](#), Mark Spitz won the most medals ever at the time, I think it was seven, might have been eight. And then I remember my father being very upset because the Russians beat the men in basketball and it was an extremely [controversial game](#) that left a lot of people upset and it's still talked about if you watch sports shows about the Olympics, when the Olympics come around and the men play basketball, especially if they're gonna play Russia, if the men from Russia and America will play each other, there will be a clip about the 1972 Olympics and then of course what happened on the balcony, that's all I remember sort of just that image of somebody on the balcony waving a flag and hearing [Jim McCay](#) talk about what was going on and that the Palestinians were bad.

On September 5<sup>th</sup> a group of eight Palestinians from the group [Black September](#) snuck into the Olympic village, killed two Israeli athletes and held nine more members of the Israeli Olympic team as hostages for a period of eighteen hours, while the whole world watched live coverage of the standoff on television. Many people who were watching the Olympics, like my father, still remember the live coverage of masked Black September fighters standing on the balcony outside the Israeli apartments in the Olympic village while negotiations were taking place. The other nine hostages were eventually murdered as well during a failed ambush plan by the German police. This might have been just another moment in the eventful 1972 Olympics for many Americans, but it stuck with them.

SSE: So is that the first time you had ever heard anything, or you remember hearing anything about Israel or Palestine?

SE: That's the first time I remember hearing anything that had anything to do with another country, really in any significant way, because I was seven and we talked about America. I mean if you asked me who the president was at the time, I probably couldn't have named the fact that it was Nixon, so yeah absolutely the first time I ever heard anything about Israel or Palestine, or Palestinians, I don't know I just don't remember hearing anything about any other countries in any negative way.

These attacks had a long-term effect on the American consciousness and how they imagined Palestinians, for the most part because it was the only time they had ever heard about them. It also helped shape how Americans conflate Palestinians and other Arabs with terrorism.

MM: There were terrorist attacks and hijackings before the 1972, but the Munich attacks really shaped a long-term discourse about terrorism in a couple of ways, one is, people really saw the

suffering of the Israelis and the athletes who were killed. The Palestinians did not, let's say, get a message across in a very useful way, they did want to raise the world's awareness of their victimization, and actually in some ways it did, people began asking "who are these Palestinians and why were they killing Israeli athletes?" but for the most part it was a very unsuccessful model for Palestinians who were trying to get the attention or the emotional affiliation of the rest of the world. So for Americans at least, the idea of Israel as under real threat, both militarily but also the civilians under threat, really caught the imaginations of people in the US.

Throughout the 1970s, fighting continued between the Israelis and other Arab states, with some Arab states continuing to refuse to acknowledge Israel's right to exist. In this hostile environment, the Israeli government carried on illegally building settlements in the West Bank and in Gaza while continuing their military occupation of those two areas, and relinquishing the Sinai peninsula after international pressure.

The next major turning point in how Americans saw the Israeli-Palestinian conflict came during the civil war in Lebanon.

In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon with the intent to attack leaders and militants from the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) with the help of the Phalange, a minority Maronite Christian faction, one of many groups vying for power in Lebanon at that time.

Here's Professor McAlister discussing her ideas along with those of fellow professor [Amy Kaplan's](#):

MM: She argues I think correctly that the 1982 invasion of Lebanon was a turning point, even if people didn't quite realize it at the time, that seeing Israel go in carry out an aggressive military occupation, make alliance with a highly problematic conservative movement in Lebanon and then stand by and allow their allies to kill indiscriminately Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps was a moment of reckoning for American supporters of Israel, or it was the beginning of that raising real questions of the righteousness of Israel, so if up to that point Israel had been both a very powerful military but also always carrying the connotation of victim or potential victim, now you see Israel portrayed in the media as clearly the aggressors in the 1982 war, and clearly going in to occupy Lebanon and for whatever reason, even if you thought the reasons were understandable, that was a very different image, this is not the first time Israel has been an aggressor in a war, that's not what I'm saying, the time that it was represented as that very straight forwardly in the US media, people began asking questions about that, and to see what was happening in Lebanon really the destruction of Lebanon over the next five or six years and the ways in which Palestinians were really getting victimized on a lot of fronts but the ways in which Israel had allied itself with and allowed to happen, the ways in which Israel had made allies that carried out this kind of attack on Palestinians really raised questions about what Israel was about and did Israel actually ever actually have an interest or a chance of making peace with Palestinians if it would allow these kind of massacres to occur and stand by and watch it. And that was I think the beginning of a very very long-term process of people asking pretty hard questions about what Israel was doing in the region.

There were many conflicts and aggressions through the 1970s and 80s in the Middle East, and many parties have varying opinions on them. But almost everyone can agree that what happened at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps was horrific.

On September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1982 the Israeli Defense Forces secured the exteriors of the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps outside of Beirut, which were at the time home to thousands of



Palestinian refugees, essentially trapping the inhabitants of the camp inside, while the Maronite Christian Phalange party entered and over the course of thirty-eight hours murdered between 800 and 3500 civilians.

*I went back and forth on how much detail I wanted to include about this massacre and about many of the violent events I have discussed during this project. I ultimately decided that this was not the place for graphic details, and to trust that if you want to know more about some of these events you can research it yourself. I am also trying to be wary of my position as an American and as a Westerner retelling stories and horrific events that don't necessarily belong to me. I don't mean to be skipping over anything or failing to acknowledge certain facts, but I had to make decisions about what to include, and sometimes chose to be more conservative when it came to violent details.*

So after 1982, international ideas about Israel's role began to change. And I want to emphasize the word began, because this is an ongoing process, and a fluid process. There is no monolithic idea of what Israel means, but what there *is*, is a hegemonic view, a view that most Americans hold and that certainly all American policymakers hold or publically express. That Israel is constantly in danger and requires our unconditional support. But as with most hegemonic views, not everyone believes this, and 1982 played a big role in changing at least some peoples' mind's as to whether or not Israel played the role of aggressor and/or oppressor. The next major change came at the end of the 1980s with the [First Intifada](#).

MM: It was 82 invasion and then the First Intifada which consolidated as vision of the Palestinians as engaged in a struggle and also as having been victimized and now trying to respond to that victimization and in the First Intifada in which they were seen as and were primarily non-violent, they were perhaps for the first time, really getting the media right, they understood the image of young boys throwing stones at tanks, that was a real protest, but they also recognized that this was a powerful image about their own status, but they also organized all sorts of local community action groups and really tried to take the leadership of the Palestinian movement back the people on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza, from the PLO leadership which was established abroad I think in Tunis at the time, and so it was a movement that got the world's attention, that was a nonviolent movement that brought in all sorts of people from the grassroots, that brought power back to people in the occupied territories and not took it away from the leadership, but really challenged the traditional leadership, and that inspired a number of people in the United States to think differently about Palestinians, activists for sure, also other people who saw the Palestinians engaged in a nonviolent movement, fighting for what seemed like a reasonable right to have a national self-determination, to have a state, and because there had also been some questions raised about Israel just five years before, people may have been more open to this rethinking about what Palestinians were or about what Palestine as a nation might mean.

I want to talk more about the First Intifada, in Arabic intifada means uprising, and I think it makes sense to hear from someone who lived through it, even if he was rather young at the time.

SA: So I'm [Sa'ed Atshan](#) and I'm a faculty member at Swarthmore College in the Peace and Conflict Studies program. So I am from Palestine, from the West Bank, I grew up in Ramallah and I went to a Quaker school there called [Ramallah Friends School](#) which was established in the 1800s and I'm a 2002 graduate and I moved to the US for college, so I went to Swarthmore for undergrad, where I'm back now as a faculty member, through the Quaker connections because Swarthmore was founded by the Quakers, so it's really great to go full circle. But I also

do have US citizenship, so I now identify myself as a Palestinian-American, that hyphenated identity. You know there are different narratives as to what precipitated exactly the First Intifada, and I don't find those kinds of debates particularly productive, I think for me, you look at some of the socio-economic indicators etcetera, Palestinians were, that was the period, the run up to the First Intifada in terms of socioeconomic conditions of Palestinians was actually much better than other periods in Palestinian history so it's kind of counterintuitive why people would rise up but actually if you really think about it, sometimes when you have somewhat of a middle class emerging, somewhat of a civil society emerging, when you have people being educated etcetera that can actually help catalyze social movements in other ways, so I think that people just were fed up and tired with the occupation, people were fed up and tired with dependency, people were exhausted that the Palestinian medical system was subservient to the Israeli medical system, that the Palestinian industry, Palestinian labor was subservient to Israeli labor demands, Palestinians had Israeli currency imposed on them, Palestinian imports/exports were being controlled by Israel, just that level of control, every basic aspect of life, people were exhausted and people had enough and people wanted independence and they wanted to be able to live as human beings with dignity and socioeconomic rights, civic political rights that any other people have in any other nation state, so people can only be stateless and under military occupation for so long, the unfortunate reality is that that persists, all that context continues and the occupation has been quite durable now for decades, but it can't go on forever, ultimately this system is not sustainable.

I feel very lucky to have sat down with Professor Atshan. We first met when he came to my college to give a lecture on Palestinian and Israeli groups currently participating in non-violent resistance. It seems to me that he's a rising star in his field of Peace and Conflict Studies, and maybe more importantly he's one of the kindest and most generous people with whom I have gotten to work. Professor Atshan is the rare academic who can not only use his lived experience to enhance his scholarship, but also remove himself from them to see the nuance in different situations. While deciding what parts of his interview to include I had a difficult time cutting anything because in everything he said he was perfectly expressive and informative. Professor Atshan is no doubt an important voice of our time, and his perspective was critical for me in understanding the last twenty years of Palestinian history.

SSE: Were you aware at all during the First Intifada? Do you remember it?

SA: Yeah I was 3 in 1987, when the First Intifada erupted so I have recollections from those years, I don't remember everything in vivid details but I think for me what was most striking was the "[Break Their Bones](#)" policy which was Rabin's policy that authorized the Israeli military to literally break the bones, limbs, skulls, of Palestinians protesting or people who were accused of throwing stones etc. so I just remember the visceral terror of seeing especially young men, with multiple soldiers around them being beaten and the excruciating pain, the screaming and agony and that kind of repression, that will always be with me, that's something I will never ever forget even though I was quite young, like you saw that publically and also at a very young age this idea that being reminded by my family that at any moment I could get snatched up, by soldiers and taken away and that sense of that imminent kind of experience if you look at the data that 40% of Palestinian men in the West Bank will be incarcerated at some point, it's an astonishing statistic, it's pervasive, there's not a single family that hasn't been affected by this in some way or another or their neighbors or extended family, their loved ones, so that really has a powerful affect on your consciousness from a very young age and unfortunately, I'm 32 and that hasn't changed, that's still the reality and so that's really, now that I say that it's almost like that's hitting me it's like wow this is ridiculous for decades this has been the reality, but also there's tremendous beauty, resilience, strength, communities coming together, familial support, people,



it was illegal to go to school at some point so people had clandestine classrooms in homes, in churches, in mosques, people had community gardens there was a huge spirit of volunteerism and community solidarity so I think it's really important to keep that in mind that Palestinians really learned to cope and tried to support one another in the face of this adversity and also knowing that theirs was a just cause, calling for the end of the occupation, freedom, rights, etc. that these are their inalienable rights, so when you feel like you have justice on your side, that helps people in terms of their conviction and their motivation to catalyze social movements.

Professor McAlister similarly spoke about how the First Intifada impacted people in the United States who were participating in social movements at the time.

MM: It didn't change everything but it certainly had an impact at the time, it really got the attention of the US media and it enlivened a couple of people who were politically active too, people who in the 1980s, left wing or liberal people who were involved in the nuclear freeze, and opposing to potential US invasion in Central America, who were anti-apartheid, who had all the right positions on all those things and who never really wanted to talk about Palestinians, or if they did felt like Palestinians were only the aggressors and Israel was only the victim as opposed to seeing both sides playing different roles at different times. They began to be more open to seeing Palestine as an issue for people who cared about challenging US foreign policy and fighting for social justice on a global scale.

Many people mark the Oslo Accords as the ending point of the First Intifada. The signing of the Oslo Accords also marks the beginning of the [Oslo Peace Process](#) between the Israeli government and the PLO, which sought to achieve peace by returning to former UN Resolutions, and fulfilling the right of Palestinians to self-determination.

MM: When Oslo happened there was a sense and a very real understanding that you had to negotiate with the PLO, like it was no longer possible to just sidestep the PLO, the PLO was understood as the representative of the Palestinian national movement and therefore of Palestinian people, but even at Oslo, there were official negotiations going on between more grassroots Palestinians, people from Palestine, who were there at Oslo making good faith negotiations but there were also really behind the scenes deals getting cut with Arafat and the PLO leadership, and so even though Palestinians on the ground many of them were so happy about Oslo, and it was a big step forward, that the PLO had been recognized as an important player, as a key player. The Oslo accords lead to a lot of hope among Palestinians and one of my friends has talked about being in Gaza, right after the Oslo Accords had been signed and that people just came out onto the streets and were just sort of walking down the streets at night, there was just so much excitement that this was now their territory, that they were going to get to control it, that it was no longer going to be Israel's territory, it was gonna be Palestine's territory, and then to find that the actual implementation of the Accords and also some of the provisions of the accords were never designed to actually provide a Palestinian state and they did not.

SA: Well I think most Palestinians initially celebrated the Oslo Accords, I think it's easy now to look back in retrospect and say that was a mistake but for Palestinians there was an acceptance, a lot of Palestinians especially in the Occupied territories realize that there's a tremendous asymmetry in power, Palestinians don't have a state, don't have a military, Israel has nuclear weapons, is backed by the US the superpower of the world, and we're going to need to compromise. So there was a huge historic compromise to say we will recognize Israel in 78% of historic Palestine, all we want is 22%, Gaza and the West Bank and we're going to settle for that. People's imaginations started running wild, they imagined Gaza as the Singapore of

the region, it's on the Mediterranean, you can have a port there, there was an airport there, people can fly international flights, there's some kind of corridor for connecting Gaza to the West Bank, as soon as you get to the West Bank you're in East Jerusalem, the Old City, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Al-Aqsa Mosque, think about tourism etcetera, and the West Bank has rolling hills, olive groves, fertile agriculture land, aquifers of water, the West Bank is breathtakingly beautiful, it's the land of milk and honey, you know and so you can have agricultural products that you can export all around the world, and you have minerals, you have the Dead Sea, you have all of this, so people thought that actually we could build a robust viable state, even though it's funky in terms of its continuity, but somehow we would make this work, and for the PLO which was in exile, exiled from country to country to country, the fact that the Oslo Accords allowed a number of PLO leaders, including Yasser Arafat to come back to historic Palestine, even though to one part of it was considered very symbolic, an exercise of the Right of Return so there was tremendous hope and Israel did promise that by 1999 the Palestinian State would emerge, and even though the areas would be divided into [A, B, and C](#), that ultimately all of the West Bank/Gaza would become area A and would become a viable sovereign state. We didn't imagine that after we signed Oslo, that Israel would use this to consolidate its power, to institutionalize the occupation and that by 1994 the year after Oslo, Israel doubled the rate of settlement expansion, building more settlements than it ever has rapidly in its history, and so very quickly it became clear that "Oh god, the areas A, B, and C are not going to be handed over to area As this is a way to bantustanize to ghettoize, put Palestinians on kind of reservations" so this is one of the historic processes of settler-colonialism, and so 1999 emerges and there's no Palestinian state that emerges, we're in 2016, where's the Palestinian state? We negotiated forever and ever and ever, as we negotiated how to divide up the pizza, Israel used that as an opportunity to eat up the pizza, as we're negotiated about how to divide it up, so it's like ahhh, you know? So then it's no surprise that by the year 2000 the Second Intifada erupts.

So what do you do when years of treaties and international involvement do nothing to improve your situation? How do you continue to hope? What does hope mean at this point? How do you garner the world's attention under such oppression?

Next episode I'll talk more with Professor Atshan about the Second Intifada, how we got to where we are in 2017, and why right now is a critical point in this history.

I'm Sophia Steinert-Evoy and this has been the second episode of "A People Without"

Thank you to everyone who made this episode possible. I would like to especially thank my interview subjects, Professors Joshua Schreier, Melani McAlister, and Sa'ed Atshan, and my dad Scott Evoy. Thanks also to Professors Tyrone Simpson and Hua Hsu from the American Studies Department here at Vassar, Orion Morrison-Worrell for letting me talk out some of my ideas with him, my grandfather Alan Steinert Jr. for his incredible patience with me, Darcy Gordineer for helping me with travel, and Santi Slade for giving me a place to stay in Philadelphia. For more information on the content and music featured on the episode you can go to my website [apeoplewithout.wordpress.com](http://apeoplewithout.wordpress.com)

## Sources for Episode 2:

### Music:

[Tradition](#) – Fiddler on the Roof ([Instrumental](#))

[Someday I'll like you but before let me rest in my solitude \(Lonely character's theme\)](#) – Komiku

[Fouler l'horizon](#) – Komiku

[Hamdulillah \(city of Life Remix\)](#) – The Narcicyst feat. Shadia Mansour

### Texts:

**Amy Kaplan**

[“In Palestine, Occupational Hazards”](#)

**Rashid Khalidi**

[The Palestine Question and the U.S. Public Sphere](#)

**Melani McAlister**

[Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945](#)

**Jasbir K. Puar**

[Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times](#)

**Edward W. Said**

[Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World](#)

**Michael J. Shapiro**

[“Moral Geographies and the Ethics of Post-Sovereignty”](#)

**Avi Shlaim and William Roger Louis**

[The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins and Consequences](#)

**Charles A. Smith**

[Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict](#)

### Articles:

The Guardian: [“Trump in apparent U-turn on Israeli settlement growth”](#)

AlJazeera: [“Israel: Water as a tool to dominate Palestinians”](#)

Electronic Intifada: [“‘They shot my father in the head’: interview with survivor of Sabra and Shatila massacre”](#)

### Resources:

Film: [The Occupation of the American Mind](#)

Interactive Site: [Oslo Accords: the full story and all the secrets](#)

## EPIISODE THREE: The Global Call

SA: I don't think you can really compare the violence of the occupier and the violence of the occupied.

This is the third episode of "A People Without," a series on our personal relationships, histories, and geographies with America, Israel, and Palestine. My name is Sophia Steinert-Evoy.

You're listening to Professor Sa'ed Atshan talk about his high school years in the West Bank during the [Second Intifada](#), which started in September 2000.

SA: There's huge inequality in terms of military might, we don't have a military so we have to be careful about false equivalence but nonetheless, I am committed to nonviolence, most Palestinians are deeply nonviolent. We were very critical of Palestinians using violence in that context, and the Israeli use of violence was incredibly disproportionate and that was a really really really challenging time, the idea of military curfew, being trapped in your house and if you leave your house you can be shot and killed and then getting constipated cause all you have left are lentils and you run out of water you know, I know someone for example who had a kidney stone attack in the middle of the Second Intifada. How do you even get to the hospital in that moment? Even for ambulances it's precarious to be operating then, so you see very quickly just how helpless it become when the occupying power shows you that it can shut down all of the arteries to life, it can, during the Second Intifada, it foreshadowed what we now see in Gaza in terms of Gaza being blockaded and trapped, and it also gives us a sense of the future in the West Bank, which is that if Palestinians act up in a way that Israel doesn't like, Israel can always turn the "Area As" of the West Bank into mini Gaza's, because you're completely surrounded by the walls, settlements, checkpoints, they can just cut you off from the rest of the world. And that's a frightening thought for a lots of Palestinians in the West Bank, so there was a lot of trauma and a lot of fatigue and I think after the Second Intifada people haven't really, people have not recovered and Palestinians are just, I keep using the word exhausted, they've tried all kinds of resistance, they've tried violence, they've tried nonviolence, they've tried negotiations they've tried, and the occupation has just continued in the settlements continue expanding and so that to me is very troubling when people don't see a horizon but the BDS movement I think is giving people a sense of empowerment and light at the end of the tunnel.

In the last episode I discussed how my past brought me to this point and how certain historic events have shaped the ways in which Americans think and feel about Israel and Israelis, and Palestine and Palestinians. I introduced Professor Atshan to learn about the First Palestinian Intifada and you just heard him talking about the Second, and at the end mentioning the BDS movement. This episode we'll finally get up to current day, but first let's talk a little more about the Second Intifada.

Professor Atshan referred to the "Area As" of the West Bank, this is a reference to the way in which the West Bank was divided up during the [Oslo Peace Process](#) in the 1990s. This plan divided the West Bank into three administrative areas, [A, B, and C](#). Area A is technically under

the complete control of the Palestinian Authority, the governmental structure also put in place during the 90s. This area comprises around 18% of the West Bank and Israeli citizens are forbidden from entering. Area B is under joint control of the Palestinians and Israelis and includes another 22% of the West Bank. The rest of the West Bank is comprised of Area C, land that had become home to over 110,000 Jewish settlers by the time of the Oslo Peace Process. Israel was to gradually oversee the transfer of Area C back to Palestinians by 1999, but as you may remember Professor Atshan saying in the last episode, this never happened. Nor did the Israeli Defense Forces ever stop their military occupation of the entirety of the West Bank, with the Area As partitioned off by checkpoints, restricting movement of even the Palestinians who live under Palestinian rule. At the end of the 90s, it was clear to Palestinians that they had been lied to about their impending sovereignty, and a Second Intifada erupted in 2000.

In the first few months of the Second Intifada, a series of high profile violent acts on both sides ensured that peace would not come easily, and over the next five years over 3,300 Palestinians were killed by Israeli troops and security forces, not counting those killed by settlers, and around 1,030 Israelis and foreigners were killed by Palestinians.

In 2002 Israel began construction on what they call a "[separation barrier](#)," isolating the West Bank from Israel. The barrier has been under continuous construction since 2002, even though the International Court [ruled it illegal](#) thirteen years ago. Most of the barrier is comprised of an electrified barbed wire fence, but in more urban areas it takes the form of a concrete wall, eight meters tall. Only 15% of it runs along the internationally recognized border of the West Bank, the other 85% digging in to territory acknowledged as Palestinian in the Oslo Accords.

The problems and contradictions of the separation barrier have been emphasized in recent months with the growing enthusiasm for and against the [proposed wall](#) along the southern border of the United States. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in Midtown Manhattan I stood amongst a [crowd of people](#) chanting:

Audio: *ALL THE WALLS HAVE GOT TO GO FROM PALESTINE TO MEXICO*

So how did I get there? The last part of my personal narrative that I detailed was in 2014, the summer before my sophomore year at Vassar, I had experienced a sort of political awakening, One part of this awakening that I didn't mention before was reading the novel [Mornings in Jenin](#) by Palestinian-American author [Susan Abulhawa](#). Abulhawa is also the founder of the non-governmental organization [Playgrounds for Palestine](#). After reading this book of historical fiction, and doing a little outside research, I thought when I got back to Vassar in the Fall I would start a Playgrounds for Palestine group, without knowing really anything about the organizing that was already happening on campus.

So there I was, nineteen years old, still knowing very little about Israel or Palestine or Sophia Steinert-Evoy, thinking that starting a chapter of this group on my highly politically engaged college campus would be a good idea. I went to a meeting of activists upon going back to school and the first thing we did was go around and introduce ourselves and what organization

we were part of on campus, these were groups like Young Democratic Socialists, Student Labor Dialogue, Femme Alliance, Queer Coalition, and of course, [Students for Justice in Palestine](#). Then, it's my turn, and I introduce myself saying that I want to start a chapter of Playgrounds for Palestine. As far as I remember it went okay, but I must have looked a little silly as someone who had never been involved on campus suddenly coming in and saying I want to single handedly start a new group, and it's not like Students for Justice in Palestine, or SJP, had exactly been under the radar my freshman year. On the contrary, they had participated in a highly publicized protest of a school trip to Israel, and come under intense scrutiny when a member posted a Nazi propaganda poster on the group's blog. Now here I was, wanting to build playgrounds. The head of SJP, Yasmeen, took me aside after that meeting and seemed a little annoyed, she said "So, you know there was just a war in Gaza, they're struggling to survive there, why would we focus our energy on sending them playgrounds?" I was ready for this. Susan Abulhawa had explained why playgrounds and not other things like medical supplies or food, she argued that when we focus on the mere project of keeping Palestinians alive, then we lose sight of their humanity. When all the aid goes to things like medical supplies and food, then children might be kept alive, but they're not really living as children. I think I might have been kind of convincing, but Yasmeen was more convincing, and got me to agree to join SJP and maybe we could do a project focusing on Playgrounds for Palestine. Thus began my relationship with SJP, and more generally, my relationship with activism, and what some might consider radical politics.

Students for Justice in Palestine, sounds pretty harmless right? We are students, and we want justice, in Palestine. What's wrong with that? Little did I know, a lot of people had a lot of problems with it.

But let's get back on track and think about what we've discussed so far. In the first episode I talked about the history of the founding of the State of Israel, and in the second episode I laid out the history on the ground and didn't go into that much detail about the politics from the 1950s to the 1990s, because instead of focusing on what was happening in Israel, I wanted to look at what Americans *thought* was happening in Israel, this is an American Studies thesis after all. Don't get me wrong, I know my history, but I only have so many minutes. Now we kind of have the two coming together. Palestinians had been fighting for their rights since the end of World War I when the British came in and vowed to establish a Jewish homeland in historic Palestine, the arena changed drastically in 1948 with the Nakba when 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from the State of Israel, and the 120,000 who remained became second-class citizens in their own homeland. Then, in 1967 the situation again took a turn when Israel began its military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, which Palestinians have been fighting ever since.

In a way, this was all an effort to build up to the current moment and talk about where we are now. But in order to do that, we need to go back to the 2000s for just a little bit. Then I promise we will talk about 2017.

Ok, so the in the 2000s it's important to think about the global context, especially what was going on in the United States. George W. Bush was sworn into office in January 2001, just



months after the start of the Second Intifada. And of course, the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 would have enormous ramifications for the entire region of the Middle East, including Israel and Palestine. The effects of 9/11 have been two-fold, first, the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan continue a long line of American and European occupation of Middle Eastern countries, the effects of which we are seeing manifested in the extremism we see today. And second, 9/11 has cemented the association between Muslim and terrorist in the American mind, a process we saw in its early stages at the 1972 Olympics. Another effect of 9/11 was the creation of the American [Department of Homeland Security](#), which has been [surveilling and punishing](#) Muslim communities ever since. This and other unconstitutional practices have been systematically carried out through the last fifteen years, with promises from the current administration about escalating Islamophobic tactics in the name of security. Professor McAlister has thought a lot the broad repercussions of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

MM: One interesting thing about 9/11 is that it had nothing to do with Palestine, it was not about that it was about all sorts of other things, the US role in the region, notions of Islam, but it was not about Palestine and it wasn't carried out about Palestinians, it did hurt the Palestinian movement no question, because people see all Arabs as one thing and of course Israel was turned to as a model of how to deal with terrorism and how to be aggressive and not put up with anything from those Arab terrorists, but I think in a way even though it really hurt people's images of Arabs for a long time it did also in some way cause people to ask questions again about what was the US doing in the region that caused such disruption, even people who had no interest in saying the US had any responsibility for it, maybe very conservative people perhaps, but did begin to ask questions and become more interested in what was happening in the region, I mean my classes began filling up with people who were neither Arab nor Jewish, and that was new. So I think we can ask questions about how 9/11 devastating as it and the war on terror have been for Palestinians and for Arabs of course for Iraqis and Syrians and many others even more than for Palestinians, it like the attacks in Munich in some ways provided the impetus for some people to beginning to ask questions about the larger politics.

So maybe some people did begin asking questions. With all eyes on Iraq and Afghanistan the Palestinian Authority and the State of Israel signed a truce in February 2005 effectively ending the Second Intifada. But this didn't end the violence. Israel had pulled their settlers out of the Gaza Strip, but they remained in the West Bank with the oversight of an Israeli military occupation, which is still the situation we are in today. After the failure of countless violent and non-violent protestations, Palestinians tried another method of resistance: in 2005 a groups of Palestinians involved in civil society in the West Bank issued the international call for the boycott, divestment, and sanction of Israeli goods. Sa'ed Atshan was a Palestinian college student in the United States at the time.

SA: Well a lot of people laughed, you know a lot of people dismissed it, thought that it was crazy, but people also knew that there was a historical precedent when it came to South Africa, that it was tremendously successful, people knew that it had been tested before, people knew that some of the parallels were undeniable, whether it was Israel and South Africa being very close allies or the Bantustanization of Palestinian areas in the West Bank under Israeli system,

segregation between blacks and white and institutionalized legalized segregation between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the West Bank, two different legal regimes, Israel being a small state, South Africa being a small state, so they are, they need to be part of global transnational networks and they respond to that, so the parallels were really undeniable.

[The South Africa analogy](#) has been incredibly helpful in arguing for a boycott of Israel, but like most analogies, it's not perfect. One reason it works is because in both cases there's one group in power based on a history of colonial rule, and the group not in power lives under a separate set of discriminatory laws. One reason it doesn't work is because the group in power in South Africa, white Christian Europeans, were the same people always in power in Europe, whereas in Israel the group in power is a group that has historically been oppressed in Europe, and some people still claim that Palestinians living in Israel have equal rights to Jewish Israelis, which is just not true, there are over [50 laws](#) discriminating against non-Jewish citizens of Israel.

Many people protest the term apartheid being applied to Israel, but it's becoming more difficult to deny. For example in March 2017 the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia issued a report titled "[Israeli Practices Towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid](#)" which describes Israel as an apartheid state and as a racial state. The head of the commission [was forced to resign](#) and rescind the report.

Not everyone agrees on the legality of practices of Israel, and not everyone agrees on the validity of boycott, divestment, and sanctions, so I'm going to give you some information, and you can decide for yourself and/or do your own research if you're interested or you don't trust me.

I've pulled directly from the BDS Movement [website](#) for this following section, the BDS website was created by the [BDS National committee](#), or the BNC, a coalition of members of Palestinian civil society working to promote BDS across the world.

The three tactics of boycotts, divestment, and sanction are different ways of putting economic pressure on Israel. Boycotting is the most straightforward, it's a way for individuals, organizations, or institutions to say "I don't like what's happening in Israel, I'm not gonna spend any of my money on Israeli goods."

Divestment is a little more complicated, divestment campaigns urge individuals, banks, local councils, churches, and universities to withdraw investments from all Israeli companies and international companies profiting from the violation of Palestinian human rights.

Sanctions call on national governments to hold Israel accountable under international law by ending military trade and free-trade agreements with Israel, and excluding them from international groups like the United Nations or even FIFA. For example, the American government currently [has sanctions in place](#) against Iran, North Korea, Syria, Sudan, and Cuba, and different departments also have embargoes against another thirty countries or territories including Afghanistan, China, Lebanon, Russia, and Yemen.



The BDS call urges nonviolent pressure on Israel until it complies with international law by meeting three demands.

The first demand is ending its occupation and colonization of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights in Syria and dismantling of the wall, or as its formally called, the separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank. Implicit in this is that Israel will also end its ongoing blockade of Gaza.

The second demand is recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality. Although most Palestinians were expelled from Israel in 1948, those who remained and their descendants now live as second-class citizens and are subjected to a system of racialized discrimination.

The third and most contentious demand is the “Right of Return.” The [Right of Return](#) calls for Israel to respect, protect, and promote the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in [UN Resolution 194](#) in 1948. The main reason why this is so contentious is because it represents demographic threat to Israel’s Jewish majority. There are currently over seven million Palestinian refugees, and another 1.8 million Palestinians living in Israel. There are just under 6.5 million Jews living in Israel. If every Palestinian refugee were to be allowed back in Israel, and each one of them came, then it would no longer be a Jewish majority state. Professor McAlister had something to say about this.

MM: You don’t have right of return and have that mean now we’re gonna have a Palestinian state in the West Bank but Palestinians can go to what is now Israel en masse, is that what? Right of return seems to imply a one state solution, so I think that’s always been the problem with right of return actually, but I think there’s a fundamental problem with a state that’s only for Jews too, or that is primarily for Jews, so maybe, I wonder if people are, now you can’t even say “well the Palestinian authority represents the Palestinians and what they say, let them negotiate a peace” the Palestinian diaspora has pretty strongly rejected that.

The question of who speaks for Palestinians is a difficult and complicated question, but as an American, it is not mine to answer. In fact, BDS specifically does not call for a stance on any solution, supporting BDS is a symbol of solidarity, not a suggestion for a certain kind of political structure, as long as it provides equal rights to all people. And even though it has been painted as a rather radical position, BDS does not call for anything that the UN itself has not already called for, notably the right of return and equal rights for everyone in the state of Israel. But you would never know this by listening to how mainstream politicians talk about it.

Here’s audio from Ted Cruz’s [speech at AIPAC](#), the American Israel Public Affairs committee in March 2016 while he was still running for president:

*I’m thrilled to be here with you today, and lemme say at the outset, perhaps to the surprise of the previous speaker, Palestine has not existed since 1948.*

The speech is nearly forty minutes long, but don't worry I'm just gonna play one more clip from around the fifteen minute mark.

*And as president, I will do everything in my power to ensure that anyone who provides financial support to the BDS movement, including schools and universities, will lose any access to federal funding...applause...and to the extent that they have engaged in illegal behavior, they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. All of us here understand that Israel is not the barrier to peace, it is the Palestinian Authority and a so-called unity government with Hamas, that celebrates the murder of women and children and incites and even compensates the terrorist attacks. If the Palestinians try to push through a United Nations Resolution to unilaterally declare Palestinian statehood, America will veto that resolution.*

And you might be thinking, well, that's Ted Cruz, he's a member of the tea party, we all know they're a bit extreme, and I would respond with [this](#)...

*Hillary Rodham Clinton: There is much Americans can learn from Israel, from cyber security to energy security to water security and just on an everyday people-to-people level, and it's especially important to continue fostering relationships between American and Israeli young people who may not always remember our shared past. They are the future of our relationship, and we have to do more to promote that. Many of the young people here today are on the front lines of the battle to oppose the alarming Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement known as BDS. Particularly at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world, especially in Europe, we must repudiate all efforts to malign, isolate, and undermine Israel and the Jewish people. I've been sounding the alarm for a while now. As I wrote last year in a letter to the heads of major American Jewish Organizations, we have to be united in fighting back against BDS, many of its proponents have demonized Israeli scientists and intellectuals, even students. To all the college students who may have encountered this on campus, I hope you stay strong, keep speaking out, don't let anyone silence you, bully you, or try to shut down debate, especially in places of learning like colleges and universities...applause...anti-Semitism has no place in any civil society, not in America, not in Europe, not anywhere.*

There's a lot in there, especially linking BDS directly to anti-Semitism, if you're interested in this I would encourage you to look at the organization [Jewish Voice for Peace](#), but for now the time has come and gone to talk about Hillary Clinton so I'm gonna move on...

So one of the biggest problems that the BDS movement has faced is that the first time most people hear about it, it's in a negative light. Whether it's from a hardline Zionist in your family, or Hillary Clinton, BDS is being talked about, but even if it is being talked about negatively, that doesn't always have a negative impact on the movement. Here's Professor Atshan:

*SA: If they would just ignore the BDS movement, it would hurt the BDS movement more but actually it's the paradox of oppression that the more you attack the BDS movement the more people talk about the BDS movement, the more of a consciousness there is, the more that that*

acronym becomes familiar, the more people start reading about it and wondering about it and the more that people start debating it, and also the BDS movement has shifted the discourse completely. I remember when I first came to the states for college, people were debating whether or not Palestinians even exist as people. People would tell me things like “you don’t exist, it’s an invented people it’s just an imagined category” etc. We got over that, they finally recognized we exist, then we had to debate whether Palestine ever existed or etcetera but we got over that, now you can say “Palestine” you couldn’t say “Palestine” ever, you couldn’t utter the p-word, then we had debates about whether or not there’s even an occupation, you know terms like disputed territory, now it’s undeniable, there’s global consensus that there’s an occupation that it’s illegal, it’s immoral, the debate is “how do you deal with it?” What the BDS movement has done is it’s shifted the discourse so that we’re not even talking about all those matters we go immediately to “is Israel an apartheid state? Should it be boycotted, should institutions complicit in this be boycotted?” So it shifts the conversation, that’s your point of departure now, is debating apartheid debating boycotts. So it just saves you so much breath and energy, you’re not having to establish your humanity or, you should go straight to the point and even if people disagree with you, just having that debate in and of itself for people who don’t know that much makes people realize there’s a debate about whether Israel’s racist in its policies. That’s really powerful.

BDS is increasingly up for debate on [college campuses](#) across the US, Palestine solidarity groups have been bringing different resolutions to their student governments, boards of trustees, and administrators, but it has not been easy.

I’m gonna give you the abbreviated version of Vassar’s experience with BDS.

I went abroad to Amsterdam for the first semester of my junior year, and I didn’t really keep up with what was happening on campus at Vassar. When I came back in January I went to the first SJP meeting of the semester and realized that I had in fact missed quite a lot. For the entire first semester SJP had been organizing a [BDS campaign](#) to last for six weeks starting February 1<sup>st</sup>. The objective of the campaign was to educate as many people as possible on the situation in Israel-Palestine and get them to support BDS, so that when members of the Vassar Student Association, our student government, voted on [our resolution](#) in support of BDS on March 6<sup>th</sup>, we would have the numbers and support of the campus behind us. A lot of planning and hard work went into this campaign and the resolution and I’m not going to go into too much detail, but put simply, it was a shit show. It was all anyone talked about for weeks, friendships were broken, lines were drawn, and a group of us were put on a right-wing pro-Israel blacklist website called Canary Mission for supporting BDS. It’s still the first thing that comes up when you Google my name, but I’d appreciate it if you Googled my name and clicked on something else so that maybe another link will come up first in the future.

The resolution went to a schoolwide vote and it failed by a narrow margin, but it was only the first time anyone had tried at Vassar. Students at McGill University in Montreal have tried to pass BDS thirteen times and failed. They keep trying. Students at DePaul University, Loyola University, Northwestern University, Stanford University, and the University of California schools

have all passed various legislation in support of BDS or just divestment from Israel. There's hope.

But BDS isn't a solution, [some](#) argue that it's not even a movement, but a tactic in the broader Palestine Solidarity movement or movement for Palestinian rights. One common phrase used by Palestinian Rights activists is that BDS is the floor not the ceiling. Which is to say, BDS is the first step, it's the least we can do, it's a starting point, and only once BDS is successful, can we start the real work of rectifying the injustice that the Palestinian people have faced.

A one-state solution can imply a number of things. First, it could imply that Israel formally annex the West Bank and Gaza and integrate Palestinians into the Zionist State as second-class citizens, many argue that there is already a one state. The second idea is for a democratic state integrating Palestinian and Israeli society into one democratic state not based on ethnoreligious demographics. The third, which is what Professor McAlister mentioned earlier, implies one Palestinian state which privileges Palestinians as the majority after the process of right of return.

The two-state solution is what's widely acknowledged in liberal circles as THE solution best for everyone. This is kind of what they tried to institute after the Oslo Peace Process, so in some ways it's already been tried. Since the 1990s, the two-state solution has been publically endorsed by the United States, both the Democratic and the Republican parties, the United Nations, the Palestinian Authority, and at times, Prime Minister Netanyahu. The problems with this are that many Israelis, including current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seem to consider all of the land that's now recognized as Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights to belong to the Jewish people, and now that there are over 800,000 Jewish settlers (if you include East Jerusalem) in land that Israel occupied in the West Bank after the 1967 War, it doesn't really seem plausible that those people are going anywhere, and the Israeli government is certainly not encouraging them to leave.

There are problems with both, but as a solidarity movement, BDS stresses that it's not the job of the international community to decide what is right for the Palestinian people but simply show support through our economic decisions. However, this discourse of two-state or one-state is prolific.

To talk about this I want to introduce one last professor, [Neve Gordon](#). Gordon is a professor at Ben-Gurion University in Israel, but he is currently abroad as a visiting professor at SOAS, University of London. Gordon's research focuses on human rights and political theory in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After reading an [article](#) of his, I reached out to Professor Gordon and was able to talk with him via Skype this winter for a short but incredibly informative interview, here he is talking about the problem with the idea of a two-state solution.

NG: The idea is that there is this fantasy that there are two states between the Jordan Valley and the Mediterranean and that the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem is in some sense temporal and all we have to do is end this colonial project, and while the facts on the ground, the materiality is a one state solution, or a one state between that

area, at least for Jews, and it's an apartheid regime because between the Jordan Valley and the Mediterranean, there is a population that lives under two legal regimes, one population lives under a legal regime that is more or less democratic with all the basic rights and protections that you as an American, a white American, can enjoy and that is my group in Israel and so I'm a very privileged person and then there's another population living within that same territory that lives under a totally different legal regime that has no basic rights, no passports, its movement is confined, it cannot vote, and so forth and so what the two-state solution at this point in history, it might not have been in the past, but at this point in history is basically a chimera, a kind of façade, to allow the deepening and the fortification of the one state to happen in its apartheid mode...

What Gordon is saying, is that the current discourse surrounding Israel-Palestine assumes that there *are* two states, Israel and Palestine, when in reality there's one state, Israel, where people live in dramatically different situations depending on their religion, race, and location, which he compares to the situation here in the United States. Another connection I'll elaborate on later. OK back to Gordon:

NG:...-what we need is a paradigm shift, we need to start thinking out of the box and we need to say "OK there is one state and now the question is not one-state/two-state, Palestinians deserve a state or not but there is de facto one state and then the questions that arise is what do we do with this one-state? Do we deepen the apartheid regime, or do we try to democratize it?" If I were to make suggestions on what needs to be done is to kind of put aside any discussion on the two state solution and to start thinking about, how do we democratize this one state, and so this status quo of the two-state solution that is accepted by everyone and is the major paradigm under which practically 98% of the population including many Palestinians, particularly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, not so much in the diaspora, this paradigm basically is one of the major tools that helps sustain the colonial project and so we need to overcome it.

This goes back to one of the foundational questions of Israel, the question of democracy. It is getting more and more difficult to understand the function and practice of a state that both privileges a certain group, and maintains a democracy, and since Israel hails itself as the only democracy in the Middle East, this is no small problem. The founders of the State of Israel knew that this would be impossible without a Jewish majority, which is why they expelled over 700,000 Palestinians in 1948. Israel's current problem is they must continue to perpetuate this idea that they have not annexed the West Bank and Gaza already, and that the Palestinians have some degree of political autonomy, thus they should not have rights as people who live in Israel, even though they live under Israeli law.

This problem of maintaining both a Jewish state AND a democracy is a crucial point for some younger American Jews...

NMG: ...they have mixed feelings basically, they're very critical of the state of Israel. They're part of a different generation and I think there's a real difference between kids who are twenty

years old who have never been to Israel and adults who are 60 years old who's parents fled Nazi Germany. There's a real disconnect, not a disconnect between us, but a difference experience, which leads us to have different thoughts on the conflict. Like maybe my parents and I can both agree that the Jewish nature of the state of Israel will make it so that Israel can never be a fully democratic state, but from there the conclusion that we draw is different. Like my conclusion is like, Israel as a Jewish majority state should not exist, that seems to me as something that's unjust, but I think for older Jews, even if they can understand that Israel is non-democratic, they still, that doesn't give them the impetus to be like "that means Israel as it is should not exist" they're feeling is BUT, we still need it.

SSE: We still need it, yeah.

This change is beginning to show. Young Americans are more sympathetic with Palestinians than ever before, and it's having real consequences.

This is me talking to my friend Noah who I've organized with at Vassar as part of the group Jewish Voice for Peace. Jewish Voice for Peace, or JVP, is the leading Jewish organization in the US that supports BDS. While Jews who support BDS are still in the minority, JVP is growing, and the question of Palestine in the progressive movement is getting harder to ignore. Here's Professor Atshan:

SA: There's definitely a shift, and there are definitely changes and there are generational gaps you know for example young Jewish Americans, polls are showing something like 44% are critical of Israeli policies so I think social media's also helping a lot with that in terms of people having access to all sorts of alternative news and analysis that isn't the mainstream US media that's so pro-Israeli but we also see gaps like people of color in the United States overwhelming identify with the Palestinian struggle, if you disaggregate the data in terms of women and men you see more sympathy among women, between religious and non-religious Americans, more sympathy among secular Americans, if you look between Republicans and Democrats you see significant differences, also Bernie Sanders helped a lot, because he's Jewish that helped a lot and that helped really humanize Palestinians and make critiques of Israel, critiques of Benjamin Netanyahu etcetera much more part of the mainstream discourse, it was exciting to see him in a debate in New York where he was saying these things and to see the audience clapping and cheering.

[Bernie Sanders](#) is just one of the public figures or events that's made a big difference in recent years. As I mentioned in the first episode, what made me start to pay attention was Operation Protective Edge in 2014, I remember feeling really helpless, and I think part of this was feeling like I was alone. But since then I've found that there is a whole community of people out there that think that there's something wrong with the way Israel and the United States are operating, and it's a community that's only growing.

In 2016 when the Movement for Black Lives released their [Vision for Black Lives](#), they included [several points](#) on the liberation of Palestinians being tied to the liberation of Black people within



the United States. This is a connection that Black and Palestinian activists have been making for [decades](#), but this moment seemed to strike a chord with American Liberals who wanted to support Black Lives Matter, but were hesitant to support Palestinians. The inclusion of these lines on Palestine were a [huge deterrent](#) for a lot of American Zionists, and a stark reminder of just how important language can be when talking about Israel.

NMG: I think words are really big blockers in making progress, not that we shouldn't call it genocide, but just that that becomes such a battleground. Like when I talk to my dad about the Movement for Black Lives platform that called what Israel is doing a genocide of the Palestinian people, like my dad who knows all about this stuff, thinks what a lot of Israel does and has done in the past is evil, is just unwilling to have that word genocide be used and then for him the fight isn't about, it's no longer like how can we change what Israel is doing and it's more like "why are we using this specific word to talk about it?" So we end up having those kind of arguments where it's like neither of us thinks what Israel does is great but it's like, how are we talking about it that people are so aware of?

SSE: I think that's a big problem in two ways, 1 because then people are just unwilling to have the conversation because of what you were saying, they feel like they have to defend themselves and the second that they admit that something that Israel is doing isn't great, it's all over, and on the other hand I think language is hard, because it's like it only belongs to people who have complete control of the language or knowledge, because a lot of kids will come into a JVP meeting and be like "I wanna learn stuff, because I feel like everyone's talking about this and I feel like something's wrong, but I feel like I don't know enough to talk about it." And I think that's a shame.

What I was getting at here, was the motivation for this project, people don't want to be having these conversations, because they feel like they don't know enough; and, unfortunately, not everyone is able to take Professor Schreier's "Roots of the Palestine-Israel Conflict" class. So I wanted to make something that could serve as a place to start, which is to say that this project is in no ways conclusive, but it hopefully provides you with a foundation for understanding things like Zionism, the role of the US in Israel, Palestine solidarity, and BDS

I wanted to bring Noah in at the end, because as much as this project has been about Israel and Palestine and America, it's also in some ways about being young and learning things at school and wanting to share them. To me this project has been as much research and scholarship as it has been political activism. I wanted to end by talking to another person who comes from a similar background to me, and who's also struggled with figuring things out and deciding where to go from there.

After BDS failed at Vassar I definitely needed a little break from talking about this subject, but when the question of what I was going to do for my senior project came up, it seemed right to do it about Israel and Palestine and America since it was something I had done a lot of thinking and reflecting on already, and something I wanted to learn more about. But no matter what I produce

or write, I'm always going to ask questions, and of course, check in with the people who keep me on track.

\*telephone ring\*

ASE: Hello?

SSE: Hi mom!

ASE: How are things going?

SSE: It's okay, I think I'm almost done.

ASE: How do you feel about it?

SSE: I think it's good, I don't know though, it feels kind of crazy finishing, I don't really know how to end it.

ASE: Well when you think about what your goals were and what you were hoping was the purpose, maybe that's something to think about, what are you thinking about when you think about that?

SSE: I don't know, I think for me, it just started as something completely different and now it's just really important that it's this stuff I know, and that I want other people to know it, so they kind of feel how I feel. Does that make sense?

ASE: That makes sense, why do you think it's evolved in that way?

SSE: I don't know, I think I wanted to do something different but then I realized there was so much stuff that was kind of a baseline for understanding these larger things. So then if I was gonna start somewhere it had to be at the very beginning, so that's what I did.

As I said earlier, in Palestine solidarity work, BDS is the floor, not the ceiling.

In my work, this project is the same way, it's the floor, I'm just getting started.

Thank you for starting off this journey with me, either by choice, or in the case of my advisors, because it was your job.

My name is Sophia Steinert-Evoy and this has been *A People Without*.

Thank you to everyone who made this episode and this series possible. Special thanks to my interview subjects this episode, Professor Sa'ed Atshan, Professor Melani McAlister, Professor Neve Gordon, Noah Goldberg, and my mother Reverend Alexandra Steinert-Evoy. Thanks also



to Professors Tyrone Simpson and Hua Hsu from the American Studies Department here at Vassar, Professor Joshua Schreier for everything, Sarah Cohn for letting me interview her, KT Firstenberger, William Smith, Caleb Lewis, and Joe Metcalf for being early listeners. For more information on the content and music featured on the episode you can go to my website [apeoplewithout.wordpress.com](http://apeoplewithout.wordpress.com)

## Sources for Episode 3:

### Music:

[Hamdulillah \(city of Life Remix\)](#) – The Narcicyst feat. Shadia Mansour

[Someday I'll like you but before let me rest in my solitude \(Lonely character's theme\)](#) – Komiku

[Fouler l'horizon](#) – Komiku

[T5](#) – Swet Shop Boys

### Videos:

[Hillary Clinton speaks at AIPAC conference](#)

[Ted Cruz AIPAC FULL SPEECH, Washington DC March 21, 2016](#)

### Texts:

**Susan Abulhawa**

[\*Mornings in Jenin\*](#)

**Rashid Khalidi**

[\*The Palestine Question and the U.S. Public Sphere\*](#)

**Melani McAlister**

[\*Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945\*](#)

**Jasbir K. Puar**

[\*Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times\*](#)

**Charles A. Smith**

[\*Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict\*](#)

### Articles:

The Intercept: [Interview With BDS Co-Founder Omar Barghouti: Banned by Israel From Traveling, Threatened With Worse](#)

The Intercept: [Meet the Muslim-American Leaders the FBI and NSA Have Been Spying On](#)

The Associated Press: [With cameras, informants, NYPD eyed mosques](#)

The Nation: [Spied on for Being Muslim](#)

AlJazeera: [Walled Off: 12 years of Israel's separation barrier](#)

AlJazeera: [BDS movement: Lessons from the South Africa Boycott](#)

AlJazeera: [What did the UN apartheid report expose in reality?](#)

AlJazeera: [Black Lives Matter and Palestine: A historic alliance](#)

Washington Post: [Jewish groups decry Black Lives Matter platform's view on Israel](#)

### Resources:

Legal Index: [Adalah: Discriminatory Laws in Israel](#)

Site: [Oslo Explained](#)

Site: [Oslo Accords: the full story and all the secrets](#)

Site: [Jewish Voice for Peace: Fighting Anti-Semitism](#)

Site: [A Vision for Black Lives](#)

Podcast: [Treyf: Ten Years of BDS](#)

Podcast: [Treyf: Jews of Color Convening with Leo Ferguson & Hirut Eyob](#)

## **Timeline:**

**1894** Dreyfus Affair  
**1882-1903** First Aliya  
**1896** Theodor Herzl Publishes 'Der Judenstaat'  
**1897** First Zionist Congress  
**1897** World Zionist Organization Founded  
**1904-1914** Second Aliya  
**1914-1918** WWI  
**1916** Sykes-Picot Agreement  
**1917** Balfour Declaration  
**1918** Britain Occupies Palestine  
**1922** Ratification of the Mandate for Palestine  
**1933** Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany  
**1936-1939** The Arab Revolt  
**1939** White Paper  
**1939-1945** WWII  
**1942-1945** Hitler's Final Solution  
**1947** UNSCOP Partition Resolution 181  
**1948** Israeli Declaration of Independence  
**1948** Arab-Israeli War/The Nakba  
**1948** UN Resolution 194  
**1950** Citizenship Laws  
**1955-1975** Vietnam War  
**1960** *Exodus* film  
**1964** PLO formed  
**1967** Six-Day War  
**1967** UN Resolution 242  
**1972** Munich Olympics/Munich Massacre  
**1973** Yom Kippur War  
**1973** UN Resolution 338  
**1975-1990** Lebanese Civil War  
**1976** Operation Entebbe  
**1977** Hampshire College becomes first to divest from South Africa  
**1978** Camp David Talks  
**1982** Israeli Invasion of Lebanon  
**1982** Sabra and Shatila Massacre  
**1987-1991/1993** First Intifada  
**1991** Apartheid in South Africa ends  
**1991** Madrid Conference  
**1993** Oslo I Accord  
**1995** Oslo II Accord  
**1995** Rabin assassination  
**2000** Camp David  
**2000-2005** Second Intifada  
**2001** September 11<sup>th</sup> Attacks on the United States

**2002** Construction of the “separation barrier” begins  
**2003** Road Map for Peace  
**2004** International Court of Justice rules “separation barrier” illegal  
**2005** Israel pulls settlers out of Gaza  
**2005** Palestinian civil society issues the BDS Call  
**2007-2009** Operation Cast Lead  
**2008** Barack Obama elected President of the United States  
**2009** Hampshire College first American university to divest from Israel  
**2011** Arab Spring  
**2011** Knesset outlaws teaching about the Nakba  
**2014** Operation Protective Edge  
**2014** Ferguson Uprising—#BlackLivesMatter Movement forms  
**2015** *March* Netanyahu addresses American congress without Obama’s consent  
**2016** *February-April* Vassar BDS Campaign  
**2016** *March* Bernie Sanders debates (doesn’t go to AIPAC)  
**2016** *March* Simone Zimmerman fired from Sanders campaign for views on Israel  
**2016** Clinton and Cruz talk against BDS at AIPAC  
**2016** Hillary Clinton wins democratic nomination  
**2016** *July* Reverend William Barber speaks at DNC  
**2016** *August* A Vision for Black Lives Policy Platform  
**2016** *August-December* Fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock  
**2016** *November* Donald J. Trump elected President of the United States  
**2016** *December* Secretary Kerry pronounces two-state solution is dead  
**2016** *December* UN votes settlements are illegal  
**2016** *December* David Freidman selected for Israel ambassador  
**2017** *January* Linda Sarsour and Angela Davis speak at the Women’s March  
**2017** *January* Trump issues first version of Muslim Ban  
**2017** *February* phoned in threats on JCC’s, desecration of Jewish graves across US  
**2017** *March* Israel bars BDS supporters from entry  
**2017** *March* Rasmia Odeh signs letter for Women’s Strike, sparking outrage  
  
**2017** *April 7<sup>th</sup>* Deadline for Vassar College American Studies Senior Project