WritingThreeSixty

Journal of Research and Creative Texts

Volume 7 Issue 2

Conflicts of the Wor(l)d: Writing Justice and Peace

UNIVERSITY *of the*

WESTERN CAPE

Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

It is with immense pleasure and pride that I present to you the second issue of Volume 7 of *WritingThreeSixty* with the theme: ***Conflicts of the Wor(l)d: Writing Justice and Peace***. This marks a significant milestone in our collective efforts to revive this graduate journal and invite authors from far and wide to captivate us with their academic and creative voices.

WritingThreeSixty aims to foster interdisciplinary research essays and creative texts, with publications ranging from poetry and short stories to art and photo essays, alongside 'traditional' research essays. We are committed to publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed articles that contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge.

This issue showcases scholarly contributions, addressing injustices around the world, from genocide to gender-based violence. Responses from the call for papers features creative non-fiction and research articles as media used to respond to the theme of current issue. We believe these articles signify a fraction of the research being conducted in the field of social injustices today.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the dedicated Content Editors, Copy Editors, Production Editors, Social Media Manager and our reviewers who have worked tirelessly to bring this issue to fruition. Their expertise and commitment have been invaluable. I also extend my thanks to the authors who have entrusted us with their valuable work.

We are confident that *WritingThreeSixty* will become a leading forum for scholarly exchange in the years to come. We invite you to engage with the content of this issue and look forward to your continued support.

Sincerely,

Editor-in-Chief

Peter Oyewole Makinde

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About the journal

WritingThreeSixty is a bi-annual, interdisciplinary journal for research essays and creative works. First launched in 2014 as an initiative of the English department at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), *WritingThreeSixty* now forms part of the broader community within the Arts Faculty and Humanities at UWC. This journal maintains the standard of peer review and wishes to provide a platform to develop a culture of publishing among postgraduate and emerging student researchers, as well as established creative artists within UWC and South Africa at large.

WritingThreeSixty also forms part of co-curricular graduate culture at UWC that affords students the opportunity to develop professional skills through the voluntary leadership and service positions created through the journal. These positions include the management of the journal and its team, editorial outputs, as well as our digital marketing efforts that are presented through social media and our online website.

CREATIVE NON-FICTIONS

From Cape to Rafah, Jenin to Madagascar: Boycotting Israel at UWC

The Palestine Solidarity Coalition at UWC (PSCUWC)

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Abstract

The Palestine Solidarity Coalition at UWC (PSCUWC) emerged in late 2023 as an intergenerational mix of staff, students, workers, and alumni. The coalition operates alongside the Palestine Solidarity Association (PSA UWC), an SRC-affiliated student formation established at UWC in 2014. This short text and selection of images offers a brief, partial narrative on the movement(s) of the PSCUWC so far. Demands presented to the university management are reiterated and achievements of having resolutions ratified by UWC Council acknowledged. We outline a key motion presented to the UWC Senate on 28 May 2024, in which UWC passed a resolution on The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (or PACBI). There is also a message from the student executive of the PSA UWC. With the struggle for Palestinian liberation ongoing, the PSCUWC encourage *WritingThreeSixty* readers to get involved. Forward to a free decolonised Palestine!

Introduction: Background to the PSCUWC

For years, UWC has been an ally to the Palestinian struggle and has had a de facto boycott of Israeli institutions. However, this was in an informal capacity and without it being made university policy, UWC risked unchecked complicity with Apartheid Israel. Prompted by the events of October 2023, visible support for Palestinian liberation grew among UWC constituents and a coalition has taken shape.

On 24 October 2023, the Ditsela Workers' Education Institute, the EMS Faculty, the Institute for Social Development (ISD), and the School of Government (SOG) co-convened a session on campus titled *Solidarity with the People of Palestine: Understanding Contemporary Palestinian Struggles and the Right to Self Determination*. This rousing meeting saw over 150 attendees listen and engage with interventions from Palestinian journalist Aziz Younis alongside seasoned comrades Na'eem Jeenah and Zelda Holtzman. An action point from this meeting was to assemble an interim working committee to clarify UWC's stance and accelerate solidarity with Palestinians.

In the months that followed a unstructured group of staff, students, and alumni formed to draft an Open Letter to the university management with six demands:

1. Call publicly for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the smooth passage of increased humanitarian aid into Gaza and all Occupied Palestinian Territories;

2. Issue an unambiguous statement of solidarity with universities in Palestine that should mourn the deaths of academics, journalists, and students who have been killed and the plight of Palestinian political prisoners who are academic staff and students;
3. Communicate this statement to the South African Minister of Higher Education and Training;
4. Agree to a university assembly to discuss the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), understanding that Palestinian colleagues call on institutions to sever links with Israel;
5. Promote active exchanges and partnerships with Palestinian universities and cultural formations;
6. Fly the Palestinian flag from the UWC flag poles as a visible signal of solidarity.

By the start of 2024 over 700 people affiliated to UWC had signed, indicating broad support for the coalition to proceed. We stepped up our campaigning with teach/learn-ins on campus adding to seminars or webinars that had been happening intermittently across departments since November. In the first half of 2024 we directed much effort towards the university Senate. Two senior academic comrades in the coalition presented at Senate meetings which were soon followed by public statements from the UWC Council.[1] The demands from our Open Letter shifted slightly but they have almost all been met and we can proudly declare that UWC is an institution committed to implementing Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) to Israeli institutions so as to be active in the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

Focus towards PACBI at UWC

For purposes of presenting a motion on behalf of the PSCUWC to Senate, on the 28 May 2024, Dr Kelly Gillespie quoted from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the UN, from a statement the UN had published a month before which laid bare the scholasticide happening in Gaza. In closing their statement, the UN experts advised that "Attacks on education cannot be tolerated. The international community must send a clear message that those who target schools and universities will be held responsible". The answer to amplifying this message had already been suggested by Palestinians. At an event on 28 March this year, we co-hosted with colleagues at UCT, Muhannad Ayyash, a Palestinian scholar and Professor of Sociology, was asked what we can do. His response was simple: educate and boycott.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (or PACBI) gives us tools to practically demonstrate our objection to Israeli violence and occupation. PACBI has generated a set of guidelines to orient a boycott, but really the adjudication still rests with us as to how best to articulate – ethically – an academic boycott at UWC. In articulating their

[1] https://www.uwc.ac.za/news-and-announcements/announcements/uwc-council-calls-for-immediate-ceasefire-and-aid-to-gaza

https://www.uwc.ac.za/news-and-announcements/news/university-of-the-western-cape-announce-immediate-academic-disengagement-from-israeli-institutions

guidelines PACBI drew explicitly on the international boycott of Apartheid South Africa. Indeed, many of PACBI's founders were involved in the anti-apartheid solidarity movement in the 1980s.

PACBI, however, is more generous than the South Africa boycott was. PACBI requests an institutional boycott but not the boycott of individuals working at those institutions. They are very clear on this. The target is the institution which sustains and upholds Zionist occupation. This provision is rooted in PACBI's principled commitment to anti-racism, which specifically includes antisemitism. PACBI's boycott guidelines allow for collegial intellectual work with anti-Zionist Israelis who are willing to collaborate in their individual capacity rather than as representatives of their institution.

What does this mean for UWC?

The PSCUWC have engaged in research over the past months to be able to answer this question. Firstly, UWC's International Office has confirmed that our university has no official ties to Israeli institutions through MOUs, collaborations or research contracts. We have official links to two Palestinian universities: Al Quds University and Birzeit University. Secondly, we undertook preliminary research using SCOPUS (the global multi-disciplinary, abstract and citation database) to assess existing academic collaborations between scholars at UWC and with Israeli institutions. The academic publishing record since 2013 shared between a UWC affiliated author and an author with an Israeli institutional affiliation were retrieved. The results were manually inspected to verify the inclusion of authors from UWC, Israel and Palestine. Of the 10,591 UWC publications assessed, we found 54 publications that had a UWC author listed alongside an author at an Israeli institution. Of these 54 publications, 42 were massive research consortiums with 10 or more authors from institutions around the world. If we exclude those because there would presumably be little direct contact between UWC and the Israeli institution, we are left with only 12 publications with less than 10 authors in the past 10 years. This is a very small footprint. Much smaller, for example, than South Africa's historically white universities. The collaboration with Palestinian academics is, however, even smaller. Of the 21 publications in which a UWC author and an author listed as affiliated to a Palestinian university appear as co-authors, and where there are less than 10 authors listed, only 2 publications were found. [One in Education and one in Dentistry]

What these findings show is that UWC has very little to do with Israeli institutions. Thirdly, from what we have managed to source in the University's archives, UWC has never taken an official position on an Israeli boycott before. What is suggested by this research is that UWC would not have to sacrifice much in adopting an academic boycott against Israeli institutions. A groundswell of support for Israeli boycott and divestment at universities around the world is gaining momentum in South African higher education. Our Minister of Higher Education in an interview on NewzroomAfrika called for: "...our universities to stand up in support of

Palestinian academics, in support of Palestinian higher education, especially in Gaza.'[2] In our motion presented, we called on Senate to:

1. Ratify a full academic boycott of Israeli academic institutions by UWC, in accordance with the PACBI guidelines;

2. Facilitate strategies for strengthening academic ties with Palestinian scholars and students, and for supporting the rebuilding of higher education in Gaza;

3. Task the university management to fully disclose any and all UWC investments in Israeli products and companies;

4. Request a commitment to a process of divestment from any and all such investments;

5. Appeal to the Rector and senior management to advocate at national level (in particular at USAf) on UWC's behalf for South African universities to commit to a full academic boycott of Israel.

Conclusion

The motion for boycott was passed by the UWC Senate with results from the vote being: 77% Yes, 6% No, 16% Abstained. As we move into 2025, the atrocious violence that Palestinians face continues. We refuse to be complicit or silent witnesses to this and other injustice. Our aims continue to be:

- To unite colleagues across constituencies of the University;
- To educate and further mobilise around the Palestinian liberation struggle, most pressingly with calls to end the genocide in Gaza and settlements in the West Bank;
- To struggle for UWC to take a lead among universities active in solidarity with Palestinians.

For the PSCUWC to keep going requires much collective effort. We welcome all with a commitment to the struggle and/or a willingness to learn and hold UWC accountable to its motion passed by the Senate. You can contact us on uwcpalestine@gmail.com and visit linktr.ee/uwcpalestinesolidarity for more. Phambili!

[2] ('Nzimande slams Stellenbosch University's Senate' NewzroomAfrika, May 6, 2024; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_XYtMCGhPU)

Reaching Across Distance and Hardship: An Interview with Riad

WritingThreeSixty **Journal**

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I encountered Riad on TikTok, the video based social media platform, when interacted with my posts in August 2024. On 10 August I was the first to say hello because he had started following me and liked many of my videos. I did not expect this interaction to result in any kind of friendship, but over time, I have come to care deeply about Riad and his family. At the time, I was aware of the genocide taking place in Palestine, but I did not feel personally implicated by it – to me, it was a distant conflict in a distant land. Since learned to internalise Nelson Mandela's message that none of us are free until all of us are free in some unique and very personal ways. Riad, like many TikTok users from Palestine, asked if I could help him by donating a sum of money because his source of income was lost, and the needs of his family increased. To make sure that this man was honest, I asked him for a video call via another social media platform, WhatsApp. He showed me the tent in which he lives with his wife and three children. I decided to donate $50 to help Riad and his family, and since then we have grown very close. We chat almost every day, making sure that he and his family are safe, and he loves sending me pictures of him and his children, and what they eat. I've come to know Riad as a kind-hearted man with a strong sense of family and love for his children. The following interview shows us glimpses of his daily life, and how he has experienced the genocide. With this interview, I hope to encourage others to find friends in conflict zones like Gaza, and not only extend a helping hand financially, but also to get to know them as people with families and dreams.

This interview was conducted via WhatsApp at the convenience of Riad. He does not speak English and used a translator to be sure that we can understand him.

Interview:

What is your daily routine in the campsite? Are some days different from others?

Welcome my friend, I am Riad. I will answer the first question about the routine. My daily routine is that if the road is safe, I go to the market, buy some food for my family, then come back and listen to my children. This is my daily routine and my family's.

What do you and your family do for entertainment in the campsite?

As for the second question, what do I do to entertain myself and my family when I am sitting, I open the phone on the internet and play it and myself and my family watch some series

Do you and your family have friends in the campsite? Why do you think it is important to have friends during this difficult time, or why do you choose not to have friends in the same situation as you?

Yes, I have some friends for me and my family, but our situation in the camp is very difficult. Yes, friends are good in these situations. You feel safe when you are among your friends. I choose not to have friends outside the country which I live because the situation we are living in is very tragic and difficult, and I do not want any of my friends to be in this situation.

What did you do before the genocide, and have any of your previous skills been useful in this situation?

Regarding the fourth question, I was working in a restaurant, and when the war started, I worked a little before the kitchen I was working in was bombed, and now nothing.

What do you teach your children now that they cannot go to school?

My children have never learned anything. The eldest this year was supposed to go to school, but they did not go to any school because there are no schools.

What do you think people living outside Gaza should know about your daily life in a tent city?

Those outside Gaza must know that we are living difficult times and that the time we are going through is a collective act of worship. They must do everything they can to stop this war and help us live in safety.

What are your children most afraid of, and what do they enjoy doing every day?

My family and I are most afraid of seeing the missiles, how they fall, and their sounds. We suffer from them every day. What makes my family and I happy or enjoy is playing in our tent.

Do you think life in Gaza would be easier for you if more people understood your situation?

Yes, definitely, my life will be better when people outside this genocide know my situation. They will definitely do everything they can so that we can live and give us a boost of hope and life.

What can people outside Gaza do to better understand your everyday situation?

Yes of course, I want people outside Gaza to understand my situation and appreciate that my family and I are living in a difficult time of genocide, siege, and a shortage of food supplies.

What is your biggest dream when the genocide is over?

I hope that after this war ends, I will build a house and start my life anew with my family and that we will forget everything that happened in the past and live in goodness and security.

Finally, I will talk about my best friend, who gave me everything she could, and until now, I will never forget her favour. About my beloved friend, Tatum, she stands by my side, she is my best friend, and she is the only one who gave me a push of hope. I will never forget her favour to me, and I hope that we will never separate and that we will remain friends for ever.

Reflection

The most important thing I learned from this interview with my friend was that hope is the most important thing people living through a war need. Hope can come in the form of a donation, or a friendly conversation. I will never forget how simple Riad's dreams are for himself and his family, and that, to me at least, he already seems to be living in the future where his dreams are possible because he has hope. My humble request to readers is that they talk to someone from a war-torn area and get to know them – Riad is an extraordinary human living through extremely trying times, and what people like him need is hope.

This Interview was conducted by **Tatum Davis**, Creative Content Manager

And Edited by **Peter Makinde**, the Editor-in-Chief

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Manipulation of Communication

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Abstract

J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* highlights many issues within universities and across South Africa through his character David Lurie. Lurie's plethora of opinions is readily available throughout the novel in tightly packaged poetic verses or decorated words of wisdom borrowed from Byron. His tactful usage and deliverance of language will be highlighted in this essay with the aim of showing how Lurie manipulates language in communicative events to evade accountability regarding his and Melanie's affair. This essay aims to question whether Lurie intended to communicate or manipulate both the characters and the readers.

Keywords: Disgrace, language, manipulation, David Lurie, communication

Introduction

David Lurie, the protagonist in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, was a professor of Modern Languages and later a Communications professor at Cape Technical University. For a living, he reluctantly "sets, collects, reads and annotates" his student's work paying attention to their "punctuation, spelling and [language] usage" (Coetzee, 4). Similarly, I aim to reluctantly dissect Lurie's speech and thoughts within the university setting, paying special attention to the way he uses language to his advantage. I will also briefly look at the narrative perspective as a tool that aids his manipulation of language. To do this, I will provide a close analysis of extracts depicting his clever language usage alongside three secondary sources namely, Carrol Clarkson's "J. M. Coetzee and the Limits of Language", Emma Williams' "Languages Grace: Redemption and Education in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*" and Jennifer Rickel's "Speaking of

Human Rights: Narrative Voice and the Paradox of the Unspeakable in J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* and *Disgrace*". This essay will highlight David's manipulation of language by looking carefully at the use of punctuation, syntax, diction and agency in the chosen extracts.

Manipulation of Communication

The ability to manipulate language is a skill which Lurie has mastered almost perfectly. I say almost because while he is able to use his words to make the narrative suit him, there are instances later in the novel where his speech is questioned. That, however, is beyond the scope of this essay. An example of his exquisite use of language is found in the following extract.

> let me confess. The story begins one evening, I forget the date, but not long past. I was walking through the old college gardens and so, it happened, was the young woman in question, Ms Isaacs. Our paths crossed. Words passed between us, and at that moment something happened which, not being a poet, I will not try to describe. Suffice it to say that Eros entered. After that, I was not the same. […] I was not myself. I was no longer a fifty-year-old divorcé at a loose end. I become a servant of Eros.' (Coetzee, 52)

Here, Lurie stands before the committee of inquiry to give his statements of events. Clarkson refers to his manner of speech as a "near-obsessive interest in being articulate" (111). We see this obsessiveness in the way he crafts the series of events and presents it as a "story". The diction here is significant because Lurie, before an institutional committee, actively chooses to label the incident as a "story". In doing this, Lurie has manipulated the way his "confess[ion]" is perceived. He strategically evades himself from accountability by insinuating that their 'encounter' was merely part of this story. The evasion is also seen in his detailing of the encounter. In saying that "it happened" and "something happened", the implications of the passive voice exempt him from agency, further highlighting his strategic evasion of accountability. The use of "it" and "something" also illustrates his evasion as he refrains from acknowledging and speaking of the incident. Furthermore, the sentence "[o]ur paths crossed" highlights both his manipulation and his obsession. The obsessive aspect of his articulation is found in his 'need' to complete his story, and in this, his manipulation is emphasised. He simultaneously gives the committee his account and manipulates the encounter to make him appear blameless. Apart from his language, his background in Romantic literature further aided his story-telling.

His decorative speech makes one question whether “Lurie’s elegant and refined way of talking [may be] an intellectual veneer” (Williams, 163). This question is particularly relevant when looking at his use of “Eros”. Firstly, his clever use of language and his manipulative ability are highlighted in the diction. In saying that “Eros entered” Lurie implies that his actions or the events that occurred thereafter were out of his control. This also emphasizes the fictitious element of his “story”. In this, he veneers his crude actions and desires. Additionally, this introduces the divine as the controlling voice. Another example of this is found in “not the same”, “not myself” and “no longer”, where the negative tone once again removes the agency from him, and in this, fate or the divine is highlighted as the active agent. This is similarly seen in “I became a servant of Eros”. This manipulation of agency is significant as it also emphasizes his “intellectual veneer” (113), where the implications of his speech hide his agency. Lastly, the shift from the passive to the active voice redirects accountability back to his actions, and David manages to manipulatively rid himself of all agency. In this manner, he makes it seem like he has no power or authority over the situation. Ironically, the whole reason for the hearing is his abuse of power over a student.

The “authoritative voice” of this hearing is not made distinctly clear (Rickel, 175). However, we see Lurie’s authority throughout the extract. Most notably in the fact that “[e]ven after Melanie provides her testimonial David is still able to control the story” (Rickel, 172). This is evident in his account of the events. The passive voice, as mentioned, is one way in which his authority is presented. Additionally, his choice to use the words “us” and “[o]ur” conveys a shared and consensual account of “that moment”. Firstly, the usage of collective pronouns shows his control over her testimonial in his attempt to invalidate her personal account by portraying the incident in this manner. That, along with referring to her rape as a “moment" signifies his authority. It also reflects the aforementioned fictional element he adds to his experience. Another example of Lurie’s authority over Melanie is seen when he states that he “will not try to describe” said moment. This is significant for two reasons. On the one hand, his refusal acts as a dismissive, he covertly disregards the force her statement has on both his reputation and his career. On the other hand, this refusal demonstrates his institutional authority; even though he is being scrutinized, his position as a professor remains intact throughout the hearing. He was asked to give a detailed account of the incident from his point of view so that both party’s accounts are considered, but here, David confidently objects and instead turns the hearing into a performance. This performance is allowed because of that institutional authority.

The institutional authority proceeding refers to the authority or superiority that Lurie exudes over his colleagues who form part of the committee of inquiry. This is evident in the phrase "let me confess" which is delivered in a manner that alludes to an admittance of his wrongdoings but Lurie, instead, narrates a "story" in a rather performative way. Here, the tone of "let me" appears subtly hostile because instead of a request to speak, it is read as a demand; he is demanding the attention of all in the room. This accentuates his authoritative voice despite his misdeeds, and having this tone of hostility next to "confess" is suggestive of his sense of superiority and disrespect towards his colleagues. The manner in which he narrates the story further portrays his superiority because of this performative element. When one looks at performances, the dramatic pause is an element that is almost always used. The pause in speech is meant to add to the dramatics of the story being told. Lurie's pauses, however, serve as a tool that he uses to infantilise his 'audience'. The multiple commas and periods break up his speech in a way that alludes to the telling of children's stories. In this, the infantilisation of the committee becomes another way in which he manipulates the usage of language to his advantage, and is again highlighted by his emphasized authorial voice. His manipulation and authority here show the contradiction between what he says and how he says it, thus portraying his words as vain.

Williams, in her article, uses the term "empty markers" to describe the degradation of language specifically when used to attain a level of "self-satisfaction" (630). Extending this term, when looking at Lurie's use of language, he inverts the significance of words to his convenience which makes the essence of his speech hollow. There are multiple examples of this hollow language or "empty markers" but to avoid repeating myself, I will quote only what have not already made mention of (Williams, 630). Beginning with the idiom "in question" that is often used to signify importance or relevance regarding the central person of discussion. This manner of address allows for the focus to remain on the topic rather than the person/s involved. It is effective here as it allows Lurie to keep the attention on his story rather than shifting to Melanie. This becomes an "empty marker" because the idiom has lost its significance and is instead used by Lurie to satisfy himself. This becomes more apparent when looking at the distance he creates between himself and Melanie in following with "Ms Isaacs". Both the effectiveness and the distance highlight the self-satisfaction and the hollowness of his diction. Likewise, in "servant" he also attempts to distance himself and appear agentless. The hollowness of this is highlighted by the fauxed servitude when in fact he is both the instigator and the voice of authority of the incident. Lastly, the word "[s]uffice" becomes an "empty marker" because of the contrary

implications of its usage. In using this word Lurie attempts to portray the phrase “Eros entered” as being enough information or detailing of their encounter. However, his statement does not provide any information about the how and the why of the encounter -especially considering that he is standing before a committee that is meant to inquire about the specificities of the case. While Lurie uses these empty markers to satisfy his story, they serve as evidence of his communicative manipulation.

Notably, Lurie’s account of events is the only account voiced as Melanie’s account remains hidden in the narrative. In this, we see how the narrative (and later the narrator) becomes a tool that aids him. The “implication of speaking and being spoken” in the extract above lies in Lurie’s vain confession (Rickel, 160). The following extract -which precedes the one above- presents the reader with an omniscient view of the incident as it unfolded.

> She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him.
>
> Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. So that everything done to her might be done, as it were, far away. (Coetzee, 25)

While both characters are “spoken”, there are instances where Lurie’s voice is focalized by the narrator. This is evident in “[s]he lets him” and “she even helps him”. Firstly, in having “she” as the subject of the clauses, Melanie is depicted as an active agent which highlights Lurie’s focalization as it attempts to relieve him of rapist insinuations. Additionally, the allusive allowance of the “lets” further emphasizes this. The adverbial phrase “even helps” similarly suggests Melanie's agency, except that “even” adds another layer of emphasis. And because an adverb modifies a verb, the emphasis is placed on “helps” which once again illustrates Lurie’s focalization. Furthermore, it “shows David mediating her voice” through the narrator by making her an active or seemingly consensual participant (Rickel, 172). This then questions the narrator’s reliability; how dependable is this narrative?

A third-person narrator is meant to “shift from character to character” objectively to give the reader access to more than one character’s “thoughts, feelings and motives” (Abrahams, 232). Here, however, the narrator fails to do this because of its focus on Lurie leaving fragments of

Melanie's thoughts and emotions in brief and nuanced metaphors and similes. These figures of speech, which are meant to enhance the language and engagement of the extract become the only representation of Melanie's world. This is significant as it portrays Melanie as a decoration or a tool that enhances Lurie's story and lived experiences. In looking at the decorative depictions of her thoughts, we see how the narrator leaves the interpretation to the reader. Keeping in mind that "words…extend our ways of seeing" encourages an examination of the connotations and denotations of these figures of speech. This can be seen in the "shiver of cold [that] runs through her" as it could refer to the literal cold that comes with being "bare" or the figurative cold of fear or resignation. Both interpretations are appropriate in this context but the vagueness of it highlights Lurie's aforementioned authority of the narrative voice while questioning whether the narrator aptly represents Melanie's inner world. Similarly, the use of "like a mole burrowing" and "like a rabbit" emphasizes his authorial voice. The imagery captured in the similes expresses Melanie's feelings of entrapment and possibly shame, but because it is filtered through Lurie and the narrator, her emotions are open to subjective interpretation, which also indicates a lack of agency and uncertainty. This uncertainty reflects the uncertainty readers feel regarding Melanie's character which again questions the narrator's reliability while implicitly drawing our attention to Lurie's manipulation of language. The control he has over the narrator and thus the language allows for this decorative portrayal of Melanie.

Aside from Lurie's manipulation of language, we see how the narrator works to aid and advantage him. Evidence of this can be seen in, "[s]he does not resist" which depicts Melanie as an assenting participant, and in "[n]ot rape" which mitigates him from accusations. Having both quotes being the beginning phrases of their respective paragraphs, signifies Lurie's domination and focalization of the narrative. The narrator implicitly depicts him and his experience as more important by putting his account before Melanie's. It is only in the "but" that we see the shift from Lurie's account to Melanie's. This is significant because it is only after the act has occurred that Lurie acknowledges his "mistake" (Coetzee, 25) albeit having noticed her hesitance. Lurie -and to an extent, the narrator- notes her aversion but she receives no acknowledgement; she is drowned out by his focalization. Instead, her internal resignation is saturated by her external movements. This is seen in the way she "lets" and "helps" him "undress her" after the narrator notes that she "avert[s] herself" and later "turns" after "burrowing" herself. This is important because in "avert" and "burrowing" we are given her reaction to what he is doing, and those reactions are muffled by the seemingly reciprocal "lets",

“helps” and “turns” which in turn diverts the reader's attention from Lurie. He uses this diversion to hide his misdeeds and portrays Melanie's actions as reciprocatory. This imposed reciprocity highlights the narrator as a tool that aids Lurie as it is the structure of the narrative that creates the diversion.

Circling back to questioning the narrator's reliability, Clarkson has stated that “it is the fragmentation of the language itself that has to become the focus of discussion, as the inconceivable reality of the event itself resists containment in the didactic and predictable ruts of the words that would speak about it” (118). Using this we see how the literal fragmentation of the language through punctuation expresses the difficulty the narrator has in describing Melani’s experience. Looking at the pauses in “[n]ot rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core” we see how language breaks down. The pauses suggest that the language used is not able to contain the weight of the experience. This inadequacy is further emphasized by “not quite that” and the repetition of “undesired”. This alludes to both the event and the language being used as unwanted. Additionally, the repetition of “done” indicates that both Melanie and the narrator wish to be finished with the event: she wants to be done with the experience and the narrator wants to be done describing it. In this, not only is the narrator's linguistic fragmentation highlighted, but it also reflects Melanie’s internal struggle and breakdown. We are then forced to question the ethics of the narrative voice. Looking at the question “[w]hat, then, are the ethical implications of *linguistic* commentary in moments of unthinkable human confrontation, or of physical suffering, or of pain” permits a narrative evaluation (Clarson, 108). Is using “[a]ll” as a determiner really reflective of everything she does? Does she truly “let him lay her out” or does she merely comply? Was “decided” an appropriate expression of her resignation?

The questions highlight the narrator's lack of moral responsibility by looking at the implications of the language used. This then suggests a lack of narrative responsibility as the narrator does not adequately capture her perspective. Melanie’s experience is reduced to interpretations as the narrator's use of language fails her. This failure to represent Melanie is contrary to the aid the narrator provides Lurie. This becomes another way in which Lurie uses his focalization to highlight his authority. This essay has looked at Lurie’s use of language, the narrator and Melanie to manipulate the reader's understanding of the sequence of events. Ending off, I leave you with this question: has Lurie succeeded in manipulating your view of his and Melanie’s affair?

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The Hermeneutics of Love in Mizrahi Diaspora

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Abstract

This paper investigates the discursive shifts necessary to establishing an anti-Zionist Jewish diaspora formed in part by Mizrahi reality. Using what Chela Sandoval calls the "praxis stage of the hermeneutics of love," I consider what formal tasks Jewish communities are responsible for in a decolonizing Palestine. This work entails the contextualization of race within Israel's formation of Jewish identity and the ongoing metabolization of Arabness to do so. Ultimately, I pose an advanced question for diaspora studies: How can a nation-state be rejected and subsequently disbanded without its most subjugated populations increasingly harmed in the "liberatory" process?

Introduction

Jean Paul Sartre wrote that to be a Jew is to be "responsible in and through one's person for the destiny and the very nature of the Jewish People" (Sartre 1948, 70). As an Ashkenazi Israeli Jew, my work is premised on an ethical responsibility to other Jews, and to Palestinians. With the Israeli state weaponizing anti-semitism to commit genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, Jews in diaspora are made more urgently aware of the need to reclaim their peoplehood from 75 years of Israeli occupation and ethnic cleansing. British colonialism, U.S. military imperialism, and Jewish and Christian Zionism all collude in the idea that Judaism is a monolith under Israel to advance their own hegemonic agendas. The contributions of global decolonial scholars, Palestinian academics, and Mizrahi writers complicate Zionist history and undo its alliances.

Crucial to this endeavor is a divulging of the violent history of European Jews (Ashkenazim) baiting Arab Jews (Mizrahim) from Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) to immigrate to the newly forming state of Israel. This agenda created a secondary class of citizens who

would serve as cheap labor for the newly established state. Although Zionism necessitates a deep dissociation with Arabness to produce a pure Israeli identity, Israel has *relied* on Mizrahi people's Arabness precisely to delineate a settling buffer between elite Israelis and Palestinians fighting to return to their land. We can recognize this as a peak cognitive dissonance, where Israeli refusal of Arabness has constructed Mizrahi self-hatred and racism towards Palestinians.

A decolonial love is the only thing that can break through this dissociation. But it will not likely be the morally implored love towards Palestinians, that so many peace processes have attempted (and failed) to negotiate. Instead, love must be part of a larger abolitionist project – one where, a global Jewry turns back to 2000 years of diasporic tradition before the state of Israel was established. In the Torah, "Israel" is not a name given to locate an immovable position– it is the name given to Jacob only after he begins *to wrestle with God*. Thus, there is a wrestling with existence central to Jewishness that does not precipitate a nation-state but an activity. Jewish communities can return this call to wrestle by loosening their attachments to a stable bureaucratic and racial identity. By doing so, the contradictions held by Mizrahi Israelis can be engaged through an imagination of a global Jewish diaspora that makes reparations for *Zionism*'s idolatrous ills.

By reflecting on the biblical definitions of the word Israel, we can detach it from the colonial implications of the co-opted nation-state's name. We must confront the imperial and anti-semitic origins of the s*tate* of Israel if we are to reclaim and repair a liberation-based Judaism. In order to shed light on the struggles of a future Jewish diaspora, I will primarily engage the scholarship of Chela Sandoval, Frantz Fanon, Ella Shohat, and Daniel Boyarin. The connections between Mizrahi and Palestinian displacement, while not directly comparable, will provide the liminal terrain to consider movements for solidarity against all anti-Arab racism.

I will ask the reader to grasp two vital concepts: First, how the notion of love, here understood as a pre-discursive approach to an "other" that aims to heal the inner- and inter-personal marks left and made by collective trauma, allows us to break the Zionist colonial structure of subjugation; and second that, Mizrahim, having a doubled consciousness due to the internalization of Zionist anti-Arab sentiments, show a vector by which collective Jewish thought can reach that love, through the crisis of self-loathing and self-destruction. For anti-Zionist Jews to consider the abolitionist project of leaving Israel, the historical oppression of

Mizrahim and the outcomes of hybrid Israeli identities must be centered.

Semiotics of "Mizrahi"

Critical to this work is an analysis of the meaning-making by predominant forces within the ongoing history of elusive, shifting and unstable identifiers "Mizrahi" and "Arab Jew." Sandoval gives a decolonial reading of Roland Barthes' "Mythologies" to articulate her own theory of the "Methodology of the Oppressed." The first step to undoing a dominant language, according to Barthes, is creating an "oppositional consciousness" that reveals the patterns of ideology steeped in Western colonial meaning (Sandoval 2000, 109). In early 90's Israel, a curious hybridity formed within Zionism's invention of the Jewish nation: the term Mizrahi to identify Israelis from SWANA. While the term contains "racialized tropes and Orientalist fantasies," it also complicates Israel's Eurocentric framework (Shohat 2017, 13). One may conclude that Mizrahi functions as an *empty signifier* – full of potential meaning and devoid of a succinct referent. Thus, the project of historicizing Mizrahi identity, especially as it emerges discursively from the Arab world, entails a complicated interpretation of what exactly we are working with when we work with Mizrahi identity.

To some, to be Mizrahi signifies a second-class background that is associated with deep hatred and brutality towards Palestinians. In this definition, Mizrahim seek to assimilate into white Jewishness by forgetting a history of dispossession and claiming full Israeliness. However, there has also been a large shift in reclaiming Mizrahi identity precisely to make visible the violent histories towards indigenous communities and name the continuous discrimination they experience. In the 1970's, inspired by the Black Panthers movement for Black liberation in the U.S., Moroccan Israelis protested the Ashkenazi Israeli government's racist and violent policies towards Mizrahim (Reiff 2024). They pointed to the irony of segregation and impoverishment while Israel professed the socialist ethics of its new state. Mizrahi Black Panthers also worked with the binational communist party to develop a notion of joint liberation and Palestinian freedom (Shalom Chetrit 2010, 213). Though most rebellions were quickly squashed by Zionist propaganda that denied any discrimination, it is interesting to note how the nominal identifier was chosen from American Black Panthers who also publicly denounced Israel's treatment of Palestinians as imperialism.

We can turn to an analysis of the incorporation of slavery into American bureaucratic forms to understand how systems of carceral segregation persist as racially dependent subject

positions within capitalism and democracy (Wilkerson 2023, 20). Zionism can be considered a prime example of an ideological system by which "the conversion of human beings into currency" succeeds through racialization (44). Although Wilkerson is writing in a different context from Arab Jews, her analysis of caste helps illuminate conditions of domination beyond the African American experience.

The Mizrahi Caste

While the exact number of Mizrahim in Israel is difficult to estimate due to years of mixing heritage, Mizrahim represent a majority of the population that experiences disproportionate levels of poverty and discrimination (Nagar-Ron 2021, 9). A turn to the history of the creation of Israel helps us understand the origin and evolution of the Israeli state's neglect towards Mizrahim. At Israel's inception, Ashkenazi Zionists held a European-flavored disdain for Arab Jews considered less civilized or barbaric, but nevertheless needed "cheap labor" to successfully populate Palestine with mostly Jews (Shohat 2017, 108). Like all nationalist caste systems, some lives in Israel are more valuable than others to the state's social paradigms. The blatant valuation of human beings as less than and more than is shrouded, however, by a guise of normalcy which disavows the systematic violence of such valuation (34).

The historical proximity we have to the creation of the state of Israel allows us to see what may always be the case: racial construction of caste is not unconsciously automatic. There is a violent agency at work. In Israel, pioneering Zionists of the 1950's used long-established racism against Mizrahim to convince Arab Jews to migrate to the newly formed state through a projection of *European* antisemitism onto the Arab World. At once, the trauma of European antisemitism was psychically linked to the anti-Arab sentiment necessary to justify immediate housing for Ashkenazim. If Israel was a state for the Jews and not an imperialist effort by Britain in the region, then ostensibly Arab Jews would be first-class citizens in their new state. However, the deployment of caste by race signifies Israel's structure as first and foremost a European imagination-- irreversibly marked by anti-Black slavery and anxiety about trade with Islamic governments. Ashkenazim who immigrated to Palestine were given resources in central cities, and Mizrahim were displaced to resource-less outskirts of the land and left to fend for themselves (Shohat 2017, 10). Thus unfolded the deliberate creation of a racial caste essential to the formation of an apartheid state that would imitate the many European colonies before it. To combat the normalization of structural violence, social

movements can employ the hermeneutics of love in the shifting locations and transformations of consciousness.

Hermeneutics of Love

The category of love is an indispensable concept for revolutionary movements. While moving toward your "enemy" with the hermeneutic of love generates a contradictory space for the seeds of liberation to appear, it does not necessarily include the *feeling* of love (Sandoval 2000, 159). Rather, we must consider how love can be *taught as* decolonial methodology. This is a question many anti-Zionist Jews in the diaspora wrestle with. Does the love towards Mizrahi Israelis entail the practices of solidarity, patience and centering of a diversity of Mizrahim? What do Mizrahi people signal as what is important to them? Simone Weil wrote that *attention* serves as the highest form of love– and prayer (Weil 1947, 15). With Mizrahi Israelis generally *more religiously observant* than Ashkenazim, the theological space of attention may be an avenue for mutually questioning Zionism. Mizrahi scholar Haviva Pedaya theorizes that the notion of *mesorti*, or between religious and secular, is a product of engagement with the Muslim world, and therefore positions Mizrahim to practice Judaism in the liminal spaces of mysticism, rather than through the comparatively new Israeli Judaism (Pedaya 2016, 138).

Through music, the mystical, or a glimpse of God, we can traverse a passage towards what Sandoval calls "differential consciousness." It is an aberrant "coming to a utopian nonsite, a no-place where everything is possible - but only in exchange for the pain of the crossing" (Sandoval 2000, 158). We are working now with the pain of the crossing: the betrayal of Zionism, how this betrayal affects Israeli born children who are assigned soldiers at birth, and ultimately how to prepare a diaspora to field what may otherwise feel like the global abandonment of Jewish Israelis (Yaniv 2023, 132). The realities of a failed colonial project only come into focus when we are required to look at the face of "the other" – for Israelis, this is the Palestinian. It is the face-to-face encounter with the neighbor that creates an awareness of the other's vulnerability and may instigate an ethical response to help (Levinas 1961, 201). The segregation of Jews and Palestinians in Israel intentionally serves to make this encounter rare. And when Israelis *do* come face to face with Palestinians through direct military violence, the horrors of these memories need to be obliterated. When Israelis finish military service, the self-destructive consequence is a prolonged immersion in drugs, occasionally leading to psychosis or death (Shamir 2007).

We must take seriously then, the communal pain enacted by a weaponization of Mizrahi labor in the name of Zionism. In doing so,

> Every time meaning cannot find a solid signified, escapes from that which is tamed and known, is defiant in the face of any binary opposition, undergoes trauma in relation to the 'real' then consciousness is 'lapsed' and passage permitted to the realm of differential consciousness (Sandoval 2000, 164).

It is here that the empty signifier of Mizrahi wields its decolonial power: unintelligible to both Ashkenazi Israelis and anti-Zionist outsiders, we may contend with its contradictions in a loving and liberatory way. This means that its power to signify a subjectivity will have to come from the meaning-making within its usages by that subjectivity. While the wrestling of Judaism may not permit us to see the face of God, we can still see the face of the neighbor (Levinas 1961, 178). The inner life of a Jewish diaspora is deeply relational and transcendental as it seeks to uphold these two things: wrestling an ideal and oneself to perfect the relationship with the neighbor.

Esther Farmer, a Palestinian Jewish member of Jewish Voice for Peace, models this differential consciousness with her program "How to Have Hard Conversations About Palestine." By inviting *Mizrahi anti-Zionists* to hold the pain of their families in Israel, Farmer conjoins pro-Palestine organizing with the dualities of Mizrahi identity in an honest way. Mizrahi scholar Shirly Bahar adds that "observing documentary performances of the pain of Palestinians and Mizrahim together invites us to contest the segregation of pain and consider reconnection and relatability to others with different experiences of pain by intimating with the very relationality of pain" (Bahar 2021, 2). Rather than drowning out the guilt of colonial consciousness, facing the construction of pain enables the potential for undoing. For these Mizrahi scholar-activists, love is a tool to unsettle the positioning of Mizrahi and Palestinian subjugation against each other.

Double Consciousness of Mizrahi Identity

As Israel adopted the colonizing tradition of Enlightenment universalism, Jews of all backgrounds were encouraged to believe in the democratic unity of a singular Jewish peoplehood (Shohat 2017, 3). Using the idea of *double consciousness* we can explore how Mizrahim have been forced to conceptualize themselves as Israelis first, and yet still

experience discrimination as Arabs in a European-powered state (Fanon 1952, 102). Right-wing Israeli politicians weaponized Mizrahi people's structurally precarious circumstances to turn them against Palestinians and use them on the frontlines of racist apartheid agendas.

Mizrahim are positioned as both dominated and dominators, who experience Israeli privilege over Palestinians, while they are also marginalized as "Orientals" (Shohat 2017, 9). Shohat's critical intervention creates a parallel with Fanon's decolonial scholarship, where the Israeli refusal of Arabness has constructed Mizrahi self-hatred (Fanon 1952, 117). At the same time, anti-Zionist Arabs globally deem Mizrahim to be deficiently Arab due to their forced assimilation into Zionism (Shohat 2017, 107). In this experience "We Jews from Islamic/Arab countries, not unlike Fanon's Blacks, began to manifest a split consciousness, and feel the schizophrenia of being at once Arabs and Jews" (307). The language here is intentionally disturbing, as it reveals the psychic landscape of how many Mizrahim have come to participate in and perpetuate violence against other Arabs.

To generate a "collective catharsis" the second-class citizen must have a "channel, an outlet whereby the energy accumulated in the form of aggressiveness can be released" (Fanon 1952, 124). The Israeli government has maintained a close watch over Mizrahi social development, ensuring a displacement of any eventual catharsis– which could potentially reject Israeli reductionism– into mainstream Israeli aggression towards Palestinians instead. The experience of double consciousness for Mizrahim may serve as an aperture for coming back to a *troubled* consciousness with respect to the occupation and murder of Palestinians.

Deconstructing the Israeli Identity

The middle voice that emerges in the space of double consciousness produces "a mechanism for survival, as well as for generating and performing a higher moral and political mode of oppositional and coalitional social movement" (Sandoval 2000, 174). This may serve as a tool for Mizrahim to climb out of the double consciousness of Mizrahi identity. When Israel first formed, Mizrahim "came to reject their dark or olive skin, their guttural pronunciation, their quartertone music, even their cultural practice of hospitality" (Shohat 2017, 117). And yet, it is precisely the allure of these qualities that early Zionists appropriated to transform the "Jewish nation" from the weak Holocaust survivor to the newly strong Israeli colonizer (Boyarin 1997, 273). The strength *of Israel* quite literally is the appropriated vitality of being

Arab. The appropriation of Arab culture here can be interpreted as a rigidity of modernity that so mechanized White people that they "turn to the Colored's and request a little human sustenance," (Fanon 1952, 108). What might an Israeli recognition of this process look like? If the ingredients of Israeli identity that are so loved were built on the shared Arab history of Mizrahim and Palestinians, there may be a crack in the homogenized identity "Israeli" itself.

What are the possibilities and significations that can arise from this emptied contradictory space? In a country dependent on nationalism to construct its legitimacy, Israelis come to internalize the politics of imperialism as a necessary mode of survival. However, Mizrahim in Israel constantly "work with/resist the conditions of impossibility that dominant culture generates" (Muñoz 2015, 6). The repeated untangling of Mizrahi signification may then serve as a model of Muñoz' 'disidentification' for Israelis trapped in an increasing cycle of violent defensiveness in the name of Jewish safety. Rather than amplifying Holocaust fear as justification for occupation, a political love can expose the way Western powers weaponize anti-semitism to produce Jewish colonization and Islamophobia. Author Meital Yaniv writes:

> Before we are israelis, before we are soldiers, before we are armors, before we are occupiers, before we are army, before we are murderers, before we are immoral, before we are apartheid, before we are ethnic cleansing, before we are state executioners, before we are born, before we are genocide, before we force identities on our bodies, before we are (151).

The praxis of love here collapses time to upend modernity's construction of militarized identity. While more research is needed on the limits of colonial national identities, we can use the history of Mizrahi identity formation to unearth the connected agendas of Mizrahi and Palestinian subjugation.

The Erasure of Mizrahi History

Between 1950-1970 Jews from SWANA were coerced into migrating to Zionist development towns across Palestine. As depicted in the documentary *The Forgotten Ones*, Mizrahim were isolated in poor areas that facilitated Mizrahi children into low-salary manual labor, resulting in an undereducated fulfillment of the caste. Mizrahim sent their children to vocational schools, from which they graduated to remain in a cycle of wage-labor (Boganim 2022). The film includes a heartbreaking scene of Mizrahi elders being shown the documentary footage.

Some erupted in tears, but others rejected the structural circumstances of their lives, that Israel would intentionally dupe and displace them. The project seeks to intervene in this disbelief using a similar hermeneutic of love to Wilkerson's: historical understanding as a path to self-understanding.

For Yemenite immigrants, an even more insidious fate awaited them in Israel. Over 2,000 Mizrahi immigrants, predominantly Yemenites, lived in shacks made by Israeli officials. Given the poverty and unfit conditions of these "homes," Yemeni parents were forced to surrender their children to Israeli medical facilities, on the claim that the infants needed better care than the parents could provide (Gamliel 2021, 2). Parents were told that the infants had died of disease, when in reality Israeli officials "lost" some and rehoused others with presumably more responsible and surely better resourced *Ashkenazi* parents. Now termed the "Yemenite Children's Affair," this separation of families is reminiscent of countless colonial tactics that tore indigenous children from their homes to re-educate them in a Western environment, and ultimately erase the traditions normally passed down generationally. Even today, as devastated Mizrahi families attempt to get answers or compensation for this barbaric act, Israeli officials silence and deny their claims (14).

In fact, some Israeli academics and officials have gone as far as to say that the vanished Yemenite children were "sacrifices on the altar of the Jewish national resurrection" (Gamliel 2021, 11). We see then how openly Israel disparages Mizrahim, in a refusal to reckon with the devastation they caused towards their own citizens. Just as every citizen of Israel is required to serve in the military, born to sacrifice their life for the safety of a Jewish ethno-state, national rhetoric is retroactively produced to determine a necropolitics of Mizrahi servitude to this cause. The Israeli government uses this patriotic praise of dying for Israel to reproduce Mizrahi inferiority that can only be rectified through a greater military commitment to the death cult. The affect of memory here serves to both construct the identity of Mizrahi and simultaneously attach it to violent Zionist agendas.

Assimilation Tactics

Historically, Israel has deployed and continues to rely on the stigmatization of a racialized group within its own settler population to justify its attempted genocide and ethnic cleansing of the indigenous population of Palestinians (Eastwood 2018, 60). Zionist initiatives created a

powerful consolidation of the Israeli "collective unconscious" that is anti-Arab and requires Mizrahim to reject their Arabness. Reminiscent of the Martinician Frenchmen serving in France's war against Angola, "it is the peoples of color who annihilated the attempts at liberation of other peoples of color" (Fanon 1952*,* 83). Placed in positions of military power, the subjugated caste becomes the direct threat to Indigenous communities.

As Ashkenazi racism proliferated during the creation of Israel, opportunistic right-wing parties spoke to the economic demands of impoverished Mizrahim, and ultimately seized the majority of their vote for the conservative Likud party in 1977 (Shilon 2018, 546). Israeli political parties were so drastically shifted, that any governmental advocacy to end the occupation of Palestinians was almost eliminated. At the same time, building on a long history of Mizrahi inferiorization, the Israeli military strategically placed Mizrahi soldiers in the most directly coercive positions towards Palestinians (Eastwood 2018, 71). Mizrahi suffering was warped and weaponized to desire a higher position in Israeli society, predicated on the oppression of Palestinians. We can understand then how the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) incentivizes the most violent military contact with Palestinians through an appeal to the economic interests of poor Mizrahim.

So why are these histories of displacement so rarely acknowledged both in Israel and globally? After the Holocaust, Zionist narratives erased Arab Jewish history to identify a unified "historical enemy" of the Jews (Shohat 2017, 105): Muslims occupying the Holy Land. By conflating all Muslim-Arabs with European Naziism, the Israeli state could further its colonial claim for a Jewish haven via an ethno-nation state in Palestine. For Ashkenazi Zionists, "this Arabness…[was] merely a diasporic stain to be "cleansed" through assimilation" (Shohat 2017, 102). When Mizrahim first arrived in Palestine, the Judaism of the newly established Israel that they were expected to connect to was unfamiliar and violent. While Arab Jews of many nations have centuries-long ties to the Judaism of their origin countries, Israeli assimilatory processes attempt to extricate Mizrahi culture and identity from individual Israelis by attributing their multiple backgrounds to a pure Israeliness. Mizrahim resist through community-specific heritage practices such as Moroccan piyyutim (liturgical poems), Iraqi Judeo-Arabic, and memory productions of Jewish community in Izmir (Seroussi 1984, 35). However, the global reach of Zionist agendas threatens to disrupt the culture of wrestling and questioning so traditionally central to Jewish identity.

The Evolution of "Arab-Jew"

Many Israeli Mizrahim today say that they "just want to be Israeli," in a twisted evocation of Fanon's "I wanted to be a man, and nothing but a man" (Fanon 1952, 92). The language of Israeli here is substituted for human, as Arab has come to symbolize something definitively brutish, even subhuman. There is a contentiousness then, in the process of detangling racism in communities of color that buy into modernity's projects towards equality. As Israeli society subsumes Mizrahi history in propagandized hyper-memory of the Holocaust, the space to remember and mourn their Arab nations of origin shrinks. Assimilation might offer a brief psychological ease, but often leaves its subject feeling unbearably bereft of an existence.

To challenge the "separatist imagination" of Palestinian and Israeli partition across ethnic lines, the signifiers of "Jew" and "Arab" must prove to be inseparable (Hochberg 2007, 53). In the early 2000's, some Arab-Jewish scholars began using this hyphenated descriptor instead of the word Mizrahi to impose a *semiology-of-resistance*, as Sandoval terms it (Shenhav 2006, 12). This idea attempted to propose "a post-partition figure through which to critique segregationist narratives, while also opening up imaginative potentialities" (Shohat 2017, 4). This resistance tactic engages a hermeneutic of love that practices holding the political contradictions in pairing these signifiers.

However, this identifier is often rejected by Mizrahim in Israel, who claim it is an externally and academically produced misnomer that flattens their history to align with anti-Zionist initiatives (Gottreich 2008, 434). This rejection reveals how implementing an oppositional consciousness from the top-down is usually ineffective. This political intervention ultimately "evaporates under the individual expression of Barthes' own genius as originator of a method for decoding and decolonizing dominant order" (Sandoval 2000, 107). There is a social safety in writing change from within academia that risks employing the same colonial methodologies it attempts to undo. In the Israeli Mizrahi rejection of the term Arab-Jew we must ask what relationships of power exist between diaspora anti-Zionists and Mizrahim in Israel, especially regarding discursive shifts. Moreover, how are Mizrahim placed back in the volatile clutches of political whim by being held as a diplomatic block to move, rather than a community still experiencing the effects of Zionist violence?

This debate about the erasure of the word Arab is hugely important, as it can be used either to pit Mizrahim against Palestinians (as they have been historically) or serve as a potentiality for what Shohat calls "cross-border identifications in the Arab world" (Shohat, 2017:4). To hold

the contradictions of various Mizrahi perspectives on the etymology of Arab-Jew and its implications, we can bring them into conversation with larger critiques of liberal social justice movements.

Israeli Moves to Innocence

A critique of individual Israelis' complicity in colonization is usually met with a barrage of Israeli coexistence examples that preclude any responsibility for the degradation of Palestine. These "peace initiatives" often rely on love as a feeling, which is only given conditionally when Palestinians embody the non-violent colonized. This love cannot last when there is any type of retaliation towards the daily conditions of settler colonialism. *Decolonial love* can help us understand why Israeli "peace" initiatives in Palestine have predominantly failed. As Palestinian scholar Rana Barakat reveals, the settler colonial framework has led to liberal Israelis' claims that there can be equality as colonizers. Israeli nonprofits fight for basic principles of Palestinian inclusion, rather than addressing the inherent cause of inequality through occupation, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing. As right-wing actors attack and defund the few Israeli nonprofits doing anti-occupation work, the entire leftist landscape becomes about legal protection for nonprofits, rather than standing in solidarity with Palestinian liberation movements. From Palestinian-Israeli "immersion" schools like Yad-b-Yad to social justice grassroots movements like Omdim Beyachad, there is an erasure of the history of Palestinian oppression and a flattening of Palestinian demands.

Liberal Israelis often engage in "moves to innocence" to distance themselves from the radically violent right-wing settlers who are seen as the source of ongoing Palestinian oppression (Tuck & Yang 2012, 10). These moves create an image of the 'good colonizer' who is ultimately excused from feeling guilty about their privileged status in society and can continue doing inclusion work that ignores the daily military abuses of Palestinian civilians. This signifies the success of the Israeli caste system.

There is no ethical way for Israelis to do "peace work" while living as colonizers in Palestine. As Fanon describes, the colonized will not accept any compromise after they have been forced to live under such deplorable conditions. They will continue to resist until they have successfully replaced the colonizer (Fanon 1961, 39). Although they disavow their citizenship and residency as active colonization of Palestine, Israelis do fear this replacement; Ashkenazi

Israelis in particular enact a “paranoid patriarchal white sovereignty [that] manages its anxiety over dispossession and threat through a pathological relationship to Indigenous sovereignty (Byrd 2011, 115). To maintain their dominant reality, Israelis blind themselves to the Palestinian demand for the right of return and continue the ineffective work of calling for peace “on both sides.” These calls will always be negligible while the might of the Israeli military is normalized for safety, and Palestinian resistance is decried as terrorist violence.

However, Fanon’s portrayal of Africa’s decolonizing resistance may not map so directly onto the Palestinian context because “the postcolonial theory arriving from the Anglo-American academy entered a certain post-Zionist, postcolonial world in Israel, where the “colonial” itself had hardly been thought through in any depth…thus we have a ‘post’ without a ‘past,’” (Shohat 2017, 319). As Fanon’s decolonial “new humanism” under postcolonial conditions has been reduced to a celebration of violence, the question of how best to support Palestinian resistance arises (314). Co-conspiratorship is made possible when “this Western peace of mind is unsettled” and “consciousness will have the opportunity to grasp the magnitude, the detours” as one step in the hermeneutic of love (Sandoval 2000, 162). We must interrogate ourselves about just how to unsettle the neoliberal grasp for a peace process under colonial conditions. And then we can ask what the ontological opening for an anti-Zionist futurity is.

Abolitionist Practices in Diaspora

Decolonial movements globally depend on Indigenous place-based practices and knowledge to establish solidarity across colonial contexts (Coulthard & Simpson 2016, 251). Indigenous communities from Hawai’i to Turtle Island confront the neo-colonial erasure of Native dispossession and articulate a tangible politics of reparation through Land Back movements. Palestinians too have long called for the *Right of Return* to their indigenous lands, a humanitarian right that has been dismissed as “too complex” in the context of 75 years of Israeli settlement and livelihoods (Khalidi 1992, 25). On October 7, 2023, Gaza militants engaged in the Al-Aqsa-flood operation, killing over a thousand Israelis and taking others hostage. While personally devastating for me and my Israeli Jewish communities, it also served as a critical decolonial shift for Palestinians. After years of both peaceful and violent resistance under occupation, people in Gaza escalated their call for decolonization. Though Palestinian scholar Rashid Khalidi may have written during a time when a one-state solution was the predominant political narrative, the global call for a Palestinian right of return today

reveals a discursive repositioning of armed resistance, its consequences, and its possibilities.

It is ultimately Palestinians who will liberate themselves. If decolonial history teaches us anything, as Palestinians build solidarity networks of resistance, revolution will be extremely violent for all who live in the region. What is the Jewish anti-Zionist responsibility to prepare a form of belonging for ex-Israelis while Palestinians and SWANA organizers lead further decolonization efforts? What are the conditions, the futurities of hope, the betrayals required to reduce this violence from a decolonial perspective? Israeli author Meital Yaniv writes that they will always be connected to the place they were born, but if and when a Palestinian comes to reclaim their home, they will mournfully and lovingly *leave* (Yaniv 2023, 81). It is worth mentioning that after deserting military service in 2017, Yaniv did in fact leave. This moral call can only be made through an abolitionist lens that *works with* Israelis forced into militarization since birth and provides a loving and healing Jewish alternative. While existentially inconceivable to most Israelis, we can root this idea in 2000 years of Jewish diasporic tradition that protects and prioritizes the safety of all Jews, including those coming from Palestine.

This idea is not new to Israelis, only vilified when it infers a policy-bound designation for Israeli dispossession. In the wake of October 7, nearly half a million Israelis *voluntarily* left Israel out of fear for their safety (Middle East Monitor 2023). While very few Israelis who leave actually engage in an intentional decolonization, we may be witnessing the destabilization of belief in the Zionist project. This is a direct consequence of the fear of Palestinian retaliation; the horrifying recognition of being born a colonizer and benefiting from its power. However, when we consider who has the privilege of fleeing the country, Ashkenazi wealth and resources dominate. When Ashkenazim leave Israel, the predominant anti-Zionist critique centers upon this privilege to leave. Another reality is also signified by this White evacuation: Israelis themselves fear the(ir) occupation and know, deeply, its eventual consequences. When it comes down to it: some try to leave before dying for Israel. This does not just point to privilege to condemn, but also to a contradiction to illuminate. Mizrahim and other Israelis of color, many of whom do not have access to dual citizenship, nor resources or connections to reasonably leave the place they call home, may be the communities most harmed by a decolonization process– not least of all simply because they remain *there*. Jewish diaspora movements must critically engage abolitionist practices that take seriously Mizrahi residency; anti-Zionists can hold Mizrahi grief and anger, while materially enabling their immigration.

The No State Solution

Anti-Zionist Jews can engage the hermeneutics of love by unlocking the temporal space capable of utopian thinking. This is a difficult project against a Zionist imagination of contemporary Holocaust fear that both suspends access to Jewish morality and drives anti-Palestinian policy. The Talmud states however, that "Jews are safer when they are scattered in at least two places than when they are all gathered together" (Boyarin 2023, 29). While this biblical interpretation still leaves anti-Zionist Jews in the vulnerable position of engaging skillfully with the tenets of nationhood– unavoidably central to rabbinical tradition– it is a first step in rejecting modernity's universal requirement for a *nation-state*. Jewish anti-Zionist scholarship is critical here in crafting a sound, Jewish rejection of the nation-state of Israel as signifying peoplehood.

Again, this idea is not new to Israelis who daily face the realities of existing in a death cult – not a place of *belonging*. This is made painfully clear, when IDF soldiers return home from the frontlines of Palestinian oppression, only to realize *there is no point of return*. The number one-way Israelis die in the military is by suicide (Ebrahim & Schwartz 2024). The IDF strategically covers these deaths up, disavowing Jewish lives almost as ruthlessly as they disregard Arab lives (Baram & Kaplan 2018). In addition to the thousands of Palestinian lives claimed, we may ask Israelis at what point Jewish life becomes more important than the Zionist agenda?

Zionist censorship and funding have long worked to negatively frame the question of diaspora and dismiss it as an anti-semitic tactic of exile. To combat these claims, we must wrestle with the Jewish *affect of questioning everything* about the unquestionable state of Israel. The first step to retrieving diaspora from Israeli propaganda, is a semiotic turn towards the positive articulation of diaspora. The richness of Jewish history allows us to consider that Jewishness is not a nation-state, but a "repeated and reiterated performance that produces the internal sense of being a Jew and of being connected particularly (not exclusively) with other Jews and that thus constitutes a Jewish diasporic nation" (Boyarin 2023, 57). Modern diaspora initiatives can serve as an opportunity for Jewish tradition to expand and flourish without abandoning the religious scope of nationhood. The ironic situation within the "Jewish" Israeli state, is how many Israelis are secular. It is convenient then, for them to blame Orthodox Israelis for the ills of occupation and economic degradation. Diaspora is an anti-Zionist alternative that prioritizes the longevity of Judaism and the Jewish *faith*. Mizrahi scholars who

already live in diaspora can give us insight into the frustrations and successes of maintaining Mizrahi Jewish traditions both in an anti-semitic West and a Jewish-exiled East (Miccoli 2017).

Practical Challenges

While this essay focuses on the theoretical possibilities of an anti-Zionist Jewish diaspora, we may also consider the feasibility of implementing the article's recommendations on a geopolitical level. We must hold the complexities of large-scale diaspora shifts, including the practical implications of Israeli trauma, and the consequential increase in violence and suppression from Zionist movements that threaten decolonial imaginations in Palestine.

One of the largest challenges to envisioning Jewish diasporic futures is the censorship of academic research and organizational movements that provide avenues for simply *conceptualizing* alternatives to Zionism. U.S. funded organizations like the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish National Fund threaten pro-Palestine agendas by pushing forward the IHRA definition of anti-semitism that conflates anti-semitism with anti-Zionism. Under this perspective, Palestinian resistance and demands for the right of return are framed as a terrorism that seeks to wipe out all Jews. Academic spaces like Settler Colonial Studies provide scholarly support for such Islamophobic narratives by equating the colonized's demand for the colonizer to leave with Native genocide (King 2019, 70).

Barakat problematizes this framework by asking, "do settlers ever actually become Native? From an indigenous political perspective this answer is clear: never" (Barakat 2017, 351). This intervention disrupts Zionist claims that equate the violence of Palestinian resistance with the U.S.-funded military might of the IDF. Not only do these claims flatten Palestinian suffering, but they perpetuate Islamophobic and anti-semitic agendas that scapegoat Muslims and Jews by pitting them against each other. While U.S. imperial initiatives in the Middle East continue to benefit from claiming they are defending Jews against anti-semitism, they will not stop sending mass weapons of destruction and surveillance for the IDF to use against Palestinians.

Many objections will also be raised about the *where* and the *how* of encouraging Israeli immigration to the U.S. and other countries with high populations of Jews. Some critical questions may arise out of the necessary fear of displacement: Who is funding this project? What networks will be put in place to support Israeli immigrants? How do we implement this

project with Israeli buy-in? How do we reinterpret this moment as a task of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) instead of a Holocaust repetition? What is the emotional impact for Mizrahim who will experience the dual subjection of Arabness and Israeliness in diaspora? What have been the traumas and possibilities of other communities in diaspora? It will certainly be important to consider the economic, cultural, and social factors that are destabilized during a diasporic shift. However, when these questions are presented as irresolvable grievances, they become a self fulfilling prophecy because all attempts to fund research regarding these practical questions are eliminated from the start. Once again, it is the resilience and hope of this painful crossing that will engage Israeli Jews in the praxis stage of the hermeneutics of love.

Toward a Jewish*full* Future

As we anxiously peek over the deep-cliffed borders of Zionism, Talmud appears again to "produce the sounds of diasporic Jewish sociality" (Boyarin 2023, 108). How do these sounds converge with the guttural prayer of religious Mizrahim in Israel? Mizrahi Scholar Ammiel Alcalay argues that it is the historical connections between Islam and Judaism in the Levant that recall a tradition for *living* religiosity through day-to-day communal ties (Alcalay 1992, 275). Conceptualizing Jewish diaspora depends on centering Mizrahi faith in God, in God's love, through the clutches of a Zionism that has both violated and preserved them. How can we situate Mizrahi incorporation into anti-colonial Jewishness as a project of reparations for their displacement? A displacement orchestrated by the U.K., but upheld and exacerbated by Ashkenazi Jews worldwide? In identifying our complicity *within* diaspora, we can generate spaces for repair.

Investing in Jewish anti-Zionist diasporas will require more research grounded in nationalism studies and methodologies of identity formation. For some diaspora Israelis, the guilt and shame of violent Zionism has led to a complete negation of their Israeliness. Mizrahi cultural scholar Ariella Azoulay, for instance, refuses to be identified as Israeli, an instinct I have also had within the clutches of colonial guilt living outside of Israel and therefore the most direct implications of its occupation (Azoulay 2019, xiv). *Guilt* seems to be the lasting significance of being Israeli. But at what point does an imperially constructed identity become incapable of shedding? And who do we ask to engage in this unraveling, and who remains blissfully ignorant of whose land they reside on? I hope this will be the subject of future research, but

for now we can rely on the semiotic explorations of this essay to amplify the role of language in strengthening Jewish diaspora. In addition to Arabic and Yiddish, we must "recover Hebrew as a *Jewish* language, not only the Israeli language" (Boyarin 2023, 122). The historic linguistic proximity of Hebrew and Arabic may be seen as an opportunity for future libidinal ties between Palestinians and Israelis (Hochberg 2007, 50). For Mizrahim who have been denied access to generational lineages of Arabic, Hebrew is a critical component of continuity and connection for survival in diaspora.

Holding contradictions of identity is not only the work of Israelis, but of all Jews. As pro Palestine movements build in solidarity, some Jews engage in the idea that "the only way to end anti-Semitism is for the Jews effectively to disappear from the earth as a collective" (Boyarin 2023, 126). This may be recognized as another "move to innocence" that often prevents a deeper engagement with Jewish values in alignment with Palestinian liberation. It also implies a racist intention for Arab-Jews, or Mizrahim, to also disappear. White Jews cannot risk this violence for such ideality. To eclipse this fragile tendency requires intricate work against punitive mindsets. By applying an abolitionist lens *within* Jewish anti-Zionist movements, we commit to practicing complexity, and extending this invitation to Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, and Jews of color in Palestine.

Further work on the subject will center the internal practices of survival local to the zones for decolonization and liberation. While we anti-Zionist Jews continue efforts for a Jewish diaspora, *the hermeneutics of love* can aid our engagement by encouraging the strength of sitting in contradiction– a discursive and physical reorientation towards a future without the state of Israel but not without the people subjugated by its caste. This practice places us in an uncertain terrain where we may utter the unutterable and hear the unhearable. It permits us to envision a Judaism beyond Zionism "without knowing an alternative" (Yaniv 2023, 154).

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Class Conflict and the Nigerian Labour Movement; Strike, Protests, and Policy Changes

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between class conflict and the Nigerian labour movement, focusing on the role of strikes, protests, and the subsequent policy changes. The primary objective is to explore how economic inequalities and class divisions fuel labour activism in Nigeria, particularly through the actions of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and various trade unions. The study is grounded in conflict theory, which posits that class struggles and economic disparities are key drivers of social and political change. A qualitative approach is employed, utilizing historical records, government reports, and scholarly literature to analyse the evolution of labour movements and their impact on policy development. The findings indicate that labour strikes and protests are pivotal in challenging class disparities and advocating for improved working conditions, fair wages, and social justice. These movements lead to significant policy changes, including reforms in labour laws and wage policies, though the responses from the government and employers are often reactive rather than proactive. The discussion emphasizes the enduring nature of class conflict in shaping labour relations and policy in Nigeria, concluding that continued advocacy is essential to address ongoing inequalities and ensure lasting socio-economic progress. The article underscores the importance of understanding of class conflict as a driving force behind labour activism and its influence on policy reforms in Nigeria.

Keywords: class, conflict, inequalities, labour, policy introduction

Introduction

The Nigerian labour movement has been a significant force in shaping the socio-economic and political landscape of the country. From the #EndSARS protests in 2020 to the controversies surrounding fuel subsidy removal in 2023, the interplay between class conflict and labour activism reflects broader issues of economic inequality and social justice. This article explores the intricate relationship between class conflict and the Nigerian labour movement, focusing on how strikes, protests, and subsequent policy changes have influenced the landscape from 2020 to 2024. Using conflict theory as a framework, this study utilizes historical records, government reports, and scholarly literature to analyze the evolution of labour movements and their impact on policy development in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework: Conflict Theory and Labour Activism in Nigeria

Conflict theory, originating from the works of Karl Marx (1848), posits that societal dynamics are fundamentally shaped by the ongoing struggle between groups with conflicting interests, particularly over resources, power, and economic benefits. Marx argued that these conflicts arise due to class disparities, with the bourgeoisie (capitalist elite) exploiting the proletariat (working class). These power imbalances perpetuate inequality and foster resistance, often leading to social change.

In the Nigerian context, conflict theory provides a lens to analyze labour activism and its role in challenging systemic inequalities. Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) extended conflict theory to include the struggle for authority within institutions, which is particularly relevant to labour relations in Nigeria. Here, workers and labour unions often oppose state policies or employer practices that perpetuate economic and social injustices.

Labour activism in Nigeria is driven by economic disparities, poor wages, unsafe working conditions, and inadequate welfare policies. Historically, movements such as the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) have utilized strikes, protests, and negotiations to demand better working conditions and resist anti-labour laws. These struggles are deeply rooted in the Marxian conflict framework, as they reflect the friction between the ruling elite and the working majority. For example, the fuel subsidy removal protests of 2012 demonstrated how labour unions, in alliance with civil society groups, resisted neoliberal policies that

disproportionately affected workers and the poor. Similarly, strikes by academic and health unions highlight persistent grievances tied to resource allocation and systemic neglect.

Conflict theory thus elucidates how the working class in Nigeria uses activism as a tool to address systemic inequities and advocate for justice, challenging power structures that uphold economic oppression. Authors such as Ake (1981) and Otobo (2016) have explored these dynamics, linking labour movements to broader socio-political struggles in Nigeria. This theoretical framework underscores the transformative potential of conflict, positioning labour activism as a critical in reshaping Nigeria's socioeconomic and political landscape.

Current Class Conflicts in Nigeria: Major Events from 2020 to 2024

i. The #EndSARS Movement (2020)

The #EndSARS protests of 2020 were a pivotal moment in Nigeria's recent history. Initially focused on police brutality, the movement quickly expanded to address broader issues of governance, economic inequality, and systemic oppression. The protests, driven largely by young Nigerians from working-class backgrounds, highlighted the deep-seated frustrations with a government perceived as disconnected from the needs of its citizens.

The government's response to the #EndSARS movement was marked by violent crackdowns, including the infamous Lekki Toll Gate shooting. This incident, where security forces were alleged to have fired on peaceful protesters, brought international condemnation and further galvanized the movement. Although the government announced reforms, including the disbandment of SARS and the establishment of judicial panels, these measures have been criticized as insufficient. The ongoing struggle to fully implement the promised reforms underscores the challenges of addressing class conflict through superficial policy changes (Adeyemi 65).

ii. The COVID-19 Pandemic and Economic Inequality (2020–2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing economic inequalities in Nigeria. The lockdowns and restrictions disproportionately impacted informal sector workers, who lacked the financial security and access to healthcare enjoyed by wealthier individuals. The pandemic

highlighted the stark divide between those who could work remotely and those forced to risk their health for a daily wage.

Labour unions, including the NLC, played a crucial role in advocating for better protection for workers during the pandemic. They demanded hazard allowances for frontline workers and economic support for the vulnerable. However, the government's response was often inadequate, reflecting broader systemic issues in addressing worker welfare. Strikes and protests during this period underscored the urgent need for comprehensive social safety nets and better labour protections (Chukwu, 2021:58).

iii. The 2023 Fuel Subsidy Removal Protests

In 2023, the Nigerian government's decision to remove fuel subsidies sparked widespread protests. The removal, aimed at reducing government expenditure and addressing fiscal challenges, led to a dramatic increase in fuel prices and, subsequently, the cost of living. The policy change was seen by many as a direct attack on the working class, already struggling with inflation and stagnant wages.

The NLC and other civil society groups led nationwide protests against the subsidy removal, arguing that it would disproportionately affect the poor. The government's response included palliative measures, such as cash transfers and transport subsidies. However, these measures were criticized as insufficient and poorly targeted, failing to address the broader economic challenges faced by the working class. The protests highlighted the ongoing tensions between economic policies and social justice (Agbo 75).

iv. Minimum Wage Strikes and Industrial Actions (2020–2024)

Disputes over the implementation of the national minimum wage have been a persistent source of conflict in Nigeria. Although the national minimum wage was increased to 30,000 Naira in 2019, many state governments have been slow to implement it fully, citing financial constraints. This has led to numerous strikes and industrial actions by the NLC and other trade unions.

In 2022, the NLC organized a nationwide strike to demand the full implementation of the minimum wage. The strike underscored the disconnect between government policies and the realities faced by workers. Despite repeated promises, many workers continue to earn below

the minimum wage, struggling to cope with rising inflation and a deteriorating standard of living. The government's failure to address these issues reflects a broader pattern of neglecting workers' rights and needs (Olusegun 92).

Comparative Analysis: Nigeria and Other Countries

To understand the dynamics of labour conflict in Nigeria, it is useful to compare it with labour movements in other countries facing similar economic and social challenges. This comparison provides insights into how different contexts shape labour activism and government responses across the world.

i. South Africa: Labour Strikes and Economic Inequality

South Africa, like Nigeria, has experienced significant labour unrest due to economic inequality and high unemployment rates. The country has seen numerous strikes in the mining and manufacturing sectors, driven by demands for better wages and working conditions. Similar to Nigeria, South African labour movements have faced challenges in achieving sustained policy changes, with government responses often reactive rather than proactive (Sibanda 113).

ii. Brazil: Labour Movements and Economic Reforms

In Brazil, labour movements have been influential in shaping economic reforms and addressing social inequalities. The country's history of labour activism includes major strikes and protests, particularly during periods of economic crisis. Brazilian labour unions have been more successful in negotiating long-term policy changes, partly due to a more engaged government and a stronger tradition of collective bargaining (Silva 89).

iii. India: Labour Activism and Policy Responses

India has also seen significant labour unrest, particularly in response to economic liberalization policies and changes in labour laws. Indian labour movements have often succeeded in pushing for reforms through sustained protests and strikes. The Indian government's approach to labour issues includes a mix of policy adjustments and social safety nets, reflecting a more proactive stance compared to the reactive measures seen in Nigeria (Rao 101).

Government and Employer Responses

The responses of the Nigerian government and employers to labour activism have been a critical factor in shaping the outcomes of labour disputes. These responses are often characterized by a pattern of short-term fixes and reactive measures.

Government Responses: Reactive Measures and Short-Term Fixes

The Nigerian government's responses to labour activism are often marked by a lack of proactive engagement. For example, during the #EndSARS protests, the government initially responded with violent crackdowns before promising reforms that were slow to materialize. Similarly, the response to the fuel subsidy removal protests included temporary relief measures that failed to address the broader economic issues. This reactive approach reflects a broader reluctance to engage with the root causes of class conflict, such as economic inequality and poor governance. The government's focus on short-term fixes, rather than comprehensive policy changes, limits the effectiveness of its responses and perpetuates ongoing class tensions (Eze 77).

Employer Responses: Compliance and Resistance

Employers in Nigeria often resist labour demands, particularly regarding wage increases and improved working conditions. Many employers, especially in the informal sector, have been slow to comply with labour laws and regulations, citing financial constraints and operational challenges. This resistance exacerbates class conflict and contributes to ongoing labour unrest.

The role of employers in shaping labour relations is complex, as they navigate the pressures of economic competitiveness while responding to labour demands. In some cases, employers have engaged in negotiations and made concessions to avoid prolonged conflicts. However, these efforts are often limited and fail to address the underlying issues driving labour activism (Osagie 130).

Future Outlook and Recommendations

Looking ahead, the future of labour activism in Nigeria will likely be shaped by several factors, including economic conditions, political developments, and the evolving nature of class conflict.

Potential Future Trends

1. **Increased Labour Activism:** As economic pressures and class inequalities continue to grow, labour activism may become more prominent. Workers may increasingly demand better wages, improved working conditions, and more comprehensive social protections.
2. **Digital Activism:** The use of digital platforms for organizing and mobilizing protests is likely to increase. Social media and online communication tools can enhance the reach and impact of labour movements, providing new opportunities for advocacy and engagement.
3. **Policy Reforms:** There may be pressure on the government to implement more substantive policy reforms to address economic inequalities and improve labour conditions. However, the effectiveness of these reforms will depend on the government's willingness to engage with the root causes of class conflict (Chukwu 58).

Recommendations for Policy Improvements

1. **Comprehensive Labour Reforms:** The government should prioritize comprehensive labour reforms that address wage disparities, improve working conditions, and strengthen social safety nets. This includes enforcing existing labour laws and implementing new policies to protect workers' rights.
2. **Proactive Engagement:** The government should adopt a more proactive approach to managing class conflict, engaging with labour unions and civil society groups to address grievances and negotiate solutions.
3. **Enhanced Social Protections:** Expanding social protections, including healthcare, pensions, and unemployment benefits, can help mitigate the impact of economic inequalities and provide a safety net for vulnerable workers.

4. **Strengthening Collective Bargaining:** Promoting and supporting collective bargaining processes can enhance the effectiveness of labour movements and contribute to more equitable outcomes for workers.

Conclusion

The relationship between class conflict and the Nigerian labour movement is characterized by ongoing struggles for economic justice and social equity. Strikes, protests, and other forms of labour activism have played a crucial role in challenging class disparities and advocating for workers' rights. However, the government's responses to these movements have often been reactive and insufficient, reflecting a broader reluctance to address the structural causes of class conflict.

To achieve lasting socio-economic progress, there is a need for continued advocacy and engagement from labour unions, civil society, and other stakeholders. Addressing the deep-seated economic inequalities that fuel class conflict requires more than temporary fixes; it demands a comprehensive rethinking of economic policies and a commitment to social justice. Understanding class conflict as a driving force behind labour activism is essential for developing policies that promote equitable and inclusive growth in Nigeria.

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