WE REMIND YOU

WHAT WOULD AN HIV DOULA DO?

HIV & PALESTINE

WWHIVDD

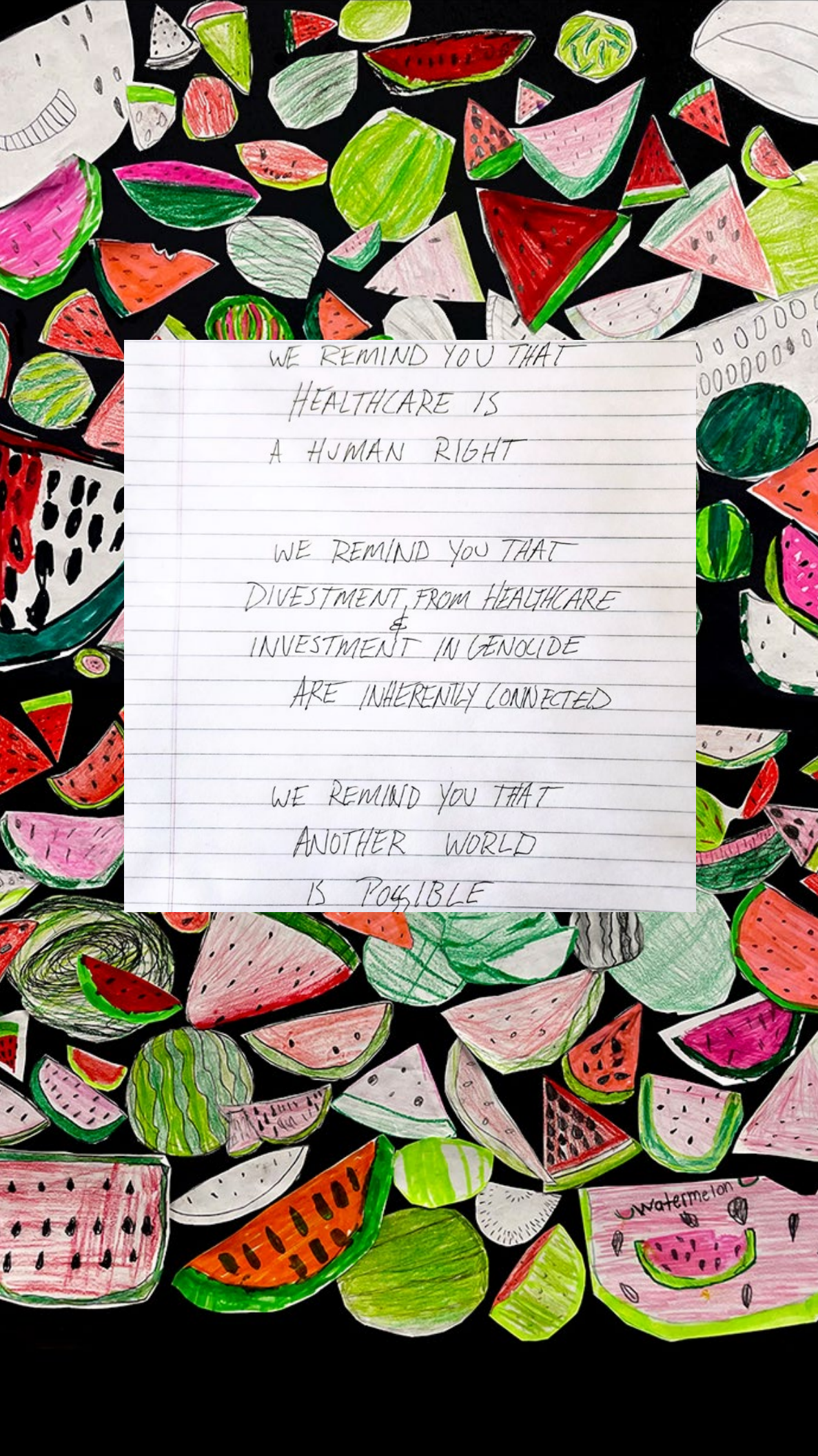
Before You Begin

Before you dive into our zine, *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine*, we urge you to pay attention to Palestinian people, specifically as they relate to Palestinian histories and futures. Here are some places to start:

- Palestine Film Institute — On Vimeo
- Palestinian Justice Syllabus — POC Online Classroom
- Palestine Reading Resources — The Mosaic Rooms
- Palestine Remix — Al Jazeera
- Palestine Square — The Institute for Palestine Studies
- Voices for Palestine — On Instagram

For more direction, embark on this list of actions by The Mosaics Room, from their October 2023 Call to Cultural Organizations, Artists, and Writers For Solidarity with Palestine:

- Learn: read and share resources on Palestine. For example: Palestinian Centre for Human Rights Gaza (PCHR Gaza), Al Haq Palestinian human rights organisation based in Ramallah, Adalah legal centre for Arab minority rights in Israel, Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre. See here for our recent list of Palestine resources to read, listen and watch.
- Refuse: funding from the Israeli government and from private funders who support its illegal occupation.
- Language: use terms which make visible the Palestinian experience, including Palestine, occupation, dispossession, ethnic cleansing, genocide, settler colonialism, and apartheid.
- Lobby your MP [congressperson], or local representatives to pressure and end their military and political support with Israel until it adheres to international law. Here is a format letter from MAP.
- Open: your programme and your collection to artists, collectives, initiatives, and galleries who are led by non-mainstream or radical voices, including artists from Palestine, and fund and support their participation.
- Solidarity: share your public statement (personal and institutional) with your networks; if you are an artist, ask the institutions who hold your work or with whom you work to support it, and share it with your institution's audiences as widely as possible. [Helpful examples here: https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/take-action/]
- Write: cover work by marginalised or radical voices, including Palestinian ones.
- Donate: support Medical Aid for Palestinian's Emergency Appeal for Gaza and Welfare Association Gaza Emergency Appeal.


WE REMIND YOU THAT
HEALTHCARE IS
A HUMAN RIGHT
WE REMIND YOU THAT
DIVESTMENT FROM HEALTHCARE
&
INVESTMENT IN GENOCIDE
ARE INHERENTLY CONNECTED
WE REMIND YOU THAT
ANOTHER WORLD
IS POSSIBLE
watermelon

Theodore (ted) Kerr

Editor's Note

This zine begins with a handwritten poem, *We Remind You*, by writer Cea / (Constantine Jones), in which the poet includes themselves in the We, a collective voice of the knowing and justice-seeking masses who, amid the genocide happening in Palestine are speaking truth to power, reminding a collective You—those with the capacity to end the violence—of the lessons We have learned from past and ongoing atrocities, such as the AIDS crisis.

The full poem, *We Remind You*, provides title, structure and meaning to our zine, which is called *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine*. Each of the three sections of this zine begins with a single stanza from Cea's poem, framed by a field of hand-drawn watermelons created by students of educator and artist Glammy. The watermelon drawings are shared without text at the end of the zine.

Each of the poem's stanzas offers a thematic framework to consider while reading the contributions that follow. The first two stanzas are about healthcare, with the second more explicitly mentioning genocide. The last stanza is about world building, hope. As the editor of this zine, I read the last stanza as a threat to those who will not end the suffering, and something like an oath that the rest of us make to ourselves and each other in our fight for justice.

The majority of contributors in *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine* are members of What Would an HIV Doula Do?, a community of people joined in response to the ongoing AIDS crisis. We understand a doula as someone who holds space during times of transition. We understand HIV as a series of transitions that begin long before being tested, that continue after treatment and beyond. We doula ourselves, each other, institutions and culture. Foundational to our process is asking questions. Over the last few months, we have been asking questions of ourselves and each other about HIV and Palestine, with many of the results in this zine.

For me, the *You*, in Cea's poem can also be the *We*. Meaning, *We* too can learn from and be reminded of the lessons learned from past and ongoing atrocities. Just because we live through history, does not mean we always know what is happening or what has happened. We can also make history together.

I also see the *We* functioning as an invitation to recognize oneself and one another as people impacted by HIV and Palestine in the past, present and future. This includes people for whom the two crises are occurring simultaneously: some of the nearly 2 million Palestinians who have fled their homes and are being bombed, are living with HIV; some of the almost 32,000 people who have been killed, lived with HIV; within the Palestinian diaspora of 6 million are people currently living with HIV; and in the future, some Palestinians—who will survive this tragedy—will contract HIV.

The majority of us who have contributed to the zine are also people living with and/or are directly impacted by HIV within US, Canadian and Mexican contexts, for whom Palestine is an urgent issue. For some people

in WWHIVDD, responding to the attack on Palestine is connected to how they understand themselves as Jewish; for others it is about how they understand a world shaped by HIV; for others it is about solidarity between freedom fighters across populations; and for others there is no single reason for their participation, but a multitude of intersections.

With the multiple uses of *We* at play, *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine* is a lot about connections. After a series of contributions that provide grounding exercises, the first section of the zine invites readers to consider the relationship between HIV rates in Palestine and within Indigenous communities tracked by US Public Health Service. To facilitate this, we have provided some HIV statistics, a few public health terms, a piece of visual art, and more resources.

Additional connective tissue across *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine* centers around action. For example, much of the powerful NYC-based civil disobedience calling for the end of genocide in Palestine has been informed by AIDS activism. Many of our collective members have been part of recent protests, were active in historic AIDS actions, and a few, have been involved in both past and present protests.

Activism is not the only site where echoes across HIV, Palestine and time are occuring. We see it also in the work of martyred writers, visual artists, and others across the globe, throughout history and spanning identities. Through images, essays, poetry and interviews *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine* offers opportunities to witness, consider, and learn from activist and cultural tactics across issues, and contexts.

Coming full circle, *We Remind You / HIV & Palestine* pauses briefly on two examples of how HIV has been historically weaponized, on a global scale, against important Palestinian figures. Specifically Yassar Arafat after his death in 2004, and Dr. Ashraf al-Hajuj, who was detained in Libya from 2000 to 2007 on charges of HIV infection. These two incidents point to a larger theme of HIV exceptionalism, often limiting how the epidemic can be seen in connection with other issues including Black liberation, economic justice, COVID-19, LGBTQ+ rights, feminism, and of course, Palestinian self-determination.

Bringing us back to the *We*, the zine is a call to action that values the work we can do among ourselves, for ourselves and beyond. Many of the contributions include resources and exercises with the aim of generating, directing, and supporting community discussion and action. In this spirit, the zine begins with specific tasks connected to the direct and immediate well being and survival of Palestinian people.

We remind we / you, HIV Is Not Over
We remind we / you, Palestine Will Be Free

Section 3:
We Remind You That
Another World
Is Possible

Keep Going

WWHIVDD

Your Four Letter Word

1964 *LOVE* — Robert Indiana created the now iconic image as a holiday card for the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1987 *AIDS* — General Idea, inspired by LOVE, created AIDS, giving the epidemic a logo.

1989 *RIOT* — Gran Fury, unhappy with General Idea's version, protested, and created their own.

2014 *GAZA* — Kyle Goen, informed by Indiana and inspired by General Idea, created an image that protesters have brought into the streets.

Exercises:

> "I think of the *LOVE* paintings as being a one word poem."
>
> —Robert Indiana

Inspired by the four word lineage from above (*LOVE, AIDS, RIOT, GAZA*), think of and then share a four-letter one-word poem to describe how you are feeling right now as you embark on this journey thinking about HIV and Palestine.

- You can do this by yourself or with others.
- If you are with others, make sure everyone shares.
- Feel free to be creative in how you use letters, numbers, etc. If you want, sketch out your response in the square style of the artworks themselves.

Resources:
Want to learn more about the images? Check out these select references:

LOVE

- The World's Love Affair With Robert Indiana's 'Love' Series Endures, Annikka Olsen, Artnet, February 13, 2023
- Paintings: 1965-1969 from artist's website

AIDS

- General Idea: Imagevirus, Gregg Bordowitz, 2010
- AIDS 1987, from GENERAL IDEA: LIFE & WORK by Sarah E.K. Smith

RIOT

- RIOT on the Wall: Gran Fury's Iconic Painting at the LGBT Community Center in New York, Charles Sanchez, The Body, June 6, 2019

GAZA

- GAZA LOVE from Kyle Goen's website
- Bombers, Blood, and Teddy Bears: Posters from the 2014 war on Gaza, Catherine Baker, Mondoweiss, July 15, 2015

Beyond these examples, other artists and activists have been inspired by *LOVE*, including Marlene McCarty (*FUCK*), Amirmohsen Shahheidari (*BARF*), and many others.

Noah Crandell

What is this Moment Asking of Us?

I ran into an ex-boyfriend of mine at the Grand Central Terminal action late last year, the one that echoed the ACT UP protest from 1991. The two of us aren't on speaking terms, and hadn't had any form of contact in a year and a half. I decided to approach him, tapping him on the shoulder and giving him a quick hug. He looked terrified to see me, and I could tell he had no real interest in engaging with me. I got the message loud and clear. I told him it was nice to see him, and walked away to a different part of the protest.

Later, when talking about this with a friend, I laughed at the absurdity of the situation and how the personal and political are constantly in relationship with one another, "The two of us are both at this protest, we both care about the same issues, and yet, we can't even have a conversation. Shouldn't being there have put things into perspective?"

My friend responded by saying, "I mean, isn't that what part of this moment is about? It's about living next to your neighbors, some of whom you may hate, but not wanting to annihilate each other. Right?" I haven't seen my ex since.

"Maybe that framing works better to describe people in the diaspora," my boyfriend tells me. "I think Zionists would say: yes, Israelis and Palestinians hate each other, and that's the root of the conflict; why can't we just learn to live next to each other and get along? And pro-Palestinians would say: we hate Israel because they are occupying us and subjecting us to apartheid...it's not just about learning not to hate, it's about them not occupying us anymore."

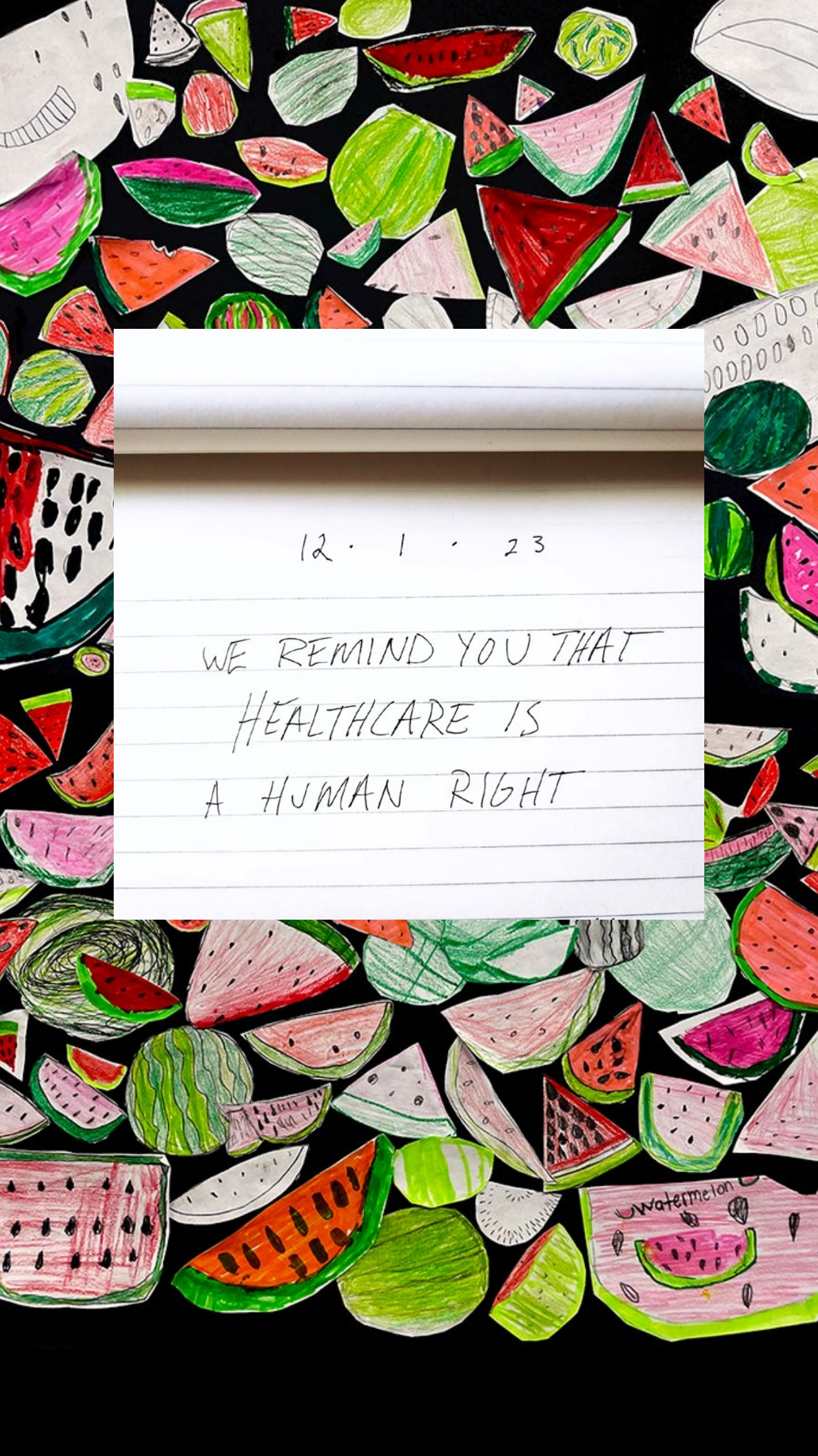
Another friend of mine told me that at a meeting they went to led by anti-Zionist Israelis, the organizers started the meeting by urging folks to "let go of every idea that you have about the conflict."

Maybe, as a Jew who has grown up in Zionist spaces, and has seen firsthand how the obsessiveness of Israel remains a pillar amongst American Jews, I am left with not feeling very hopeful. Maybe I wanted seeing my ex to mean something more than what it was. Maybe there is nothing to learn from that moment, other than awkwardness, bitterness, and sadness. Maybe this moment is just about grief. Maybe there isn't anything special about this moment, other than sadness. Maybe we are witnessing the destruction and annihilation of a people, and there's nothing we can do. Maybe in the end, all this moment is asking us to do is grieve.

Maybe, I don't know what this moment is asking of us, and that terrifies me.

Exercises:

- After writing the above reflection, Noah was left with some unanswered questions. Consider them, discuss them with others, journal with them in mind:
  - How do we bear the weight of a loss of this caliber?
  - Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the re-emergence of Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate, and everything else that has been happening since 2020, what have we learned that can help us now?
  - Is this moment about testing the limits of our compassion?
- Come up with your own questions as a way of getting to the heart of how you are feeling at this moment. What thoughts, history, etc. are you bringing to this historic moment?
- After you have dove into Noah's questions, and/or asked your own, write your own reflection. What is this moment asking of you?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WE REMIND YOU THAT
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watermelon

alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society

Bhebek Aamin

Bhebek Aamin (Arabic for "I Want You Safe") was a unique health initiative established by alQaws in 2009 to provide much-needed sexual health information to the Palestinian LGBTQ community, including information about HIV/AIDS. Bhebek Aamin was run by alQaws activists with an emphasis on offering friendly and accessible information about safer sex. In addition to providing sexual health information to individuals, the project sought to raise awareness about the health concerns and needs of the Palestinian LGBTQ community to healthcare professionals, clinics and major healthcare organizations. Through its workshops and media campaigns, Bhebek Aamin aimed to develop a positive attitude towards sex and address misconceptions about sexual health. (Edited from www.alqaws.org)

WWHIVDD
Introduction by Mathew Rodriguez

HIV in Indigenous Communities in the US *&* Middle East Regions

What can a number accomplish? What stories can it tell? The same number can be large or small; I can tell you I have $50 in my bank account or that I've been bitten by 50 snakes and the reactions elicited would, perhaps, be very different.

The same can be true when it comes to the ongoing crisis of HIV/AIDS. When I tell you that an estimated 50 million people living with HIV have died since the beginning of the epidemic, you can imagine a silent "that we know of" at the end of that statement. And while that sounds like a huge number, does that number's vastness fill the hole of grief that we might feel from a personal loss? Or even begin to include the many people who lived and died with HIV without ever being counted?

A wise friend once shared an insight with me: without colonization, the circumstances may not have existed for HIV to proliferate and move with as much efficiency as it did. Suppression is sometimes such a well-oiled machine that it allows disease to move, silently, without detection. When we talk about being "undetectable" in the HIV context, it usually describes a person's viral load becoming very low. We can also think of it as a hallmark of a virus' history. We need to talk more about the connection between colonialism and HIV.

When we speak about bodily sovereignty, part of that privilege is the freedom to know what is happening inside our bodies. When I go to the doctor and allow the phlebotomist to stick a tube into my arm in search of a vein, I get a list of numbers back that lets me know — from blood sugar to hormones — a picture of what is happening underneath my skin. A function of colonialism is obfuscation and disinformation, including the creation of a chasm between information about your own body.

Below are official HIV statistics regarding Indigenous communities, whether in North America or the Middle East. Even though they come from government officials, we can see how they provide insight into the lives of the few people who have been granted access to information about their own bodies. The numbers remind us of the scores of people who, with grave intent, are left without information about what is happening in the borders of their own bodies.

Before the stats, which are the most up to date available, we provide terms we hope are useful to put the numbers in context. We end with questions and resources, ways for you and your community to think about the terms and stats together.

Useful Terms from Various Sources:

Allostatic Load

Refers to the cumulative burden of chronic stress and life events. It involves the interaction of different physiological systems at varying degrees of activity. When environmental challenges exceed the individual ability to cope, then allostatic overload ensues. Allostatic load is identified by the use of biomarkers and clinical criteria. From: Allostatic Load and Its Impact on Health: A Systematic Review

Settler Colonialism

Colonialism is a system that occupies and usurps labor/land/resources from one group of people for the benefit of another… In settler colonialism land, not labor, is key. In this system, Indigenous Peoples are literally replaced by settlers. From: Settler Colonialism Primer

Social Determinants of Health

The non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems. From: World Health Organization

Survivance

An active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry. The practices of survivance create an active presence...Native stories are the sources of survivance. From: Decolonizing the Archive: Indigenous People and Survivance, Early Caribbean Digital Archive

Syndemics

A syndemic is defined by two or more illness states interacting poorly with each other and negatively influencing the mutual course of each disease trajectory. Syndemics is a conceptual framework for explaining diseases or health disorders that emerge in communities and are aggravated by the social, economic, environmental, and political milieu in which they exist. It refers to the importance of biological, social, economic, and environmental elements in individual and population health. From What is a Syndemic?

Stats and Reports:
HIV/AIDS in Palestine
From: HIV/AIDS in Palestine: A growing concern

- HIV incidence and AIDS-related mortality are rising. Between 1988 and 2017, there have been 98 cases (79 AIDS and 19 HIV).
- The numbers do not reflect the actual status of HIV/AIDS; there is a shortage of information, probably due to insufficient investment in surveillance and collection and analysis of data.
- The mortality rate among people living with HIV/AIDS in Palestine is very high; people become susceptible to opportunistic infections, probably due to late diagnoses and presentation of cases.
- People were referred to the AIDS clinic at the Palestinian Ministry of Health, where they received free diagnoses, antiretroviral therapy (ART), and psycho-social support.
- It is believed that most people living with HIV/AIDS do not seek medical treatment, probably due to confidentiality concerns; the Palestinian Ministry of Health insists that patient information and records are not disclosed by any means.
- Most people discovered their HIV status when subjected to HIV tests required for blood donation in blood banks.
- It was found that HIV/AIDS was more frequent in males than females; 80 males and 18 females were found to be HIV positive or living with AIDS.
- The majority of HIV/AIDS cases are among youth; the highest incidence was found among those aged 20–39 years.

HIV Among American Indian/Alaska Native People
From: Indian Health Services

- HIV is a public health issue among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people, who represent about 1.7% of the US population. Compared with other racial/ethnic groups, AI/AN ranked fifth in estimated rates of HIV diagnoses in 2021.
- In 2021, there were 223 new diagnoses of HIV infection among AI/AN people, an increase of 18% from 2020 and 7.2% from 2017.
- In 2021, out of every 100 AI/AN persons with diagnosed HIV, 75 persons received some care, 52 persons were retained in care, and 64 persons had achieved viral suppression, on par with Black/African Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, but below their White and Asian counterparts.
- In 2021, the rate of new HIV diagnoses among AI/AN persons was 10.9 (per 100,000 population), more than twice the rate of 5.3 (per 100,000 population) experienced by Whites.

- In 2021, AI/AN persons had the lowest level of knowledge of HIV status than any other racial or ethnic group.
- The rate of diagnosis of HIV infection among AI/AN women (4.4%) is over twice as high as the rate of diagnosis among White women (1.8%).

Exercises:

- To start, articulate your relationship/philosophy on stats.
  - For some, they can be inhumane ways to catalog human experience, for others, they are useful data from which change can be made, and for others still, they are one of many attempts to make sense of large issues.
- Similarly, articulate your relationship with terms like allostatic load, settler colonialism, social determinants of health, and syndemics.
  - Some may disagree with how these terms are being used, and that is okay. With that in mind, can you still engage with the terms for the purpose of this exercise?

Thinking about:

- Syndemics: What are illnesses and social realities that Indigenous people are having to deal with co-currently? How do you see these impacting a community's health?
- Survivance: How can we ensure a way of looking at these stats as a judgment upon the systems that fail and harm Indigenous people, and not a commentary on Indigenous communities' ways of life? What stories do the statistics tell us that honor Indigenous survival and thriving?
- Allostatic load: What impact do you think settler colonialism has on individual or collective health?
- Use community sources, the internet, and/or your own curiosity and skills to add information to this section that you think is missing as it relates to Palestinians living with / impacted by HIV and Indigenous people living with / impacted by HIV. Share it with others as well.

Resources:

- If you are interested in learning more about HIV stats in your area or by demographic, check out the AIDSVU website.
- "Who is the public in public health?," was said by Gary Kingsman. See more of his work at his website.
- Visit the "We are not numbers" project, a youth-led Palestinian non-profit project in the Gaza Strip. It tells the stories behind the numbers of Palestinians in the news and advocates for their human rights.

Demian Dinéyazhi'

POZ Since 1492

Poz Since 1492 is an image of the first Thanksgiving—pilgrim settler colonizers offering food to the Indigenous peoples—that I've digitally altered so it becomes this sort of cryptic, Sci-Fi dystopic scene. And I've implanted the words Poz Since 1492 on top, pointing toward HIV/AIDS language. An alternative title was *The First Infection*, which also points toward colonization and settler colonialism within the Americas as being synonymous with the introduction of contagion, infection, epidemics.

I sometimes think of the work that I'm engaged in, especially with digital media and appropriated images like *Poz Since 1492*, as a continuation of Indigenous Diné (Navajo) strategies of war and resistance. I read that early on, one of the main tactics of Navajo warriors in warfare against the cavalry was raiding the enemy's camp and resources, stealing from them. I think of taking digital archived objects as a continuation of that warfare, through stealing these images.

Poz Since 1492 was initially created as a digital image, an experimentation, a sketch for my Tumblr account, which is the same as my Instagram handle @heterogeneoushomosexual. I was trying to bring together the complexities of Indigenous queer history and identity, and AIDS-related art, activism, and politics. I wanted to make an image that could make up for a lot of lost opportunities for Indigenous peoples. I'm sure that throughout the HIV/AIDS crisis, there were various Indigenous people who had similar perspectives but unfortunately, lacked the ability, resources, or communities to have these conversations.

I'm really interested in art that is aggressive, and the history of social activism that intersects with visual art—the graphics of Gran Fury and the

AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). When I started making work about HIV/AIDS art and activism, I came into awareness of the SILENCE=DEATH slogan. In thinking about Indigenous health issues, I also understand that sometimes silence for Indigenous communities has been used as a form of protection. It was a way to protect ourselves and our communities from ridicule, scorn, harassment, continued violence—either to continue our traditional ways, but also because assimilation into western standards, gender systems, ways of being, completely conflict with pre-colonial traditional society. We're still fighting against the western medical industrial complex. Public health is such a sacred right, within which we still haven't been able to fully find some form of self-determination.

Public health for Indigenous people—diabetes, alcoholism, forced sterilization—is a very political subject. Throughout the entire history of settler colonialism in the United States, Indigenous peoples have been ignored and health has been used as a form of political warfare against Indigenous peoples. And there's a shit ton of stigma that exists on reservations. I am trying to bring out this conversation about HIV within Indigenous communities and AIDS politics, which is something that has been missing.

In terms of HIV + Palestine, I feel like the connections are a lack of visibility or awareness, a lack of resources or up-to-date statistics, numbers, or even accessibility to effective and current HIV regimen. I know that at various points throughout the last few years, there have been HIV/AIDS communities in the United States and Canada that have expressed support for shipping medication to Palestine, though I don't know what that current situation is.

I wonder about access to HIV medication in Palestine? I don't want to fall into a trap or mindset of assumption, because we are talking about different circumstances here, but I wonder if it is similar to the complete lack of resources or education or awareness that we saw within Indigenous communities in the United States throughout the 90s. Also, a similarity I see is around how Palestinians are asking global communities to care about their cause, and doing so in ways that they are forced to strip down their humanity in very private and sacred scenes of horror to try to find and restore any sort of humanity for the outside world to humanize them.

In 2011, I became interested in creating this collective initiative R.I.S.E. (Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment) to find like-minded younger generations interested in being political and aware of Indigenous history and the intersections of queer trans feminist communities and Indigenous communities. I wanted people to get messy and be political and just build spaces together. I think a lot of that changed when the COVID pandemic hit. Honestly, everything gets really hazy before 2020, especially in terms of thinking about the ways that COVID has affected memory and has brought out different types of trauma for various communities. R.I.S.E.'s mission became about supporting social distancing on reservations, pushing

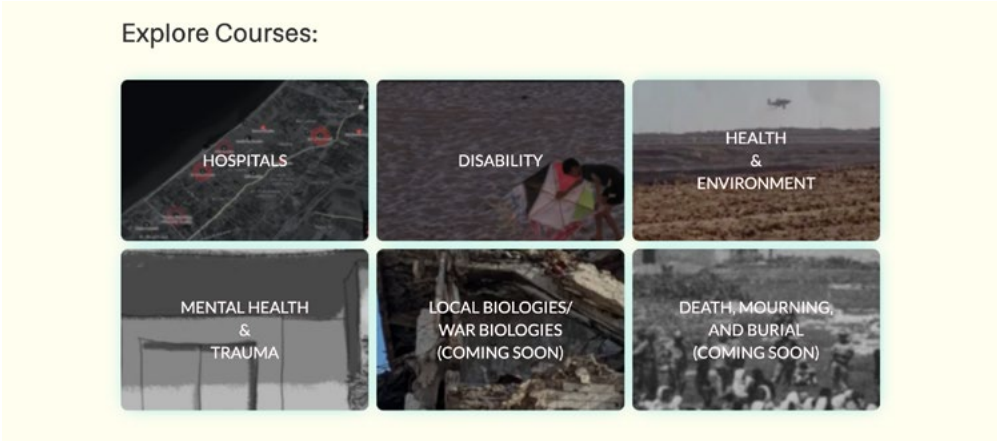
out information about how Covid-19 was affecting Indigenous communities and our elders. And then it pushed to supporting mutual aid efforts and Black Lives Matter and #StopAsianHate. I think that's where a lot of power of Indigenous communities is found, in creating solidarity and support for not only ourselves and our various tribal systems and tribal identities, but also in continuing conversations within a global context of what it means to be a good relative.

R.I.S.E. is invested in thinking about and supporting this moment of awareness of the impacts of United States colonialism, imperialism and ongoing warfare, genocidal conquest, the experimentation of weapons and weapon manufacturing and surveillance that is happening in Gaza and Palestine and beyond. It's a really frightening and fucked up moment, but it's also making so many more people aware than they've ever been. And there has to be some sort of hope there. I'm trying to get back into this space where I realize that making work is also synonymous with building community and building culture in spaces that we need.

As told to Alex Fialho

Emily Lim Rogers +
Emma Shaw Crane

Medical Anthropology for Palestine



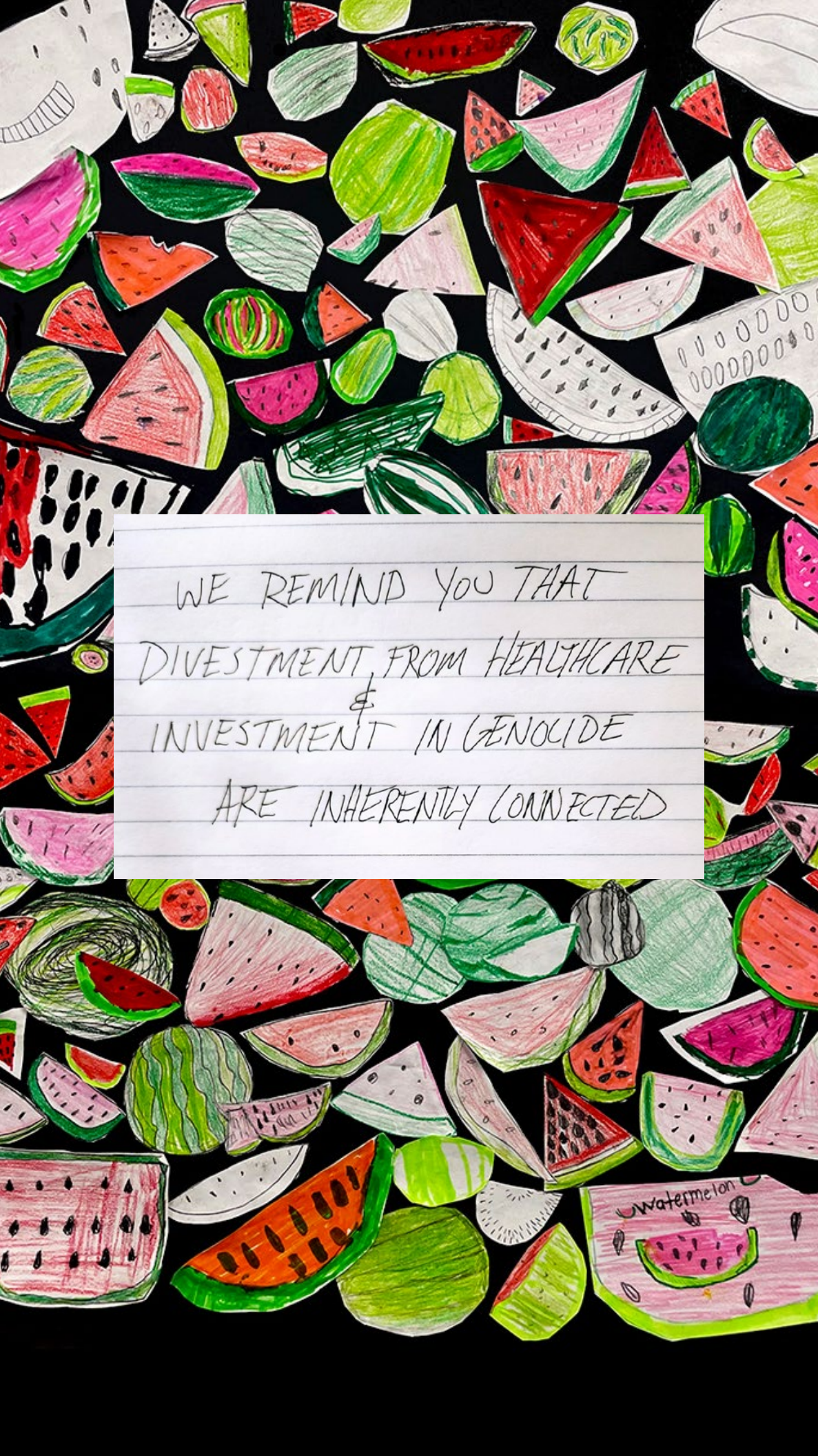
Screenshot of anthropologyforpalestine.org

We created Medical Anthropology for Palestine for non-specialists like us to talk about Palestine in the classroom, geared towards medical anthropology, disability studies, and global health courses at the college level, but also as a potential resource for reading groups or other forms of study. As two anthropologists who do not work in Palestine, we felt what many others do: an ethical and professional imperative to address the genocide in Palestine, even if it is not directly related to our own work. The goal of the project is to make it as easy as possible to teach about Palestine. The list is thus divided into topical categories with themes people probably already have in their syllabi. We've found that many educators do want to talk about Palestine, but feel ill-equipped to do so. So we compiled readings and films and asked several specialists to review the list before we went live.

We see genocide as a mass disabling event and take an anti-colonial approach to disability studies in the list. Just as HIV activists demand that we recognize the misdistribution of access to medical treatment and care as a question of colonialism and racism, so too we recognize ongoing global inequalities; our project insists disability, disease, and death are processes of geopolitical power rather than seeing them as siloed, single issues as is often the case in the Global North. Groups such as ACT UP have long connected war and health. This project shares that ethos.

Palestinian civil society has asked that we use whatever platforms we have available to us to end the siege on Gaza and the ongoing occupation of Palestine. Our project attempts, in a small way, to answer that call in our role as educators. We hope that the list has an impact within and beyond the classroom. We encourage folks to use the list in whatever way is most useful to them. We'd love to hear from people about how they are using it–feel free to drop us a line. Finally, we express our gratitude to the many contributors whose suggestions were indispensable to the project, and our solidarity with our Palestinian colleagues who face scholasticide and the destruction of their universities in and beyond Gaza.

Visit the website: anthropologyforpalestine.org
Website designed by Ry Dunn


WE REMIND YOU THAT
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watermelon

Yara M Asi +
Osama Tanous +
Bram Wispelwey +
Mohammed AlKhaldi

Razan al-Najjar

Excerpt from *Are There 'Two Sides' to Attacks on Healthcare?*

Screenshot from the video: Rare interview with slain Palestinian medic Razan al-Najjar

> "In June 2018, 20-year-old medic Razan al-Najjar was shot and killed by an Israeli sniper as she tended to protestors on the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Despite efforts to obscure Razan's motivations, with an Israeli spokesperson claiming she was 'not the angel of mercy Hamas propaganda is making her out to be,' eventually Israel admitted that her death was unintentional and a rigorous New York Times investigation found that the medics and others in the immediate area posed no threat to Israelis. Although Razan's murder made international news, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 431 other attacks against healthcare in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2018."

Read the full article here.

Hans Sherrer

Ashraf al-Hajuj

Excerpt from the *Wrongly Convicted Database Record*

Ashraf al-Hajuj, and co-defendants, upon release after eight years of being held captive under false charges of deliberately transmitting children with HIV.

"Palestinian doctor, Ashraf al-Hajuj was one of six co-defendants who were doing aid work in Libya when accused of deliberately infecting 438 children with HIV-tainted blood at the El-Fatih Children's Hospital in Benghazi, Libya's second city.

They were arrested in February 1999 and protested their innocence. Thirteen other Bulgarian medical workers [were] arrested at the same time were eventually released. The six co-defendants confessed to infecting the children, but they all later retracted those confessions, claiming they had been physically tortured into making them. They were charged with murder with a lethal substance among other lesser charges.

Their trial began on February 7, 2000 in the People's Court. Two years later, in February 2002, the court declared that it did not have jurisdiction to try them on the murder charge, and their case was transferred to the criminal court system. Their second trial began on July 8, 2003. The six were convicted of the murder charges, and on May 6, 2004 were sentenced to death by firing squad. In the face of widespread international condemnation of the fairness of the trial, in December 2005 their appeal was successful and a retrial was ordered. Their third trial began in May 2006. The six co-defendants were again convicted of the same charges in December, and again sentenced to death.

al-Hajuj and his co-defendants' convictions and sentences were upheld by Libya's Supreme Court on July 11, 2007. Six days later Libya's High Judicial Council commuted the sentences to life in prison, reportedly after European Union countries agreed to compensate Libya approximately $1 million for each of the 438 children. Libya agreed to transfer the six to Bulgaria to serve their sentences, including the Palestinian doctor who was granted Bulgarian citizenship a month earlier on June 19, 2007.

After arriving in the capital of Sophia on July 24, 2007, Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov granted the six full pardons on the basis of their innocence of the crimes.

Six weeks later, on August 10, 2007, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, the son of Libya's leader Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi, admitted that the confessions by the six were extracted through torture with electric shocks and threats against the safety of their families."

Read the full entry here.

Theodore (ted) Kerr

AIDS + Arafat

Image honoring Yasser Arafat after his death

Delta Burke, Little Richard, and Ryan White are 3 famous people that I could not get enough of when I was kid. It was not until I was older that I understood the hold that the coverage of them had on me. Their fame was rooted in their proximity to - yet non-normative relationship with - beauty, talent and circumstance: Delta was a past beauty queen, Little Richard was the dethroned King of Rock and Roll; and Ryan was a little white boy with AIDS. They were so close to being an ideal, yet so far from what gets considered perfect. And there I was, a fey boy growing up in the Canadian prairies, licking his way through his mother's weekly tabloids.

Joining the above-mentioned stars was Yasser Arafat, the founding leader of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) from 1969 to 2004 and the president of the Palestinian National Authority from 1994 to 2004.

As a little white kid, I knew nothing of Palestine, let alone its politics half a word away. But I knew who Arafat was. He was more famous than Delta, and more intriguing. He didn't have a sitcom, but he was featured on the nightly news—especially around the Oslo Peace Talks—and he was a familiar face from the grocery store magazine racks. A tabloid cover I remember had a photo of his smiling face in a rectangular box, next to a headline that read, "Yassir I'm Gay." I didn't get the play on words until I read it outloud, and then, in close order, I laughed, felt shame, and covered my mouth. Standing next to my mother, as the line inched closer to the cashier, I remember feeling I had just outed myself, first as gay for reading the headline in the first place, and second, as ignorant for having found it funny.

By then, I had already read reports that Arafat was gay, and was attached to the story. Here was a man, I thought, figuring out how to get the freedom he needed to be himself, while not sacrificing the freedom he was trying to secure for his homeland.With equal parts hubris and projection, gay myself, the Arafat narrative felt familiar to me.

Lost on me at the time though were more nefarious implications. Embedded in the story of Arafat's European escapes was the notion that the Middle East was so unsafe that even Arafat, a national leader, had to escape to the West. And of course, the major takeaway was that the supposed regional strong man was a fairy.

These subtexts became more obvious after Araft's sudden—yet, depending who you talked to, not surprising—2004 death in Paris. Almost immediately, questions about his sexuality went from gossip to international news. The global debate became: Did Arafat die of AIDS or was he poisoned? Put another way: Who was Arafat, what would Arafat's legacy be? Was he a terrorist whose march towards Palestinian freedom was such a threat that he needed to be stopped? Or, was he an unruly queer, whose sexual drives killed him in the end? In any case, whether the Western media chose to narrate Arafat as an outlaw of imperialist apartheid or a sexual outlaw, his untimely death would appear to be justified by their political standards

Even in death, Arafat could not escape the tabloid glare. Like Delta, Little Richard, and Ryan, as much as he was flesh and blood, Arafat was also made to be an object to be studied, and depending on the story, mocked, feared, or both. Tabloid overage is a way to keep stars, and us (the readers), in line within acceptable ways of being, as dictated by those in power. Delta could be fat, but not a movie star. Little Richard could be flamboyant, but not a king. Ryan could have friends, but they had to be freaks: Michael Jackson, Elton John, etc.

So what message was being sent by the coverage of Arafat's death?

One of the earliest appearances of Arafat dying of AIDS stories, seems to be an article in the Israeli paper, Haaretz. But rather quickly, voices of dissent emerged. A 2005 blog post from Voltaire Nation not only put into question the source of the story, but also underlined the possible motivations:

> The Israeli daily based its headline on this imaginary diagnosis rather than on the forensic report. There are two things at stake: On the one hand, to damage Yasser Arafat's reputation after his death by presenting the old leader as homosexual (which in turn shows that the term is still pejorative in Israel), and on the other hand, to hide any suspicion of poisoning by the Israeli service.

Almost ten years later, as questions about Arafat's death raged on, the Council on Foreign Relations weighed in:

> As for the accusations that Arafat died of AIDS, no physician or investigator has ever offered any credible evidence for this claim. The suggestion that Arafat was gay and thus succumbed to AIDS rather than being poisoned was part of a political strategy not only

to deflect allegations of murder, but also to delegitimize the man who was a hero to many (and the personification of evil to many others). As an aside, I have no idea whether Arafat was gay, but using his sexual orientation (real or alleged) in this way is despicable even for those who loathed the man.

Thinking about it now, it also seems clear that any attempts to defame Arafat was not only an attempt to create division within the country of Palestine, but also to defame Palestinian citizens. AIDS goes from being constructed as a judgment on a man, to a judgment of those who listened, loved, and followed the man.

What emerges is an understanding that AIDS was politicized via homophobic slander by Israel—a supposed gay mecca—in an attempt to delegitimize Arafat and the Palestinian cause. The tabloid message, at least to Western audiences, seems to be: You can lead a call towards freedom, but you will die in shame of its pursuit.

But, like Little Richard has rightfully regained his Rock and Roll crown in recent years, AIDS activism and the fight for Palestian futures prevail.

More reading:

- Haaretz Spreads A Rumor — Voltaire Network
- Myth buster: Killing Arafat — Al Jazeera
- Polonium, HIV or 'Palestinium' — The World

WWHIVDD +
Salonee Bhaman

Rhyming with History: Images of AIDS Activism + Palestinian Liberation

The playwright and activist Larry Kramer drew some ire when he compared AIDS to Shoah, the Holocaust of Jewish people and other marginalized groups at the hands of the Nazi regime. Both, in Kramer's view, were genocidal programs enabled by slow-moving institutions that looked away from the truth in favor of decorum. For some critics, the comparison was offensive because it implicitly challenged the Holocaust as a singular moment of state violence against innocent people. Similar critiques have been leveled against the charge that the Israeli government is currently perpetrating a genocide in Gaza. As the old aphorism goes: history doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes. That rhyme is evident in the moral urgency and visual vernacular of protests unfolding on the streets of New York City at this moment, thanks to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge about the strategy of using culture and spectacle as tactics against war and apathy that is clearly underway. One assumes Kramer would be proud of what is happening, but maybe those who knew him would be a better judge of that.

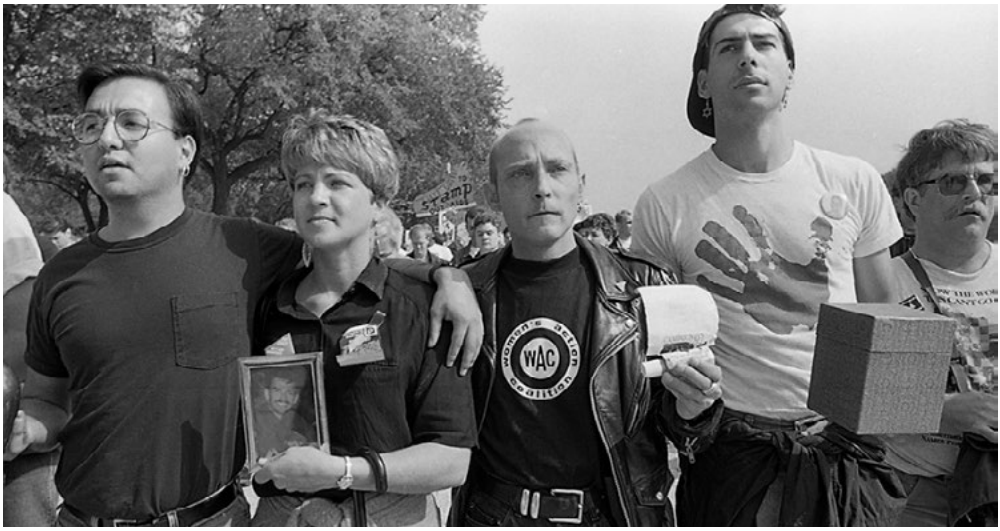
The photo essay that follows, spotlights three examples where echoes of 20th century AIDS activism roar into present-day Palestinian Liberation images. Included with the photos is text from historian Salonee Bhaman. Bhaman's research focused on social welfare, gender, race and HIV make her well-suited to elucidate the relation between the images, connecting them through a network of understanding and stories rather than a straight line.

In pairing and sharing these images, we have some hesitation around accidentally suggesting that AIDS history is primarily something to learn from, or point to in the past from the vantage of the present. As a collective of people living with and impacted by HIV, some of whom partook in the actions depicted in the images from the past and the present, we are moved by this moment in history where the power of AIDS activism is being named and used outside the realm of HIV or LGBTQ organizing. And / or perhaps these actions are an extension of that very organizing, during the ongoing HIV/AIDS crisis.

We understand HIV/AIDS to be a lived reality the world over, and a world-shaping phenomenon. Seeing tactics created by and for people living with HIV/AIDS in service of those suffering and dying in a genocide (some of whom are also living with HIV) is overwhelming, and powerful.

WITNESSING = ACTIVISM + MEMORIAL

In a photo by Meg Handler, from October 11, 1992, we see activists bringing ashes of their loved ones to the White House, also known as the ACT UP Ashes Action. In a photo by a member of WWHIVDD from November 9, 2023, we see students at The New School carrying a list of names of Palestinians who had been murdered during the then month-long bombardment of the Gaza strip by the Israeli military. Joining protests across the world, the students unfurled a list of names that clarified the scale of devastation.



Passersby, no matter their political leanings, were forced to look at the length of the scroll—which required several people to carry it.

ACT UP's Ashes Action was a mass-political-funeral. A group of ACT UP protestors marched to the White House Lawn, carrying the ashes of a loved one who had died of AIDS-related complications. One by one, they scattered the ashes on the lawn in grief and protest. They were saying goodbye to their loved ones in public, and forcing those with the power to shape policy to reckon with the magnitude of their collective loss at once. Unlike the AIDS memorial quilt which was being displayed nearby on the National Mall, this memorial refused any interpretive distance: ashes, dust, and bone fragments attesting to the fact that these had been people made of flesh and blood.

Looking at the Ashes Action in relation to the action by The New School students, both strike me as a type of political funerary rite. The dead are most honored when we allow them to help us fight for the living. It is not unusual to see a group assembled in support of Gaza on the streets of New York City. Like the political funerals organized up and down the streets of Manhattan in decades past, those gathered now stand in defiance of the normalcy that's around them: no forgetting what's at stake in silence; no peaceful brunch while others are dying.

STILL DESPERATE

ACT UP's 1991 Day of Desperation action made an important connection between the billions of dollars that the United States was spending to fight the Gulf War and the complete lack of government support domestically for healthcare and AIDS research. The action technically began on the night of January 23, when activists disrupted the evening news on CBS and PBS to declare "Fight AIDS, not Arabs / AIDS is News." When asked by a reporter if protests were a silly way to make a point, the protestors responded "No, we think spending hundreds of billions of dollars bombing people in another continent is a silly and immature way to get a point across." The next day, ACT UPers flooded Grand Central Terminal at rush hour, unfurling banners that informed commuters that there was one AIDS death every 8 minutes and exhorting them to action.

32 years later, on the same day, anti-Zionist Jews and their comrades pulled off the same action– shutting down Grand Central Station during the evening rush hour and unfurling a banner over the train schedule: NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE. PALESTINIANS SHOULD BE FREE.

Earlier that day, news had come that Israel had shut off access to all the internet in Gaza. I remember sitting on my sofa, eyes glued to videos of bombs detonating that had been posted overnight, filled with dread about the silencing by internet blackout. I felt hopeless. Soon, my feed began to show me row after row of protestors, queer and Jewish elders, wearing matching black T shirts. An image of Cecilia Gentilli getting arrested. A sweet-faced young person bravely holding up half of the tapestry as those beneath her were ushered away, hands behind their backs, by the NYPD.

The next day, I joined hundreds of others marching to the Brooklyn Bridge. Somewhere near the top of Flatbush Avenue, I ran into a friend who was with an organizer who had held up half the banner the night before. She told me that the secret to sneaking onto that balcony had come by way of the Day of Desperation organizers themselves.

NEW YORK CRIMES

Then and now, activists and people of conscience have asked: Who gets to tell the story of what is happening in the world? How are crises interpreted for the broader public? What makes a trustworthy source—and who gets to claim objectivity when delivering the news?

Using the familiar fonts and formats of the "newspaper of record," both of the protest papers pictured here draw attention to the news that wasn't fit to print: naming names and drawing lines between violence and neglect and the wealth it produced for those at the top. See images from the newspapers below: *The New York Crimes* 1989, Gran Fury and *The New York War Crimes*, 2024, Writers Against the War on Gaza (WAWOG).


The New York Crimes

AIDS and Money:

N.Y. HOSPITALS IN RUINS; CITY HALL TO BLAME

Inmates with AIDS: Inadvertent Political Prisoners

What About People of Color? Race Effects Survival


"All the Consent That's Fit to Manufacture"

The New York War Crimes

Late Edition

STOP THE PRESSES! FREE PALESTINE!

BOYCOTT! DIVEST! UNSUBSCRIBE!

THE EPIC OF THE GOAT AND THE WOLF

Live like a porcupine, fight like a flea

Why Does The

Shawn Escarciga

Avoidable Mass Death Anywhere is an Affront to Life Everywhere

December 1, 2023, ACT UP NYC + JVP, photo by Alexa Blair Wilkinson

In 1967, Palestinian freedom fighters started using the watermelon as their symbol when the Israeli government made it illegal to fly the Palestinian flag in the West Bank and Gaza after the Six Day War.

In 1986, a group of young men brought together by the increasing crisis of AIDS inverted the Holocaust pink triangle in a design for a wheatpaste poster, which included the now-iconic phrase "Silence = Death."

In 2023, members of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) came together almost two months into the genocidal attack on Palestine for a World AIDS Day action. Posing in front of Lincoln Center in NYC, they held a sign that read "Fund Healthcare Not Warfare." At the bottom of a photograph of the action, a pair of activists can be seen holding up a vital mashup of AIDS response and Palestinian Liberation visuals, updated for the digital age: a pink triangle watermelon slice.

Artist Shawn Escarciga made the triangle slice image at the invitation of, and in collaboration with, World AIDS Day action organizers Morgan Bassichis from JVP and Jason Rosenberg from ACT UP NYC.

As Escarciga shares, the image came into being quickly, in conversation with Bassichis and Rosenberg. He is not new to using visuals and the Internet for social causes. In addition to his art practice, which takes on issues of class, homonormativity, and liberal politics, Escarciga is the Development Manager at Visual AIDS, a New York City HIV and art non-profit. In March 2020, he founded The NYC Low-Income Artist + Freelancer Relief Fund. With collaborator Nadia Tykulsker, the fund raised almost a quarter million dollars for those who lost income in the early days of COVID.

In the interview below with WWHIVDD member Theodore (ted) Kerr, Escarciga dives into the role of design within social justice, what participating in activism can look like, and more. He begins by sharing reservations he had about putting the image out into the world.

Shawn Escarciga (SE): Hindsight is 2020. I knew ACT UP and JVP, and I trusted Morgan and Jason. They said, 'this is something we've come up with together between our two coalitions and we want it to coincide with our World AIDS Day actions.' So, that was important because initially I was like, who am I to make this image?

Theodore (ted) Kerr (TK): How do you feel when you see it circulating beyond your own social group?

SE: To be transparent, this didn't take me a very long time. It was something I did in an afternoon with a few edits. When the image was posted, I was tagged. That was not something I was expecting, and it has connected me more to the ACT UP community and the JVP community and others who have appreciated it. That has been nice, but different. I think Jason and Morgan came to me because I make memes and I have a little platform online where people see my shit and I'm used to people taking things [I have made and sharing them]. The triangle slice felt like it never was mine and I never really intended it to be mine. I was thinking this was a way for me to tap into the protests that were happening and help [be a part of the movement] with the skills that I have and the tools that I have at my disposal. I was helping create something in collaboration for something larger than both myself and the organizations. So I'm happy to see it. And it's interesting to see it in banners and things. But yeah, it's not mine.

TK: You mentioned that Morgan and Jason reached out to you because they knew you could do it. What part of your background or practice do you think informs this work?

SE: I am someone who's always kind of straddled the political and the accessible in terms of this kind of work. I think they thought that I could whip something up. And I did. By the time I started working on this project I had already committed to make a meme a day for the next three years. Making the image was part of that practice for that day. Not that this is a meme necessarily, but the way that it spreads as a meme is something that I was used to. So I think that felt aligned.

TK: How do you define meme?

SE: It's vacuous. I think meme is the word that has been put on these digital collages that have text and are easily spread. I'm not a meme purist.

TK: I also like the more traditional definition: if gene is the way information gets passed physically, meme is the way information gets passed non-physically.

SK: Yes. This is a remixed version of an iconic image, which was a remixed version of an iconic image. So that feels mimetic.

TK: It's a meme as much as the original Silence = Death poster was. It is drawing upon insider knowledge to evoke a reaction, and I would say a sense of community, as well as activism.

SK: I work for Visual AIDS, and the chance to work on this was coming at a time where institutionally I wasn't able to say anything, but having my name attached to something like this, with people who know what communities I'm a part of made it feel more aligned than just having anyone do it.

Also, I don't have the physical ability to protest in public as much as I used to. I can't walk for long distances. So [like I said before] having this as a tool to use my voice was good, but I was scared honestly. I was like, this is iconic imagery. It didn't feel sacrilegious, but it did feel like taking on something, stewarding part of that legacy.

TK: What were you nervous about?

SE: I wanted to do justice to the labor and the depth the Silence = Death imagery has in contemporary culture, how we talk about HIV / AIDS, how we talk about what activism looks like in a contemporary sense. I didn't want people to think what we made was cheap and disrespectful. Even though there was a quick turnaround, there was a lot of care and thought and a sense of duty.

TK: I think of you as someone who responds in a crisis.

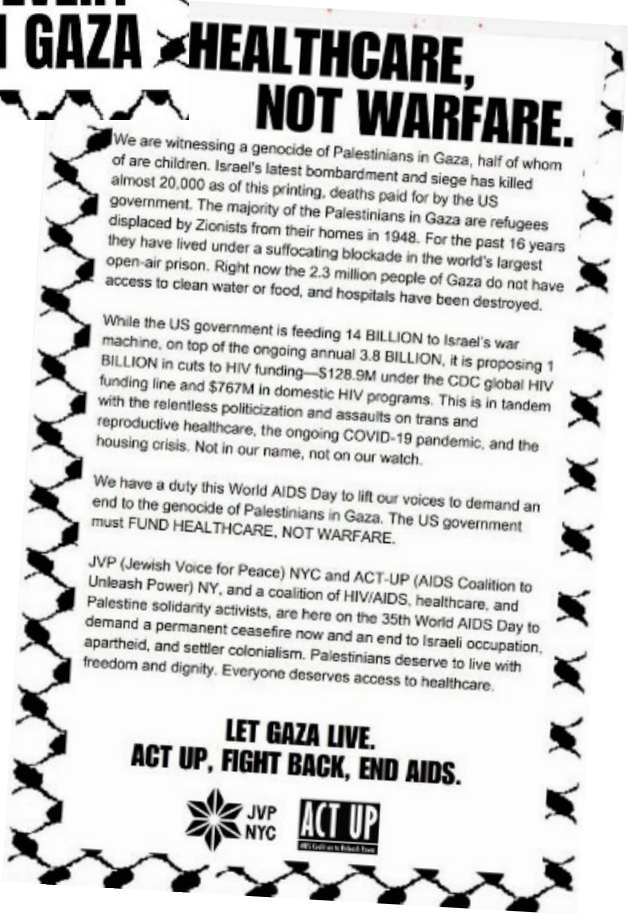
SE: Making memes actually started as promotional tools for a mutual aid fund I ran at the start of the COVID lockdowns, and also as a way to keep me sane. But I found that they were a quick and easy way to get people's attention for something important. I think there's often an undervaluing of the internet or memes as something that doesn't have the capacity to connect. Running the fund with Nadia, raising a quarter of a million dollars in six months purely through online advocacy, taught me a lot. And at the heart of it, I was designing images using cultural references to bring awareness and bring some lightness to a really heavy moment in a way that could bring more people towards this cause and towards each other.

TK: What connections do you see between Palestine and HIV?

SE: The Silence = Death imagery came around when mass death was occurring due to government neglect and profits were put over people. I think that ACT UP understands clearly when the people have to be loud and when the people have to use [symbols and images that are important to us]. People were [once] pissed off about the pink triangle being used in connection to AIDS, but it's impactful. You look at it, you know what we're talking about. It's repurposed and it's reclaimed. And I think when we look at the mass amount of death happening at the hands of the US government, the Israeli government and the failure of world governments all over, the connections between HIV and Palestine don't feel like that much of a stretch for me. Is it a direct parallel? No, of course not. But I think from a human perspective, avoidable mass death anywhere is an affront to life everywhere. As a person of moral standing, connected to the legacies that I steward in my day job and the communities that I live within, and having just lived through a height of COVID, how can we not collectivize? How can we not use the tools that we have from our ancestors (some of whom are still with us)? How do we not forget that lineage?

JVP +
ACT UP NYC

The Government has Blood on its Hands



Flyers, design by KT Kennedy, that were given out as part of the December 1, 2023, JVP + ACT UP NYC action

Eyal

Queer, Anti-Zionist, Born in Israel Recounts What It Was Like to Go Back

Eyal was born in Jerusalem during the first Intifada. Right after the Gulf War, not yet a teenager, he immigrated with his nuclear family to the South Bay area in Silicon Valley. Eventually, his parents and brother moved back to Israel, and in 2018, after he received his HIV positive diagnosis in New Orleans, where he had moved as a young adult, he followed his family back.

He stayed in Israel until summer 2023. By then, even after he had riled some zionist feathers within the country's Radical Faerie community, and spent 3 months in the South Hebron Hills learning Arabic and serving as a protective presence for Palestinians being terrorized by Settlers, he knew his time was done. The country he imagined he left as a childhood was no longer. He moved back to the US, where he currently lives.

In the interview below, Eyal speaks with artist Noah Crandell about his years in Israel, specifically struggling with the country's medical system as a sex worker and a person living with HIV in the supposed gay mecca; the community he built and the tumult he witnessed during his time in the West Bank; and what it all means to him now that the Israeli attacks on Palestinians have intensified after October 7th, 2023.

Noah Crandell: What spurred on that transition to move back to Israel?

Eyal: So 2018 was a big one. I became HIV positive early that year. I had already been on PreP for years, but I got off PreP because I had been traveling and I got back and whatever… I have so many HIV positive people in my life, but actually feeling that going through my body and in my spirit was really difficult, but also all of these new things came up: desires, questions. Part of that led to me to leave New Orleans and explore deeper questions about who I was and what belonging meant and what my relationship to the land where I was born is and was. A lot of that existential juice started flowing and led me to be like, "I don't wanna live this complacent life in New Orleans anymore." I wanted to go deeper into things.

NC: By the time that you moved back, were you already in anti-Zionist spaces?

E: Before I tested positive I was already thinking about these things. When I was younger, I went to UC Berkeley. Within a year and a half, I had begun meeting Palestinians, thinking about Israel, organizing Jews to think progressively about Israel. The first time I was in New Orleans was in 2011 to disrupt Bibi Netanyahu's speech. So, by then I was already involved. I was totally identifying as an anti Zionist. But then I kind of put that aside and was prioritizing other things, not engaging in solidarity activism. And then that came back as a priority all of a sudden.

NC: Do you correlate contracting HIV as the big shift that had you rethinking how you want to be spending your time?

E: I think so. That was one of the big shifts. I was part of organizing a big annual Purim party. We turned a backyard into this magical playground.

For the two weeks that we were planning and building I was so sick. I didn't know what was happening, and I didn't have any health insurance. I somehow managed to get through that party…barely. The next day I got the call to come in, after going to the clinic. Things that soon became apparent were who my friends were, the ones that actually cared for me, and who I knew would actually hold me in this really difficult and vulnerable moment. This led to questions and things began to click into place.

NC: I think you should talk about what the anti-occupation movement looks like within Israel. When you were there in 2018, did you feel hopeful about the anti-Zionist movement within Israel?

E: I definitely didn't go to Israel to become an activist. First, I needed to figure out how to get meds, where to live and figure out what kind of life I wanted to lead in Israel. As things started to shift, I was like, "Okay, what's actually important to me is to have real friends and relationships that I can trust. " I've done the whole getting involved in activism thing, I realized that political beliefs or alignment does not always equal people that I want to hang with all the time.

The main community I started to hang out with were the Israeli fairies. The fairies were a big part of my life when I was in New Orleans and I would often visit Tennessee. A lot of my connections were through them and adjacent people who are all committed to creating a queer home in the woods in rural spaces: getting in a "right" relationship with the land and also getting into less normative communal structures and ways of relating. So I connected with the fairies in Israel because I loved being with queers, and on the land where we're not surveilled and not constantly navigating Google calendars and shit.

In the fairies you often take on a new name or a different name, or a fairy name. In the American context, I never took on a different name. I was always Eyal, but all of a sudden within a few months, somehow the name that I took on was Nakba. My fairy name was Nakba. And as Nakba, I was all of a sudden trying to move all this weird, colonial Zionist shit out of this community. But it wasn't activism. I wasn't launching campaigns. But there were weird tensions and contradictions of having predominantly Jewish and Israeli fairies on land that had been colonized as a settler culture that was also trying on these different ways of relating to the land that we were also settling on.

NC: Queer Israelis can be very Zionist. That's showing up even more at this moment. So how many of the fairies shared an anti-Zionist belief system? How ingrained was that into the group?

E: Laughs. Not at all. When I came over there, there were two or three Palestinian fairies that were coming into this space where we spoke Hebrew.

Occasionally we all spoke some English when there were international fairies. But in order to be there, you had to be comfortable navigating an Israeli/Zionist…you know, whatever. So I connected quickly with Palestinians, because I was like, "Okay, what are you even doing here? Why are you here? Why am I here?" Also, there were a few people that had resonated with my politics - because I was pretty outspoken. And I got defensive and angry and critical. I was like, "You fucking fairies. It's important for me to be here, and I want to be here, but also fuck your nationalism. Fuck your mythologies, fuck your…"

I got a lot of pushback whenever I spoke out about anything. I remember getting the feedback: "We come here for a break from politics. This is an apolitical space we want. Why are you bringing the outside world into this space by talking about these politics?" I'm like, "It's not just politics." So people were very resistant, but I think they were also very protective over the space that they were trying to carve out. It was kind of an escapist "fantasy island" vacation-like space. Over the course of the four years that I engaged, things shifted dramatically. And I wouldn't say I did that single-handedly, but I do think that I've seen how I've shifted and how people's political beliefs have changed….[after me] nobody will tell you that there's no room for politics in fairyland anymore. People have realized that part of what they need to do is have difficult conversations in relevant ways. I've done a lot of different kinds of teaching in that space, by talking about and engaging in grief and ritual and ceremony, different ways of looking at the land itself and being on the land itself. I think we brought that change and that beginning of the shift of consciousness.

NC: You mentioned your first priority was getting meds. What was it like navigating the Israeli health system? What was that experience like for you coming back to Israel?

E: If you make Aliyah [immigration of Jews from the diaspora to Israel], and if you make a plan, they'll send you a plane ticket. They'll get you set up with everything pretty quickly including a healthcare provider. In Israel, there's four public healthcare providers and if you're a citizen, you get to choose membership in one of them and that's free. Then you can pay a monthly fee for slightly better services. It's maybe up to a hundred shekels a month, which is about less than $30.

I made Aliyah, but only as soon as I landed, and it took me about three months to navigate the bureaucracy before they initiated my healthcare. I wouldn't call it a nightmare, but it was very demoralizing to get there and be like, "Oh, I thought I was going to have access to meds right away because I made Aliyah, because I have this Jewish blah, blah, blah…" And nevermind the fraught moral ethical dilemma of accepting all this money from the Israeli government for being Jewish and coming back to live in Israel.

But for about the first three months I was trying to figure out how to expedite my healthcare so that I could have meds. I had about two months worth of meds that I came with. I realized pretty quickly that I was not going to be able to get meds from the healthcare system before I ran out. And I wasn't out to my parents about my status. I had to navigate it by myself. I reached out to some fairies who gave me some advice. There is a project in Israel called something like, "The Agency for the War on AIDS" (always these war metaphors). I reached out, went there in person, and first I had to deal with someone working there hitting on me right away, and then, once I got to see a social worker she started interrogating me! She was like, "Are you sure that there's no way you can buy them? Are you sure that there's no other way you can get them?" I'm like, "Isn't this your fucking job?"

At some point I left, knowing I needed help. I called my aunt and I told her everything. She supported me. I got back in touch with the social worker, who was like, "Well, I found some meds for you, but just so you know, if you take these meds, there are African asylum seekers who are gonna be deprived of them. It means you're taking them away from people who need it a lot more than you." I was so livid, feeling so attacked. I got off the phone, my aunt called her and it was this whole thing. She got me a month's worth of pre-descovy meds. And that was my experience with the nonprofit that was supposed to be my advocate as an HIV positive person. It was a very stark contrast from what I had experienced in New Orleans. The clinic that I was a part of, where I got tested all the time, was free. The doctor that called me to tell me about my diagnosis was HIV positive and gay himself. They sent me an Uber to go to the clinic to get my first dose of meds. He texted me from his private number being like, "If you need anything, call me even on the weekends or text me even on the weekends." I received such personalized compassionate care. It was a stark difference.

NC: Israel markets itself as a queer mecca, and yet from your story, I feel a presence of homophobia. I am wondering if you have other examples of misconceptions about Israel that Americans are fed.

E: Being HIV positive, navigating hookup culture, the apps and sex work, it became clear to me very quickly that disclosing my status was not a safe thing to do. In San Francisco, New York, New Orleans there was more understanding, a lot more people on PreP and more education about U equals U and all these things. Very, very few people had that good information in Israel. I think it's shifted now. Everybody asks you if you're on PreP before they hook up with you. It's the fucking wrong question to ask, but, "Sure." For all intents and purposes, we're all on PreP.

As far as socially, I was very open about HIV in the fairies. But on Grindr I had a few situations where people freaked out or stopped talking to me after I disclosed, even people that I had really great sex with. And then, navigat-

ing the healthcare system is another thing. As an HIV positive person in Israel, I have a special designation where I have this "chronic illness," which means that I don't pay for a lot of shit. I get extra benefits and subsidies. That was cool. But it also means I have to go to a special immunology clinic at the hospital. I can't go to my primary care and get HIV related blood work, so, I go to the special clinic. If you go into that clinic, obviously most of the people that you're gonna meet are also HIV positive, so they don't really think through anonymity. So that was interesting. And at the clinic I had a doctor who actually knew what was up with HIV and was great. He was probably straight, but, whatever. My primary care person had no idea what the fuck HIV was. And when it came to STI testing, forget it. I had to educate her and advocate for myself.

NC: And did you ever disclose to the doctor that you were a sex worker?

E: No. One time I went into a dental clinic to get my teeth cleaned. The dental hygienist was like, "Are you taking any meds? Do you have any other preexisting conditions?" I was like, "Well, yeah, I'm taking this med and that's for HIV." And she's like, "Hold on. Let me go. I don't know if I can actually treat you without proper - whatever. Let me go ask the doctor." And I'm like, "I'm telling you right now, everything's okay. You should start cleaning my teeth now." And she's like, "No, no, no, I have to go check. I'm just not sure what the protocol is." She pulled out this doctor while he was in the middle of treatment and she's like, "Can I treat this person?" And he's like, "Well, you know, as long as they're medicated and… " but he was showing doubt. So her answer to me was, "I can't treat you." And I'm like, "Yes, you fucking can. Get me your supervisor on the phone right now." I got the supervisor on the phone, and I spoke very loudly with the door open so that everybody could hear. I was like, "This woman just disclosed my HIV status to another doctor and made this whole scene and this doctor misinformed her that she can't treat me because I might infect her with HIV or AIDS or whatever and you need to get this shit straightened right away." But by the time this whole scene was over, my appointment slot was done. And she was like, "I have to leave. I have my next patient coming in." And I was like, "Well, fuck you." She did call me later that day and was very apologetic, "I'm sorry that this happened. I just needed to find out. I couldn't just take your word for it. " I'm like, "Well, that's the problem. I'm never coming back to see you again, but I'm also not filing a complaint because I do appreciate you talking to me and, and caring enough to check in, but you're just covering your own ass. But I don't actually have time for this."

NC: Is there something to being in all of these spaces as an HIV positive person, and not getting the care that you need that is also making you even more critical of Israel and the government and everything as a whole?

E: Things were happening in this chaotic, organic way. I wasn't shocked by any of these experiences around the healthcare system. But in the fairies,

I was slowly figuring out some stuff about myself, like the way that I had taken on politics as an identity didn't fit anymore. I was learning in the fairies that softness, compassion, and kindness were really core values for me. Those are the things that I really enjoyed about being there. There was a sense of togetherness and community when we were there. That was really beautiful and inspiring for me. Humbling. Sure, I didn't bring a lot of people into anti-Zionism, though I think a lot of people have been more empowered to think through their mythologies and the indoctrination that they grew up with differently. For example, we didn't have a land that we would meet on, but we would meet in different places, like in the desert in the north, in the hills. And for each location, I would bring the story of the villages that were displaced, or that were depopulated or destroyed. I started making signs and little workshops and people were welcomed into this fairy space with at least some acknowledgement of what the recent history of ethnic cleansing of that space, of that land was, or is. I would also take people on tours, like, "Let's go see where the villages actually are and try to find the signs that people were here, on the land. I actually talked to some elders that were around, like Jewish Israeli elders, people that had been around when some of these structures of these demolished villages were more intact pre-'67. We'd look for signs of quarried stone, almond trees, olive trees, Sabra bush, sabra cactus…We'd have a moment where we'd sit and we'd acknowledge and tell the history of the Nakba and share some perspectives. Then, we'd open up big maps and talk about the Nakba. At first only a couple people would show up. Then it steadily grew and other fairies started to do different things around ceremony and grief.

NC: I think you left Israel after the first few years of COVID. But I am not sure why.

E: I was in Israel throughout the early days of COVID. It was a really, really good time. I was living in a beautiful place with some really amazing friends. I had a garden, chickens. I was a few minutes walking from the Mediterranean Sea. That first year made me want to stay there or be more rooted. That's when I felt the most embraced and embracing of that land. Especially because I was actually working the land and getting to know native plants and learning that this is part of what Palestinian stewardship of this land looked like. And then, what changed? I went and lived in the West Bank for three months.

I had been in Israel for a couple of years at that point and that phase of COVID was over and I was like, "Okay, actually I want to engage my activism more deeply." Part of my goal was to learn Arabic. That's when I found this group of people who were taking a group of Israelis who were self-organizing Arabic study in the West Bank alongside this like, solidarity protective presence work. I didn't really realize what I was getting myself into (even though I'd been in the West Bank). Yet I was not emotionally, physically, spiritually prepared for living inside occupied Palestine, being

surrounded by settlers and the army and the police constantly fucking with daily life and quiet, you know?

NC: Can you say more about the time you spent in the West Bank?

E: I spent three months living in the West Bank. It was this self-organized program that these two Israeli women put together who had been establishing connections in the South Hebron Hills, in the Southern West Bank, about an hour and a half from Jerusalem. It is very coveted by settlers. There's a lot going on on this really small strip off this road of like fourteen villages. There were eleven of us and we had Arabic classes every day unless shit went down. The other goal, aside from learning a language, was to bear witness. They call it protective presence. I don't know how protective it actually is, but it was just to be around when shit was going down with settlers, when the army was fucking shit up. On a daily basis settlers would come down and harass shepherds, intimidating them, intimidating children on their way to school. The army will come in with a tractor and demolish a home or a water tower or something because somebody doesn't have the right permit because they will never get the "right" permits because Palestinians have no rights to their own lands. So here we were having our Arabic class and then in the middle of class get a call. We would go and point our cameras in soldiers' and settlers' faces. It's this whole absurd theater of attrition.

NC: Did you find that the work that you were doing was effective?

E: One of my friends that I did this with described it like this: it's like you're in a sinking ship riddled with holes and you're using a finger to plug in a hole. Your fingers are not gonna stop it from sinking, but it's what you do when a ship is sinking and you're in it. So it's hard to gauge our impact. It's very negligible. Maybe we were de-escalating.

And, I think it's really important to have people speaking in Hebrew with an Israeli accent to soldiers and settlers like, "Yeah, get the fuck outta here. This is not your land." They have to interface with people that they can't deny the humanity of. And just having Israeli people who are all white, makes some difference in the moment, but it doesn't stop anything from happening necessarily.

It was meaningful to do this work alongside Palestinians, making this line of solidarity very clear where, you know, this is not all Jews, this is not even all Israelis. Those relationships are very meaningful. And I think they kind of lay the groundwork for what is possible after the occupation inevitably falls. And, because of what we saw, and our cameras, we have an archive of so many war crimes.

NC: Do you feel comfortable sharing any specific stories?

E: Yeah. In one of the towns there's a school and children from a neighboring village go there because there's no school in their village. But there's an illegal settlement that's relatively new and very extreme. It was built in between two villages. The settlers routinely harass these kids on their way to school and because of this harassment the Palestinians filed a petition to get some sort of way for these kids to safely commute. The army was like, okay, we will escort the kids. This means somebody has to wait with them in the morning and in the evening on either side of this road to make sure that the army gets there, because they're often late, or don't show up at all. So, doing a shift, a couple of us are up there with Hamud, who was 17 at the time. He grew up in the village. And this is something that he and his brothers have taken on - making sure that these kids are escorted. And one of these afternoons, a couple of settlers, probably guys in their late twenties or early thirties, came to intimidate these kids and Hamud. They start shoving the kids and Hamud. They throw them to the ground. Uddi's like, "Get the fuck off of me." Meanwhile, the police are called, and guess who ends up arrested later that evening? Hamud, even though we have it on video that these settlers started the fight. This is how the occupation works. Everything that is done to Palestinians, the army or the police or the settlers claim that it's being done to them. The army will listen to settlers before they ever listen to Palestinians.

Another story: a settler decided that one of his sheep was stolen by a Palestinian shepherd. So he went from house to house across several villages searching for his sheep with a group of teenagers, armed with like AK47's and assault rifles just running around being like, "Where the fuck's my sheep?!" So I was driving these fucked up roads on these hills, right? And they're fucked up because the Israeli army fucks them up, literally destroys them to make it harder for people to access their lands. We chased the settlers for hours to show them that somebody was paying attention and that if something happened, we would have it on tape. The car I was driving was a beat up car, and the guy with me, who lives there, who's been doing this for years, in his mid twenties, is like, "Drive faster! Let me drive!" It's this crazy scene. We have one confrontation with a settler kid who's probably like 21. He's like trying to intimidate us and we're like, "You are just a fucking little baby child."

There's another story: one of the spiritual leaders of this village, a very charismatic figure in the resistance movement in the West Bank named Haj Suleman. He's just like this mystical character that is full of love and full of disgust and hate for the occupation. I took a few pictures of him during one of these confrontations with settlers. On the second to last day that I was there, Haj Suleman came out because two cars had just been confiscated inside of the village. And this is important because another thing that started happening, just when we were there, the Israeli army and the police started confiscating Palestinian cars that were considered illegal from inside the villages themselves; it used to be that they could only do it on apartheid

roads. But then they started confiscating cars by actually entering the village and taking cars from people. Haj was there like, "You don't fucking take these cars." The tow truck comes and he's standing in front of it, and shouting in Arabic, he is like, "You're not gonna, you can't take this car." The person in the tow truck, a settler from Hebron City, is a very extreme guy. And, this motherfucker runs Haj Suleman over with a tow truck. Haj Suleman spends two weeks in intensive care and dies from his wounds.

NC: Oh my god.

E: There were thousands and thousands and thousands of people at his funeral. That happened the second to last day that I was there. Everybody was going nuts. We stayed back with all the kids that were from the village and entertained them for the night. We cooked dinner for all the kids, put on a movie, all while their parents were dealing with the aftermath of this crazy situation.

NC: What was your experience living in the West Bank as a queer person?

E: I never felt like I needed to hide myself or my expression in any extreme way. I was also there in a particular role and as a guest. You know, I'm pierced and I have my tattoos. Some of the kids thought it was funny or weird, but I received no hostility from inside these villages. I think that's what solidarity does. I have a story: one of the first times I went into the West Bank was like 12 or 13 years ago when these protests against the wall were starting. There would be weekly protests against the wall that was also annexing a huge portion of village land because the wall was built for the purpose of preventing the Palestinians from having access to their lands, not as a protective barrier. The organizers of the weekly protests were inviting internationals and Israelis to participate. The army threw tear gas at us. After the protest, usually the activists were invited to somebody's home to have a meal or tea and coffee. We went to this person's house. I drove to the protest with this like lesbian, vegan punk with a bunch of piercings and pink hair, and we were sitting, having salad that was grown by the host himself, and there's also a bunch of goat's cheese on the table. And he's like, "Why aren't you eating the cheese? This is my cheese. I want you to try it." The vegan lesbian is like, "You know, I'm vegan. I don't eat cheese." And he's like, "What do you mean you don't eat cheese?" She's like, "I find it unethical." And then they had this whole conversation about the ethics of eating cheese. And he's like, "Listen, this is not cheese you buy in the supermarket. This is cheese from my soul, from my heart. Every morning I wake up with the goats. And I milk them every morning. I pet them. I sing them songs. I love them in all of these different ways." He was describing this beautiful scene, inviting her, "You have to try this cheese. There's no way you're leaving without trying it." And she was like, "You know what? Fuck it. I'll try the cheese." And then, she was like, "Oh, wow, this is so amazing. This is so good. This feels actually very different." It was this beautiful

moment of what's possible when you do these things together, when you have true solidarity.

NC: What brought about your decision to leave Israel? I know you said that maybe you would've been going back to Israel right now if it weren't for October 7th.

E: After the pandemic, I came to America. I was traveling for a while, and then I was like, "Okay, actually, I'm ready to hunker down and recommit to learning Arabic and recommit as an activist." And then after learning Arabic and traveling for another period and returning to Israel, I felt like it was really hard for me. I don't know how to talk about it. It was a feeling of alienation. It felt like self-sacrifice all of a sudden to stay there.

NC: We've seen in international news Netanyahu's right-wing government and the protests against the judiciary system. You weren't there for those big protests, were you? Had you already left by that point?

E: I was there for a lot of those.

NC: So were you seeing the population get even more conservative, more right-wing, and did that feel different from when you had come back right after your HIV diagnosis? Was there a clear shift that you saw, or were you just maybe noticing it more?

E: It was always there. I was just starting to experience it and internalize it in different ways. My family left in '92 after the Gulf War. After that was the Oslo period. In 1995, Rabin was assassinated. This era, when I was eight, nine, ten, consisted of a lot of movement towards peace. My parents were like, "Okay, there's all this hope. Hopefully something will happen." Then I came into a different consciousness in school, meeting Palestinians, and then arriving back in Israel, seeing the state of things was like, there's no hope here. Nobody's actually interested in peace after a decade and a half of Netanyahu. Everybody's more racist and more right-wing than their parents. Radical queers are few and far between, and they're often very bitter and embattled. There's a bunch of hippies doing cool stuff but very few of them are actually engaged with the world that they inhabit as I see it. To be engaged in healing and spirituality often means some form of spiritual bypassing. That's a big part of my experience in Israel this last time. I was meeting a bunch of people in that world of new age spirituality. There's a lot of need and craving for some sort of connection because their whole experience or a worldview is shaped by a deep disconnection from basic human values and humanity, and therefore Judaism. So a lot of the people seek connection outside of Judaism because Judaism has been ruined, so deeply co-opted, that there's no terrain there in Israel for most Israelis to connect with. They have to seed their ancestry and their ancestors to militarism and racist ideology. I was just feeling like, I don't know what the fuck I'm doing here

anymore. I'm not strong enough. I thought I was going to teach English in a Palestinian village and use Arabic every day but it was isolating and just hard to exist. I thought to myself, "What am I doing? Why am I trying so hard to do it?" If I can go and be surrounded by people that have similar values and have the infrastructure for community in New Orleans or in Tennessee, or in some parts unknown that can hold me better. I just felt like I needed a break. I was confused. I left at the end of July with that feeling of, "Okay, I really need to just take some space from this place. I need to take care of myself and figure that out." And then October 7th happened and I was like, "Okay. This is the society I've been living in."

NC: Did you feel surprised by the Israeli reaction to Oct 7th?

E: I don't know. Yes and no. I don't think I was surprised so much as it was just the deep, deep hardness of the truth. That's what was shocking to my system. It's kind of similar to how I felt becoming HIV positive. My whole queer community is full of HIV positive people, and of course I was thinking, "I don't give a fuck if I get HIV or not." But then it actually hits you and you get it, and then you're like…your body is in shock. You have to acclimate to this new reality, this new world where you are HIV positive in it. It's very similar emotionally, to what I've been going through over the last few months. Acclimating to this new reality with this sober ring of: "Oh yeah, oh yeah… I knew I was living in a genocidal, colonial, settler…ethnonationalist state…but here it is." I have to deal with that inside of my body. And I've been crying every fucking day. I've had grief move through me with an intensity of emotion like I've never experienced before. Maybe, like I said, the only similar experience emotionally is becoming HIV positive. I didn't actually make that connection until this moment.

Questions:

- Eyal and Noah covered a lot of ground. Journal, or share with a friend what sticks out in your mind.
- Eyal shared his experiences trying to create change within the Radical Faeries. Can you think of a time when you attempted to make your community more progressive?
- Did anything about Eyal's experiences in Israel surprise you?
- In the end, Eyal considers Israel's reaction to Oct 7th and his HIV positive diagnosis together, rooting his reaction to both as occurring within his body. When you think of intense things happening to you and happening in your world, do you feel it in your body? Elsewhere?


WE REMIND YOU THAT
ANOTHER WORLD
IS POSSIBLE
watermelon

Noah Crandell

The Freedom Theatre

The Freedom Theatre is a performing arts venue located in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. Previously known as the Stone Theater, it was founded in 1987 by Israeli peace activist Arna Mer-Khamis following the First Intifada. Since then, it has remained a symbol of hope and resistance for Palestinians–both as a performance venue and a community center. The theater produces professional productions, which have explored themes of women's rights in Palestine (*Us Too - Women of Palestine*), displacement (*Lost Land*) and skateboarding (*A Skate Play in Palestine!*). It also hosts workshops and has its own theatre education program for youth.

The theater was destroyed by the IDF following the Second Intifada, and reopened in 2006, where it was officially named The Freedom Theatre only to be attacked again in 2009; Khamis's son, the theatre's owner following his father's death, was murdered in 2011.

On December 12th, 2023, the theater was again attacked by the IDF. During a raid in which they ultimately arrested five hundred Palestinians, Israeli military forces ransacked the community theater and spray-painted it with images of the Star of David. After the attack, thousands of protesters in New York, mainly culture workers, marched in solidarity with the arts institution and the detainees.

These repeated acts of violence on The Freedom Theatre ask us to consider what role the arts play in resistance work. Constantly under assault, The Freedom Theatre is clearly seen as a threat by Zionists and the IDF. It makes me ask: why are cultural institutions and culture workers often the first lines of attack in moments of peril?

The Freedom Theatre perfectly embodies the inherent values of the arts and the theater's role in fighting oppression. The roots of theater, as I see it, are that of resistance. A place for the people. In ancient Greece, the theater was a place where (male) members of society could purge their emotions through catharsis. It was a space of refuge and release, where they could watch men walk amongst Gods. In ancient India, plays were passed down from generation to generation, community to community. The plays were a shared language between people, where every character and story was so well known that the performances changed course and were improvised, taking days to complete. The DNA of theater is that of community engagement, experimentation, non-hierarchical organization and revolt–all of which threaten the status quo.

Of course, as we look at history, we can see how theater has been a tool not only for resistance, but also for bigotry, its tools of performance used by elites to promote their own interests. I think about the history of minstrelsy in the United States and how it served as an effective propaganda tool in fueling racism in the United States. Or, more recently, the commercialization of

Broadway, in which corporations like Disney have infiltrated Broadway as a tool for gaining massive profits in an effort to expand their corporate branding.

When talking about this essay with Ted from What Would an HIV Doula Do?, he mentioned that a lot of his students' first meaningful exposure to HIV / AIDS is *RENT*. Discussing the politics of *RENT* would be a whole other essay in and of itself, but it does make me consider how intrinsic theatre is in changing a collective consciousness, or at the very least spreading awareness, and how performance makers have long been incorporating resistance work into their practice. I think of the work of Reza Abdoh, Bill T. Jones, Larry Kramer and Paula Vogel, all of whom were navigating the AIDS crisis in radically different styles and forms and bringing AIDS into the public sphere at a time when it was still taboo.

As theater becomes less accessible in the United States, due in no small part to the lack of government funding for the arts, theater companies have unsurprisingly continued to stay resoundingly silent in relation to Israel's genocide against Palestinians. The American theater has been losing audiences for decades, with the pandemic serving as the tipping point.Since COVID's emergence, the American theater has doubled down on maintaining its most loyal base: older white liberal audiences, thus producing plays that don't challenge or provoke the elite. This creates a conundrum: post-2020, the American theater was rightfully awoken for its lack of diversity, and made public efforts to make sweeping, institutional changes. This is a hard space to live in: become more diverse, but not in a way that makes its most loyal customers feel bad. (Notable exceptions: *Fairview* by Jackie Sibbles Drury, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *An Octoroon*, and *Slave Play* by Jeremy O. Harris)

The Palestinian cause has been notably absent from theater companies' commitment to diversity. As of this writing, almost no theater company across the United States has released any statement in solidarity with Palestine, nor called for a ceasefire, with the exception of the Noor Theater and The National Queer Theater, both of which have released pro-Palestine statements. The silence from the theater world is upsetting. While I might not expect much from Broadway, I wonder about the silence from avant-garde spaces like The Kitchen, Abrons Arts Center and La MaMa, to even larger Off-Broadway houses that at times have at least the patina of radicality, like Manhattan Theater Club, Signature Theater and MCC. What stops these theaters from making a statement?

I want to end this essay on Victor I. Cazares, a queer, Mexican, HIV-positive playwright who is currently on a med-strike. He is refusing to take his medication until the New York Theater Workshop calls for a ceasefire. Cazares was a playwright-in-residence with NYTW for two-and-a-half years, during which the company produced two of his plays. Cazares was also a teaching artist with the theater company; he says after expressing his pro-Palestinian views, he was fired.

As with the institutions listed above, NYTW's silence is not only disappointing but confusing. After October 7th, 2023, Patricia MacGregor, artistic director of NYTW, spoke at the Freedom Theatre protest, calling for the release of the detainees. Ironically—in the face of Cazares' current med strike—this makes her the most high profile theater worker to have released a statement in support of Palestine.

When our US arts institutions fail to condemn genocide and occupation (and when arts workers who do speak out face retaliation), it sets off an alarming new status quo in which the theater has ceased to be a space for the people, but rather one for the elite. When the theater and other arts organizations refuse to deviate from the mainstream and stand up against oppression, what is its use? Where do we go from here? I believe if the theater actually re-committed itself to the people, reaffirming its necessity to society, audiences would follow suit. Maybe we can look to the Freedom Theatre for answers.

Izat El Amoor

A Sick Angelic Fantasy Dreaming of Recovery

In 2010, Qadita, an online literature and culture website, published a series of texts related to World AIDS Day that year. It was connected to a larger STI and AIDS awareness campaign started that year by AlQAWS FOR SEXUAL & GENDER DIVERSITY IN PALESTINIAN SOCIETY.

As part of the issue, writer Izat El Amoor wrote about the infamous AIDS play, Angels in America. The first few paragraphs of the piece provide an in depth and sensitive read of the play, with an attention to the emotions of the characters. Below, are the paragraphs that come after, that put in the play in conversation within an Arab context.

In addition to the AIDS issue, which can be considered the most important, the literary project "Angels in America" is loaded with many aspects of life that Kushner criticizes, where the common denominator for all of them is the will to raise awareness and spread a new futuristic philosophy that accepts the other exactly as they are, and respects their freedoms. These aspects include political, health, and social aspects that defend the rights of minorities, such as the queer community, black people, or the integration of religions into human relationships based on love. All of this makes me miss literature similar to what Kushner and others like him write, which is not as present in our Arab literary archive.

It is clear that our Arab society has not woken up to see the importance of increasing social and health awareness of all kinds, even if this is in dramatic literary forms and not necessarily scientific. Because the writings of each group indicate their mentality and the depth of their thought, our Arab literature lacks many issues that are still waiting for their turn to join the narrow discussion table. The most important of which, of course, is AIDS, which if we do not rank at the top of our list of goals for the very near future, we are in a very bad situation.

The angels in an American drama will not save us. We need to save ourselves with our hands and pens. It is time to write about our problems, stop our death, and gain an iron immunity that destroys ignorance. Literature or the pen may be an ideal platform for reaching the goal. Prophetic figures like Pryor might be excellent for serving this public interest, which we often hear at the end of "Angels in America" breaking free from the scripted role and addressing its audience by saying about AIDS: "This disease will be the end of many of us, but not all of us, for the dead will be immortal." They will struggle alongside the living, and we are not going far. Starting today, we will never die in secret. The world is only moving forward. We will become citizens. it's time". This is an end that needs to happen in reality, and not just in an optimistic democratic theatrics. How can we begin to reach this goal? This is a question to think about and the answer is rather easy.

Pato Hebert

Journal Notes, December 11, 2023

Malapropisms: Track Changes, which was first published at Art Journal Open in January, 2024, by Pato Hebert

World AIDS Day was just ten days ago. This year I am remembering James, Kenny and Shiv in particular, and always querido Horacio. The 34th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Panamá is nine days from now. I remember well los cuentos de mi abuelita's terror, her shrieks at the U.S. military planes screaming overhead. This year, in between these two days of December mourning, hundreds and hundreds of Palestinian people have been killed by munitions made in the United States and paid for by U.S. tax dollars, mine included. We must somehow make space for our horror and grief, justice and hope, rage and reimagining, change and new ways.

I keep thinking about that destructive and unjust invasion of Panamá that began on December 20, 1989. And how the very first Day Without Art occurred just a few weeks prior to that. I found this on Visual AIDS' site:

> In 1989, in response to the worsening AIDS crisis and coinciding with the World Health Organization's second annual World AIDS Day on December 1, Visual AIDS organized the first Day Without Art. A committee of art workers (curators, writers, and art professionals) sent out a call for "mourning and action in response to the AIDS crisis" that would celebrate the lives and achievements of lost colleagues and friends; encourage caring for all people with AIDS; educating diverse publics about HIV infection; and finding a cure. More than 800 arts organizations, museums and galleries throughout the U.S. participated by shrouding artworks and replacing them with information about HIV and safer sex, locking their doors or dimming their lights, and producing exhibitions, programs, readings, memorials, rituals, and performances. Visual AIDS coordinated this network mega-event by producing a poster and handling promotion and press relations.

In the mid-1990s, during December's annual arrival, my queer friends and I used to acerbically joke about wanting a Day Without AIDS. HIV was wreaking havoc on so many of our lives. It still is. Stigma, discrimination, inequity, isolation and frustration are all busy finding new ways to stay alive come 2024. But we and our gallows humor and irreverent joy also persist. Our sense of priorities does too. Activist groups with banners, chants and actions remind us to fund healthcare not warfare.

It is once again HIV/AIDS season, meaning the time of year when World AIDS Day asks the broader public to remember all whom we have lost, all who still live with HIV long-term in these pandemics ongoing, all who find numerous ways to thrive. For some of us, it means more emotions and calendar commitments than we can seemingly manage. I had the privilege of helping to jury this year's program, Everyone I Know Is Sick, with those amazing films by Dolissa, Lili and others. And on Wednesday, aAliy and I will be talking about "The Role of Artists in Justice Movements." I need these kinds of conversations and connections, these chronic illness lifelines. I would love for our world to know at least a Day Without HIV or Long COVID, lupus, MS or ME/CFS. But when Gazan hospitals and lives are relentlessly bombarded into inoperative carnage, I would simply welcome an immediate ceasefire now.

Julian Watkins

Cure & Peace, Ceasefire & Treatment

Late into the process of putting this zine together, I started thinking a lot about the relationship between the words CURE and PEACE, and CEASEFIRE and TREATMENT. In an email I asked if any of the WWHIVDD members wanted to write about the words. A few people expressed interest but due to the tight turn around, and how much is going on in the world, they were not able to contribute. Julian Watkins, Physician and Health Equity Specialist, was able to share a contribution. And we share it now below:

Cure and Peace
Ceasefire and Treatment

My initial reaction to seeing these words pause. These are such hefty words, with a lot of depth, and high cost. How often they are taken for granted. I think about how words have different meanings when they are spoken by different people.

I think about how they are used so cynically- to erase, to justify, to silence.

How cure and peace are seen as destinations to be arrived at. As opposed to a daily choice that must be maintained and lived.

Treatment when placed near the other words, and in the context of Palestine and HIV, makes me think about what is seen as acceptable treatment. the process of manufacturing the "other", projection, subjection, social death and marginalization.

How do we demilitarize our language and understanding of health issues and declare a ceasefire on these wars on disease? Ceasefire feels like an incomplete word. What is the word to denote the start of a peace process?

Exercise:

Consider these questions alone and with others

- What do the words CURE, PEACE, CEASEFIRE and TREATMENT mean to you: on their own or all together?
- How do you think your proximity to terminal illnesses or war impacts your relationship to the words?

Alexandra Juhasz

Not in his Name / Not in my Name

Alexandra Juhasz was invited to lead the short closing that ends every Jewish Voice for Peace daily zoom Power Half-Hour. The closing remarks reproduced below were given on World AIDS Day, 2023. She said:

The first Day Without Art was called in 1989, coinciding with World AIDS Day. Visual AIDS sought for "mourning and action in response to the AIDS crisis," which continues each year on this day.

AIDS is not over, so today we mourn, and we also educate, agitate and celebrate people who are very much alive with HIV and AIDS.

I have been an AIDS activist since 1987. At that time, if you had eyes, ears, a heart, a conscience and an analysis, it was impossible not to be moved to action. People were dying, the government and public were ignoring or demonizing PWAs and their communities.

Just as is true for us at this JVP gathering, it was impossible not to be moved to action. AIDS activists made and make art; we protest, we mourn, we organize.

Even so, many people did and do not survive. On World AIDS Day, we grieve, we remember, and we learn with them.

In this spirit, I share with you the last 3 minutes of Marlon Riggs' remarkable Tongues Untied from 1989. It aired on American public television [PBS], but it was censored at many local affiliates. History corrected this silencing. The film was added to the National Film Registry in 2022.

Marlon Troy Riggs is one of the most important American artists who worked on AIDS. He died in 1994 at the age of 37. Together we will remember him, and many others. We will learn with them.

I am also here for another reason: another matter of memory and survival. When he was a boy, my father, Joseph Juhasz, SURVIVED assaults on his freedom, health and dignity. Like children in Gaza, he hid in his basement as his city was bombed. He was denied food, water and electricity during the violent siege of Budapest at the end of WW2. My father is one of many Jewish Holocaust survivors saying no to genocide. He is with us on this call, accompanied by all of you, several of his daughters, and one grandchild who all say "not in his name."

After that, Alex showed the last three minutes of Tongues Untied which you can watch here https://vimeo.com/504564826. *Riggs' film is also available on Kanopy, Criterion and available from Third World Newsreel.*

Reflecting on the final three minutes of Tongues Untied, Alex has noted that:

> Marlon Riggs declares that he has found his voice as a Black gay man with HIV at a time when there was no treatment, as his friends and colleagues were dying in great numbers, and even as he recognized "a time bomb ticking in my blood." He says he is at last "lightened and freed," that he can speak and hear because of the beauty and power of movements and fighters before him from civil rights, gay liberation, and Black gay power.

In thinking about that, Alex invites us to ask: How do the struggles for justice from one movement and moment—AIDS activism for instance—give us light for other struggles? How do the deaths of people who struggle before us help us to seek voice and freedom?

Glammy

No Zionism in My Judaism

No Zionism in My Judaism, silkscreen on paper 2023, by Glammy

Glammy shared the following text regarding No Zionism in my Judaism:

"Some symbolism explained: The language on the hand is Yiddish, which Ashkenazi Jews have been speaking before Israel existed. It says "We Are Here," the final line in a song from the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters who fought against the Nazis. It is meant to be my hand, and a tattoo I want in the future reclaiming the space where Holocaust tattoos were once placed. I write it to remember our ancestors who fought against ethnic cleansing and as a reminder that we're still here.

Adding one more thing: I see people write off anti-Zionists as not caring about Jewish ppl, and although I have not said anything publicly I too lost family October 7. Vivian Silver was white Jewish settler in Israel, a peace activist who fought for the rights of Palestinian people and helped many access healthcare. I am mourning her while knowing she would want a permanent ceasefire, and holding in my heart my truth: a Jewish theocratic ethno-state should not exist and does not make us safer. May our fear and trauma stop being manipulated to justify genocide. "

Learn more: Jewish Anti-Zionist Artist Glammy Discusses the Link Between AIDS Activism and Her Art — Mathew Rodriquez

Dan Schapiro

Choosing Not Choosing:

Against the Exceptionalism of HIV in / and Palestine

In his opening remarks to the International Court of Justice this past January, Israel's appointed representative Tal Becker said he was "singularly aware of why the Genocide Convention, which has been invoked in these proceedings, was adopted," citing "the systematic murder of six million Jews as part of a pre-meditated and heinous program for their total annihilation."

Glaringly absent from Becker's defense was any mention of the some five million Romani, Black, disabled, and reputedly "sexually deviant" lives extinguished in the name of Naziism, let alone the Herero and Nama peoples decimated by Germany well over a decade before the National Socialist Party's foundation, among innumerable others. Becker's speech lays bare the pivotal role that scarcity models—what I call "triage logics"—play not only in the Zionist project, but in all -isms and -phobias that award or withhold care, attention and value on the basis or condition of perceived exceptionality. By exceptionality, I mean the singling out of something or someone, whether a genocide, a state, or an individual, as most: "...likely to succeed," "important," "tragic," "inhumane," "cruel," "unthinkable."

If the Shoah (by which I am referring specifically to the Jewish experience of the Holocaust) has indeed been, in Becker's words, "seared" in both collective memory and international law as a genocide par excellence, the singular standard against which all other allegations of ethnic cleansing are sized up, then so too is HIV/AIDS upheld—at least within hegemonic queer culture—as the most cut-and-dry, quintessential, or politicized state-sanctioned viral episode in modern history.

Along with the macroscopic privileging of certain genocides and viruses as holding more historical or affective heft than others, an analogous stratification also occurs on the micro scale of individual victims. Just as Ashkenazi (or non-Iberian, Euro-descendent) Jews, for instance, have received a disproportionate share of memorializations, reparations and protections since the fall of the Third Reich, from dedicated task forces to combat institutional antisemitism to a Jewish ethnostate in occupied Palestine, so too do white-adjacent cis gay men—particularly those hailing from large, Western metropoles like Paris, New York and San Francisco—figure most prominently as both the cultural bearers of the AIDS crisis and as beneficiaries of resultant treatments and prevention campaigns such as U=U and PrEP.

Once you attune yourself to triage logics, you begin to notice them everywhere: in the systematic sidelining of Black and Jewish criticisms of anti-Blackness and antisemitism within pro-Palestinian spaces; in the media's fixation on the deaths of "women and children" to the passive villanization of nonwhite male radicals; in the foregoing of COVID precautions among HIV+ activists; in the dismissal of the Sudanese, Congolese, Haitian, Armenian and Chinese Uyghur plights as secondary to that of the Palestinians; in the routine ostracization of victims and protection of serial abusers for the sake of "unity" and numbers in socialist spaces; in the response of a former editor

of mine after I politely asked her to refrain from using any variation of the r-slur on her Instagram (even if her "fucking libt**d" of a date was a racist Zionist): "There's a fucking genocide going on. Is this really what you want to focus on right now?"

The cruel irony to triage logics is that even their intended beneficiaries suffer from their excess violence. "Peoples do not live on exception," as Martinician luminary Édouard Glissant reminds us. For all the material and immaterial protections that are conferred to Jews, gay men, the HIV+ or Palestinians, a target is simultaneously placed on their backs, undermining their capacity to forge meaningful solidarity networks with the "unexceptional." In his study on HIV/AIDS interventions by Western nonprofits in Mozambique, for example, Ippolytos Andreas Kalofonos found that the deliberate sense of resource scarcity introduced by colonial enterprises in already impoverished communities end up inadvertently stoking existing resentments towards people with HIV/AIDS. As one seronegative interviewee put it, "'why is it that the HIV-positive benefit from all these projects? Don't those of us who are healthy deserve anything?'"

Funnily enough, the piece that that ableist editor published of mine—an interview conducted by my friend and collaborator Joselia Rebekah Hughes—in many ways anticipated the very stakes that would cause our rift all these years later: "I'm always trying to push two words into the same space-time, which I know you can't do because you always have to make the choice, you have to prioritize. That's what it means to have executive function: to have the capacity to choose who lives and who dies, right? Which lines to cut."

I was thinking about Emily Dickinson when I said this, how her proclivity for leaving multiple word substitutions in the margins of her poems, with neither word holding definitive primacy, generated almost endless possible permutations for how each one could be read. "Choosing not choosing," scholar Sharon Cameron called Dickinson's technique—i.e. her refusal to make the final excision, to "kill her darlings."

Triage logics, like viruses, are nothing if not adaptive; they excel at infiltrating even the thoughts and actions of those who seek to oppose them. They compel us to treat liberation as a scarce commodity, to run frantically from fire to fire, treating only the most readily visible, urgent or emergent of burns while neglecting to care for those who have been inhaling the smoke—including, not least of all, ourselves. As avowed HIV and pro-Palestinian activists, artists, agitators and doulas, we would be remiss to reproduce such hierarchies of importance and grievability, lest we burn ourselves and our movements out before we have truly begun. Collective liberation is not a choice affair: it demands that we not only spare but cherish our darlings, that we relegate absolutely nothing and no one to waste, that we cast our scalpels and scruples aside, and choose not choosing.

Refaat Alareer +
David Wojnarowicz

If I Must Die / If I Die

Pinned

Refaat in Gaza 🇵🇸

@itranslate123

If I must die, let it be a tale.

#FreePalestine
#Gaza

If I must die
Refaat Alareer

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze–
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself–
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up
above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale

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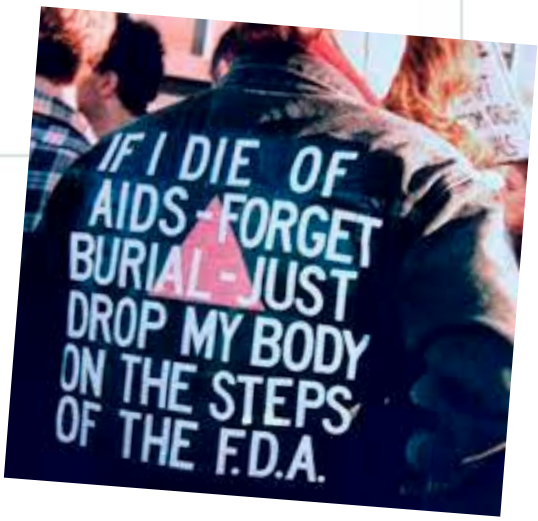

Cea / (Constantine Jones)

Watermelon Seeds

After Refaat Alareer and David Wojnarowicz

for those still here &
for those still not

If I die
If I must forget burial
If I must forget my body on the steps
If I must bury a tale
If I must let it be
If I must plant a seed
If I must

If he must die
on the steps, in the tale
or if in the tale he must bury his body
& if in the end the tale were retold
or if in the moment the tale were rewritten
If we with our memories never forget
If we with our bodies start writing the tale
If we with our bodies start planting the seeds

If there was aid in the tale
or if the tale itself was an aid
or if in the telling the tale was undone
If the aid was not needed
If there were no burial to forget
If there was no tale to bury

If I with my body
If he with his body
or if he with his body
or if us with all of their bodies
or if us with all of our bodies
or if us with all of each other's bodies

If I with the tale in my body must die
If the tale in my body must not forget
If the colors were forbidden to fly
If the seeds
or if the seeds began to sprout
or when the seeds begin to sprout
or since the seeds already bear fruit
& since the roots will never forget

If you with this tale before you
If you do not forget your body
& if you do not forget my body
or if you do not forget their bodies
If every body in the same place
If every body all together
If every body all at once
If every seed
If we must
& we must

Click the link to hear Cea read their poems:
We Remind You
Watermelon Seeds

As well as
If I Die... by David Wojnarowicz
If I Must Die by Refaat Alareer


watermelon

WWHIVDD

Your Four Letter Word, Now

Exercise:
Now that you have spent some time with the zine, revisit the FOUR LETTER WORD exercise:

Inspired by the four word lineage from above (*LOVE, AIDS, RIOT, GAZA*), think of and then share a four-letter one-word poem to describe how you are feeling right after you have embarked on a journey thinking about HIV and Palestine.

- You can do this by yourself or with others.
  - If you are with others, make sure everyone shares.
- Feel free to be creative in how you use letters, numbers, etc. If you want, sketch out your response in the square style of the artworks themselves.
- Consider your first response to this exercise, and now your most recent. Did your word change? Why or why not?
  - Reflect on the experience of engaging with the zine. What did you learn? How do you feel? What will you do now?

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What Would an HIV Doula Do?

hivdoula.work