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## **Insurrection, not inclusion: Education and the right to the city in Occupied Palestine**

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**ABSTRACT:** Critical educational theorists have recently begun to take up the notion of the “right to the city” to understand and resist neoliberal attacks on education in the U.S. This process, however, has thus far not attended to the important debates taking place around what the right to the city actually is. In this paper we tease out the complexities that arise from these debates by turning to the colonization of Palestine and Palestinian resistance to colonization. We ultimately argue that the right to the city has to be conceived of in internationalist and anti-imperialist terms, lest movements for the city—particularly in the global North—result in reinforcing international relations of exploitation, oppression, and settler colonialism. We pay particular attention to the ways in which education has been central to both the occupation of and resistance in Palestine.

**Keywords:** critical education; right to the city; settler colonialism; imperialism; Palestine

The year 2009 marked a significant turning point in the global spatial arrangement of people and social relations in that by the end that year most of the world’s population was, for the first time, living in urban rather than rural areas (UN DESA, 2009). All of the processes that we engage in—inhabiting, playing, producing, consuming, exchanging, moving, learning, teaching, studying, desiring, and so on—are predominantly taking place in cities. This is not simply a quantitative shift, but is instead a qualitative rupture in the social organization of production. This qualitative rupture had been building for hundreds of years, first slowly and then, beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, at an accelerated pace. Writing in 1967, Henri Lefebvre anticipated this rupture in his book, *Right to the City*, by locating the city as the site and stake of political struggle.

On the one hand, Lefebvre argued, the city had become increasingly central to the production and reproduction of everyday life. On the other hand, people had become increasingly alienated from participation in that life, as well as from the production of the city. The brilliance of city life—the encounters between different groups and subjects it facilitated, the forms of communication, solidarity, and relations that it generated—was everywhere under attack by technocratic politicians and bureaucratic urban planners working on behalf of capital.<sup>i</sup> But the brutalism of capitalist urban development and control could never fully repress the desires and *jouissance* birthed through the city form. As Lefebvre (1996) put it: “use and use value resist irreducibly” (pp. 170); exchange-value can never totally dominate. The people who produced the city had to reclaim their right to it; the contradictions of the capitalist city had to burst open. And they did. The next year, 1968, France witnessed a wave of protests that shut down entire cities.<sup>ii</sup> Not coincidentally, these protests started at the Paris University of Nanterre, where Lefebvre had been teaching sociology. While the uprising was ultimately defeated, it marked a pivotal historical moment for exactly the reasons that compelled Lefebvre to write his manuscript the year prior: the class war had taken on a spatial form. Workers and poor people “found themselves steadily decanted and banished” from the city, which became

“conquered by the well-heeled, by the bourgeois, whose playground it henceforth became” (Merrifield, 2013, pp. 84).<sup>iii</sup>

The decades that have followed have confirmed Lefebvre’s prognosis of the centrality of the city in the maintenance of global capitalism. The contradiction between the repression and resistance of city life has reached higher levels and, accordingly, the right to the city has become an important rallying “cry and demand” for a diverse range of movements. Just like the expansion of the city itself, calls for the right to the city have spread across the globe, appearing in a host of different and contradictory sites and contexts, from grassroots alliances in New York City to the movement of red shirts in South Africa; it has even been appropriated by the United Nations and World Bank. Over the last few years, critical education scholars who are theorizing resistance to neoliberal attacks on education in the United States have begun to take up the concept of the right to the city (e.g., Lipman, 2011; Ford, 2013; Means, 2014). Yet the plurality of contexts in which the right to the city has been mobilized and appropriated necessitates that we pause to address these contradictions, which so far have gone unexamined. We maintain that the right to the city is a pressing and powerful framework for understanding and resisting contemporary global capitalism, but we insist that its ability to be a force of contestation is dependent upon our ability to be clear about what the right to the city is and what it is not. The primary way in which we sharpen this concept is by examining it in relation to settler colonialism and the occupation of Palestine.

The paper unfolds in several steps, each of which makes an important contribution to critical education’s engagement with the right to the city. We begin by examining the right to the city by delving into Lefebvre’s original text. We then turn to the way that Lefebvre’s call has been taken up in critical education, particularly in the work of Pauline Lipman. While Lipman offers important insights for critical educationalists resisting capitalism, her conversation on the right to the city is rather brief and she doesn’t pay any attention to the political debates about the right to the city. It is to these debates that we turn next, examining questions of *what kind* of right, *whose* right, and *what* city. We then tease out the complexities that arise from these debates by turning to the colonization of Palestine and Palestinian resistance to colonization. We ultimately argue that the right to the city has to be conceived of in internationalist and anti-imperialist terms, lest movements for the city—particularly in the global North—reinforce international relations of exploitation, oppression, and settler colonialism. We pay particular attention to the ways in which education has been central to both the occupation of and resistance in Palestine.

### **The right to the city**

The city plays a fundamental role in the development and maintenance of capitalism. Historically the city has proletarianized people, absorbing them into the capitalist machinery of production. Yet it has also, through this same process, laid the material basis for their unification as a class against capital. Industrial capitalist production exacerbates the miserable conditions that inspire revolt, while the city form concentrates workers in space. This, Lefebvre (1996) says, provided the embryonic form for an “urban democracy [that] threatened the privileges of the new ruling class,” (pp. 76), the bourgeoisie; it is what led to the Paris Commune of 1871. As a result of this potential

urban democracy, the proletariat had to be divorced from the center of the city, and this was the project of Baron Haussmann, who “replaces winding but lively streets by long avenues, sordid but animated ‘quartiers’ by bourgeois ones” (pp. 76). This is a terrible drama that is lived by the working class over and over again throughout history: we are constantly being expelled from the very centers that we produce.

The city, for Lefebvre, is an *oeuvre*, an artistic work that is—or should be—produced by all. The city is produced through simultaneity and encounter; specifically the encounter with difference. The problem is that private property prevents all city-dwellers from participating fully in the production of the city, and it in fact places heavy restrictions on the right to the city; it is only capitalists, their state, and their politicians and planners that have this right. Even the middle classes are prevented from participating in the production of the city; they are left merely to consume it. Integral to the attack on the city as *oeuvre* is the logic and rule of exchange-value, which “is indifferent towards urban form; it reduces simultaneity and encounters to those of the exchangers and the meeting place to where the contract or quasi-contract of equivalent exchange is concluded: the market” (pp. 131). The city becomes subsumed under the rationale of the commodity, being produced solely for its exchange-value. One of the outcomes of this commodification is a constant encroachment on public spaces, which are defined largely by the priority of use over exchange. It is becoming more and more difficult to live a public life in the city, especially as so-called “quality of life” laws proliferate.

What, then, is the right to the city? Lefebvre is clear that it is no mere constitutional guarantee. Neither is it an individual right to services or spaces. The right to the city is a collective right to production, to encounter, to simultaneity, to difference; in a word, it is the right to *use*. It is also not—and this is just as important as the previous distinction—the right to be *included* in the city. Instead it is the right to appropriate the city and, in so doing, remake the city. The right to the city is the right to *liberate* the city from the rule of private property, and is thus a class project. To be sure, Lefebvre’s text is far from systematic. It is not even so tight as to deliver a coherent plan or project. Lefebvre is forthright about this, opening the book by writing that “systems tend to *close off* reflection, to block off horizon. This work wants to break up systems, not to substitute another system, but to *open up* through thought and action towards *possibilities* by showing the horizon and the road” (pp. 63). Lefebvre was by no means a systematic thinker, yet we don’t wish to judge Lefebvre’s writing style or thought, but rather to indicate that any taking up of Lefebvre’s potent call for the right to the city must be done thoughtfully.

Thus far, relevant work in critical education has not yet engaged in this necessary task. Take, for example, Pauline Lipman’s (2011) otherwise excellent study of the relationship between educational policy and neoliberalism, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race and the Right to the City*. Lipman convincingly demonstrates that educational policy is not just impacted *by* neoliberalism; it is rather constitutive of neoliberal restructuring. She studies the ways in which school closings play an integral role in contemporary strategies of capital accumulation at the level of the city *and* ways in which students, parents, and teachers are resisting this nexus. The right to the city is—correctly, we believe—proposed as a “concrete and metaphorical” (pp. 6) means through which to enact resistance to global capitalism. At the end of the book,

Lipman delineates four principles that she believes are beginning to be articulated by educational and community activists: participatory democracy, education for full development, equitably funded free public education, and education as a tool for liberation (pp. 165). Education here is

integral to a movement to reclaim the city. It is a demand for all those locked out of equitable access to public education and dispossessed of their schools, a demand for public schools that are not exclusionary (racist, homophobic, discriminatory) and for all those simply desperate to find a “good school” for their children. (pp. 161)

Education is both an integral element of the city and a means by which we can enable full participation in social movements.

Perhaps most importantly, Lipman writes that the right to the city “is a call for a wholly different city and society” (pp. 161). Throughout the book Lipman refers to “anticapitalism,” “radical democracy,” and even “socialism” (or “prosocialism”).<sup>iv</sup> The recognition that the right to the city is a demand that cannot be attained within the capitalist mode of production is absolutely essential for critical educational theory. Although this key point is made, there are only a handful of paragraphs in the entire book about the right to the city, and there is no discussion of struggles over precisely what the right to the city is. And there is no shortage of such struggles. As Andy Merrifield (2013) writes, “Recently, urban theorist and planner Peter Marcuse joked that the only word he doesn’t have a problem with in ‘The Right to the City’ is ‘to’” (pp. 24). There is thus much work for critical educationalists to do should we choose to take up this framework. This work, we suggest, is particularly important for critical pedagogues who seek to connect classrooms to social struggles, engaging in “the transformation of the world of ‘what is’ to the world of what ‘could be’” (McLaren, 2015, pp. 128). In what follows we demonstrate that without attending to the contradictions and problems with struggles for and over cities we risk reinforcing and deepening the logic of capitalism, imperialism, and settler colonialism.

### **Struggles over the Right to the City**

In this section we delineate some of the debates taking place around the right to the city, as a body of literature and a set of political demands. This discussion is meant to be illustrative and not exhaustive. Our intention is to carve out a space for future deliberation. While we do weigh in on some of these debates, our main intervention takes place afterwards, when we discuss the ongoing colonial occupation of Palestine and the ways in which it highlights the primacy of anti-imperialism within any mobilization of the right to the city in the U.S.

The first question we raise is: What does the *right* in right to the city mean? This question has been explored most in-depth by Kafui Attoh (2011), who shrewdly observes that the question of “rights within the literature on the right to the city remain a black box” (pp. 669). Attoh argues that, while the openness of rights in the right to the city literature can be positive in that this absence of absolute definition can allow for the unification of different groups and struggles, within this openness there are inevitably

“rights that not only collide but are incommensurable” (pp. 674). One example of such incommensurability pivots on the right *for* and *against* democratic management. David Harvey’s (2008) basic definition of the right to the city is the “greater democratic control over the production and utilization of the surplus” (pp. 37). What gets produced, how it gets produced, and the ways in which products are distributed throughout the city should be subject to (greater) democratic deliberation. It is through this democratic control that citizens will be able to participate in the city as *oeuvre*. But, Attoh notes, rights are also used to protect certain groups against such democratic decisions. To illustrate this, Attoh turns to Don Mitchell’s (2003) work on anti-homeless laws in the U.S. These laws ultimately work to police public space and the public sphere more generally, defining what one can and can’t do in a public space. As homeless people have no place to be but in public, these laws represent “an ongoing war against homeless people” (pp. 199). Attoh notes, however, that these rights can be enacted by “a possible majority who might believe that such laws are just and appropriate” (pp. 677). To assert the right of homeless people to public space is, in this instance, to assert a right *against* democracy: “If, on the one hand, a right to the city appears as a collective right to democratically manage urban resources, then, on the other hand, following Mitchell, the right to the city appears as a right against such management” (pp. 677). While this conflict is certain to take place in bourgeois democracies such as the U.S., Attoh writes that even in more expansive forms of democracy we will still have to decide between majority and minority rights claims. We can certainly imagine instantiations of this battle over schooling and the right to the city, particularly given the heterogeneous social groups that attend public schools.

This problem points to another question regarding the right to the city: *whose* right is it? Peter Marcuse (2009) approaches this line of inquiry by insisting that the “cry and demand” that the right to the city entails are each distinct. The *demand* for the right to the city springs forth “from those directly in want, directly oppressed, those for whom even their most immediate needs are not fulfilled: the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, the persecuted” (pp. 190). The demand for the city is made out of necessity. The cry for the right to the city, by contrast, is an *aspiration*, not an immediate need. This “cry comes from... those superficially integrated into the system and sharing in its material benefits, but constrained in their opportunities for creative activity, oppressed in their social relationships, guilty perhaps for an undeserved prosperity, unfulfilled in their lives’ hopes” (pp. 190). The demand arises from the oppressed and excluded, while the cry emanates from those who are included but are still alienated. This is one quite useful way in which to understand the current resistance to the neoliberal agenda for public education. Those demanding the right to education are deprived of education in the first place, while those crying for the right to education have access to schools but, for example, are alienated from curriculum as a result of policies such as the recent Common Core Standards Movement.

There is also debate as to precisely *what* constitutes the city. Merrifield (2013) has argued that it no longer even makes sense to speak of the city as the site and stake of political struggle. The premise of this argument is actually located in a text that Lefebvre published in 1970, just a few years after *Right to the City*, titled *The Urban Revolution*. Lefebvre (2003) begins the work with the hypothesis that “Society has been completely urbanized” (pp. 1). For this Lefebvre (and there are, indeed, many Lefebvres), the urban is “preferable to the word ‘city,’ which appears to designate a clearly defined, definitive

*object*” (pp. 16). The urban, by contrast, is “defined not as an accomplished reality... but, on the contrary, as a horizon, an illuminating virtuality” (pp. 16-17). We are, according to Merrifield (2013), now living in this reality. To speak of the city is too limiting and too bounded to represent our political aspirations. In 1968 the city may have been the center of political, economic, and social power, but this power is diffused throughout the globe. Instead of demanding the city we need to push “outward onto the world, into a world without nation and without borders” (pp. 86). Boundless, the urban is more appropriate to our world of hypermobility and global integration. While it is certainly true that the composition and production of cities have changed dramatically since 1968, and that today, for example, financial institutions in Hong Kong work to directly produce space in New York City, we think that Merrifield rushes this conclusion and pushes it too far. In so doing, he works to marginalize some of the most oppressed and dispossessed inhabitants of the globe, who are still struggling in the face of settler colonialism to maintain the built-form of the city. The move to eradicate national borders in a world where indigenous peoples and their land are still under occupation risks further effacing the struggles of oppressed peoples whom settlers have sought to systematically erase.

For us, Merrifield’s romanticization of the urban foregrounds the ongoing division of the world between oppressing nations and oppressed nations. Although using different language, Margit Mayer (2012) places the right to the city in a more helpful and accurate global context than Merrifield, one that takes the uneven development between the global North and South into primary consideration. Without taking seriously the international division of labor, right to the city movements in the global North can be reabsorbed into the hegemonic power of capital. This claim rests on the observation that contemporary actors in right to the city struggles are “disparate groups that share a precarious existence... by middle class urbanites who seek to defend their quality of life, by radical autonomous, anarchist, and alternative groups and various leftist organizations” (pp. 78). Some of these groups can, and are, “usefully absorbed into city marketing and locational politics for attracting investors, creative professionals, and tourists” (pp. 77). This process is currently taking place in Detroit, which is competing to be one of America’s most “creative cities.”

The composition of right to the city movements in the global South is markedly different, Mayer observes, in that they are composed “on the basis of indigenous, marginalized, and (post)colonial experiences” (pp. 79). The different material realities that give rise to these movements present a direct challenge to “theories which imply that urban movements today must organize on a global scale” (pp. 79). This is not to say, of course, that movements in the South are not inherently global, but rather that these movements draw little strength from “transnational networks, which are more oriented to the needs of the North” and are instead rooted in “specific local requirements” (pp. 79).

Cities *are* produced globally and any call for the right to the city has to be conceived of globally. Particularly for those of us in the global North, or what we refer to as oppressing nations, the way in which we conceive of and take into account the global situation is absolutely imperative. Mayer points out that we run the risk of being absorbed into the capitalist reproduction of the city and that we cannot limit ourselves to demanding the right to certain cities in our nation-states. Mayer implores us “to identify commonalities and connectivities generated in the realities of globalization” (pp. 81). Yet

there is another crucial component of this that we argue must take center stage, and that is the participation of oppressing nations in settler colonialism.

### **The right to the city in Occupied Palestine**

In this section, we highlight the Palestinian struggle for liberation to insist that settler colonialism, understood as a structure and not an event, is antithetical to the realization of the right to the city. Further, and consequent of the global division of labor that sustains capitalism, we proffer that movements that take up the right to the city while ignoring the links between nations under global capitalism are necessarily predicated upon the suppression of the right to city for inhabitants of oppressed nations. Struggles over the right to the city in the global North that focus purely on the local at the expense of the global, then, are fundamentally incommensurable with the realization of the right to the city both for people in nations occupied by colonizers and for those oppressed under global capitalism. We therefore take seriously Mayer's (2012) admonition that "since the struggle for the 'right to the city' today can only be conceived globally, neither critical urban theory nor urban movements can rest satisfied with merely appropriating selected zones of Northern metropolises and remaking them, 'to their heart's desire'— as just, democratic, and sustainable havens in a heartless world" (pp. 80). Our reasons for focusing on the Israeli state as a nexus for struggle are twofold. First, we seek to call attention to the settler colonial structure that denies Palestinians the right to the city to emphasize the irreconcilability of the right to the city with settler colonialism. Further, we argue that the U.S.'s imperialist interests in upholding the Israeli state shed light on the interconnectivity of cities under capitalism. Specifically, highlighting the colonial and imperial practices of oppressing nations underscores that social movements within these nations are implicated in the struggles of those in oppressed nations resisting imperial and colonial powers. This means those of us in the U.S. have a particular responsibility to oppose U.S. support for the Israeli state, to support Palestinians' struggle against the settler colonial Israeli regime and for the right to the city, and to practice education in a way that renders these links apparent.

We begin by examining some of the manifold ways the Israeli state is predicated upon the systemic exclusion of Palestinians from participation in the production of cities in Palestine. We then discuss the erasure of Palestinians in the education system as well as the Israeli state's control and restriction of Indigenous Palestinians' encounters through tactical confinement in the West Bank and Gaza. Given the United States' crucial role in the occupation of Palestine and the imperialist logic driving the U.S.-Israeli alliance, and in light of the proliferation of social movements taking up the notion of the right to the city in oppressing nations, we insist that those calling for the right to the city cannot be silent about the enmeshment of cities in one another within contemporary imperialism. In other words, realizing the right to the city in the global North cannot come at the expense of the inhabitants of cities repressed by the imperialist endeavors that uphold capitalism. We argue that for the right to the city to take hold as a truly revolutionary social movement, cries for the right to the city in oppressing nations must heed demands for the right to the city emanating from occupied and oppressed nations. We consider the oppressive ends to which education has been employed by the Israeli state to suppress Palestinians' right to the city and, further, point to the centrality of



liberatory education for fueling Palestinian resistance to colonizing forces. We hope this analysis can inform social movements, particularly those stemming from the global North, as the right to the city is increasingly arrogated as a guiding framework.<sup>v</sup>

### **Insurrection, not Inclusion: Against the right to the city for all**

Though the right to the city as a concept has not been widely taken up in relation to Occupied Palestine, we begin this section by critiquing the instances wherein it has been invoked in order to further explicate what the right to the city is and what it is not. In his examination of the experiences of Palestinians living in cities in the Israeli state through what he deems “a critical revision of Lefebvre’s right to the city,” Jabareen (2014) delineates several rights that he claims the realization of the right to the city necessitates. He emphasizes that the right to the city is about renewing the right to urban life, but he offers a dangerous and limited notion of the right to the city in employing the concept to assess the urban rights of Palestinians living in cities within the Israeli state. Describing the right to the city as “a political agenda that aims to enhance the political conditions of urban life and its inhabitants in the face of economic processes and the hegemony of the central state” (pp. 140), he severely constrains the revolutionary promise of the notion originally conceived by Lefebvre. As articulated above, the right to the city is about more than protecting “the city from state tyranny and technocrats” by providing “adequate human shelter with a strong political status” (pp. 141). The right to the city isn’t about inclusion; it’s about insurrection.

Jabareen’s (2014) analysis not only elides the irreconcilability of the right to the city with capitalism, he also fails to situate Israel as a settler colonial state fundamentally built upon the denial of Palestinians’ right to the city. He writes that “Palestinian citizens of Israel are denied the right to the city to a greater extent than their Jewish counterparts” (pp. 140) and proffers that “urban rights might ease the national political conflict” (pp. 141). Drawing from Lefebvre, he asserts that “those who are eligible for the *right to the city* are all those who inhabit the city” (pp. 136). As Marcuse (2009) clarifies, though, the right to the city is not a fully inclusive right and, we add, those inhabiting the city as settlers on occupied land cannot unproblematically lay claim to the right to the city.<sup>vi</sup> Israeli settlers’ occupation fundamentally inhibits Indigenous Palestinians from realizing their right to the city.

As Salamanca, Qato, Rabie, and Samour (2012) note, commenting on the Zionist ideology invoked to uphold settler colonialism in Occupied Palestine,

Zionism is an ideology and a political movement that subjects Palestine and Palestinians to structural and violent forms of dispossession, land appropriation, and erasure in the pursuit of a new Jewish state and society. As for other settler colonial movements, for Zionism, the control of land is a zero-sum contest fought against the indigenous population. (para. 2)

While Palestinians are denied self-determination and the recognition of their national identity, Israel’s Law of Return dictates that “any person living anywhere in the world who [can] prove that he or she had one Jewish grandparent regardless of whether they or their family ever stepped foot in the Middle East... would be granted citizenship”

(Becker, 2009, pp. 44). Further, and in line with Marcuse's aforementioned distinction between the cry for the right to the city—emanating from those included but alienated—and the demand—springing from those directly excluded and oppressed—Israeli settler colonialism is not bent on the exploitation of Palestinian labor but the absolute erasure of Indigenous Palestinians (Wolfe, 2006). Consequently, calls for the inclusion of Palestinians into the inherently exploitative political and economic system are misguided. The highly exclusivist Israeli state exemplifies why, as Marcuse (2009) delineates, not all inhabitants of the city have equally legitimate claims to shape and produce the city. In his appeal to this conceptual framework, Jabareen (2014) incorrectly promotes the right to the city as an all-inclusive right for those who dwell in the city, thereby ignoring the colonial project of Israeli settlement by which many such urbanites came to inhabit cities and, paradoxically, denying Palestinians the right to self-determination and land. Alternatively, Joseph Massad (2015) offers a more appropriate platform for what we would call the right to the city in Palestine, which includes removing colonial institutional structures and “ending Israeli state racism inside present-day Israel in order to bring about both the equalization of the Palestinian citizens of Israel with their Jewish counterparts and [allowing] the Palestinian refugees to return, and the ending of Israel's colonial occupation of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the siege of Gaza” (para. 37).

Jabareen (2014) limits the revolutionary potential of the right to the city as conceived by Lefebvre and, in so doing, accepts the settler colonial status quo. Mayer's (2012) insight regarding the increased traction the right to the city has gained as a legalistic guarantee to the already existing city is useful here. She notes that “unlike the Lefebvrian notion of the right to the city, [these] claims... boil down to claims formulated for inclusion in the current city as it exists. They do not aim at transforming the existing city—and in that process ourselves” (pp. 74). Mayer (2009) further articulates that the Lefebvrian right to the city demand “is not about inclusion in a structurally unequal and exploitative system” (pp. 371). The Israeli state, consequent of both the settler colonial violence executed to uphold it and the state's utility in the service of U.S. imperialism, typifies an unequal and exploitative system that is antithetical to the actualization of the right to the city for Indigenous Palestinians. In the context of present-day Israel, then, it is not just transformation of the existing city that is requisite for the transformation of self, but rather the radical transformation and dismantling of the settler state within which the city exists.

### **The Systematic Suppression of Palestinians' Right to the City**

While the right to the city encompasses more than a right to the access and use of urban infrastructures, the settlement of Israel has consistently entailed the destruction of the very materiality of Palestinian cities. In no instance is this clearer than in the routine bombardments of Gaza. Weizman (2006) details the strategic and systematic reconstitution of Palestinian urban spaces by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in his examination of how architectural theories, urban studies, and systems analysis, among other theoretical frameworks conceived in academic institutions, have been studied by Israeli military personnel and appropriated to inform Israeli military practice. Discussing a commander of an IDF paratrooper brigade whom he interviewed following Israel's

2002 incursion in the West Bank, Weizman explains that the commander's "soldiers used none of the streets, roads, alleys, and courtyards that make up the order of the city" (pp. 9). The walls of urban structures are purposefully rendered porous by IDF tanks and weaponry. As the retired brigadier general of the Israeli Army explained to Weizman, "the city itself is a very complex system of interdependent networks. Furthermore, urban battles take place within a field in which two networks- the military as a network and the enemy as a network- overlap spatially" (pp. 13). Military tactics and manipulative rhetoric instilled in IDF soldiers render Palestinian cities "a military ghost-like fantasy world of no borders, of boundless fluidity in which the city becomes a navigable space, an ocean" (pp. 16), a space wherein private/public distinctions are collapsed and all spaces become accessible and disposable in full-fledged urban warfare. In light of this, Merrifield's insistence that cities are no longer appropriate targets of political struggle seems not only premature but also quite oblivious to the existing configurations of imperialism.

The geopolitical narration of Gaza evidences the blurring of the line between civilian and combatant that functions to erase any purely civilian spaces (Bhungalia, 2009). Palestinian cities are rhetorically rendered war zones to encourage and legitimize their physical destruction. As former IDF soldier Avner Gvanyahu explained in a recent *Democracy Now!* interview, "What we see in the Gaza Strip is basically the army's attempt to eliminate the idea of doubt. Soldiers were told—and this is really throughout the Strip, throughout the board—soldiers were told that the areas that they're entering are areas that there are no civilians" (Gvanyahu, 2015). The Israeli military, serving as an apparatus for the Israeli state, employs discursive and physical tactics in an effort to expunge Palestinian cities.

In his examination of how "imaginative geographies" of civilization and barbarism fuel contemporary colonialism, Gregory (2004) notes that Palestinian cities "have been smashed by Israeli missiles and bombs, by tanks and armored bulldozers. The objective is to suppress... 'the right to the city' through a campaign of coerced de-modernization" (pp. 189). In Palestinian cities, both urban infrastructures and urban inhabitants are decimated by the IDF as tactical means of upholding Israel's settler colonial regime. A recent Oxfam report estimates that rebuilding homes, schools, and hospitals in Gaza would take roughly a century under the current Israeli blockade that imposes restrictions on construction materials to the region (Guilbert, 2015). Gregory further notes that during the IDF's 2002 offensive in the West Bank, given the euphemism "Operational Defensive Shield," the IDF began explicitly targeting "the Palestinian Authority's *civilian* infrastructure, the institutions and the record—the very archive— of Palestinian civil society" (pp. 185). Israeli practices employed to uphold the settler colonial structure in Palestine rest on the denial of Palestinians' personhood and national identity. Palestinians' right to both remake themselves and their cities is irreconcilable with Israeli settler colonialism.

The realization of Palestinians' right to the city, then, cannot be achieved merely through the construction of infrastructure in Palestinian territories. Only after liberation from occupation can Palestinians realize the right to the city, as cities built under Israeli occupation are fundamentally antithetical to the enactment of a wholly different kind of city and society.<sup>vii</sup> Weizman (2006) notes that Israel has at various points sought to build Palestinian cities in the West Bank in order to allay active resistance. In the Occupied

Territories, he explains, the “temporary nature of the refugee camp is its very essence, as it manifests the urgency of the claim for return” (pp. 18). Building new houses, then, can “be seen as a betrayal of the national cause” and thus plans for reconstruction are rejected by the Palestinian resistance (pp. 18). The construction of permanent housing and infrastructure by the Israeli government, part of Israel’s strategy for addressing “the refugee problem” and reducing the dire conditions that fuel Palestinian resistance, is indicative of the loss of the possibility of return. Infrastructure constructed by the Israeli settlers was rightly understood by Palestinians as emblematic of settler permanence and, thus, rejected. In the context of Israeli settler colonialism, the construction of Palestinian cities by settlers signified the absolute disavowal of Palestinians’ right to the city. Thus, it is through both the destruction and construction of cities that Israel denies Palestinians the right to the city.

Israeli settler colonialism is also antithetical to the right to the city in that the state is upheld by the military-enforced circumscription of Palestinians’ encounters. Encounters with difference that produce cities are controlled and constrained by Israeli military forces through, among other practices, the hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints used to delimit Palestinians’ movement. In the West Bank, Palestinians have sub-standard roads, and Israeli-only roads contain and control mobility. Abu-Saad (2006) notes, moreover, that “the loss of so much agricultural land and the displacement of so many communities made Palestinian Arabs acutely dependent on the Jewish sector for employment” (pp. 1088). All of these practices, employed to uphold Israeli settler colonialism, are incommensurable with the right to encounter, to produce, and to collectively remake the city.

### **Settler-Controlled Education**

The control of Palestinian education has been central to the settler colonial structure and concomitant suppression of the right to the city in Occupied Palestine. As Abu-Saad (2006) explains in his exploration of the role the Israeli educational system plays in repressing Palestinian identity formation, “the educational system of the Palestinian Arabs has been, and continues to be, determined by a set of political criteria that they have no say in formulating” (pp. 1088). While “the Arab school system has its own curriculum, it is designed and supervised by the Ministry of Education, where virtually no Arab educators or administrators have decision-making powers” (pp. 1091). This speaks to Attouh’s question of what type of right the right to the city is, specifically by highlighting the incompatibility of the right to the city with bourgeois liberal democracies and, we add, Israeli settler colonialism. Colonial settlers run the Ministry of Education. Thus, within Israel, Indigenous Palestinians’ right to shape educational institutions and praxis and, in turn, to be shaped by education, necessitates asserting a right against democracy and those settlers. In contemplating the question of whose right the right to the city is, the Palestinian struggle for liberation is emblematic of a demand, emanating from the directly oppressed and excluded, as opposed to a cry, which emanates from included but alienated Israeli settlers, such as Ethiopian and Mizrahi Jews who have protested systemic racism in the Israeli state. Abu-Saad concludes that “Indigenous Palestinians do not have autonomous control of their school system and do not hold any

of the key decision-making and policy-making positions in the nation educational infrastructure, which is reflective of their position in Israeli society” (pp. 1097).

The Israeli state further exerts control over Palestinian education through strict censorship of curricular materials (Abu-Saad, 2006; Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003; Baramki, 1987). As Nurit Peled-Elhanan (2012) delineates, Israeli schools propagate racist discourse through textbooks that teach anti-Palestinian propaganda to youth to promote support for expansionist policies. Permissible textbooks and lessons erase the history of the Palestinian people and their relation to the land, instead promulgating Zionist ideology that champions Israel as a land created for Jews. Israeli schools highlight Jewish history, culture, and values and seek to erase the history and ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people (Abu-Saad, 2006). Abu-Saad astutely observes that “it is clear that the suppression of the history of indigenous minorities has survived through numerous textbook reforms because its repression is of key importance in teaching history to mainstream students to foster and maintain their support for the ideologies/actions of settler states” (pp. 1090). Additional control over Palestinians’ education is evidenced by the fact that Israel has denied proposals for independent Palestinian universities and imposed security checks that bar Palestinian educators who espouse a Palestinian national identity from teaching in schools (Abu-Saad, 2006).<sup>viii</sup> Such policies highlight the practice of limiting and controlling encounters within Palestinian schools in present-day Israel as a tactic for upholding settler colonialism. In Gaza, this takes place through the outright destruction of schools.

The IDF’s use of various academic theories discussed above is further emblematic of the dangerous ends to which education can be employed. As Weizman (2006) explains, reflecting on the integration of postcolonial, poststructuralist, and various other theoretical frameworks into Israeli military tactics,

[w]hile these theories were conceived in order to transgress the established built ‘bourgeois order’ of the city— with the wall, projected as solid and fixed, embodying this repression in matter and form— here these methods are projected in order to conceive of forms of tactical attack in an ‘enemy’ city. Education in the humanities, often believed to be the best lasting weapon with which to combat imperialism, has been adopted as imperialism’s own weapon.” (pp. 15)

The deployment of education in the service of imperialism and settler colonialism is evidenced both by the exploitation of various academic theories by the Israeli military and by the erasure of Palestinian people in Israeli students’ texts intended to bolster the Zionist ideology on which the state was built. The utilization of education to perpetuate settler colonialism in Palestine has been a persistent practice and shows no sign of slowing. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed Naftali Bennett, of the religious Zionist Bayit Yehudi party, for the Minister of Education in May of 2015 (Eldar, 2015). Bennett has stated that he “will do everything in [his] power to make sure [Palestinians] never get a state,” (Remnick, 2013, para. 3). Widespread instances of pro-Palestinian academics around the world being censored, denied tenure, and fired further speak to the imperialist investments in using education to maintain systems of domination.

### **Palestinian Resistance and the Urgency of an Internationalist Right to the City**

In spite of routine Israeli military sieges, largely funded and supported by the U.S., Palestinian resistance remains strong and multifaceted. For example, in 2012 Palestinians organized a roughly 50-car motorcade to challenge the system of Israeli-only roads in the West Bank (Zonszein, 2012). In addition to regular protests in Palestine, there are armed resistance forces operating internally and internationally, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the al-Qassam Brigades, and Hezbollah. Much of this resistance has taken on a specifically urban character, as Harvey (2013) notes:

Oppositional movements like Hezbollah and Hamas, in their turn, increasingly pursue urbanized strategies of revolt... For their part, Hezbollah and Hamas both combine military operations from within the dense networks of urban environments with the construction of alternative urban governance structures, incorporating everything from garbage removal to social support payments and neighborhood administrations. (pp. 117)

It is also imperative to recognize the instrumental support provided by the Iranian and Syrian states. Palestinian resistance would be in a sorry state without this regional network of state and non-state actors.

Education has been indispensable to the resistance movement. Alzaroo and Hunt (2003) compellingly argue that “education has been of great significance for Palestinians who have used it as a tool for liberation” (pp. 179) and note that education is instrumental for nation-building among Palestinians. During the first uprising (Intifada), for example, political education helped to “develop individual and collective awareness so as to achieve emancipation by using educational resources and activities for organizing and mobilizing the population to challenge the occupier and confront its policies” (pp. 177). The authors also draw on qualitative data from a regional study they conducted to argue that education is widely valued above money by Palestinian refugees in Jordanian camps. While Israel’s continued occupation in Golan, Gaza, and the West Bank defies international law, the Israeli state “criminalizes any act of resistance to its illegal operations there” (Gregory, 2004, pp. 189). Palestinians’ perseverant resistance and struggle in the face of ongoing settlement projects and violent military assaults epitomizes a demand for the right to the city born of necessity.

Right to the city movements within Northern nations predominantly frame the struggle within the confines of national borders, therein effacing the interconnectivity of cities under advanced capitalism and the incommensurability of the capitalist system with an internationalist right to the city. This, unfortunately, has also been true in critical educational work like Lipman’s. Such a call presupposes and perpetuates the oppressive global power relations that disavow others of the ability to liberate their cities from the grips of capital and collectively remake urban spaces. As Richard Becker (2009) outlines in his comprehensive analysis of Israel’s role in the maintenance of U.S. empire,

the existence of Israel as an artificial and colonial state in the heart of the Arab world has profoundly distorted regional development for the benefit of imperialism, and to the detriment of the Arab and other people of the region. (pp. 13)

In the interest of maintaining U.S. Empire, more so than resulting from the U.S. pro-Israel lobby's stranglehold, as is often charged, the United States has supplied Israel with hundreds of billions of dollars in military aid (Becker, 2009). Historically situating U.S. investment in Israel, Becker explains that Israel's successful appropriation of the remainder of Palestine during the 1967 war "convinced U.S. leaders that Israel could be a highly effective weapon against the Arab liberation struggle, and should be supplied with nearly unlimited quantities of economic and military aid" (pp. 79). Given the hundreds of billions of dollars the U.S. has afforded Israel in the interest of expanding and securing its empire, U.S. citizens are acutely implicated in the Palestinian struggle, which has been paramount to resisting U.S. domination in the region. Critical educational praxis can play a foremost role in rendering apparent these interconnections so as to foster support for the dismantling of Israeli settler colonialism and U.S. imperialism.

### **Closing Remarks**

By turning to the Palestinian liberation struggle we have aimed to sharpen the right to the city as a truly revolutionary concept and demand. The settler colonialist regime that persists in Palestine sheds light on what the right to the city is and what it is not by exemplifying why the right to the city cannot be conceived as a fully inclusive right for all. The suggestion that reform can accord Palestinians the right to the city in an Israeli-occupied state predicated upon the denial of self-determination for Indigenous Palestinians is fallacious and illusory. The colonial project of settling Palestine has disavowed Palestinians of the right to the city not merely by denying Palestinians their individual rights to access and use urban spaces and services or by deferring their right to be included in the city. Foundational to the creation of the Israeli state has been the denial of Palestinians' right to remake the city and liberate it from the clutches of U.S. Empire and colonial occupation. The creation and ongoing settlement of the Israeli state has fundamentally deprived Palestinians of the right to remake themselves through reshaping their cities, and the Israeli-controlled education system has been and continues to be paramount in this project. Because the expropriation of land and resources is central to the reproduction of capitalism and imperialism, any call for the right to the city has to challenge this on a global level.

While Palestinian people themselves are at the forefront of their struggle for liberation, those in the United States are particularly implicated in their oppression and thus responsible for opposing both the Israeli occupation of Palestine and U.S. imperialism, which underlies U.S. support for Israel. As Okazawa-Rey (2009) notes, "without the enduring U.S. government and civilian support... the occupation of Palestine would be impossible" (pp. 208). Those of us in oppressing nations thus have a responsibility to support the self-determination of Palestinians. Okazawa-Rey further illustrates the illusory nature of the domestic and foreign policy dichotomy, asserting that effective global solidarity work "means seeing how U.S. financial aid to the Israeli state, and the U.S. government's overall military spending, take away from financial aid for working-class and poor U.S. students of color, thus denying them a college education and perhaps compelling them to join the military as the alternative, for example" (pp. 221). This is not to simplistically suggest that U.S. funding for the Israeli state is the primary

means by which the U.S. secures a highly exploitable workforce of color, which is achieved through myriad interconnected practices and policies that perpetuate white supremacy. Rather, we raise this point to further emphasize the incommensurability of the right to the city with capitalism and imperialism by stressing that the war on the poor within the U.S. is directly tied to the war against Palestine, and the resistance against this internal war has to make the same ties. The considerable military and economic support the U.S. provides the Israeli state functions both to sustain a regime antithetical to Palestinians' realization of the right to the city and, further, to extort resources that could be allocated toward undoing systemic injustices within U.S. borders and cities. As Mayer (2010) notes, "war machines to maintain and expand corporate control over the resources of the world are proliferating" (pp. 371). Within this context, struggles over the right to the city cannot be remiss about the interconnectivity of cities within contemporary imperialism. Specifically, those in oppressing nations must oppose the capitalist accumulation, achieved via imperialism and colonial occupation, upon which their cities are built in order to align their call for the right to the city with the demands emanating from oppressed and occupied nations.

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<sup>i</sup> Lefebvre—incorrectly on our view—conflates the capitalist development in cities with the development of cities in the existing socialist states at the time, but we don't address this error here.

<sup>ii</sup> When speaking about “1968” there is a damaging tendency to homogenize the many, diverse, and even contradictory events subsumed within the signifier. This is especially problematic given the radically different class characters of the movements (i.e., whether they occurred in capitalist or socialist states). For the purposes of this article and to avoid any such homogenizing, we exclusively mention France.

<sup>iii</sup> Because of the “see-saw motion” of capital (Smith, 1984/2008), in which capital has to constantly be flowing *from* some place *to* some other place (often only to flow back again), this particular spatial displacement wasn't final. In the U.S., for example, white flight in the 1950s and disinvestment from cities in the 1960s and 1970s concentrated workers and people of color in cities, a trend that began to reverse in the 1990s and continues to this day.

<sup>iv</sup> Unfortunately, and as is all too common, Lipman feels the need to completely dismiss the experiences of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc socialist states as “distorted” (pp. 152). While there is certainly much to critique in these experiences, there were also significant gains made both within socialist states and in the broader global struggle for justice as a result of these socialist governments. Consider, for example, the instrumental material and ideological support that the Soviet Union gave to socialist and national liberation struggles throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. See Malott and Ford (2015) on why this outright dismissal of decades of struggle is problematic and damaging.

<sup>v</sup> We emphasize that this analysis is primarily intended to inform urban movements stemming from the global North in order to acknowledge the different realities, resources, and challenges faced by urban movements in the global North and South. Mayer (2012) points out that northern theories advocating global scale organizing are often rejected in the global South, where urban movements face different conditions and are often confronted by “enormous material and political difficulties” which “prevent them from directly participating in global organizing processes” (pp. 79).

<sup>vi</sup> As we are positioned as colonial-settlers writing on the occupied land of the Onondaga people, we include ourselves in this assertion.

<sup>vii</sup> We talk about the “liberation” of Palestine without offering up exactly what that entails, primarily because this is not the role of non-Palestinians in the U.S. Our role is to fight *against* our government's support for Israel and to defend the right of Palestinians to resist by any means necessary.

<sup>viii</sup> Palestinians hold 1% of faculty positions at universities in Israel, despite constituting 19% of the population (Abu-Saad, 2006, pp. 1095).