

THE ROLE OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN SOLIDIFYING IDENTITY: THE CASE OF
PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

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ABSTRACT

Through a critical review of scholarly literature on the role of collective memory as a resistance tool to memocide, this research paper uses an analytical approach to examine the efforts exerted by Palestinian refugees in post 1948 *Nakba* (catastrophe of dispossession) to preserve and consolidate their national identity through the transmission of history of displacement and cultural heritage. With a specific focus on the fourth-generation Palestinian refugees living under occupation, and through studying cultural practices, oral history, and the Great March of Return Movement, this paper examines the role played by the collective memory in consolidating the Palestinians national identity in the post-Nakba era. The research argues that the collective memory constitutes a central anchor to preserving the Palestinian national identity and becomes an instrumental site for resistance, creating a generation of hope and rights, not despair and loss, as claimed by the recent literature.

Key Words: Palestinian Refugees, Nakba, Collective Memory, Memocide, National Identity, Oral History, Memory, Heritage, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Right of Return

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Alhamdolilah alathe bini3matihi tatim alsali7aat

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mother Ghada, grandmother Aliaa, and great grandmother
Khadeja...

Through them I honor all Palestinian people, their resistance and resilience, with
which they have shaped an unprecedented chapter of human history.

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1. Introduction:

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10th of 1948, yet 71 years later, human rights violations devastate the lives of millions of people on a daily basis all around the world. These violations come at a heavy price, impairing the livelihoods of those most vulnerable and imprisoning them to a system of oppression. This is especially the case for those exiled, displaced, segregated and expelled from their homes, land, communities, and livelihoods. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the global population of forcibly displaced people (refugees, IDPs, and asylum seekers) has increased from 33.9 million in 1997 to 70.8 million in 2018 (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). Of that 70.8 million, 5.5 million are Palestinians registered under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (2008, p. 2). UNRWA is the refugee agency specifically created in December 1949 to look after the Palestinian refugees, and provide them with basic health, education, and relief services (UNRWA, n.d). The Agency defines Palestinian refugees as persons and their descendants “whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict” (UNRWA, n.d.). The 1948 conflict mentioned here, refers to what Palestinians call the *Nakba*, that translates to the Arabic word catastrophe/tragedy or disaster, which became exactly that for the native Palestinians. The *Nakba* signifies the catastrophe of the Palestinian exodus and dispossession, in the course of which about eight hundred thousand Palestinians were expelled or forced to flee their homes and lands and become refugees (Masalha, 2009; Ageel, 2016).

Despite the passage of seven decades, the *Nakba* remains a constitutive event for the people of Palestine and their descendants. It also remains a central commemoration, uniting Palestinians

through “sharing the great pain of being uprooted, the loss of identity, and the struggle to reverse this nightmare” (Abu Sitta, 2016, preface). This tragedy not only altered lives, but segregated communities and destroyed much of the cultural and physical property created and amassed over the generations (Pappé, 2002; Ageel, 2016). Prior to the 1948 *Nakba*, Palestinians shared a collective identity, history, and culture, that till this day has carried through the generations defining the Palestinian collective, their resilience and resistance while defying obliteration. This collective’s history and culture has continuously challenged and defied what Israeli historian Ilan Pappé has referred to as the process of ‘Memoricide’; that aims for the systematic ‘erasure of the identity and history of one people in order to write that of another people’s over it’, constituting a continuous imposition of a Zionist layer and nationalized Israeli patterns over everything Palestinian (Pappé, 2002, p. 225). The process was, and is conducted within a nation building project, which Pappé characterizes as ‘colonialist’ in its origins (2002, p. 225). It is the destruction of not only physical and conceptual spaces, but also of memories, as it attempts to erase the parts of history that go against the hegemonic narrative story of the occupier/colonizer. And while today Israel may have succeeded in erasing the traces of Indigenous people of Palestine from their lands by re-cultivating, landscaping, and renaming Palestinian sites and villages (2002, p. 226), they have failed in annihilating their collective identity and their demand for their right of return.

The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), is a term that had come to be known after the 1967 war, when Israeli forces occupied the Gaza Strip and the West Bank including East Jerusalem. It currently houses nearly 4.5 million Palestinians, with 2 million residing in Gaza and the rest in the West Bank (ECFR 2019, p. 6). After the occupation, and in defiance of international law, Israel continued its policy for colonization of the Palestinian land through building illegal Jewish colonies, often referred to as settlements. In the West Bank, these illegal colonies and

outposts - together with the web of roads intended for Jewish only use, military bases, and buffer zones around each colony - now occupy at least 40 percent of Palestinian land (Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009, and B'Tselem, 2017). They had also occupied 40 percent of Gaza prior to the disengagement in 2005, when the late prime minister, Ariel Sharon, disengaged from the Gaza Strip as a plan of security measures (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.), evacuating over 9000 Israeli illegal settlers from the 25 Israeli colonies in the Strip (n.d.). Ever since this disengagement, the Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli air, land, and sea, blockade (ECFR, 2019, p. 7). Settler colonial policies have also been heavily applied in the West Bank, resulted today in Palestinians living in less than ten percent of their land, while the rest is utilized for the benefit of the illegal Jewish settlers and the state of Israel (Ageel, 2016). Furthermore, permit system, checkpoints and walls were applied to separate, ghettoize, and segregate Palestinian communities from each other, a practice that has been referred to by many scholars as an apartheid system (Pappé; Ageel; and White). Today, the vast majority of Palestinians living in the OPT are refugees and displaced people, living in densely populated and overcrowded camps. Currently, out of the 58 Palestinian refugee camps, eleven are situated in the West Bank and eight in the besieged Gaza Strip which has come to be known as "one of the world's most densely populated areas, with more than 5,000 inhabitants per square kilometer" (Hovring, 2018, p. 1).

This research will only focus on those refugees living in the OPT, as covering refugees residing in exile or inside the state of Israel is beyond the scope of this enquiry. It will focus mainly on the fourth-generation Palestinian refugees as they have been recently referred to by scholars as the 'unnamed', 'lost', and 'hopeless' generation (Ernie, 2013, p. 27). Taking 1948, the year of the *Nakba*, as a starting point, researchers have described four generations of Palestinians: 1) "the generation of the *Nakba*" (*jil al-nakba*), which experienced the trauma, eviction, and the

destruction of the homeland 2) “the generation of the revolution” (*jil al-thawra*), who were born in the refugee camps or in exile after the *Nakba*, 3) the generation of the wars (*jil Al Harb*) that witnessed the two *Intifadas* and the tragic defeat of the 1967 six-day war that resulted in the loss of the rest of Palestine, and 4) the current “no name generation” (*jil bidun Isim*) claimed to be living in despair and hopelessness without a vision or a goal (Erni, 2013; Litvak, 2009, p. 28).

Despite the changing circumstances of the different periods, the *Nakba* remains as the significant historical event that unites all generations. *Jil Al Nakba*, generation that were born and raised in historic Palestine, and who witnessed its destruction, became the frontline narrators, sharing the stories of the pre- and post-1948 tragedy. They encountered the feeling of alienation after their expulsion, and a deep sense of loss in the refugee camps, but they were the generation that shaped the building blocks for the individual, national, and collective consciousness. This generation had then raised the next two generations born in the refugee camps, *jil al-thawra* and *jil Al Harb*, preserving their identity from being lost in exile. The stories of the lost land, then became in the words of Dr. Baroud “a daily narrative that simply defined” the internal relationship of the Palestinian community (qtd. in Ageel, 2016, p. 9). For the two generations born in exile, hearing the stories from the old generation (though painful and distressing), the *Nakba* becomes inspiring and full of patriotism that over time has become a national symbol in shaping the Palestinian identity as well as a sanctified symbol – that is unique and exemplifies an “unprecedented historical experience” (Abu Alaa, 1998). Thus this literature review paper aims to answer the following research question:

How does collective memory shape the identity of post-Nakba 4th generation Palestinian refugees, against the systematic colonial project of memoricide?

Both an analytical and critical approach will be used to examine the efforts exerted by Palestinian refugees in the OPT post-1948 *Nakba* in maintaining their identities through the transmission of cultural practices, oral history, and movements such as The Great March of Return that erupted in March 2018. These efforts have been instrumental in maintaining and consolidating the identity of this generation of refugees living in OPT, using the collective memory as a place to defy the colonial ploy of memocide, amnesia, and denial of history.

Therefore, this paper argues that preserving collective memory becomes a deeply significant site of resistance for the fourth generation Palestinian refugees who currently live under a very complex situation. In this context of complexity and despair, the collective memory becomes a crucial tool for restoring this generations' identity and a site of resistance to the systematic colonial project of memocide. A resistance with no arms, and no bullets, rather with documenting memories and preserving heritage. The argument goes further to suggest that such generation have a quest for rights to be restored and a vision revolving around a lost patrimony that needs to be regained.

As this research is a literature review, it will mainly use content analysis of secondary resources of current literature and utilize academic articles, books, journals, online newspapers, as well as formal and informal recollections of oral narratives (stories vs. literature). It will aim to analyze current day cultural practices through the application of the conceptual framework lenses that will be explored in the next section. Search engine terms will be deployed by using initial search terms such as "Memory", "Collective memory", "Palestinian Refugees Collective Memory", "Palestinian refugees' identity", "the role of oral histories", "*Nakba*", "Post-*Nakba* Generations" etc. to find the first set of relevant peer-reviewed articles and secondary source

material. This will be done through the University of Alberta and Ryerson library catalogues, as well as google scholar, and any other accessible, trusted higher education databases.

NVivo 12 coding software is also used for coding nodes that categorized the relevant material in each of my article selections. I also read through journal articles' reference lists to find pertinent authors/articles that may be relevant. It is also important to note, that there has been much to reconcile within academic literature, as researchers challenge, examine, and continuously update on issues such as that of the Palestinian question, especially it being the largest and longest refugee question in the world. It is of great importance to continue such accumulation and revalidation of knowledge, as it not only helps in the knowledge production, mobilization, and transfers, but also on shedding light on this groups' evolving resistance and resilience tools.

The research will be divided into three main chapters. The first chapter will delve into the conceptual frameworks that will support and frame the research, discussing the concepts of collective memory, settler colonialism, and memory as a site of resistance politics. It will also touch upon the concepts of identity, oral narratives, memocide, and historical consciousness. This will set up the lenses in which the cultural practices can be visualized in relations to the collective memory as a site for resistance and resilience. The second chapter will give a snapshot of the historical background and context of the study, the Palestinian 1948 *Nakba* which signifies the Palestinian exodus and catastrophe. This section will briefly shed light on the political events that followed the *Nakba* including the Oslo Accords and its failure that has led to the current political impasse. It will discuss the significance of the *Nakba* to the fourth-generation, which as mentioned earlier have been described by scholars as the lost generation, that has 'no name' or 'vision'. This will then give leeway to the third chapter, the analysis part of the research, which will argue against

this claim of the fourth generation as the ‘lost’ one, through examining the role of collective memory practices in shaping the identity of that generation.

To demonstrate this argument, the third chapter will be separated into three subsections of practices. 1- Oral and documented history, looking at transmitted oral history and documented histories. 2- Cultural practices such as embroidery that signifies more than just items of clothing, dressing its wearer in symbols and colors that represent the villages and towns, and the politics of the time. It will also look at the cooking of dishes that represents village-specific lineal traditions and recipes, and the use of food as a symbol of resistance as well as the practice of the traditional songs and dance, that also embody the collective national identity. 3- The section will conclude with the Great March of Return (GMR) protests, where all these cultural practices come together to highlight the power and crucial role of the collective memory in consolidating the current generation heritage and identity.

Contribution:

I hope that this study would benefit people with an interest in Palestinian issue and in the current events in Palestine/Israel by providing new ways to make sense of the often-restrictive contemporary depictions of the ongoing conflict and a different approach to shape perceptions of Palestinians. I also hope that this study will be of significant value to interconnected and interdependent communities conducting research on Palestine in North America and beyond. It should also be of interest to students concerned in Middle Eastern issues in particular that on Palestinian refugees.

A hotly debated, contentious subject such as Palestine, requires a knowledge base that is steadily re-examined, revolutionized and growing. This involves creative, innovative research and scholarly inquiry. This study, which embodied segments of Palestine's history and Palestinians'

multilevel struggles, was written in a time where refugees live under exceedingly difficult conditions, defying enormous forces working to obliterate them and their cause. This fact in itself underlines the urgent importance of focusing on the implications of denying Palestinians their human right to freedom and dignity, over the better part of a century. By shedding light on the injustices of dispossession and the continuing harsh conditions in Occupied Palestine, the study confronts readers with the tangible meaning of an absence of a dignified future for those Palestinians. This study adds clarity about the impact on the backdrop of a shattered peace process, and of over a decade of siege on Gaza and systematic policies of colonization practiced in the West Bank on Palestinians living under occupation.

The study will also help to tackle some of the negative stereotypes about refugees in general and Palestinian in particular and attempts to portray them as they are: survivors of injustice, rights seekers and dignified humans who are awaiting their return to their home. Furthermore, this research offers a different analysis in looking at the fourth-generation Palestinian refugees, claiming that they have a name, a vision/goal and a shared experience that defines them as Palestinians.

Finally, this research attempts to fill the gap that several scholars have noted on the lack of studies of the history of the Palestinians after 1948, or what Salim Tamari has called “an astounding absence of an overall picture” on Palestinian history (Tamari, 2000). Thus, in highlighting Palestinians history and cultural heritage post 1948 *Nakba*, the study aims to connect the Palestinian narratives and look to it not as “disparate incidents, unconnected to the general” but as full picture that portrays a land and a people who are engaged in an epic of resistance the process of memocide (2000).

With that said, one of the prominent limitations of this study that could have filled the gap of what Tamari has mentioned above, is the use of Arabic literature. An Arabic speaker myself I believe much of this gap is only relevant to the English literature on the topic, as much more intensive recollection has been written, explored, and expanded upon in Arabic. Yet the shortage of time has restricted this possibility.

Researcher self-disclosure

The development of research questions in the humanities is informed by many factors, some of which can intimately be connected to the person of the researcher. As a researcher it is important to recognize my background and how it may shape my interpretation, my positionality, and the retrospect of my lenses coming into the study. As a Palestinian, born in the Gaza Strip, this study has a personal and intimate tie to my identity. I am a 4th generation refugee whom used to be registered with UNRWA and have lived most of my childhood in-between Gaza and Britain, moving to Canada in 2010. My whole extended family reside in the Gaza Strip (with a few living scattered in different countries), where nearly all live in the eight refugee camps of Gaza. Since moving to Canada, my family has attempted to visit home as much as financially and timely possible. And every year we face the bleak and painful reality of struggling to enter into Gaza, currently under Israeli illegal blockade, through the long and rigorous journey, risking our safety crossing the Sinai Peninsula and reach the Rafah crossing. Rafah is the only entry point feasible and allocated to us as we all hold a Gazan *Hawiyya* (a residency card that identifies Gazans from West Bank Palestinians). At the Rafah crossing, 55 kilometers from my refugee camp, Khan Younis, we gamble on the possibility of either entering Gaza (which if we were to enter, we would not guarantee our departure as there is no set schedule when the crossing would be open) or you risk being sent back to Canada, with many losses and despair. Meanwhile, my socio-political

commitment in the realm of Palestinian issues, specifically in the interest of my BA studies in Human Geography and movement, led me to peruse a masters in migration looking at refugee issues especially that of the Palestinians. These experiences have with no doubt shaped and influenced me in many ways, one of which has led me to writing this paper. My questions for this research is centered on the phenomenon that I have always admired in our people, and that is of their resistance and resilience no matter the hardships that have struck them. Despite the passage of 7-decades of ethnic cleansing, two *Nakba*'s (that of 1948 with the destruction of Palestine and then 1967 with the loss of the rest of Palestine), 5 decades of military occupation, and over a decade of illegal and inhumane siege on Gaza, the now five generations residing in refugee camps, are continuing to challenge, fight, and dream for their right of return to their homes and lands from which their great grandparents and grandparents have been expelled. Through my research, I hope to explore and learn more about the stories and memories of their individual, collective, and national identities.

2. Conceptual Frameworks

This chapter will examine the conceptual frameworks of collective memory, memocide, and memory as a politics of resistance. I will first examine the term memory, its relationship to the construction of identity, and how it lends into the conceptualization of the term 'collective memory/ies'. I will then bridge into memory and indigenous narratives/oral history, generational transmission, and the role of trauma as they signify important thematic areas of exploration for my analysis. It is also of great importance to highlight the role of memory on history, and history on memory, as we examine how settler-colonialism has allocated power imbalances of hierarchies; leading to the memocide, historical amnesia, and denial of history by the colonizing power. Finally, I finish this section with an overview of the conceptual framework of memory as a form

of resistance, as it arguably holds the greatest importance in this work. By looking at these concepts, a framework will be set, and a lens will be created in which we can better look at the role of collective memory throughout the next chapters. These lenses will shape how the analysis of practices have ultimately impacted the fourth-generation Palestinian refugees, their identities, and the role in the resistance and resilience against memoricide.

Memory:

Memory in its simplest of terms is defined as the function or sense of the mind that remembers and stores information; a creation or recollection of something remembered from a past time (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). In fact, memory has been used in many different areas of studies, from psychology to the humanities, but continues to be a complex phenomenon to explore, as there is yet to be a unified definition. Jeanette Rodringuez and Ted Forteir (2007) argue that memory can be used as a strategy for social justice, “recalling the forgotten or suppressed to bear witness, yet it is a strategy that requires reading history away from a linear positivist narrative to a history of mnemonic traces, each endlessly recited, reiterated, recombined” (p.198) thus memory can become a heaven of potential from political to social use.

William Hirst and David Manier (2008) state that there is a large amount of literature on both individual and collective memory, which they ultimately believe falls back to the use of a set of mechanisms. What they mean by this is that for collective memories, it is simply the process of formulation and maintenance of a memory. They say that while scholarship may not necessarily “use the word mechanism or process...their discussions of the invention of traditions...the politics of memory...and the social conventions and practices surrounding memory, usually focus on mechanisms, albeit social or institutional rather than psychological ones” (2008, p. 185). This is important to my analysis, as such mechanisms will be explored in depth later on in the paper, as

we see the application of these social and institutional practices to be of great importance to the Palestinian identity, and the ways in which they are brought about by the Palestinian collective memory.

For Bellelli Guglielmo et al. (2007), the need of a specific circumstance or event that explicitly reinforces a memory to a group is essential. They reference Nico Frijda (1997) on the origins of commemorations, that describes the origin as “the desire to define the group’s own collocation within a time frame of continuity, integrating the self in an experienced past and taking possession of it, and by the desire to confirm one’s own identity through the group’s identity” (2007, p. 632). They believed that commemorations concern collective events that are deeply traumatic that later become “commemorative rituals [which] define the individuals’ identity by assigning them their own social role” (2007, p. 632).

Memory and Identity

Identity in its most bare form "is a cognitive scheme closely related to specific definitions in which we find ourselves" (Elbedour, Bastien, & Center, 1997, p. 219). Michaela Clemens (2007) in her paper, *The Influence of Refugee Status on Palestinian Identity*, states that in the case of the Palestinian refugees, “identity is not only influenced by displacement, it is reinforced by how Palestinians view themselves and how the outside world views Palestinians” (p. 103). The designation of the status of refugee, while having both entitlement and limitations, “is a designation that Palestinians both embrace and deny” (2007, p. 103). She continues by adding “it is apparent that the process of becoming a refugee and the reality of remaining in exile for decades has a strong influence on how Palestinians are viewed by outsiders and how Palestinians view themselves” (2007, p. 104). While identity can be both self-ascribed and ascribed by others, the Palestinian identity therefore has many factors, requiring an all-encompassing lens. Such lens

would need to take into account the multiple-facets that influence this identify formation, from the displacement, conflict, and occupation (to name some) that have played a major role in the individual and collective identity.

Salman Elbedour et al. (1997), in their paper *Identity Formation in the Shadow of Conflict*, talk about social identity within the social context, while trying to understand the processes of identity formation in conflict-driven spaces. They state that identity can be taken as a tool to make sense of ourselves in our social environment, as well as a means of how people self-identify. This is "ultimately an internal construct" making the process of trying to understand how someone self-identifies as if we are always on the outside looking in to the inside (1997, p. 221). When looking at identity, two types are of core importance. The individual identity and the collective identity. It is also interesting to keep in mind, that just like the theory of orientalism, in order to determine a 'sameness' that allows us access into the 'collective', there also has to be an 'otherness' that must be constructed in contrast. In conflict studies this other is usually the enemy to the 'collective' or 'in-group', in this case the settler-colonial power. Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000), explain that collective identities are maintained and strengthened through shared beliefs, backgrounds, and ultimately narratives. This includes shared histories, chronicles, ancestries, solidarity, and 'shared consciousness' (2000). Cillian McGrattan (2012) also adds to this idea, saying that to be able to merge these two types of identities there needs to be a 'historical consciousness' where memory becomes the bonding and binding glue. In saying so, he believes that the "past is malleable, but it is only malleable within certain limits" (p. 33); while referencing to Pocock who says that 'history' entails not simply change, but also continuity.

J.G.A Pocock defines 'historical consciousness' as a product of a transmitted tradition, that is intimately interconnected to the ways in which the society that the individual lives in, irrigates

the norms and conduct of behavior. He sees this as a form of traditions, a mechanism that transmits from the past, collects from the present, and transmits again, handing down to the future. “Historical consciousness therefore relates to the fundamentals of what makes us human. It is also political insofar as it is both reflective and reflexive” (2012, p. 33). Jan Assmann (1995) analyzes this reflexivity and categorizes cultural memory’s reflexivity in three ways: 1) It is ‘practice-reflexive’ where it interprets common practices in terms of rituals e.g. sacrificial rites 2) It is ‘self-reflexive’ drawing on itself to distinguish, reinterpret, criticize, etc. and 3) It is reflexive of its own image insofar reflecting the self-image of the group (p. 132). This concept of ‘cultural memory’ Assmann says, encompasses a “body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image... Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity” (1995, p. 132).

On this note, Robert Bowker (2003) mentions in his book *Palestinian Refugees: Mythology, Identity and the Search for Peace*, that “the essence of Palestinian identity is the collective memory” (qtd. in Erni, 2013). Meir Litvak (2009) reiterates this notion stating that “collective memory is the basis of every national identity” (p. 1) and “no group identity can exist without memory as its core”. Adding that the continuity of identities is sustained by remembering, whereby “reconstructed images of the past provide the group with an account of its origin and development and thus allow it to develop a historical identity” (2009, p. 1). Litvak, in his book *Palestinian Collective Memory and National Identity*, believes that collective memory plays a significant role in shaping the perception and culture of communities that have “suffered historical defeats (such as the Serbs, the Jews, and the Palestinians) than of [those] victorious nations (such as the Americans)” (2009, p. 1).

Litvak also references to the national identity as a ‘forceful agent’ that constructs collective memory by identifying mines from the past that encompass elements from events, to symbols, to heroes etc. “The national past is, in fact, memory rather than historical past” that is planned in a strategically engineered way that picks from histories ‘great moments’ to construct the national identity; thus a strong links formulates between “nationalism, identity, and memory materialize in the sites and rituals of commemoration, where the national movement fuses and molds the collective memory into collective identity” (2009, p. 14).

Collective Memory

Collective memory as a concept is fairly new and has received insufficient attention, specifically because it has not yet been conceptualized in many fields. The term was originally coined by French philosopher and sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs (1992), in his paper *On Collective Memory*. Much of what Halbwach theorizes about, such as the role of the individual’s memory on their identity, actions, and space in society has filled a very important gap in memory and identity literature, and one that has continuously been referenced and challenged to by other scholars. Litvak says, “[b]roadly defined, collective memory is “how members of society remember and interpret events, how the meaning of the past is constructed, and how it is modified over time” (1992, p. 12). That said, Halbwach’s primary argument was based on the idea that human memory can only function within a collective context, where collective memory is developed in a specific social environment, or what he called ‘the social framework (*cadres sociaux*) of memory’ (1992).

While there have been many references and attempts at analyzing his argument, some scholars have noted the lack of applicability, whether it is due to misinterpretations of translation of his work or simply differences in eras; it seems that much of his analysis has created a need for

more scholarship that looks deeper into the conceptual and contextual understanding of collective memory. For Jan Assmann (1995), it is partly for this reason that it is possible to speak of *collective* or, in his term, *communicative* memory. Following Halbwachs argument stating that memory in its most basic nature, is socially mediated and is socially constituted, Assmann suggests that people make meanings from the past via narrativization (aka oral histories) and the handiworks of commemorative articles that take shape through the influence of what has been shared from the past (Assmann, 1995). For example, the symbolism of the key or the letters of land ownership for the Palestinians. As Cillian McGrattan (2012) notes, “it often lies in the ‘stuff’ of every-day life – the stories which people tell to make sense of their pasts and that they articulate to envisage their futures” where that memory and/or article “ends up lying at the heart of who we are as individuals and as collectivities” (p. 27) .

Cillian McGrattan also takes from Halbwach’s work on collective memory, referencing his argument on how “the individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of [collective] memory” (Halbwach 1992, p. 182; McGrattan 2012). For Halbwach, groups are only sustainable when they hold onto a narrative “or a framing of those memories which bind individuals together” (qtd. in McGrattan, 2012, p. 149). They do this through “elaborating a network of rituals, stories, rules and commemorative practices that ensure cohesion and futurity” (2012, p. 149), and thus a collective memory. McGrattan also makes an important point, that as the social situation changes, so does the relationship and frame of reference, and quotes Bell who reminds us that “memory is not a ‘black box’, ‘untarnished by external influences’: instead, our memories evolve over time, as the external political and social environment changes so too does our appreciation of the past” (2012, p.148) giving each generation the agency to re-evaluate the past in essence to the their present. In the case of Palestinian generations this appreciation comes

of great importance as it is the spirit of the collective identity that keeps reminding the new generations, that despite the continuous changes in political and social environments, there is still the right of return. The collective memory acts as a cultural and national map of importance, that bridges the narratives of the past, giving meaning to present and future of the generations.

Memory and Indigenous Narrative

“Rescuing silenced victims and displaced historical narratives from that process is politically difficult since it involves rowing against dominant tides; however, it should be an ethical imperative, involving as it does questions of recovering forgotten truths and making those truths visible” (McGrattan, 2012, p.10)

Here McGrattan speaks about the importance of collective memory as a field that is conceived and formed from absences and silences. He distinguishes that there are varieties of such memories, such as those that fall under the field of oral history. Assmann asserts that through the practice of oral history we gain more insight into the qualities of this particular form of collective memory, and ‘its most important characteristic’; its limited temporal horizon, which oral history studies suggests, does not extend more than 80-100 years into the past (equaling three to four generations, or the Latin ‘*saeculum*’, which refers to the maximal life span of those who remember a generation) (Assmann, 1995, p. 127). What renders the break between the past and the present, is exactly this notion of *saeculum*. It forms a societal transition through a generational shift, that witnesses the passing of eye witnesses and the loss of a living memory (McGrattan, 2012, p. 33) to the next generations that continue the memory through those passed down collected and transmitted oral memories. Thus the past is chained to the ideas about identity, which is permeated and infused with ethical significance and “concern our adherence to the beliefs of our forebears as well as our responsibility to future generations” (2012, p. 33).

Generations of Memory

The importance of wisdom received from the past lies in the fact that it's inevitably about the future as much as it is about the past (2012, p. 27). As Paloma Aguilar (2008) notes, the 'lessons of history' are always filtered through various lenses that are created via generational difference and generational change as it is 'true that different generations live through different historical events...[and] even when living through the same events, they interpret...and are affected by them in a specific and unique way' (2008, p. 22). She ties this generational change to the development of the 'never again' to trauma and violence culture and to the silence and amnesia of such memories (2008, p. 22). McGrattan also adds to this saying that many psychologists and sociologists have studied such related memories of 'collective trauma' and the 'transgenerational transmission of trauma', and found for instance it has been noted that in the South African case:

[M]emories of unresolved trauma are often perpetuated through stories told within the family and broader community. Memories continue to affect generations even when they do not directly experience the specific traumatic event. These 'received' memories shape identities as well as fuel negative perceptions and stereotypes of difference, often hindering reconciliation processes and perpetuating identities of continued victimisation. (McGrattan, 2012, p. 8).

Violent pasts affect younger generations even if they did not experience the conflict or trauma directly, so the concept of collective trauma should be differentiated from the personal/individual trauma as it is "imbued with particular political resonance...involved with questions of power" (2012, p. 8). This power therefore determines the voices that get to be heard and given acknowledgment and the voices who are silenced and muted. "Thus, trauma is not only a silence, but, politically speaking, it is an act of silencing. This silencing can be passive and active" (p. 9).

Memory, Power, and the Past

This act of silencing is exactly what Ilan Gur-Ze'ev and Ilan Pappé describe in their article *Beyond the Destruction of the Other's Collective Memory: Blueprints for a Palestinian/Israeli*

Dialogues “the destruction of the collective memory of the Other, through the construction of one's own” (qtd. in Weedon, & Jordan, 2012, p.149). This destruction carries form in what Chris Weedon and Glenn Jordan (2012) discussed as “the cultural political struggle over voice and memory” (p. 149), which aims to effectively challenge and remove the hegemonic constructions of collective memory and history by giving rise to the forms of counter-memory. This in turn exposes the degree of violence that is applied in the attempted for such dominance. Gur-Ze'ev and Pappé (2003), talk about this power-domination, arguing that the formation of nation states/identities utilizes violence in both a ‘direct and symbolic’ way which thus plays “a crucial part as collective memories are produced, reproduced, disseminated and consumed within concrete historical power relations, interests and conceptual possibilities and limitations” (p. 93). This is especially in the context of the Palestinian issue, where the past is as important as the present, and collective memory as important to resistance, as it is to identity. As Gur-Ze'ev and Pappé write:

In the case of the Israeli/Palestinian coexistence, the struggle over the control of the collective memory of victimization is a matter of life and death, and suffering and death, as actuality and as memory, are philosophical, political and existential issues. (2003, p. 94)

Memory, Settler Colonialism and Power Politics

In the words of Philip Marfleet (2007), ““History is the fruit of power,”— an account of the past which celebrates the few, excluding the many, [where] the successful... are remembered [while] The blind alleys, the lost causes and the losers themselves are forgotten”” (p. 136). Those powerful write the history and built upon the dispossession of indigenous people under the veil of settler-colonialism. To begin by understanding what constitutes the idea of settler-colonialism and what it truly entails, David Lloyd and Laura Pulido (2010) state that:

settler colonialism is the practice of conquering land and then populating it with the victorious people, the settlers. Such a population shift may be triggered by the need for space for an expanding population, or it may be prompted by the need to assert economic and political control in the new territory; regardless, it results in the dispossession and often

the extermination of large parts of ‘native’ populations and the subsequent cultural, economic, and political subordination of the remainder. (p. 796)

This definition describes settler-colonialism as more than an event locked in history, but rather is an ongoing process that is continuously subordinating indigenous peoples, mainly through land dispossession. They continue by saying, here is an assumed “right of possession” of the land, which is ultimately “legitimated by appeals to manifest destiny, divine dispensation, or merely a civilizing mission” (2010, p. 797). As the European settlers ‘discovered’ lands and claimed it for themselves, deeming the indigenous inhabitants ‘savages’, they utilized the principal of *Terra Nullius* (nobody’s land), where they ruled that the indigenous people were not cultivating the land in a European standard (to generate profit), and that they then did not have any rights to it (Dyke, 2006). In the context of the Palestinians and Israel, the same colonial strategy was applied. Zionists claimed that historic Palestine was ‘a land without people’ and should be given to ‘to people without land’. They had also used religion to promote their colonial project claiming that Palestine is the homeland of the Jewish people who are chosen and designated by God, and where every Jewish person has a religious responsibility and right to return to it. Many academic contributions refer to the fact that ‘historical Zionism is essentially a colonial enterprise’ (Veracini, 2006, p. 3). Zionism was regarded as a form of ‘European overseas expansion in a frontier region’ but the paradigm with which the “conflict is framed tends to discount the colonial genealogy and current phenomenology of the confrontation by foregrounding religious and nationalist features” (2006, p. 2) as mentioned above. This not only based the colonization in theological beliefs, but it also ignored the existing inhabitants of the land, laid the foundations for the ethnic cleansing/*Nakba* to come and created a settler-colonial hierarchy of racialized categories that are maintained through a history of colonial violence, appropriation of land in order to extract its resources and dispossess the indigenous peoples.

Scholars have called for a more comparative approach in order to ‘deal with Israel’s colonial legacy’ (the very allusion deemed taboo, in both Israeli society and Israeli historiography), by looking at settlement processes such as those in the new settler-colonial states of the Americas, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (Veracini, 2006, p. 3). While ‘defining a movement as settlement-colonialism may well help to clarify the relations between the settling nation and the native one’; it seems that this acknowledgement has yet to be extensively pursued (2006, p. 2). Lorenzo Veracini (2006), a prominent scholar in settler-colonialism studies, contends that a “systematic disregard of the colonially determined characteristics of the Palestinian struggle contributes to a specific interpretative deficiency” (p. 3). Specifically, it develops the notion of detachment of the current circumstances of the Palestinian reality from the pre-determined colonial conditions and settler colonial system of institutional and personal relationships that have been set.

Veracini (2011), distinguished settler colonialism as a distinct type of colonialism, functioning on the replacement of the indigenous people with an invasive group of a settler society that overtime fosters a distinctive domination. He sees this as a form of a larger imperial project, where he states that the “colonisers and settler colonisers want essentially different things” (p. 1). He references Patrick Wolfe, who remarks that settlers ‘invasion is a structure’ and not ‘an event’, and where “Colonialism *reproduces* itself while the settler colonialism *extinguishes* itself, justifying its operation on the basis of the expectation of its future demise” (2011, p. 3). Settler colonialism is also distinguishable from other forms of colonialism by a number of key features. First, settler collectives intend to permanently occupy and assert sovereignty over indigenous lands as they “come to stay” and push out the indigenous people (Veracini, 2010). Second, settler colonialism is a penetrative structure, that persists on the memocide and continuous removal of indigenous populations, while asserting state sovereignty and juridical control over their lands

(2010). While this may take many forms, some are applied through physical elimination or displacement, “having one’s cultural practices erased, being ‘absorbed’, ‘assimilated’ or ‘amalgamated’ in the wider population” (Veracini, 2011, p. 2). Such practices, unlike other forms of colonialism, aim to eliminate indigenous peoples themselves, so to not have to face challenges against the settler society’s sovereignty. They do this by asserting false narratives and structures of unchallengeable settler belonging and statehood, which comparatively is different to other forms of colonialism where the goal remained in maintaining power structures of hierarchies and control of the native people. Likewise, different colonial structures, produce different reflexive reactions from the colonized groups, who also develop distinctive anti-colonial responses to their contexts (2011, p. 3). If the settler-colonial societies plan is to expel indigenous peoples, “it is indigenous persistence and survival that become crucial. Resistance and survival are thus the weapons of the colonised and the settler colonized” (2011, p. 4). This resistance and survival are what make certain that colonialism and settler colonialism are never triumphant.

[Memoiricide, Amnesia, and Denial of History](#)

In his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, the Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2006) adopts his new coined term ‘memoricide’. Pappé defines memoricide as the “erasure of the history of one people in order to write that of another people’s over it” (2006, p. 231). Here Pappé is referring to the massive erasure of the pre 1948 Nakba Palestinian history and the hebraizing of Palestinian geography as state-organized “memoricide”, which was conducted in the hope that the memory of the lands and the history of its people would vanish. In this process, Palestinian villages and towns were de-Arabized and renamed, aiming to eliminate centuries of history as they signified paving the way for the new Zionist colonization. Palestinian historian, Nur Masalha (1997), called this colonial process “the de- Arabisation of the land [...] the erasure of ancient

Palestinian place names and their replacement by newly coined Zionist Hebrew toponymy” (p. 29), or as he coined it ‘toponymicide’. Other scholars have later used the term with conjunction with terms such as ethnic cleansing, ‘cultural genocide’, or as an aspect of settler-colonialism that attempts to erase and/or remove ‘unwanted’ groups and their historical existence as to be the only hegemonic power. This research uses the terms memoricide and toponymicide interchangeably.

Philip Marfleet (2007), talks about historical amnesia in his article, ‘Refugees and History: Why We Must Address the Past’, where he deconstructs the relationship between what history can teach us, and what it can sometimes conceal in its footnotes. He argues that the omission of forced migrants (those most vulnerable compelled to flee repression, wars, civil conflict) amounts to a general amnesia as they are associated with marginal status and of unequal relation; especially after losing their resources of materials, and their socio-cultural and psychological character. But he also states that political authorities can sometimes champion certain populations as deserving of refuge and support, which Israel had applied to the existing Palestinian Jewish and Christian communities in 1948. The ‘other’ displaced Palestinians were viewed as undesirable, dismissible and a threat to the Zionist state.

Take the partition of land (aka partition plan) for example. The partition of land was one of the leading reasons that has led to the conflict today; and continues to be the reason of intensified conflict and negotiations. Marfleet quotes that “Professional historians have addressed the formal politics of Partition in great detail...The role of the colonial authorities, of local movements and parties, and of individual actors” (2007, p. 143) yet in his analysis he found that oral history was missing, which created a gap in information collecting as he believed “the voices of ordinary people” (2007, p. 144), would challenge dominant ideas about the ‘birth of the nations’ as he puts it and the inevitability of ethnic separatism by bringing forward testimonies that disrupt

“uncluttered national history” and dominant political ideologies (2007, p. 144). By doing so those voices would challenge the national narratives which is why “state authorities, agencies and academics ignore refugees past *and* present (2007, p. 144) and which is why memory is not only a tool, but a power that can carry the truth from within.

Memory as a Resistance Politics

It has been said that “while collective memory is the basis of every national identity, it seems to play a more substantial role in shaping the self-perception and culture of people that have suffered historical defeats (such as the Serbs, the Jews, and the Palestinians) than [those] of victorious nations (such as the Americans)” (Litvak, 2009, p.1). Similarly, all colonized peoples “whose past and present were dominated by outside powers who had first conquered the land and then rewrote history had to wage a battle to claim a collective historical reality” (Edward, 2000, p. 184). According to Edward Said (2000), “Every independent state that emerged after the dismantling of the classical empires,” felt the urgent need “to narrate its own history, as much as possible free of the biases and misrepresentations of that history” that is written by colonial historians” (p.184).

Also Said not only talks about memory as an important tool for accessing to the past but a tool to resist and claim back rights. He stresses on the right “to a remembered presence and, with that presence, the right to possess and reclaim a collective historical reality” (2000, p.184). Resisting Memoricide and toponymicide projects and consolidating the identity required waging a battle of reclaiming back the history and the culture from those who erased it. The erasure of spaces and stories prompted scholars, including Said, to call for ‘permission to narrate’ and “right to narrate” on all fronts of the creative spectrum, including heritage industry to encounter these

hegemonic colonial versions of history and political domination that has always obstructed native representational efforts to make their history/culture and displacement visible.

On this front, McGrattan emphasizes critical importance of ‘Political domination’ where he argues “that such domination ‘involves historical definition... [history] is at stake in the constant struggle for hegemony” (McGrattan, 2012, p. 150). He continues by saying that “the relation between history and politics ... [is] an *internal* one: it is about the politics of history and the historical dimensions of politics” (2012, p. 150). This truly speaks to how memory and history are “mobilised by groups who seek to increase their political standing... or contain those they perceive as rivals.” (2012, p. 150), which is why memory and history are important to understand in the contexts of sites of struggle and resistance.

3. Historical Background

On November 1st, 1917, the foreign secretary of Britain, Lord Balfour, issued a letter addressed to Walter Rothschild, a prominent Zionist leader and head of the British Jewish community. In that letter, he stated that “His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object” (Schneer, 2010). This letter, widely known as the Balfour declaration, was the result of a great deal of mobilization and lobbying of the Zionist movement.

Furthermore, the Balfour declaration was nothing short of a parcel of the imperial and colonial plans in the region. Zionism founder, Theodor Herzl, had appealed to the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony (present day South Africa), for support of the Zionist project in Palestine as “something colonial” (Weiss, 2011). While, Chaim Weizmann president of the World Zionist Organization and later the first President of Israel pledged to “form a very effective guard for the

Suez Canal” if Palestine fell under the British sphere of influence, as they would “encourage a Jewish settlement there” (Polkehn, 1975, pp. 88-89). Yet unlike the design of European-colonization (which in a nutshell aimed to exploit indigenous peoples as laborers while extracting their natural resources), Zionism wanted to not merely exploit the people, but “to disperse and dispossess them” and replace them with a new settler community (Schoenman, n.d). “The intent was...to eradicate the farmers, artisans and town-dwellers of Palestine and substitute an entirely new workforce composed of the settler population” (n.d) which in doing so would create a political climate that aimed to remove them from both their physical and historical existence.

Between 1922 and 1947-48, with direct British assistance Zionists grew more powerful forming a parallel government and a sophisticated well-equipped militia under the British mandate. This allowed the Zionists to establish their own self-governing institution, while prohibiting the Palestinians in doing the same, which in turn was ‘cementing the way for the 1948 ethnic *Nakba*’ (Shepherd, 2003). The British also approved a Jewish open-emigration policy, resulting in a mammoth number of European Jews immigrating to Palestine. Between 1922 and 1935, the Jewish population rose from 9 percent to close to 30 percent by 1947 (Khalidi, 1984, p. 239). This increased migration created tensions, as the indigenous Arabs watched their rights being violated one after the other, and their lands disappear before their eyes. As the clashes escalated in the region the Palestinian question was brought to the UN where a proposal for dividing the land between the Jews and the Palestinians was designed. In November 1947, the UN voted for the division of Palestine under resolution 181, giving the minority, the Jews (then 30 percent of population) 56 percent of the land, and the remaining 43 percent to the majority native Palestinian, while placing Jerusalem under international regime (UN, The Plan of Partition., n.d.).

The native Palestinians rejected the plan and the clashes increased. Six months after the partition resolution, the Zionist had occupied 78 percent of historic Palestine (Baroud, 2017). This was carried out through systematic policies and plans of erasure, expulsion and ethnic cleansing, which have been coined by Palestinian and Israeli historians as *memoricide* and *toponymicide*. One of the plans was a blueprint known as Plan *Dalet*, that ultimately aimed “to achieve military *fait accompli* upon which the state of Israel was to be based” (Ageel, 2016, p. 7). These cleansing plans were instructed the *Haganah* (Jewish underground military) with lists of places that had to be occupied, destroyed, and/or its inhabitants expelled (2016, p. 7). Such operations were carried out by destroying villages, setting them on fire, and blowing them up (especially those most areas most populous as they would be more difficult to control in the future) (2016, p. 7).

In May 14th 1948, Britain terminated the mandate and left Palestine, where Israel then declared its state the next day on the ruins of Palestinian homes. This historical snapshot informs volumes about the colonial roots behind the state of Israel's birth as well as the historical amnesia that it adopted in its nation-building narrative. As Mafreet had expressed earlier, what history can conceal in its footnotes – such as the omission of forced population movements – is a state of the general amnesia associated with marginalization and of unequal relation (2007).

In 1967, Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and what later had become known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Immediately after the military occupation the state of Israel continued its ethnic cleansing project and the process of active *memoricide*. This was carried out through policies of expansion, colonization of Palestinian land, and expulsion. In 1987, twenty years after the Israeli military occupation, the *Intifada*, a popular uprising, erupted in the OPT, which obliged Israel to sit with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in search for a political solution (Ageel, 2016). The peace process

was then launched in 1991 under the auspicious of the American Administration of George W. Bush (Office of the Historian, n.d., para 1) leading to a conference in Madrid in 1991 and in Moscow in 1992. By 1993, talks had come to a deadlock in Washington, and took form as private negotiations between Israel and the PLO and ended with the signing of the Oslo Accords (n.d., para 2). The Accords, which was considered by several Palestinians intellectuals as the ‘biggest Hoax of the century,’ adopted the two-state solution formula while neglecting “Palestinian rights, international law, [and the] UN resolutions.” (Said qtd. in Abu Sitta, 2016, p. 298).

Although the peace process had created hopes for the Palestinians, this hope quickly evaporated, when they realized that staples of the Palestinian cause, issues such as refugees, right of return and the 1948 *Nakba*, all considered by Palestinians as the pivotal core of their struggle, have been missing from the Accords. Palestinians read the obliteration of *Nakba* and denial of their inalienable rights, as a new phase in the attempted and ongoing project of memocide. Reflecting his deep frustration of Oslo, Palestinian historian Abu Sitta, himself a refugee and part of the generation of the *Nakba*, wrote to the late chairman Arafat asking him why there was no “Palestine”, “no Palestinians,” and no demands for rights in the Accords or in his speech, writing:

“I wished to hear you, Mr. President, say: I stand before you today to remind you that decades ago 85 percent of my people were uprooted by the force of arms and the horror of massacres, from their ancestral homes. My people were dispersed to the four corners of the earth. Yet we did not forget our homeland for one minute.... Let us learn the lesson of history: Injustice will not last. Justice must be done.” (2016, p. 287)

The observations made by Palestinian intellectuals such as Said, Abu Sitta, and Abu Lughod about Oslo as a disastrous project, came to be true a few years later. It created harsh realities for the Palestinians on the ground and accelerated the project of memocide. This next section will shed light on some of these current realities in the OPT.

[The Realities of the OPT Today](#)

In the eyes of all the generations of Palestinian refugees, the 2-state solution proposed by Oslo ignored the core plight of the 1948 Nakba and their right of return. Judith Butler (2013) speaks on this, stating the limitations of such a plan for the refugees and their descendants asserting that “any notion of the nation would have to consider the rights of those who have been forcibly expelled from their own homes and lands” (p. 206). She goes further to suggest that “any nation built on these presuppositions depends on the disavowal of 1948...and blinds itself to the continuing condition of expulsion for Palestinians” (2013, p. 206). Well Oslo seemed to do just that, as the settler colonial strategy went unabated in the West Bank. It could be said that the realities of today in the OPT, are a continuation of the appalling record of human rights abuse, omissions, and denial that began from the 1917 Balfour Declaration. By calling Palestine to be a national home for Jews and disregarding the existence of the Palestinians inhabitants and the land in question, they set in motion the process of dispossession, exile, and social fragmentation, as well as the memoricide. As a result of such policies, Palestinians are now living on less than ten percent of their historic land. (Ageel, 2016, p.4).

The failure of both the international community to condemn Israel’s colonization of Palestinian land and the Oslo Accords to recognize Palestinian people rights, made the fertile ground for the eruption of the second *intifada* in 2000. During the second *intifada*, colonial practices, and denial to Palestinian rights increased: from the construction of the separation wall and building of the illegal settlements in the West Bank, to imposing the blockade on Gaza in 2006 which crippled the Strip and led the UN in declaring it “as inhabitable by 2020.” (Algherbawi, 2019, para 3). These violations coupled with the ongoing attacks on the Palestinian people, their spaces, organizations, and their basic infrastructure ensures control of all aspects of their life and development, ultimately cause a great level of despair and hopelessness among Palestinians,

particularlry the young generation. An example of these attacks can be seen in the massive damage caused by the 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza, which left the strip in an impoverished and disabled state (UNOHA, 2014, p. 2), destroying over 100,000 homes, 62 hospitals, 278 mosques, 220 schools, and leaving over 2500 people dead and dozens of thousands wounded (PCHR, 2014, n.p.).

While Gaza wages wars of survival against the wars of eradication, the West Bank has their own battle under different circumstances of occupation. A recent report released by an Israeli human rights organization stated that over 75 percent of the population in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, with a quarter living in neighborhoods cut off from the rest of the city by the separation wall (Sherwood, 2017). Furthermore, Palestinians residing in Jerusalem are struggling against home demolition (over 20k homes have been demolished since 1967), regular arrests (over a million Palestinians have been in prison since 1948) and the revocation of residency permits (over 15k permits that have been revoked in Jerusalem since 1967) (Silver, 2017; Alaraby, 2017). Such practices deploy aspects of both memocide and ‘toponymicide’, as Israel attempts to erase the Palestinian people physically and figuratively by de-Arabizing the land, and placing a new hebraized people instead (Masalha 1997; Pappé 2006). These policies are also demonstrated in home demolition regulations adopted by the Israeli authorities who first demolish Palestinian homes, then prohibit its owners from rebuilding claiming that they had no permits. Amnesty International (AI) has reported that these permits are run by discriminatory policy, that consistently were denied to Palestinians but reliably gave “Israelis permission to set up settlements” (AI, 2019). The report also stated that two-thirds of all existing structure in East Jerusalem were undertaken without permits (e.g. due to their existence before the creation of the state), which later justifies their demolition, not only displacing Palestinians, but also facilitating the expansion of the Jewish settlements and settlers, therefore “secure Israeli control of the area” (2002, p.184). These

examples of policies and practices demonstrate in bold terms the current memocide that is currently ongoing on in the OPT, taking over Palestinian spaces while, suppressing their identity, rights, and history.

These practices discussed above (the use of permit system, land grab, building settlements, checkpoints, the separation wall, and home demolitions) coupled with the constant attacks on Palestinians have created unimaginable economic and social for those living in the OPT. Out of such dire circumstances and “the experience of *Al-Nakba* made for [such] a distinct Palestinianness” (Sayigh qtd. in Schulz 2003, p. 119) the new generation living amid this harsh reality was motivated to look for new sites of resistance to defy such policies and plans of eradication. This ‘Palestinianness’ as Sayigh puts it, becomes in parcel with the national and individual identity, that manifests from the collective memory of the *Nakba*. This next section will explore the *Nakba*, its definition, meaning, and emphasizes on why it's so important to the Palestinians, and why it has such an impact on their national identity, collective memory, and historical consciousness.

[Nakba, and the Palestinian Identity](#)

“In the sorrow of a history buried alive, the year 1948 in Palestine fell from the calendar into exile, ceasing to reckon the marching count of days, months, and years, instead becoming an infinite mist of one moment in history.” (Abulhawa, qtd. In Ward, 2005, p16)

2019 marked the 71st anniversary of the *Nakba* (the catastrophe that befell on Palestinians in 1948) in the course of which about eight hundred thousand Palestinians were expelled from their homes and lands and forced to become refugees (Said, 2000; Tamari, 2000). Yet despite the passage of more than seven decades, this 1948 catastrophe remains a constitutive event for the Indigenous people of Palestine and their descendants, as this tragedy altered lives, segregated communities and destroyed much of the cultural and physical property created and amassed over

the generations. Moreover, this became a representation of the displacement, dispossession, and exile. To use the words of Dr. Ibrahim Abu Lughod (1974), the Nakba expresses the enormity of the disaster that was inflicted on the Palestinian people— one that “led to the dual injustice of dispossession and exile” (p. 34) and therefore remains a central event uniting Palestinians, through “sharing the great pain of being uprooted, the loss of identity, and the struggle to reverse this nightmare” (Abu Sitta, 2016, preface). For all Palestinian generations born pre or post of 1948, the Palestinian leader Abu Ala, states that *Nakba* is a historical event of major importance as it “touches the core of the struggle -now as in the past- for dignity, identity, and justice in the face of power” (Abu Ala, 1998). Palestinian historian, Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, affirms this importance adding that the Nakba represents a painful legacy and a unique feature of human history, writing:

The Palestinian *Nakba* is unsurpassed in history. For a country to be occupied by a foreign minority, emptied almost entirely of its national majority, its physical and cultural landmarks obliterated, its destruction hailed as a miraculous act of God and victory for freedom and civilized values, all done according to premeditated plan, meticulously executed, financially and politically supported from abroad, and still maintained today... with the same vigour, is no doubt unique. (Abu Sitta, 1998)

During and ever since the 1948 Nakba, a systematic colonial processes of ‘memoricide’ and ‘toponymicide’ have been applied to erase Palestine and Palestinians and replace them with the new inhabitants (Pappé, 2006, p. 34; Masalha, 2012, p. 10). These processes had involved the destruction of more than 530 Palestinian villages and 11 urban centers that ultimately led to “the loss of old local traits and their replacement by a new kind of belonging” (Nassar, 2001, p. 34). It was also the event that made the vast majority of Palestinians (about two thirds of some 11 million) refugees, scattered and displaced within and outside Palestine, resulting in what is now considered to be the largest and oldest refugee problem in the world (2001, p. 34). Epitomizing Palestinian loss, the Nakba becomes not only the commemorative event to unite Palestinians as a collective but also the founding stone of Palestinian national, culture, and historical identity. As such, Nakba

has become a national symbol preserving and shaping both the identity and national consciousness of all Palestinian generations. The following section will discuss these generations in detail.

Palestinian Generations since the Nakba

As mentioned in the introduction section, researchers have distinguished four generations of Palestinians: 1) “the generation of the *Nakba*” (*jil al-nakba*), who witnessed and experienced the trauma, eviction, and the destruction of the homeland 2) “the generation of the revolution” (*jil al-thawra*) born in the refugee camps, in exile post-*Nakba*, 3) the generation of wars (*jil Al Harb*) who witnessed the two intifadas and the tragic defeat of the 1967 war) the current “no name generation” (*jil bidun Isim*) claimed to be living in despair and hopelessness without a vision or a goal (Erni, 2013; Litvak, 2009, p. 28). Yet, despite the changing circumstances of the different periods, the *Nakba* remains as the significant historical event that unites all generations. *Jil Al Nakba*, the generation born and raised in historic Palestine, became the frontline narrators, sharing the stories of the pre- and post-1948 tragedy. This generation raised *jil al-thawra* and *jil Al Harb*, passing on their practices to preserve their identity from being lost in exile. Learning from and hearing the stories of the old generation about the *Nakba* became inspiring and full of patriotism that over time has become a national symbol in shaping the Palestinian identity. Thus, the *Nakba* is seen as a sanctified symbol of identity – a unique and “unprecedented historical experience” (Abu Ala, 1998). Unfortunately, none of the first three generations managed to reverse the catastrophe of the *Nakba*. On the contrary, it seemed as if Palestinians were going from *Nakba* to another, starting from 1917 Balfour Declaration, to the 1948 loss and destruction of historic Palestine, then to the 1967 war, the occupation of the rest of Palestine, and ending with ‘hoax’ of the Oslo Accords. The fourth generation was born amidst these catastrophic failures, under the continued process of memocide and the signing off of Oslo, that had neglected both the 1948

Nakba and refugees' rights of return, which ultimately including this generations' rights of return also. Such political failures were also accompanied with the horrors of the ongoing colonial projects and the military attacks on Palestinians lands, creating a situation of despair and hopelessness. Such political deadlock has resulted in what scholars claim to be the lost generation, that has no vision or goal for the future (Erni, 2013).

In her work, Fiorella Erni (2013) states that the first generation of refugees have "the memories of the homeland and the trauma of war and dispossession as a common denominator and unifying power for the *imagined community* of the Palestinians with a collective identity" (n.p). The second refugee generation "the Generation of the Revolution" who have "the heroic tales of the Palestinian Resistance Movement" (2013, n.p). The third refugee generation "the Generation of the War" who have "the experiences of the war and its horrors, as well as the idea of steadfastness as a source of a collective Palestinian identity" (2013, n.p). The fourth generation that Erni describes has "neither a name that would mark their collectivity, nor a shared experience of heroism" as it does not have "strong and defined visions of a happier future in Palestine" (2013, n.p) to bring it together.

The next chapter will examine this last argument about this "no name" generation that Erni classifies, focusing on those living in the OPT. I argue that with the utilization of collective consciousness and collective memory tools, such as oral histories and cultural practices, become deeply significant site of resistance for the fourth generation of Palestinian refugees living under such complicated political, social, and economical situations.

It is precisely within this context of complexity that collective memory becomes so crucial to restore and revive this generations' identity. It becomes a site of resistance, in which Palestinians make no use of arms or bullets, but rather of documenting memories and heritage of their ancestors.

Thus the collective memory, for the fourth generation, becomes a significant site to consolidate identity, and a tool of struggle for rights and dignity against the systematic colonial project of memocide. The research will conclude that this generation does indeed have a goal and a vision.

4. Oral History, Culture, and Right of Return

As Rubinstein so poetically iterates, “Every people in the world lives in a place, except the Palestinians. The place lives in them” (Rubinstein qtd. in Abu Sitta, 2001, p. 195). This idea of ‘Palestinianness’ as undertaken by scholars such as Sayigh, who articulates the term as a result of “the experience of Al-Nakba [which] made for [such] a distinct Palestinianness” (Sayigh qtd. in Schulz, 2003, p. 119), and translates as the representation of the Palestinian’s cultural heritage, history and hence identity. This identity is of great importance for the Palestinians, their history, and their existence. On this note, Said writes,

Perhaps the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been the right to a remembered presence, and with that presence, the right to possess and reclaim a collective historical reality [. . .] A similar battle has been fought by all colonised people whose past and present were dominated by outside powers who had first conquered the land and then re-wrote history so as to appear in that history as the true owners of that land (Said 1999, p. 12).

This waged battle is of great importance to Palestinians, as it resists the attempted ‘memocide’ and the process of erasure, that has been tactfully mobilized and executed for decades by Israel. In internal discussions of the Israeli cabinet in 1970, Golda Meir (later prime minister) proposed the retention of the Gaza Strip on the condition of “getting rid of its Arabs” as “there are no Palestinians”, pushing their existence on the verge of extinction; while Levi Eshkol (at that time prime minister) asserted the policy of not allowing those expelled during 1967 to return on the basis that “We cannot increase the Arab population in Israel” (qtd. in Ageel, 2016, p.17). In such contexts where Palestinians are challenged with such Zionist denial of their rights

and existence, it becomes fundamental to claim representation and identity. They claim this thorough collective memories, authorship of narratives, and relics of existing. Such generational transmissions become the core of the Palestinian identity. Edward Said touches on this:

The lectures I give now always feature the importance of memory to the Palestinian experience. Not organised memory, because we don't have a state and we don't have an organised, central authority. But if you look in every Palestinian household, into the third generation after 1948, you'll find such objects as house keys, letters, titles, deeds, photographs, newspaper clippings, kept to preserve the memory of a period when our existence was relatively whole. [. . . it is a strategy] against historical erasure. It is a means of resistance (Said, 2000, p. 182–3).

In his quote, Said illustrates the dedicated nature of Palestinians to conserve and consolidate their 'remembered presence' turning spaces such as the home, into a hub of archival memory and identity. With objects, artifacts, and representational pieces that are "kept to preserve the memory of a period when our existence was relatively whole...against historical erasure... [and a] means of resistance" (1999, ps.182–3). This research argues that such collective tools not only transmitted 'into the third generation' as Said mentioned above, but also into the fourth-generation, going on to the fifth. The next sections will look at the tools used in the shadows of collective memory, that have become categories of resistance, as they aim to preserve the history, culture, all while consolidating the Palestinian identity. It is precisely in this context that memory becomes a crucial and significant site for resisting policies of memocide for both communities living in exile and under occupation in disenfranchised OPT.

To demonstrate this argument, four main catalysts will be explored. Firstly, I will look into the oral narratives and documented history, from the story-telling of the first generations' exile stories, to the transmission of history that describes the daily life in villages and towns prior to *Nakba* and the history of the Palestinian land. Secondly I will look at the role of cultural practices that have been passed down to the generations. From the spread of embroidery works in Palestine,

that references back to villages and tribal identities through the symbolic meanings of pattern motifs, thread color, and fabrics. To Palestinian cooking where the new generation re-learn the traditional Palestinian food from their grandmothers, to the unique stories with flavors. To Palestinian songs and dance that maintain the Palestinian folklore and have become part of every wedding and celebration. Thirdly, I will touch upon the Great March of Return, the peaceful protests that erupted on March 30th 2018, to demand the right of return and an end on the 12-yearlong blockade on the OPT (Fayyad, 2019, n.p). Tents have been set up at the border aimed to embody different villages' traditions, as the Palestinian refugees cook traditional Palestinian food, tell stories, draw family trees, and narrate the history of that village and the Nakba that befell on them (2019, n.p.).

Oral and Documented Histories

This section will explore oral narratives and documented history, from the storytelling of the first generations' exile stories, to the transmission of history, and educational elements that have helped in portraying Palestinians daily life, their traditions and history of their land.

Oral history, Sherna Gluck argues, has moved 'from the margins to the center' and has become the core of Palestinian historiography in the past twenty years (2008, p. 69), with an abundant amount of formal and informal deployment that has gone into collecting and reviving it. Mainly seen as a result driven by Edward Said's scholarship and his call for the 'permission to narrate', oral history has given way for the continued production of archival collection so to resist against the continued erasure of Palestinian spaces, existence, and identity. Gluck notes that Palestinian oral history practice, not only recovers and preserves the past through the collection of accounts, such as those of the *Nakba*, but also establishes a legitimacy of claim and the right of return (2008, p. 69).

These collections of accounts also tie to the collective memory and collective consciousness of the Palestinians. Sustaining this collective memory was especially prevalent in spaces of the refugee camps. It became visible in the social structures of the camps where refugees would re-group with people who were close to either their locality origins or village societies that they had come from (Nimr, 2008, p. 2). They did this in an attempt to secure and preserve the continuity of their traditions and social autonomies, through costumes, customs, food, stories, music, dance, sayings (proverbs), and also through the practice of inter-village marriages (2008, p. 2). Thus despite all these decades in exile, Palestinian identity and culture preservation through their collective memories has been the backbone of the resistance against identity eradication. It has also created linkages to homeland, the past, and the generations of post-*Nakba*, a sense of ownership and identity.

Michael Milshtein (2009) refers to this as the development of “communities of memory” that consists of the practice of activities that reflect “a strong commitment to both the memory of the past and the dreams of return in the future” (2009, p. 72). He states that these ‘communities of memory’ preserve and integrate the memory of *Nakba* in everyday life, as well as instilling the feeling of being uprooted and the yearning of something that is missing, that created “an awareness so powerful that the youth felt as if they themselves had experienced the *Nakba*” (2009, p. 72). By passing this identity torch, they pass with it the commitment to the right to return and right to inheritance of a land that embodies everything related to home. The homeland “stays alive with the next generation, and...passes the responsibility of its liberation” (Nimr, 2008, p. 2).

Nimr notes that Palestinians in the refugee camps replaced traditional folktales and storytelling with genealogical tales. Storytelling of myths and legends was replaced by tales about “ancestors, everyday life, the harvests, and even quarrels” (2008, p. 2). So, to preserve and ensure

the memory of the homeland throughout the generations, stories with princes who saved the princess from the evil witch, “was replaced by the boy who took a gun” to defend the village against the invaders. “The monstrous Ghoul’ in the stories was replaced by another kind of monster, less mythical, but no less vicious, who occupied their land and ruined their lives. The exodus of “Abu Zaid al Hilali” to find peace was replaced by “a forced exodus towards the unknown” (2008, p. 2). According to Milshtein, such stories are calling upon the new generations to take lessons from 1948, and to “demonstrate endurance and perseverance rather than surrender to fear or the impulse to flee” (2009, p. 78). This grappling with the Nakba he says, mirrors “the process of political, cultural, and ideological changes that the community has undergone, and the way it defines its very identity” (2009, p. 84).

Story Telling & Generational Transmission

Nimr states, that while some historians believe that the transmission of memory of one generation to the next loses value, this is not the case for the Palestinians (2008, p. 7) as they have shown it to be of highest value. Preserving the memories of their villages/towns, way of life, and traditions, powerfully and successfully transmitting to the next generation’s born in exile (2008, p. 7), as if they had never been expelled. And while it can easily be said that the first and second generation had stronger recounts of transmitted memory than those of the third and fourth generations, it is important to account for the intergenerational differences that affect such memory recollection. Some of these factors can be accounted to the passage of time, the loss of the first generations, and other effects of social, economic, and political situations. While the first generation tended to be less linear and focused on the exodus, the generations that followed were more tied to national history. These accounts that follow the national history was representative of the collective memory, which had become a “critical component of their struggle [where] recent

activities to rediscover their village of origin had captured the imagination of the second and third generations.” (Gluck, 2008, p. 77)

Shera Gluck (2008) reviews Rosemary Sayigh addition in the Web-book, *Women Narrate Displacement*, where she talks about Hajji Umm Salah al-Yassini, the oldest survivor of the Deir Yassin massacre that took place on April 8, 1948 (p. 72). Sayigh notes that for Umm Salah, not a day goes by where she does not think or dream of the massacre, noting an occasional look of absence in her eyes when she was speaking of the event. A similar story was portrayed by Ageel, herself a third-generation Palestinian refugee who was born and raised in Gaza camps. In her book *Apartheid in Palestine*, Ageel narrates the displacement of her grandmother, Khadija, who was expelled from her village, Beit Daras, and ended in one of Gaza’s refugee camp, Khan Younis. In one of the accounts mentioned, Khadija visits her village (in the 1970s, some refugees were allowed to visit their villages; or what remained thereof), where she finds total destruction that obliterated the structures that once used to be. After tracing some of the village remains of what was left behind, Khadija finds some of their house’s remains. She falls to her feet and starts sobbing and hugging these remains, that once used to be her sweet home while recalling the memories that she shared with the place that she grew up in. After returning to Khan Younis camp, Khadija was sick for a month, and remembered the reason why her father refused to visit his village after expulsion. She recalls having that conversation with him, where with a turned back, trying to conceal his tears, he said “[my house] is my flesh, my sweat, my blood and my bone. It’s me, the broken human being you see now. How do you expect to walk on your body?” (Ageel, 2016, p. 14). The author continues by expressing that “home is a sense of belonging, safety, and comfort, and a place of life’s memories, whether sweet or bitter” (2016, p. 14) and that nothing can prepare the homeowner for the loss of that sanctuary, especially the forced expulsion where one either

chooses life, by escaping until it is safe to return, or death, by staying and being eradicated by any means. “Khadija’s tale is a story of a land,” Ageel writes, that has been emptied of its people and of a people who have been separated from their land and segregated from each other— some never to be reunited” (2016, p. 4). The effect of this expulsion on Khadija not only impacted her, but also impacted the author, who as a third generation Palestinian refugee, has not be allowed to visit her ancestors’ village, but yet was so propelled to write about it in the despair that her grandmother had, in hopes that this would carry a narrative, a legacy, and a historical footprint of their village and family existence.

This also becomes a reflection of the identity formation for authors such as Ageel, who is now narrating a history, an account, and a knowledge production tool that is specific to the Palestinian experience, struggles, and traumas. This references back to Paloma Aguilar’s ‘lesson of history’ that she said are always filtered through generational lenses as ‘different generations live through different historical events...[and] even when living through the same events, they interpret...and are affected by them in a specific and unique way’ (Aguilar, 2008, p. 22). Aguilar also comments on the violent pasts that affect these younger generations, who even though did not experience the conflict or trauma directly, are “imbued with particular political resonance...involved with questions of power” (2008, p. 22) that determine the voices that get to be heard and given public acknowledgment; and the voices who are silenced and muted. “Thus, trauma is not only a silence, but politically speaking, it is an act of silencing. This silencing can be passive and active” (2008, p. 9). While Khadija might have not been able to document her traumatic narrative, she was able to push back against the mutation of such an event, by transmitting it to her granddaughter. Her granddaughter, now in a historical and political time with different resonance than her grandmother, was able to break that silence by using the transmitted

memory of those traumas, and publishing it for not only her kids, and grandkids, but also to the world. Even more than that, Khadija and Ageel, both represent the first and third generation Palestinian refugees, use the transgenerational memory as a tool to continue the struggle for dignity and rights including the right of return. On this note, Khadija in a conversation with Ageel at the time of the 2014 attack on Gaza, looked at Ageel's children (fourth generation refugees), and said "I can now rest in peace even if I am not yet in Beit Daras. I now know that Beit Daras is in your heart, and I also know that you are not alone in your journey" "Don't get discouraged. We are getting there" (Ageel, 2016, p. 19).



From the left: my great grandmother, my grandmother, me, and my mother. Four generations of Palestinian refugees in Khan Younis camp, in the Gaza Strip.

Another account that Gluck references, is that of William Dalrymple records of oral histories on Kafr Bir'im, a Christian village destroyed in 1948, that today stands as a national park (the same fate that met the 531 destroyed Palestinian villages). Dalrymple interviews Father Bishara Suleiman who recounts the exodus of the village, where after having to flee for fifteen days, the villagers try to return only to find the Haganah soldiers occupying their houses, and had issued an evacuation order on the area declaring it a military zone (reference to above-mentioned Haganah's A-D cleansing operation referred to by Ageel) (Gluck, 2008, p. 74). Father Suleiman continues by saying on the day the villagers planned to go back to their village, was the day that

the Israeli army destroyed it via aerial bombardment. Wadeer [another villager from Kafr Bir'im] describes what happened:

All the villagers went up onto that hill and watched the bombing of their homes. They call it the Crying Hill now because everyone from Kafr Bir'im wept that day. Everything they owned was still in those houses (qtd. in Gluck, S., 2008, p.74).

Today, instead of the acknowledgment that the left stones scattered in the area are remnants of the Palestinian villagers' homes, it now reads "Bar'am Antiquities", a reference made to Roman history (Gluck, 2008, p. 74). According to Father Suleiman, there were ruins from the Roman-period in their village, but the well that they alleged was built by Yohanan of Bar'am in the first century, was actually a well that Wadeer and his father built, summing the story by saying that "We've been edited out of history" (2008, p. 74). This is an example of what Nur Masalha, coined as 'toponymicide' the colonial process that aimed for the "de-Arabisation of the land...the erasure of ancient Palestinian place names and their replacement by newly coined Zionist Hebrew toponymy" (Masalha, 1997).

These effects of the loss of home left a forever lasting trauma on the generation of the exodus, and those that follow who witnessed it effecting the lives of their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents; From Khadija, to Ghada, to Umm Salah, to Father Bishara Suleiman, to Wadeer. As McGrattan states on the South African case, collective and the transgenerational transmission of trauma stems from the memories of unresolved trauma which are perpetuated via the stories told within the family and collective community thus memories "continue to affect generations even when they do not directly experience the specific traumatic event." (2012, p. 8).

Research Projects and Palestinian literature (Memoirs)

After the creation of the state of Israel, Palestinians were denied the rights to study, read, or possess anything that related to the homeland (Ageel, 2016, p. 9), let alone utter the word Palestine. Referencing the Palestinian *Nakba* of 1948, Danny Rubinstein, an Israeli official said:

I also identify with the images of the destroyed villages. I do understand the Palestinians' longing and I empathise with it ... The Palestinians know, or their leadership knows, that they have to forget Ramle and Lod and Jaffa [in present-day Israel] ... They have to give up the return as a national goal. If I was a Palestinian politician, I would say that you don't have to remember. You have to forget. (Ageel, G., 2015, n.p.)

Rubinstein's self-serving advice to Palestinians not to remember and to wipe their homeland from their memory is not only a form of denial, but also of eradication. His understanding and empathy with Palestinians' rights act as nothing but empty words and instead is an act of memocide, exactly as Pappé described "erasure of the history of one people in order to write that of another people's over it" (Pappé, 2006, p. 231).

With those most powerful writing their history and establishing their presence on the ruins and on the expense of the dispossessed using the veil of settler-colonialism, research and documentation of the indigenous history becomes of great importance. Marfleet also puts such importance especially regarding documenting the oral history, saying that without it there is a gap in information collecting where "the voices of ordinary people" need to challenge the dominant ideas about the 'birth of the nation' by bringing forward testimonies and research that challenge the dominant narrative and disrupt 'uncluttered national history' and dominant political ideologies (Marfleet, 2007, p. 144). In doing so, these voices not only would challenge the national narratives, but also make the collective memory a useful and powerful tool that can carry the truth from within.

Palestinian literature, widely described as the 'Literature of Resistance' in which "Palestinian works almost always relate, either directly or indirectly, to collective and national Palestinian issues," becomes another tool to create, "a sense of belonging to the collective and to

national space.” (Gottesfeld, 2018, p. 323). According to Fredric Jameson's an American literary critic, all third world texts products are “allegorical” and are to be read as ‘national allegories’ so to keep in mind the political dimension and the continuous experience of colonialism and the struggle for independence that dominate those third world cultures (2018, p. 232). As such the Palestinian literature is much influenced by such allegories, especially that of the *Nakba*.

The turning point in the Palestinian literature took place in 1967. It was the year in which Israel occupied both the Gaza Strip and West Bank and the term Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) was born. In its aftermath, writers in the OPT were motivated to document their history at a difficult time in which they were going through major political changes that may forever change the future of Palestine (Gottesfeld, 2018, p. 324). This attention and efforts resulted in an increase of literary production, which continued to pile up during the nineties, responding to signing and implementing the 1993 Oslo Accords. In the eyes of refugees, the Accords ignored the *Nakba*, their plight and their right of return and enabled the occupier to add salt to the open wound of injury of dispossession (Butler, 2013, p. 213). This failure to recognize rights coupled with the continuity of the Israel's expansion and colonial settler logic dashed Palestinian's hopes creating a state of despair among all generations, particularly the young one. It is precisely in this context that Palestinian new generation found the opportunity to place more emphasis on both the literature of resistance and the memorialization and documentation through a broad range of projects and initiatives including the current Great March of Return that will be discussed later.

The *Nakba*'s oral history told and narrated by Palestinian older generation to the younger ones gradually gained scholarly status and captured the collective consciousness of the popular imagination, kick starting a series of academia, documentation projects, and communal collective activities. From collection of oral narratives, to websites devoted to the *Nakba*, files of testimonies,

detailed and extensive information about destroyed villages, photographs, documents and many more (Milshtein, 2009, p. 73). Rema Hammami notes, "for the first time, Palestinians witnessed a collective and public commemoration in which the *Nakba* was marked off as a national ritual as opposed to a series of texts and private memories" (qtd in Gluck, 2008, p. 69).

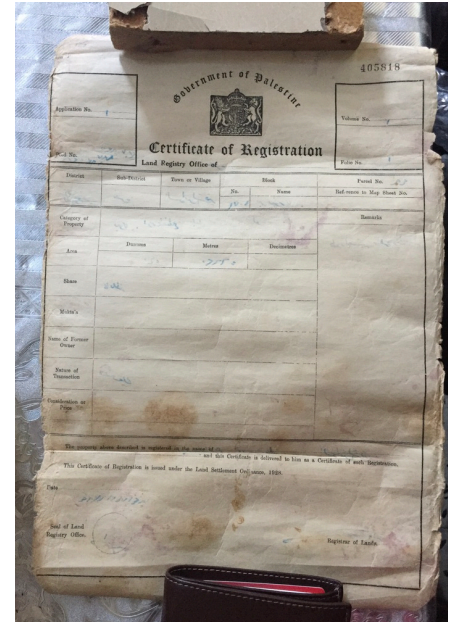
Projects such as 'The *Nakba* Archives' are only one example of many. Launched in Lebanon in 1998 and West Bank in 2000, the Archives have an intensive collection of videos of oral histories, which most of the collection had historically composed of mainly Arabic interviews, has had a growing body of English literature products (2008, p. 70). Gluck notes that even this type of literature resource was not widely available to general audiences, and was "published mainly in specialized academic journals like the *Journal of Palestine Studies* or in magazines published in the Arab world like *Al Jana* (Lebanon) or *al-Majdal* (Palestine)" (2008, p. 70). Historian Azzam Nassar supports this point asserting that despite the *Nakba* being a formative pillar in Palestinian identity, "research on it had been rather scant" due to Archives in the Arab states being closed to the public (Milshtein, 2009, p. 74).

Another inclusive memorialization research project, is that of Palestinian historian, Walid al-Khalidi, *All That Remains*, which comprises detailed documentation of all the localities that were destroyed, from data about the primary families in each area, the type of agriculture growing there, the conquest by the Israeli army, descriptions and images of what remains of the villages, and their present use or settlement by the Israeli Jews (2009, p. 73). It came to my surprise this past summer when I visited Gaza that Al Khalidi book is being read and discussed by not only the fourth generations like myself, but also the young generation leading the Great March of Return.



All the generations of our family would sit around the fire, and look through our land deeds, tax receipts, and ownership documents that my grandfather managed to save before being expelled from his land in al-Sawafir al-Sharqiyya, NE of the Gaza region.

We would all fantasize about the life that we would be living if it wasn't for our exile and now the occupation.



Cultural Practices

“In scholarly works, Palestinian refugees have been discussed as victims of dispossession and persecution, as peasants turned into revolutionaries during the armed resistance of the 1970s who were later forgotten by Palestinian leadership, and as an oppressed stateless minority with no rights in their country of residence” (Sayigh, 2007, p. 323).

But yet Palestinian are challenging the portrayed victimhood, and claiming back their identities through tools that empower them through the resilience and resistance that they are notoriously known for. In her book, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*, Julie Peteet (2005) gives us an anthropological perspective on this. She examines the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon’s refugee camps, focusing on the construction of the Palestinian identity, and the sense of place that has been created in those camps. She argues that “the construction of the Palestinian refugee as a category of person and object of intervention both constrained and enabled the refugees’ practice of crafting new worlds” (2005, p.1), where they use tools of culture and memory to create new meaning for their spaces. These spaces are of great importance she says, as they become hubs for formation and reformation of the Palestinian identity as they meet other Palestinians where they share their experience and knowledge. Peteet also discusses the

importance of historical events in relation to individual and collective identity formation, thus signifying the differentiation between generations who experience events in ‘periodised’ times and eras (2005, n.p.).

This notion of periodising comes of great importance, as each Palestinian will have a different lived experience in their respective space and time thus constructing unique memories and identities. This section will explore role of cultural practices that have been passed down to the generations, from the spread of embroidery works in Palestine, that references back to villages and tribal identities through the symbolic meanings of pattern motifs, thread color, and fabrics; to Palestinian cooking where the new generation learn the traditional Palestinian food from their grandmothers, to the unique cook books that have merged identities and stories with flavors; to Palestinian songs and dance that maintain the Palestinian folklore and have currently become part of every wedding and celebration in the OPT.

Embroidery (*Tatreez*)



Palestinian embroidery, *Tatreez* in Arabic, is the epitome art of communication without words, that possess a unique and expressive language of its own, where each stitch represents a narrative, identity, and expression steeped in tradition that displays a uniqueness in character, heritage, and representation. This part will aim to look into these aspects of Palestinian cultural

embroidery and the intersections of history and changes in social and political environments that have made *Tatreez* symbolic for its collective national identity.

In her piece *Re-inventing Cultural Heritage: Palestinian Traditional Costume and Embroidery Since 1948*, Jeni Allenby (2002) gives a detailed background of how such embroidery came about, starting from as early as the 16th century Ottoman rule in Palestine. She references such history through the use of the patterns and motifs that could be seen at that time such as that ‘Pasha Tent’ pattern that from the Ottoman Court, or the ‘Officer’s Pips’ that appeared during the 19th century British Mandate, thus embroidery started to act as a tool of historical recording of the social, political and, cultural events that affected the lives of Palestinian village women (2002, p. 102). Embroidery played an important role in Bedouin and village life, where women learned to embroider from as early as eight years old, and was thought to reveal a woman's character, personality, and her economic status (2002, p.102). The main garment that was decorated was the *thobe*, a loose-fitting robe that varied in its cuts dependent on the region, and where "grammatical" rules governed where the stitches would lie on the dress, mainly on the chest panel, the cuffs, and the vertical panels that would run down the side of the dress (2002, p.102). These sections and their pattern alone would enable village women to identify the region or village of another woman (2002, p.102) through the language of her dress.

In Ramallah, for instance, you'll see the motifs of cypresses, palm trees and feathers on a lightly-colored or black linen. A large pendant pattern on the chest is unique to Gaza. Pasha's tents and moons on a dark blue dress are typical for the area of Hebron. Bethlehem used to be known as the fashion center of Palestine where techniques from Turkey, Greece and Persia melted with the local symbols of roses and apple branches. In Galilee, a land strongly influenced by Syrian and Lebanese traditions, dresses were less embroidered since women there worked in the fields alongside men. (Abbadi qtd. in Tones, 2018)

When the *Nakba* erupted, Palestinian traditional life was severely disrupted, with society dealing with a period of great turmoil, and leading to “little documentation available on Palestinian

costume in the 1950s” (2018, p. 103). As embroidery started to slowly reappear in the 1960s, it also reflected the social and economic realities of the now occupied and exiled life, that showed in the cheap fabrics and cotton embroidery (2018, p. 103). The great revival of embroidery can really be seen in the late 1980s when the *intifada*, uprising, occurred in the OPT, where the women’s political resistance was embodied in the *tatreez*. By creating a visual form of narratives through stitching, and combined the traditional motifs with nationalistic symbols, the women created ‘flag dresses’ that featured emblems of maps, flags or political slogans. For example, researchers found feature thread of the colours of the (then) banned Palestinian flag, with nationalist symbols such as the Dome of the Rock mosque, the checkered *koffiya*, and maps of Palestine that would be embedded in the structure of the thobe (Tomes, 2018, p.105). Allenby states that as “Palestinian costume had almost completely fragmented as a communication devise, it again at this time assumed an important role as an expression of national identity, of symbolic defiance without violence” (Allenby, 2002, p. 106). The *thobe* in the OPT became identified as a statement of the national, social, and political Palestinian consciousness. Wearing a *thobe*, became a demonstration of a heritage and a nationalistic pride, which today has also manifested in the political arena such as that of Rashida Tlaib, who was sworn into the American Congress wearing her thobe. Tlaib wanted to honor her roots and her mother who dropped out of school to embroider dresser and make ends meet for her family in the



My mother, a 3rd generation refugee wearing her grandmother’s *thobe* that represents our village of *Beit Daras*.

occupied West Bank (Ettachfini, 2019). Her decision to wear a *thobe* inspired the social media hashtag #TweetYourThobe, that created a chain reaction of posts on all social media platforms, with women sharing their thobes, stories, as well as commemorating the women in their lives that ultimately have shared this cultural artifact with them.

Similarly, in an interview Fatima Abbadi, a Palestinian-American author, finds herself rediscovering the colours and textures of tatreez, that she says is "something strongly linked to national culture and identity [where] the patterns recall stories of women and their surroundings" (Tomes, 2018, n.p.). She describes tatreez as a very powerful tool, where prior to 1948, Palestinian women had enjoyed an independent role in society, often using luxurious silks and brocades from Syria, and embroidered with gold or other precious metals. After expulsion into the refugee camps they found themselves needing to support their families financially, so they used their craft as a way to gain independence, while also passing down the traditions and celebration of tatreez to the younger generation.

An example of this passing down the craft can be seen in Suleiman Jibril Abu Taima, a 23-year-old fourth-generation Palestinian refugee living in Gaza, who has taken up the practice of traditional embroidery while also challenging the gender norms associated with it. In his video interview with The Electronic Intifada, an online news outlet, he talks about how he was initially attracted by the colours of the thread and patterns that he saw his mum embroider when he was a child, saying he started learning from her making wallets, trays, the Palestinian *thobe* (adding that he knew the stitches from peasant thobes to urban ones) as well as frames and mirrors (The Electronic Intifada, 2019). Abu Taima was one of the thousands of refugees displaced from his home in Khan Younis in 2014's Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip, and was forced into refuge at an UNRWA school where he ended up teaching girls how to embroider (2019, para 3).

Usually a craft practiced by women, Abu Taima came to face social judgment by the men around him, temporarily stopped practicing, until he met his fiancée who encouraged him to continue producing and applying his talent to the cultural craft. He concludes by saying “Israel is trying to obliterate the Palestinian cause, and the Palestinian heritage. That's why I hold onto Palestinian heritage, and the *thobe*” (2019).

Abu Taima's message is now being practice and communicated in all forms of Palestinian consciousness, especially through its continuation in the language of Palestinian tatreez, as it aims to not forget the past by preserving the national identity through visual keys that authenticate the Palestinians existence. In the words of a fourth-generation young woman from the UNRWA Embroidery Project, *Sulafa*, in Gaza "we embroider for our houses and for our work. We embroider cushions, clocks and maps of Palestine. Embroidery is our heritage. We love embroidery...and we are proud of it" (Allenby, 2002, p. 107). This can be seen as the fourth generation are embodying, claiming back, and modernizing their heritage, culture, and tradition practice despite the blockade and occupation that they are battling in the OPT.

Cooking



Food “represents the collective...[stating] who we are, where we came from, and who we want to be. It is a cultural product through which ethnicity is constructed” (qtd in Givion, 2012, p. 11). In her book, *Beyond Hummus and Falafel: Social and Political Aspects of Palestinian food in Israel*, Liora

Givion looks at analyzing and examining the kitchen ‘as a political and cultural text’ that is shaped

by the political and social processes around it that have contributed to the formation of the national identity (2012, p. 1). She states that food can be seen as a prism, in which it can “present, write, and reconstruct history... thereby [reveling] relationships of control, exploitation, and denial of or derogation of rights accorded to the culture of the other” (2012, p. 2). She applies this to the Palestinian kitchen, in which she tries to conduct a parallel between Palestinian cuisine with immigrants’ cuisine. While the cuisines of immigrants tended to change as a result of exposure to the dominant culture, seeking approval and becoming labeled as an ‘exotic aroma’, the Palestinian cuisine underwent a complex transformation as well (2012, p. 16). It was not interrupted by the occupier, “as it retained its unique features” keeping “most of the elements of their cuisine in the private sphere”. It was kept in the private sphere due to “components appropriated by Jewish knowledge agents and became identified as “Israeli” dishes, in that their source was ultimately forgotten or not acknowledged. This was the fate of falafel, hummus, tahini, baklava, and labaneh” (2012, p.16). The Israeli academic, Yael Raviv writes:

In the case of Jewish nationalism, a connection between the people and a common land and history had to be created artificially. Food was one of several cultural products that were used by the Israeli nationalist movement to establish and enhance the ties that would bond the Jewish people to the land of Israel. (2003, p.20)

Givion continued her comparison by looking at the generational transmission of such food practices within immigrant communities and how they are passed down from one generation to the other. The first generation in diasporic communities, she says tend “to preserve and reproduce its food and eating habits in the home, both out of habit and in an attempt to overcome a sense of alienation” (2012, p.17) as the familiar cuisine becomes a ‘source of comfort’ with its fragrances reminding them of their land of origin. The second generation becomes more receptive to the dominant culture cuisine “even at the price of alienation from their parents’ culture” (2012, p. 17). While the third and fourth generation of immigrants, are ‘familiar with the codes of the dominant

culture', they had not experienced the trauma of migration, and "are able to see in the culture of their parents and grandparents an exotic decoration of their daily lives" (2012, p. 17). In the Palestinians' case, the ability to see this importance of cuisine has always been present in all generations, as it has been actively passed down from generation to generation as a form of daily life, and resistance and resilience of maintaining their cultural cuisine heritage.

Bait al Karama, translating to the House of Dignity in Arabic is a cooking school that does just that. It is situated in the heart of the Old City of Nablus and founded in 2008 on the principle "that it is just as effective to fight the Israeli occupation through sugar and spice, as Molotov's and stones" (Hanna, 2016, n.p). The school aims to bring economic independence for women to work at the center, encourage a healthier lifestyle of food for the community, and encourage tourism to the old city. Fatimah Kadumy, the founder, describes the recipes that the school aims to preserve as recipes that have "come from our grand grand grand grand grandmothers! And we keep them how they are, we keep everything as it was since hundreds of years ago all across historic Palestine" (qtd. in Hanna, 2016, n.p). These orally passed recipes, techniques, and ingredients from one generation to the other, are preserved through the collective memories and practices that tie not only food, but the land and the history of the Palestinians.

Hanna describes Kadumy's school as being founded on the rubbles of the second Intifada, and born from the struggles of the local community, when the city of Nablus was under siege between 2001-2010, and where a lot of people had lost their homes, livelihoods, and family members (2016, n.p). Kadumy thus emphasizes to Hanna how the school became such an important place where it became a source of income for some, as well as a social place for others, to meet, have coffee, discuss politics as well as to speak and learn from one another. "This is what makes the food remain how it should be, and it makes us a strong community" (qtd in Hanna,

2016, n.p). She says by sharing a meal, a setting can be created for talks, thus making food a bridge for the society to communicate and build on the collective consciousness. This helps create spaces of and for sharing knowledge, enhancing the Palestinian identity, and feeding the resilience and resistance of this heritage. This is of great importance as it allows the fourth generation to link to the generations to come, allowing the continuous revival of traditional culinary practices, that ultimately encompasses a meaning more than just food.

“Eating and cooking are two of the oldest and most powerful tools for revolution; they help us monitor our minds and bodies and create spaces of nourishment, community, and resistance” (Sensei, 2019, p.1) An opinion article written by Rashad Abu Dawoud, a fourth generation Palestinian, reiterates just that through



makloubas, also come to be known as the ‘victory dish’ or ‘Makloubas at Al-Aqsa’. *Makloubas*, translates from Arabic as ‘inverted’, is a Palestinian dish that comprises of a meat, vegetables, and rice, that is served after being flipped onto a platter, resulting in all the ingredients being ‘inverted’ (Abu Dawoud, 2019, n.p). Abu Dawoud goes on to say that he did not know that *makloubas* was a dish that had origins in Jerusalem, until he saw “Palestinian women flipping over large pots of *makloubas* onto large dishes and serving them to the Palestinian activists stationed at Al-Aqsa Mosque” making him wonder what the significance of it was.

After some research he found that *Makloubas* was given its name by Saladin in 1187 when he conquered Jerusalem as the “dish of victory”. This became more so when Hanadi Halawani, a

Jerusalemite activist, challenged the Israeli occupation forces who banned her from Al-Aqsa Mosque by asking her family members and fellow banned activists to have *maklouba* at Bab Al-Silsila (2019, n.p) thus transitioning the “victory dish” from a staple home dish to being the food of the Palestinian activists. This became a trend at the courtyard of Al-Aqsa, where *maklouba* was at the center of any and every event. One of these events in 2017 “followed the decision of US President Donald Trump to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel, where the Jerusalemite families prepared and shared *maklouba* every Sunday and joined the activists stationed in the Mosque courtyard in protest of Trump’s decision”. Abu Dawoud concludes by saying “How would the Zionist invaders ... understand the significance of serving Saladin’s dish in the Al-Aqsa Mosque’s courtyards by the great great grandchildren of Saladin and his army who liberated Al-Aqsa 800 years ago?” (2019, n.p).

Thus this preserving of food as an identity precursor becomes forms and acts of resistance and defiance. All the relentless baking, cooking, eating, and keeping up with traditions becomes a refusal and pushback to their attempted erasure. “Palestinians have a word for this adhesiveness to place and culture: they call it *sumud*, which translates as ‘steadfast perseverance’” (Ghandour, 2013, p. 293). As Israel continues its plan of memocide through violence, coercion, and domination, it has failed to achieve hegemony, which in the words of Ranajit Guha, if dominance has to continue, let it be without hegemony.

Music and Song

In his book, *My Voice Is My Weapon - Music, Nationalism and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*, (2013) David McDonald eloquently and neatly outlines the many intersectional aspects that go into the symbolism of song and dance in the Palestinian context. McDonald states that with the massacre of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila in 1982 became “a metaphor for Palestinian

suffering, vulnerability, and loss of agency...and became the subjects of widespread nationalist painting, poetry, song, and dance deploring the tragedy and mourning the victims” marking the start of a “new poetics of Palestinian nationalism based in a new performative articulation of martyrdom, sacrifice, and suffering.” (2013, p. 97) McDonald categorizes the *mūsīqā al-thawrī* (translating to the music of revolution in Arabic) where he analyzes songs that came as a result of, and for, the generation of the revolution. He starts with the song “*Wayn al-M alayin?*” (Where are the millions?) which he says “remains perhaps one of the most recognizable Palestinian protest songs of the *jīl al-thāwra* (generation of revolutionaries)” (2013, p. 98), although it was composed by a Libyan poet, Ali al-Kilani, and sung by a Lebanese singer, Julia Butrous. The song starts with the lyrics:

Where, where, where . . .
 Where are the millions?
 Where are the Arab people?
 Where is the Arab anger?
 Where is the Arab blood?
 Where are the millions?
 Where, where, where . . . ?

Butrous angrily and boldly rebuts the rhetoric adopted by Arab leaders of the time, who proclaimed to be the protectors of Jerusalem, yet had taken no action on Israel’s continued aggression. Butrous also dismisses the myth of Arab solidarity and the empty promises of Arabism, which McDonald states “is certainly characteristic of music and poetry of the time” (2013, p. 98).

“The introduction to the song calls for Palestinians to “fight in the day to end the night, and the coming of our freedom.” The body of the song portrays the revolution as a swelling fire, the Palestinian people as greater than the mountains, land, and sand. References to red blood (sacrifice), green orchards of citrus (Palestinian agricultural indices), and the blackness of night (the occupation) coalesce into the colors of the Palestinian flag. In the last lines Butrous makes her most powerful statements. Here Palestinians are defined not by their victimization, their humiliation, or their patience, but rather by their unwillingness to surrender. Speaking for and as the nation, Butrous declares, Palestinians “will not kneel . . . will not be humiliated . . . [and] will not submit.”” (2013, p. 99)

The dominant meanings of the song can be seen in those last three statements, that are catalysts that defined and empowered the revolutionary music and conditions of the time. The loss, defeat, and continued dislocation was seen in the performative arts of the 80s as it started to “reemphasize the traditions and customs of *al-sha‘b* (the folk)” and led to what McDonald references as the ‘national folk revival of the early 1980’s’ (2013, p. 105). This revival movement was carried out by a group of folklorists, amongst them Dr. Abdellatif Al-Barghouti, Dr. Sharif Kanaana, and Dr. Nimr Sirhan, who specialized in the fields of folklore and anthropology. Such fields of specialization worked to preserve and promote indigenous Palestinian folklore as a form of collective resistance to the Israeli occupation, in particular in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as it was of increasing importance to resistance movements (2013, p. 104). This had a great effect on the Palestinian identity, as it aimed to preserve the indigenous cultural practices against colonial erasure and memoricide, as well as preserving traditional Palestinian folklore.

The group that was credited the most with reviving Palestinian indigenous music in the was *Firqat Aghani al-‘Ashiqin*, in which McDonald argues that four particular songs of theirs had risen to parallels of a national anthem (2013, p.108). 1- *Min Sijin ‘Akka* (From ‘Akka Prison) which is a song that narrates the execution of three Palestinian rebels in the 30’s 2- *Yama Mawil al-Hawa* (Oh song of longing), a sorrowful and mournful lullaby portraying the traumas of the *Nakba* and the rise of the resistance movement 3- *Hubbat al-Nar* (The fire exploded) and 4- “*Ishhad Ya ‘Alam*” (Witness oh world) which were both composed shadowing the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982 (2013, p.108). A verse from *Hubbat al-Nar*:

The fire swelled and the rifles sang,
Call to the youth, oh nation, and give hope.
The fire swelled from ‘Akka to al-Tira
A handful of children raised on straw mats,
And now they became youth and did not forget the homeland.
And who would forget the paradise of Palestine,

The fire swelled.

McDonald annotates each line from the fire of the resistance that swelled to resemble the revolts from *'Akka* to *al-Tira*, to the calling of the youth that were 'raised on straw mats' (references to them being refugees), who did forget their homeland as to "forget the homeland is to forsake the nation in exile" (2013, p. 108). Ultimately the song talks about the essence of the collective memory and its transmission to those that live in exile through means such as embroidery, food, songs and dance, that aid in the national consciousness, identity, and active remembrance.



Mohammed Assaf has notably become one of the best known Palestinian singer of this era. Assaf participated in 'Arab Idol', a pan-arab television singing competition watched by millions of people mainly across the Middle East, in 2013 (Madhoun, 2013, p. 1). Every Friday night

for 16 weeks, millions tuned in to watch the show. Assaf, at the time a 23-year-old wedding singer and student from the Khan Younis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, "became an overnight sensation in the Arab world and a Palestinian national hero when he won the show" (Kelani 2017, n.p) He had become "the darling of the Arab media and was dubbed the "golden throat" as he performed some of the most intricate of Arabic songs. He had also come to be known for his ability to create a state of *tarab*, an emotional reaction that is defined as something that "surges up, inside, from the soles of the feet ... it's not a question of skill, but of a style that's truly alive." (2017, n.p).

Assaf's story to get to the auditions for the show became an inspiration story. He had struggled to get a permit due to the Israeli blockade of Gaza, that requires travelers to obtain a special permit to leave from the Gaza-Egyptian border. After convincing the border guard to stamp his passport, and reaching the audition site, it was closed, so he jumped over the wall (Madhoun, 2013, p. 1). He was being escorted by security guards until a fellow Gazan participant, Ramadan Adib Abu Nahel, "recognized Assaf from his performances in Gaza and gave him his candidate number" (Kelani, 2017, n.p). which allowed him to compete. His story moved people and set a new wave of patriotism and national pride. It showed a different face to Gaza, where the Arabs would think only 'besieged enclaves' or 'tough resistance' or 'hot spicy food' (as Gaza is historically known for its red chili paste) (Madhoun, 2013, p. 3). He disrupted these stereotypes of the Gazan and Palestinian people, bringing to the stage his Palestinian identity in every shape and form, from his nationalist song choices, to his cultural artifacts such as the *Kufiya*, (a black and white checkered scarf come to represent the Palestinian resistance), the Palestinian flag, and the commemoration of the struggle and strength of the people. An example of this was when Ragheb Alameh, a judge on the show, had shared a letter of a Palestinian political prisoner on hunger strike, who has asked to be allowed to watch and see Mohammed Assaf perform as one of his protest demands. Assaf Responded:

"Allow me, Mr. Ragheb, to salute all our prisoners in the Israeli prisons, and to tell them that your cause is our cause, and we are all with you, and may God give you freedom."
(Madhoun, 2013, p.2)

In this very spirit, Assaf had become a symbolic voice for the Palestinian, not only as a singer on Arab Idol, but also an advocate for the Palestinian collective and cause. His victory had sparked joy all over the Middle East, especially in the OPT where residents held viewing parties at their homes and "Arab Idol" block parties, where dozens and hundreds (even thousands of

people) would gather to watch Assaf (2013, p. 2). A young man from Gaza reflects on Assaf's rise and message, saying: "It's really a beautiful thing when the name of Gaza is not linked to explosions and destruction, that even though our conditions are miserable, we are able to bring the Palestinian story to people who may not care about politics, in the hopes that one day we will see justice." (2013, p. 3). This young man's words are reiterated by Assaf, who a fourth-generation Palestinian refugee himself states in an interview after his victory:

"The revolution is not just the one carrying the rifle. The revolution is the paintbrush of an artist, the scalpel of a surgeon, the axe of the farmer. This is something I consider to be logical. Everyone struggles for their cause in the way they see fit. Today I represent Palestine, and today I'm fighting for a cause also through the art that I am performing and the message that I am sending out." (2013, p. 2)

Dance (*Dabke*):



Dabke or *Dabka*, is the folk dance that involves intricate footwork performed by a group, that is often practiced in the Levant (Ladkani, 2001, p. 1). The contemporary' Palestinian *dabke* includes different variations from modern to

traditional practices, with a mixture of dance, music, traditional folklore, and political agendas (2001, p. 1). Jeniffer Ladkani explains that "the Palestinian *dabke* tradition is best understood as having two forms: an apolitical and celebratory folk music and dance tradition in pre-1948 Palestinian villages, and a specialized music and dance tradition in the post-1948 Palestinian diaspora...which often carries political and nationalistic overtones" (2001, p. 2).

David McDonald (2013) refers to *dabke*, as a "line [formation that] imbues the act of

“remembering” as a somatic materiality, where flesh and bones moving together in a collective performance of Palestinian history and practice” (p. 109) that weaves together a human tapestry of music and movement in step to the beat. He says this stomping of feet “reinforce the indigenous *dabke* rhythms and the collective remembering and witnessing of indigenous Palestinian song and dance” (2013, p. 114).

McDonald reenounters his conversation with Abu Hani, a figure who he considers as a ‘national treasure’, is a researcher of Palestinian culture, folklore, and history, stating that Abu Hanis academic contribution “have provided the foundation for Palestinian cultural and folkloric studies” (2013, p. 19). After conversing for a while, McDonald says Abu Hani stands up and begins to stomp his feet on the ground repeatedly asking him, “Do you know what this means when we [Palestinians] stamp our feet in the *dabke*? ...Do you know what the *dabke* means? Why we do it? Why we love it so much?”. McDonald, afraid of answering wrong replied: “No, I am not sure what the *dabke* means”. Abu Hani answers:

We stomp our feet in the *dabke* to show the world that this is our land [Baladna] [stomping loudly on the floor], that people and villages can be killed and erased [stomping again] ...but our heritage [turāthnā] is something that they can’t reach because it is here [motioning to his heart]. They have stolen our land [stomp], forced us out of our homes [stomp], but our culture is something they cannot steal. When we stamp our feet we are saying that no matter how far we have been scattered, Palestine will always remain under our stamping feet [filasṭīn rāḥ biṣāl taḥt aqdāmnā]. (2013, p. 20)

To Abu Hani, preserving the *dabke* is like preserving the nation, where to dance the *dabke* is to dance the nation in its purest form in defiance of violations and that attempted erasure by Israel. By practicing the indigenous folklore, the Palestinian space, presence, and identity is preserved, as the *dabke*, in both its traditional and modern styles, is an icon and symbol of Palestinian culture. And while it might have been transformed by nationalistic motives, “contemporary Palestinian *dabke* groups employ this newer, nationalized version of the *dabke* as

a powerful emblem of identity, ethnicity, and cultural self-determination (Ladkani, 2001, p. 12). An example of this is seen at the March of Return, where Palestinian protesters have been known to engage in a long chain of *dabke* dance at the Gaza fence (Press TV, 2018, n.p.).

The Great March of Return



The Great March of Return (GMR) unifies all this chapters explored topics all in one movement, a peaceful-protest that seeks to bridge all these collectives under one protest. The GMR was launched in March 30, 2018, a day in which Palestinian commemorate the 32nd anniversary of the Land Day (a day in which Israel confiscated vast areas of Palestinian farmlands back in 1976) (Lochman, & Beinini, 1989, ps. 205-216). In January of 2018, a fourth generation Palestinian journalist and poet Ahmed Abu Artema took to Facebook, and prompted for a collective widespread movement calling on the Palestinian refugees to peacefully gather at the fence with Israel and attempt to return to their pre-1948 homes (Al Jazeera, 2018). This was done in protest against the Israeli inhumane blockade on the strip, as well as for the demand for the right of return. And it has been an ongoing event since its launch, where on weekdays people gather in peaceful demonstrations and sit-ins, held at multiple points on the buffer zone imposed by Israel a couple

of hundred yards from Gaza's fence (Fayyad, 2019, p. 1). This has led to the weekly Friday protests known as the GMR rallies, where it became known as the new event of Palestinian popular resistance, which as a grassroots social movement includes "various and diverse components of the Palestinian civil society" (Al Jazeera, 2018)

It has been a legendary epic of resistance carried out by the new generations (Deger, 2019, p. 1) celebrating Palestinian endurance, traditions, heritage and history. Young and old protesters have danced, sang, shared stories, flew balloons and kites, drawn Palestinians flags, cooked traditional meals, and recounted memories of what was once their homeland, all the while praying for and dreaming of return (Ageel, 2018, p. 2; Deger, 2019, ps.1-2). And while the protests remain mainly non-violent, some Fridays protesters demonstrated by burning rubber tires and throwing stones at the Israeli soldiers stationed at the borders, attempting to damage the fence that separates them from their freedoms. Israeli Security Forces (ISF) have responded to these demonstrations with the "use of tear gas, rubber-coated bullets and live ammunition" which as of March 2019, have killed 195 Gazans, 41 of whom were children and injured over 29,000, 7000 of whom were wounded with live ammunition (UNRWA, 2019). Yet despite such numbers and increased incidents to this day, people are still gathering in the hundreds, if not thousands every week, regardless of any political spectrum or fraction.

At the GMR, there are tents displayed all across the border fence with historic Palestine representing the hundreds of depopulated villages on that other side (Aljazeera, 2018, p. 10). Each tent attempts to highlights the once upon a time experience and life in Palestinian villages and towns in pre-1948 Palestine. Knitting together a historiography, these generations narrate an intergenerational time, from pre-*Nakba* life through the destruction of the Palestinian villages and

their inhabitants' dispossession. In her eloquent words, Dr. Ageel, a third-generation Palestinian refugee describes this new form of resistance as follows:

“The tent memorialising my village, Beit Daras, depopulated and demolished in 1948, was full of villagers of all generations from various camps and towns in Gaza. They cooked the traditional *maftoul*, a couscous that was very popular in Beit Daras, and shared it with other villagers in nearby tents. They staged Palestinian weddings and danced the traditional *dabka* into the night. These were days of unity and hope, of happiness and dreams so long obliterated from Gaza's daily life” (Ageel, 2018, p. 2).

Cultural practices such as Dabke are also taught and performed, despite the danger associated with it practiced at the fence as they tend to be shot at (Al-Araby, 2018, n.p.) For example, in week 14, the protest that took place in May 2019, Palestinian youths staged a perfectly executed Dabke circle dance. Swinging ropes in their hands and wearing the Palestinian Keffiyeh scarf, the several young boys and girls performed Dabke in front of hundreds of men, women and children who clapped as they watched them. While Dabke is typically reserved for happy occasions, this has not always been the case at the GMR. Two Palestinians, including a 14-year-old boy, were killed by Israeli live fire during that 14th week, in addition to over 400 injured (PCHR, 2018, n.p.).

Storytelling, poetry recitals and singing are also part and parcel of the activities executed and performed during the GMR. Contests and prizes are awarded for those distinguished literary works and cultural performance. Afnan Abu Mousa, a fourth generation 25-year-old medical student from Gaza City, was one of three local poets awarded a special prize by the higher committee of the Great March of Return. She had recited some of her own verses promoting the Palestinian people's right to return (Almeghari, 2019, p. 1). Abu Mousa is one example of the fourth-generation who are “taking part in the Great Return March” and resisting using their “own way, which happens to be ‘poetry’”. As her way of resistance, she is sending a message to the

Zionist occupation; that “we Palestinians are steadfast in defending our inalienable right of return by all possible means at our disposal, including poetry and writing.” (2019, p. 1).



Another example of the new generation ways of resistance is songs. Mohammad Basiony, an 8 years old boy, sang a song called *I am standing on the border fence, with no fear*. “In performing here at the borders of my land I say that we little Palestinians can understand

what is meant by *Awda*, (return)” (2019, p. 2). The presence and performance of the new generation constitutes a clear goal, that Palestinian young generation are using ‘their own ways, using collective memory and cultural activities to resist memoricide and affirm their rights to know, speak, and return to the land.

Conclusion

The Palestinian 1948 Nakba was and continues to be a deliberate disaster that has destroyed the Palestinian society and altered the lives of millions. In the decades that followed the *Nakba*, Palestinians have been subjected to systematic colonial policies that not only swallowed their lands but have also made them a target to the process of memoricide. This process aims to liquidate their identity and existence by erasing their history and cultural heritage. All the generations that followed the Nakba exodus, have actively resisted these policies, deploying different tools and strategies, from protests and revolutions, to wars and *Intifadas* reflecting the different times’ political, social, and economic situations. With the 1967 defeat and the occupation of the rest of

historic Palestine, this periodisation had changed many things in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With the former being currently under what has been referenced as an apartheid system, and the latter under a tight land, sea, and air blockade it had become a bleak reality to all generations living under military occupation, particularly the fourth one. To resist this harsh reality, new emphasis had been placed on the revival and restoration of identity, where actions to preserve the memories and heritage of the collective started to take new forms. All these forms shared a mutual point of departure, and that was the 1948 Nakba.

With the specific focus on the fourth-generation refugees living under occupation, this research explored the role played by the collective memory in consolidating the Palestinian national identity in the post-*Nakba* era. It examined the efforts exerted by that generation and how these efforts have come to be a signifier of their resistance to the occupation and to the state of despair that resulted from the failure of Oslo and the ongoing settler colonial policies and attacks on Palestinians, their infrastructure, and mere existence. In this context, the research shows that the collective memory has become a site of resistance against the systematic colonial project of memocide. In their battle to solidify their identity, the fourth generation use no arms, and no bullets, but documenting memories and preserving heritage. The argument went further to suggest that such generation have a quest for rights to be restored and a vision revolving around a lost patrimony that needs to be regained.

To prove this argument, I selected three pillars and examined their roles in solidifying the fourth-generation identity while resisting the process of memocide. They were: documented and oral histories, cultural practices, and the Great March of Return (GMR) movement. This was done through the utilization of the conceptual framework of collective memory, oral history, memocide, resistance politics, generational transmission, and settler-colonialism. These concepts

has been defined and fully explained in relation to the research question, and had provided the framework of the analysis that followed.

The analysis showed that in their quest for rights, the fourth- generation, who have been referenced to by scholars as the ‘unnamed’, ‘lost’, and ‘hopeless’ were taking the lead in consolidating their identity through the collective consciousness and preservation by reclaiming their history, culture, and heritage. Collective memory thus has become the site of resistance where battles of preserving the history and heritage are waged against the policies of dispossession, segregation, rights denial, and living under a settler-colonial regime that practices memocide.

The first section of the analysis showed that through their efforts to learn and collect Palestinian narratives, both told and documented, the fourth-generation reaffirmed their ancestral relation to their homeland and their right of return. For this generation, it became evident that by documenting such history and culture, they not only produced knowledge that informs the collective, but also knowledge that helps to shape the identity of the new generations to come. This would also allow them to break the silence, challenge the process of memocide, and the denial of history that claims there was “no Palestine” and “no Palestinians” adopted by the settler-colonial Israeli state.

Such documentation and research projects prove and reflect on crucial facts and important events, that ultimately bring pieces of evidence that defy the Israeli accounts of history, thus resisting their omissions. In collecting and documenting the narrative Palestinians also celebrate both the richness of their history and survival against the settler-colonial narratives and attempted memocide. This section also showed the importance of the collected narratives in bridging and filling the gaps in history, informing and teaching not only the new-generations about the 1948 expulsion, but also the international community by obstructing the state of amnesia that has shaped

the settler's version of history. In adopting this strategy, the fourth generation created a new site for resistance in which they abstained from the use of violence but rather opted for a survival mechanism where memory and stories become the key to preserving the rights and rescuing history.

Through examining the cultural practices of cooking, *Tatreez*, songs, *Dabke* and GMR the second part of the analysis showed that these tools have played a crucial role in the resistance and defiance of the Palestinian people. Hence such practices become an identity precursor that take form as acts of endurance and defiance. All the relentless baking, cooking, eating, and learning how to cook traditional Palestinian food becomes a channel to challenge the attempted erasure of the people. The practice of *Tatreez* becomes the preserving canvas, that through its visual keys and symbols authenticate the Palestinians existence, national identity, and collective consciousness reminding the generations to not forget the past. Then there is the universal language of music and songs, that humanize the Palestinians and their struggles through the utilization of such tools, that moved millions in the Arab world as they watched Assaf and listened to Butrous' outcry through their music of resistance. The weave of human tapestry of Palestinian music and dance was also used to keep the attachment to the homeland as strong and live as possible with the beats of *dabke*, where the stomping of feet "reinforce the indigenous" rhythms and the collective remembering of the heritage. By claiming back and modernizing their heritage, culture, and tradition practices, despite the blockade and occupation, the fourth generation are waging an ultimate collective of cultural resistance.

All these examples of documentation and cultural practices deployed through collective memory, had all come together in the movement of the GMR. At this March, Palestinians put up tents that represent hundreds of their depopulated villages from which they have been expelled. In

each of these tents, Palestinians highlight the once upon a time experience and life in Palestine pre-1948. By doing so, the GMR has become a site in which young generations learn from the older generations about the Palestinian history, their village's customs, traditions, activities, folklore and ways of life. They also sing and dance *dabke*, hold national poem contests and learn and record their history. In practicing these activities, this research showed that this generation is utilizing a new mechanism of survival, and offering an alternative approach to be added to their list of tools to their past and ongoing resistance to the memoricide.

The research concludes that while all Palestinian generations, that of *Nakba*, revolution, and war, have used different means in their battles to resist memoricide process and preserve identity, the fourth generation is focusing its efforts to consolidate their identities and heritage through learning and documenting the practices of their ancestors. Memory becomes the new site of resistance to fight back against the Zionist settler-colonial project. In this site, activities and new initiatives are becoming the tools and 'arms of resistance'. These tools challenge scholars' definition of the fourth-generation Palestinian refugees as having 'noname', no 'shared experience of heroism', and are without a goal nor vision.

Through their activities that have been fully discussed in the past chapter, the research proved that Palestinian fourth-generation are strong and capable, have a goal, and vision to both their future and the future of Palestine. Thus, this research argued that this generation is not nameless or a 'lost' one, rather, it has a name and a powerful vision to restore rights. It is the generation of claiming back identity. The collective memory has become an arm of resistance, and a response to the ongoing memoricide and the hardship imposed by the occupation. To quote a young refugee from Gaza this strategy is "a scream for life so that this generation may 'leave the walls' of their prison" and live in peace and dignity (Shah, 2018, n.p). If history can teach us

anything, it's that repetition of power imbalances always leaves one side more vulnerable than the other. Hard power may work for some time, but the power of resilience and hope - that of resistance to amnesia, folkloric storytelling, and existence - will prevail. With such power of resistance the Palestinians will triumph against the process aiming to annihilate their history and identity. The current battle waged by the fourth-generation refugees to reverse the *Nakba* that befell on them continues today through the utilization of collective consciousness and memory. It is this generation, who have witnessed nothing but misery and despair who are presenting to the world another model of mobilization for justice.

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Dabke:

Group dancing: <http://arabcal.blogspot.com/2014/10/dabke-arabic-dance-you-should-try.html>

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 2nd Group clapping: <https://citizentruth.org/palestinians-protest-with-art-during-gazas-great-march-of-return/>