



A Tale of Resistance and Love

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Keywords:

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International Commission of Jurists in some of the former Soviet Union Republics. Batrawi is the author of three small handbooks published by The Mandela Institute for Human Rights: 1) Now we are free – a handbook for released prisoners and their families, 2) The Palestinian regulations on Arrest and Searches, and 3) The Palestinian open fire regulations. Moreover, Batrawi is a short stories writer, married to a Dentist and The Father of Three, two lovely daughters and handsome son, very soon will be a grandfather.

Recommended Citation: Masud, H. and Batrawi, K. (2022). A Tale of Resistance and Love, *Global Journal of Community Psychology Practice*, 13(1), 1 - 12. Retrieved Day/Month/Year, from (<http://www.gjcpp.org/>).

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The nature of this piece asks us to open ourselves up to operating at a different level of awareness, calling on a more creative, intuitive, and more abstract/poetic epistemological frame. This piece is a short fable-like story exploring the ethics of the human within moments of immense struggle. For those of us who grapple with living within dynamics of various forms of oppression, this is essential reading for deeper discovery into ways of maintaining a sense of freedom.

Who We Are

Hana is a postdoctoral scholar-activist working with local communities in Palestine. Khaled currently resides in Palestine, and uses memory of ex-detainee experience to demonstrate pathways of resilience and connection towards transformative justice. This approach centers the potential for change through processes of healing and accountability grounded on everyday needs and strengths of those most directly impacted by violence and oppression (Brown, 2019). We seek to integrate understandings of decolonization and decoloniality when derived from our flesh, born from experiences of our bodies within acts of resistance, and from our relationships in/to each other, who resist colonization and coloniality throughout our lives and beyond. Theory and methods born of our flesh teach us how decolonial processes are rooted in the fight for the right to exist, to belong, and to express the full range of our humanity (Moya, 2000). We bring this story into the public eye so we can collectively learn more about how one person holds both resistance and love, simultaneously, in preserving both their own humanity and that of their oppressor.

Why storytelling?

Our understandings of resilience, of justice, and of transformation, have certainly been informed by our trainings, research, and practice experiences as psychologists. However, these understandings also arose

deeply from within our most intimate stories of loving, rebuilding, reconnecting, and surviving intergenerationally as Palestinians in the face of colonial violence and long-lasting, intersecting oppressions. We came to this understanding by processing together much of our own pain, our families' collective grief, and by caring for one another. Through deep listening and authentic storytelling, we emphasize (counter)stories in ways that honor our communities, remembering our villages, our lands, and our loved ones that we have lost to annexation, to incarceration, to desperation, to dreams deferred, to murder (Atallah & Masud, 2021).

With this context in mind, we see the value embedded in telling/reading/hearing our stories from our own ways of knowing. We also see the harm inherent in ways of doing/being that are grounded in worldviews of the colonizer. This is why we refuse to give our stories in fragments to qualitative data methodology to meet the requirements of academic writing, where researchers code, and reduce stories to bits and nodes. Refusal is persistence; we persist because we sense what is possible. Refusal is generative. It is using imagination, love for ourselves and our interconnected humanity, and vision to articulate and dream possibilities. It is re-grounding ourselves in a present, not only marked by the past, but also by the imminence of that which is still unsaid, unthought, un-lived. It is desire, longing, and action. It is (re)mapping, (re)making, weaving together and traversing a landscape of

decolonial praxis that is rooted—not in disciplines, but in lived STORIES OF REFUSAL, RESISTANCE, AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE - inherited legacies of struggle and survival.



**The following story is based on real events and experiences of an activist struggling to navigate dehumanizing conditions and oppression under Israeli imprisonment. To protect the identity of the activist, names of people and places have been made up.*

A Tale of Resistance and Love - STORY VERSION 1:

I am Raed, and was born in January, 1960, and have lived in Nablus most of my adult life. The body is where we live, where we fear, hope, and remember. When something happens that is too much, too fast, it overwhelms our bodies and can create trauma. Today, I tell my story, I tell my pain, in attempts to honor my wounds, and understand how the physical, mental, emotional, as well as social and political structures have influenced my trauma and resistance responses.

When I was detained, a series of threats and warnings were made to force a confession out of me, and if I didn't conform, I would be subjected to Penal liability. In February of 1985 around 2:15am, I woke up to disturbing banging on the front door and angry voices from multiple people shouting "Soldiers! Soldiers!" in Arabic. My father hurriedly opened the door, he knew that to keep them waiting would not only heighten their anger and imminent aggression, but also strengthen their conviction of the Palestinian's guilt inside the home. There were fifteen soldiers at the night raid and arrest! With the exception of the Israeli officer called Captain Avi who wore civil clothing, the rest dressed in Israeli soldier uniform as they rushed into

the house with their automatic guns in ready-to-shoot positions.

Captain Avi, asked all family members to gather in the living room where my family typically receives loving friends and family for tea and coffee, where they would spend many long nights of laughs and gossip. The room now was to become tainted with the memory of this awful night. Captain Avi ordered the soldiers to search the house, an order that meant the total destruction of property and personal belongings. During this so-called search, all I could think of was my poor mother, who prided herself in a clean and tidy home.

Once they were satisfied with the destruction of our home, Captain Avi asked my father to name all the members of my family. When my father said my name, Captain Avi told him to stop and then ordered me to raise my hand. I raised my hand.

He told me that tonight I will go with them and "be their guest". What an eerie way to refer to an arrest and interrogation, I thought to myself. And my family felt the same way, for they began shouting and demanding that they let me go. Captain Avi calmed them down by assuring them that "don't worry, he will be our guest only for a few hours. He will be questioned and return home to you before noon the next day."

I did as I was told and changed out of my pajamas. The soldiers led me out of my home and placed me in one of the military vehicles. I will always remember that night as the last night I spent at home with my family before everything changed, the night that I was arrested as an Israel's prisoner, not their guest.

On the Way to the detention facility, the car was far enough to ensure that no family member could see or hear, they handcuffed my hands behind my back and bagged my



[Image 1: Families of political prisoners are prisoners too by Mohammad Sabaaneh.](#)

head with a sack that smelled of human vomit. The soldiers then began beating me all over my body using their fists and heavy military boots. The beating lasted the entire ride to the military compound which is thirteen minutes away from our house. They not only struck me with their fists, but with their words as well. They cursed me, my family and my people. After five minutes, I began to lose consciousness and could not remember the rest of the car ride.

When I woke up, I found myself surrounded with people dressed in civilian clothing speaking in Hebrew. This is where the interrogation and torture began. It took me a few moments to realize that I was at a detention facility. A medic hovered over me and examined my eyes and pulse, finally saying to the others in Hebrew (from what I understood) “He is now physically fit for questioning”. Two people led me into an interrogation room, and the moment I stepped inside a third person shouted “Blindfold him now! You should have done this before entering!” My head was hooded again, and this time I thanked God that at least this sack smelled less foul than the first one.

The two people holding me forced me to sit on a small chair, similar to the ones used for children in daycares. They handcuffed my

hands behind the chair, then left. In the few minutes of silence that followed I became keenly aware of the horrible pain all over my body. Before I could begin to analyze the extent of my wounds, the person who remained in the room finally spoke in fluent Arabic. “I am Captain Rony. I am in charge of your case. Listen, it is really late, my wife is pregnant and we are expecting our first baby, so I don’t want to waste my time here tonight. I will let you rest tonight and tomorrow we will start your questioning. Questioning is a dialog between two brains; when an interrogator uses force, it means that he failed”.

I was placed in a foul uninhabitable cell. It was extremely small with no light, no toilet and no water source. Later I realized that the small bowl they placed on the floor was the toilet. The cell’s floor was full with dirty water, and if you desired an ounce of sleep you quickly realized that you couldn’t spend the entire time standing. So I laid in the dirty pool and slept. The pain and exhaustion took me away.

Between now and then, the guard positioned outside my cell would bang on the door so that my sleep was never continuous. I noticed he had Eastern features and later realized he was an Iraqi Jew.

When I woke the next day, I had my first meal since my detention began. A slice of Bread, two olives, butter and a cold cup of tea with no sugar. It was not appetizing, but I was famished and had no choice but to eat. After my meal I was taken outside for a few minutes to empty the urine bowl in which I was able to briefly enjoy the sun. It didn’t last long. I was hooded and handcuffed again and led to the interrogation room. The moment I entered I noticed the brown shoes from my peeks under the hood that Captain Roni was present. I was the one who started the conversation. I asked him if his wife gave

birth and if they are expecting a baby girl or boy. He immediately removed the hood, looked sharply towards me, and said “she is fine, still did not give birth”.

Captain Roni introduced himself as a graduate student in Social Studies from Tel Aviv University, and that he wants to continue his studies and specialize in Middle Eastern Studies. His current work at the prison was part of his research. He said he wanted to help me. He told me to cooperate so that the interrogation will be quick, and that he promised to put all his efforts into convincing the military judge to issue me a light sentence. “Just a few months”, he said.

I was incredulous. “What are you talking about? I have no idea why I was arrested. There is nothing to interrogate.”

Captain Rony responded with a story. “Once upon a time, there were two neighbors, one was very practical, he went fishing daily and came back with fish. The other one was very lazy that he would end up stealing the fish from his neighbor’s kitchen. His neighbor caught him once and gave him three choices: eat one hundred fish, go fishing and bring me back a hundred fish, or pay him the value of 100 fish. The lazy neighbor was so happy and said he’ll eat a hundred fish. He started eating and managed to eat only thirty. He said he’ll go fishing and come back with 70 fish. He went and after the entire day he caught only twenty. He promised his neighbor that he’ll pay the value of the other 50 fish. The lesson is, if he just paid for the fish from the beginning, he could have saved his time, effort, and health.

“I don’t understand what this has to do with me,” I told him.

Captain Rony answered, “You will confess in the end. So why not save both our time, effort and health and confess now?”

He hooded me and left the room. Ten minutes later a group of people came in and I inspected their shoes from the small space in the hood. Two wore military boots and the other three wore regular shoes. They started beating me, beating all over my body while they shouted curses in Hebrew “Ben Zannah” (son of a bitch) they cursed my Islamic religion, my God, and even cursed me a bit in my own language. I soon fell unconscious. I lost sense of time, location and dates. I remember that I woke up in the same room, still hooded and surrounded by nothing only complete silence. For how long I was unconscious, I cannot tell.

Captain Rony came back and found me lying on the ground and asked what happened, as if he wasn’t the one who ordered the attack. I kept silent. He removed the hood, pulled me up and ordered me to sit on an average sized chair, not the small one. He asked again, “what happened?”

I told him, “You should know”.

He wiped off the blood from my face using toilet paper and water. Then he phoned his wife and talked to her in Hebrew. From what I could understand, she did not give birth yet and that he is going to go home in a few hours. I was taken back to the cell and kept there for a long period of time as I heard a nearby mosque’s call for prayer for the noon, afternoon, night and dawn prayers. In the cell I was given some bread, a cup of cold tea without sugar, and chocolate spread on a piece of bread. This was the first time I learned that chocolate could be eaten with bread.

As the days went by, Captain Rony told me that I was being charged for being a member of an illegal Palestinian faction and participating in the 1982 War in Lebanon. I was shocked and denied the charges.

As usual, the torture started, but never in Captain Rony's presence. I have gotten used to the routine. Interrogation, torture, food and sleep deprivation, as well as denying my basic biological right to go to the toilet, not to mention the major hygiene issues.

I was taken to The Military Court and found out that eighteen days have passed because Israeli Military order Number 378 concerning Security gives interrogators eighteen days to obtain confession or else the prisoner will be brought to Military court where the judge will decide to release or extend the detention period.

The Judge gave me an "open check" which meant the interrogator had an unlimited period of time to interrogate me.

I can't shake off the numerous times with Captain Rony when told me that he has plenty of time to obtain a confession from my side, and yet, in those critical moments, I remember when I asked him, if his wife gave birth, he said "not yet" and added "I beg you to confess so I could be near my wife". I wondered if he knew how I wanted to be near my family too, but I'm a mere Palestinian to him, so that luxury could never be mine. While interrogating he would phone her every half an hour inquiring about the situation there. Once I told him I wanted to talk to her. And I did. I wished her an easy delivery and apologized that her husband could not be with her. I also asked her, "Have you been in a situation like mine, where the interrogator is giving you a list of false charges, asking you to confess in which it could result in at least a 25-year sentence. She answered in good English, "Definitely no, a big NO".

The torture increased, same methods same daily agenda. Bringing me back and forth to the cell. Trying to rest but was not successful as mosquitos start attacking.

I started thinking about mosquitos. I remembered my mother, when she used to spray the bedrooms before sleeping with anti-mosquito liquid with no success. Instead we would scratch all night in our sleep, and wake up to red bumps all over our bodies. If we were lucky, they would avoid our faces.

Torture continued, questioning continued, still what worried me was the mosquitos. How come humanity did not find a solution to the mosquito problem? I discovered that the mosquitos' strength is in its wings. As long as it is flying and does not settle on the ground or on walls, it is superior. Similar to an airplane. I spent countless hours in solitary confinement imagining the life cycle of a mosquito. I even remembered my science teacher at school explaining to us how planes fly because the idea is to make the pressure over the wing less than the pressure under the wings; thus, a force is established under the wings which allows it to fly.

The idea sparked in me: If the pressure over the mosquitos' wings is more than that under the wings, mosquitos will land and be disabled from its raids. It's not that difficult, for you wouldn't need to arrest each mosquito and remove its wings individually.

Torture increased and I fainted several times. I then found myself in the prison's clinic where I overheard the guards being told that my health is deteriorating.

Rony's wife gave birth, to a baby Boy, I congratulated her, and she thanked me. I continued my concentration on finding a way to paralyze mosquitos, if I will come to a tested result, I will register it as a patent and intellectual property for all prisoners.

The Judge ordered that I will be released on the basis of no evidence. After nine months and thirteen days, I walked out of the prison. I was so sad that I did not come up with a

solution to the mosquito dilemma. *I decided to postpone thinking about mosquitos until my next arrest.*

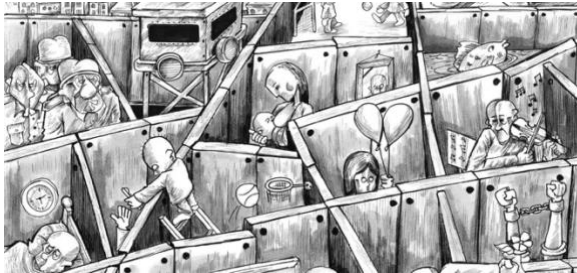


Image 2: [Lives Interrupted by Mohammad Sabaaneh](#)

*The story is told here again from a different angle. Consider the connection between these two versions.

A Tale of Resistance and Love - STORY VERSION 2:

When Raed was detained and thrown into the cell, before the guard closed the iron door, the interrogator said, "I will leave you here to revive your memories."

With a bloody face and aching body, Raed crawled towards the very thin, dirty mattress and laid on his back. He closed his eyes and began deep personal reflections.

This is the third interrogation session, they tortured him intensely and violently. He was always covered in blood. They said they had strong evidence against him, even one of his colleagues confessed in front of him. What should he do? Should he meet the interrogator's request "to rethink and confess", or to continue the act of denial?

Raed slept deeply, his body and nerves relaxing. Meanwhile, a mosquito flew over his head and landed on his right cheek. It punctured his skin and he felt the poke. He automatically extended his hand to shoo it away. It flew away and met with its

companions who rushed to support an attack on Raed. Every exposed part of Raed's body was targeted.

Raed rose to his feet and looked over the bites. He was outraged. Not only was he being tortured by the intelligence personnel, but also mosquitos. He removed the remaining part of his torn, blood-stained shirt and fell back on the foam mattress exhausted. He closed his eyes and the mosquitoes came at him once more. Raed rose again, unable to come up with any viable solution.

Raed leaned against the rough wall and extended his feet to the opposite wall. He poured his anger onto the mosquitos in their capacity as intelligence agents, and remembered the poet's words: Do not despise a young creature in the fight... as a mosquito destroys the lion's eyeball.

Raed smiled a little as he remembered his mother, who used to shut all the windows tightly at night and commenced spraying each room with mosquito spray. Then half an hour later, she would re-open the windows for ventilation. Raed recalls that, despite his mother's efforts, the mosquitoes were engaged in night raids. Raed reviewed the modern chemical means in the fight against mosquitoes, which only drove the mosquitos to other rooms instead of eliminating them completely. Raed was surprised that despite humanity's many advancements, mosquitos still roamed around freely.

The cell's door was opened. The guard shouted for him to walk out where he handcuffed Raed's hands behind his back and blindfolded him. The guard then covered Raed's head with a dirty bag disabling his vision. The guard took him to an unknown location, and after removing the hood he found himself again in the interrogation room facing the interrogator, who was accompanied by four men. He immediately

asked him:

"Did you think about your confession, Raed?"

"I did. And I have nothing to do with what you accused me of."

The interrogators started torturing him. Raed tried his best to hide his face, but failed. He drowned in his own blood. As they beat him savagely, his attention and discontent were focused on the issue of humanity as a whole, where he could not find a solution to the problem of mosquitoes.

Raed resembled a corpse when they returned him to the cell. He crawled toward the dirty mattress, laid his back against the coarse wall, and closed his eyes. The mosquito came again. Instead of trying to rest, he started thinking again about mosquitoes. Minutes passed, hours passed. Raed's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of the small window at the cell's door being opened. Raed glanced at the window and noticed the guard watching him. He ignored him and returned to his meditations on mosquitoes.

The guard rushed to the interrogator reporting that Raed is "thinking deeply"--the first step towards collapsing and confession. The interrogator smiled and spit on the guard's shoulder and laughed, "They all keep their mouths shut at first. But they eventually spill everything. They all do."

Raed went back to the seventh grade. He remembered the science teacher Ali, who always held a stick in his hand forcing pupils to study science, or else they'd be whooped. When Mr. Ali taught us about the aircraft, he explained how the entire concept of flying was inspired by the bird. Then he said, "A plane has long wings and a smooth body, and has big fans on either side. The secret of flying lies in the wings."

Raed heard the sound of the cell's lock key turn. He remained indifferent. The guard smiled, handcuffed him to the back and left him in the interrogation room. As soon as he entered, the interrogator smiled, hugged him and took him by the arm and said, "Listen my darling, stop thinking hard and thinking a lot. Thinking too long causes harm. So tell me your story."

"I have nothing to say," Raed said.

"Listen, my darling, I will tell you a story," said the interrogator. "Once there were two neighbors, one was hardworking and the other a lazy man. One day the hardworking one caught a hundred fish. When returning home he hung the fish near the window. He went to the market and when he returned the fish were gone. He knew right away that his lazy neighbor stole them. He confronted him and said, "You have three options. Eat the one hundred fish, give me a hundred fish, or pay me for a hundred fish. The lazy neighbor chose the first option, but he was only able to eat thirty. So he promised to catch the fish, but returned with only four. Finally, he decided to pay him the value of the fish."

The interrogator then added, "So dear Raed, if this lazy neighbor just paid from the beginning he would not have had to go through all that trouble."

"I don't understand," Raed responded.

"You are the lazy neighbor, the donkey".

Beatings and abuse continued, blood flowed, his face swelled and his eyes popped. Then Raed fell unconscious. They dragged him into the cell. When Raed woke up he noticed his clothes were wet. After examining his body he decided nothing was out of the usual, besides the bruises and wounds.

Raed reflected on planes some more. The

shape of the wing is important for the flight process. The bottom surface of the wing is flat and slightly tilted from the horizon and this exposes it to the wind. While the upper surface of the wing is curved in the shape of an arch.

May God's mercy fill your days teacher Ali, Raed thought. He recalled how Mr. Ali used to walk around the classroom repeating the airplane lesson, "When the plane moves very fast, its wings are exposed to a strong stream of air. The wing splits the air into two parts, the first hitting the surface of the lower wing, the other sliding over the surface, bending over it to meet the lower wind....."

Another interrogation round followed in which the interrogator was furious. This time he had three assistants to beat Raed. He fell unconscious again and they threw water on his face to wake him up, so that may torture him again. They kept repeating this process until they finally returned him to the cell unconscious. But he woke up this time to the sound of mosquitos buzzing in his ears.

Raed leaned his back on the rough wall. He remembered how Mr. Ali hit him when he failed to define the forces that raised the plane up. "The wing is exposed to two forces, the first caused by the pressure of the wind hitting the surface of the lower wing, and the second by a force formed by the partial vacuum above the surface, which makes the atmospheric pressure above the top surface very low, resulting in pressure difference, the overall air on the lower surface is a big force that lifts wings up and the plane rises with it."

So that's the simple answer: the force pushing the wing up and up with the plane. That is, the mosquito flies upward with a force that pushes its wings upwards.

The idea came to him, just as Archimedes found it and discovered its famous base. And

the same as the apple fell on top of Newton's head before he discovered the law of gravity. Raed underestimated all human scientists. They can eliminate mosquitoes if they render them flightless, he thought. They should create a power of an adverse action that hinders and prevents the fly of the mosquito. That is to say, bringing up a force from the top down, forcing the mosquito to stay ground and cripple its ability to fly. Then the housewife pours a bucket of water on the ground and the water runs the paralyzed mosquitoes down the drain. As the poet says, the mosquitos would be "as if he were going to war without weapons."

Raed focused all his attention on how to create the opposite force from top to bottom. As the torture continued, his thoughts remained on mosquitos and planes. What Raed hadn't realized is that he began to resemble the flightless mosquitoes he thought of. Still, silent, and unmoving in the face of interrogations and abuse. The intelligence officer and his staff eventually realized this. They knew there was no point in continuing the investigation, and so they finally released him.

Raed returned home. He decided to stop thinking about reversing the force from top to bottom until his next arrest.

Reader Reflection Questions

* What do we learn about pain/suffering/wounds, resistance, and human connection? How do these two versions of the story differ? How does love manifest in these two versions of the story? How does resistance manifest in these two versions of the story? How are resistance and love intertwined?



[Image 3: An artist in Gaza City works on a mural glorifying six Palestinian prisoners who escaped from Israel's Gilboa prison. \[Mahmud Hams/AFP\] This is a continuous struggle. Our struggle is a metaphysical resistance and this image is the actual physical](#)

Revolutionary Reflections

What kept Raed alive during this time is his political training by other revolutionary figures and leaders on strategies he can draw on to maintain the spirit of life. Within this training, we learn that our inner resources will help us transform the world around us. That maintaining our wellness in a torture room is where we practice resistance and love towards justice and liberation. The above testimony demonstrates how our tortured mind can protect itself through intentional and deliberate wandering; occupying itself with topics unrelated to the present situation, to protect us from the occupier's grasp.

Any person who is involved in national liberation must be equipped with theory, and ideology, which shapes their vision, language, and actions towards targeting and resisting interrogation and oppression. They must also be able to apply theory in practical steps towards national liberation. Here are three main points to remember:

- *There are no limits to the amount of harm that can, and will be enforced.* The occupying powers will deploy every effort to combat national activities including

willful, extrajudicial killings, detention, and deportation. The occupier will not only cause personal harm to one individual involved in national liberation, but will also enforce collective punishment and harm that targets our family and community as a whole.

- *We must understand that when we are imprisoned, the prison's gates will not be closed forever. We will someday leave the prison. The catch is, we will either leave walking on both legs, or dead, or unconscious on a stretcher.*
- *While in detention, we have two choices: We either allow ourselves to be destroyed by the occupier's abuse, or become self-empowered. While being tortured, if we think about our wellbeing, family and friends, or the charges and potential sentencing, we will only be assisting the occupier in destroying our mind, body, and spirit.*

Connecting With Embodied Decolonial Praxis

The wounds and imagination of our prisoner and intuitive theory born of the embodied experience orient this story. Through the telling of this experience, from two angles, we see how our prisoner takes this opportunity to resist by connecting through imagination and love – a revolutionary act opposing colonialism.

For some people under fight for the right to exist, the struggle to be human, to enter a solitary confinement for 9 months and 13 days like the case of Raed, to make time, in a tiny box, not just to proceed to survive but to be there at all. You have to do something, say something. The act of liberating the imagination from a crisis has hindered losing oneself to pain.

A person in a space of resistance, does not seek heroism, he is persistent in self-denial. Inside the

solitary and under interrogation, you must not think of yourself, family or the social cause, because that is a key factor to break you psychologically. One must only think about how to uphold their dignity and pride, and fight for their humanity. Mindfulness and clarity is not a luxury, it is key to think collectively.

It is easy to see how settler occupation bodies and systems have created soul wounds for many thousands and millions of Palestinian people over the past 70 years. It is less obvious what the experience of trauma has done to their bodies and psyches. However, trauma is not destiny, especially for those fighting for humanization and liberation. While trauma can look like destiny when people choose to blow their trauma through others, we choose not to pass on our trauma to others, and that choice begins to mend some of the trauma for future generations. It changes what looks like destiny of pain into healing and transformative capacity. Refusal is generative – we can refuse to pass on trauma to others (Menakem, 2017).

We have written this with clarity and courage, like when we say “End the Occupation” or “Get your knee off our necks”. Because even when a police officer or soldier pushes his knee upon our necks, we can still see clearly, far into the horizons of justice.

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