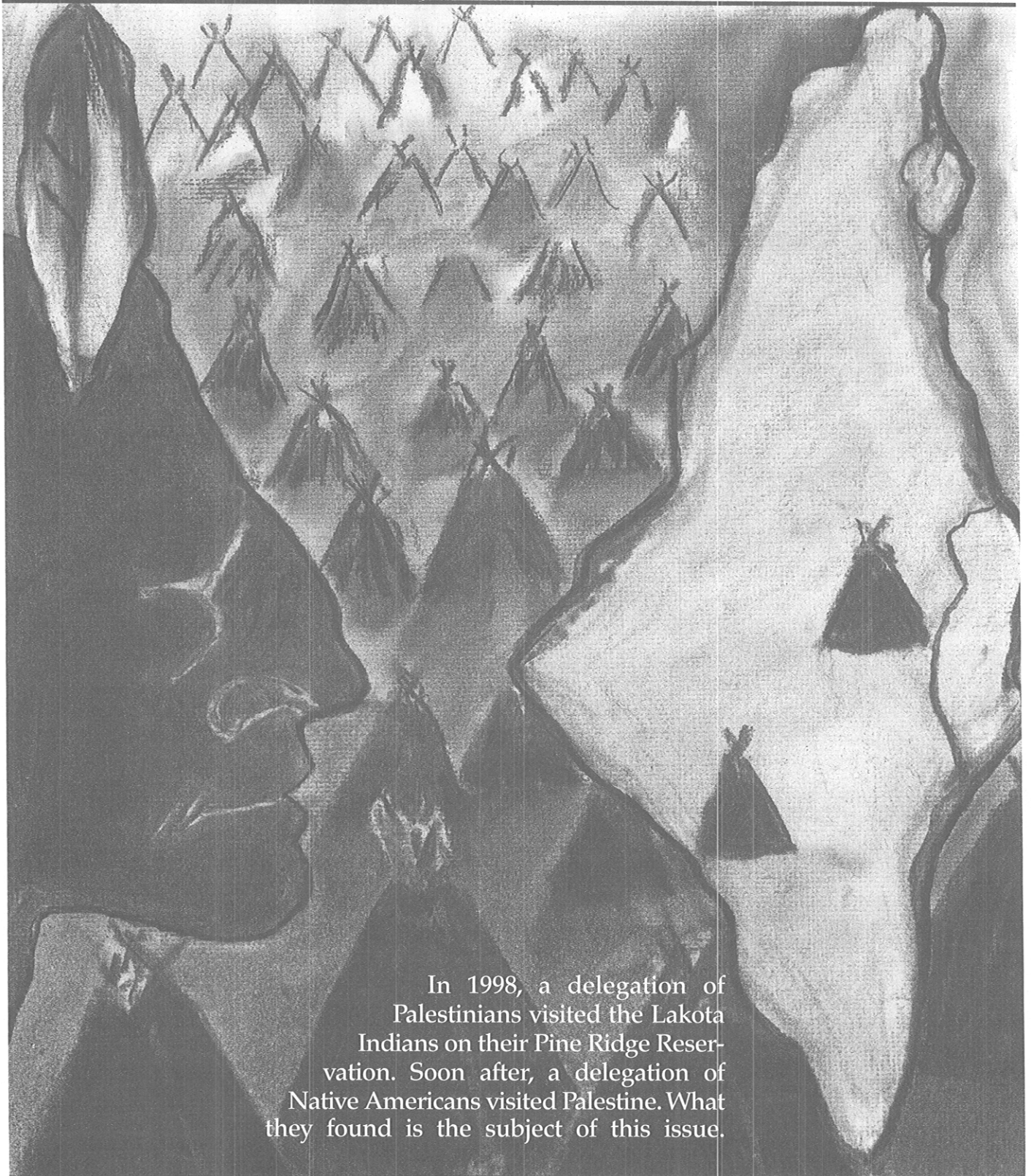


The Link

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In 1998, a delegation of
Palestinians visited the Lakota
Indians on their Pine Ridge Reser-
vation. Soon after, a delegation of
Native Americans visited Palestine. What
they found is the subject of this issue.

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About This Issue

Ardis Iron Cloud is a Lakota Indian, a teacher, and a mother of eight children. In a phone conversation she confided that when she visited Palestine she felt like — and here she paused while she found the right words — she felt, she said, like she was visiting relatives.

Palestinians felt the same when they visited the First Nation Indians in Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

We asked Zoughbi Zoughbi, a member of the Palestinian delegation, to describe how the exchange of visits came about and what happened when these far separated peoples met. Zoughbi is currently the director of the Wi'am Conflict Resolution Center in Bethlehem.

What both peoples have in common, of course, is history of ethnic uprooting. And because it is a history that stretches back over the past five hundred years — and may haunt us for years to come — we offer it at this time as our way of marking the millennium milestone.

To review that history we asked Dr. Norman Finkelstein to write the introductory section, based on his book "The Rise & Fall of Palestine." His and other books and videos are listed on pages 15-16.

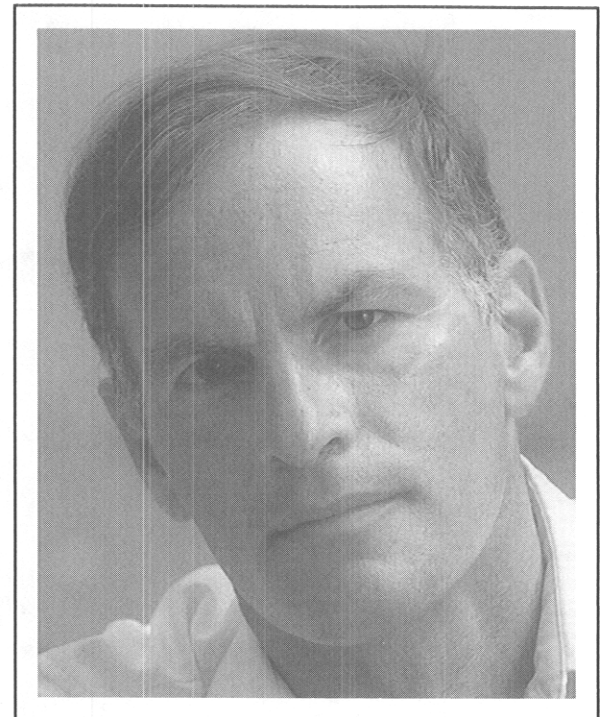
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BACKGROUND OF THE VISITS

BY NORMAN FINKELSTEIN

In his monumental narrative, "The Winning of the West," the 26th president of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, eulogized the "spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces." No "period of race expansion" had ever been "either so broad or so rapid." And none, it would seem, had ever been so just. The European settlers "moved into an uninhabited waste...the land is really owned by no one...The settler ousts no one from the land. The truth is, the Indians never had any real title to the soil."¹

In Roosevelt's reckoning, however, the wheel of progress not justice loomed largest. Indeed, progress was the true measure of justice. It was "shortsighted," Roosevelt explained, to "speak of all wars of conquest as necessarily evil." A "conquest may be fraught with evil or with good for mankind, according to the com-



Norman Finkelstein writes and lectures extensively on the Middle East.

parative worth of the conquering and conquered peoples." In North America, the colonists rightfully "claimed the continent as their heritage," and "battled on behalf of the destiny of the race" as they conquered it. "The continent was predestined to be the inheritance of their children and their children's children." North America was the Promised Land and European settlers the Chosen People. "In the interests of mankind" and "civilization," it was "all-important" that this continent be won by such a "masterful people."

Roosevelt conceded that the conquest of North America meant for the native population "the infliction and suffering of hideous woe and misery." But that, alas, was the price of progress. "The world would probably not have gone forward at all, had it not been for the displacement or submersion of savage and barbaric peoples as a consequence of the armed settlement in strange lands of the races who hold in their hands the fate of the years." And again: "The settler and pioneer have at bottom justice on their side; this great continent could not have been kept as nothing but a game preserve for squalid savages." Not shying away from the genocidal implications of this concept of progress, Roosevelt argued that "the most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized man under a debt to him."

To criticize the march of progress, in Roosevelt's view, was idle sentimentality. "It is indeed a warped, perverse, and silly morality, which would forbid a course of conquest that has turned whole continents into the seats of mighty and flourishing civilized nations. All men of sane and wholesome thought must dismiss with impatient contempt the plea that these continents should be reserved for the use of scattered savage tribes, whose life was but a few degrees less meaningless, squalid, and ferocious than that of the wild beasts with whom they hold joint ownership." In a more succinct formulation, Roosevelt warned that "if we fail to act on the 'superior people' theory..., barbarism and savagery and squalid obstruction will prevail over most of the globe."

A half century later Winston Churchill, in his defense of Zionist conquest, echoed Roosevelt's sentiments. Comparing the indigenous population of Palestine to a dog in a manger, Churchill said: "I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time...I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, or at any rate, a more worldly-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place."²

The Cherokee

The European conquest of North America was, for Roosevelt, if not bloodless at any rate relatively benign. "No other conquering or colonizing nation has ever treated savage owners of the soil with such generosity as has the United States."

Exemplary of this American generosity was the fate of the Cherokee nation. In its main lineaments, the Cherokee displacement typified the fate of many conquered peoples, Palestinians included. For that reason examination of the Cherokee nation's relations with frontier settlers and the U.S. government serves as a useful parallel to the fate of the Palestinians in their contest with Jewish settlers and Israel. Although the two processes are widely separated by time, place and culture, there are striking similarities in the rhetoric, tactics, legal justifications, and deployment of violence by the two conquest regimes.

The Cherokee nation first made contact with an English settlement in the mid-17th century. This English colony in Virginia had recently concluded a bloody conflict with the Powhatans, which prefigured the fate of the Cherokees. It is not too far-fetched to find in the Second

"What is history but the obituary of nations?"

—Georgia Congressman, 1830, advocating Cherokee removal

"Some of them would die and most of them would turn into human dust and the waste of society..."

—Israeli Foreign Ministry, circa 1948, advocating the permanent exile of Palestinian refugees

Anglo-Powhatan War an early prototype of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 as well. Using an Indian attack as a pretext, the Virginia colony declared war and, in the words of historian Kirkpatrick Sale, "finally enacted the policy of all-out land confiscation and population removal it had been hoping to effect." "We, who hitherto have had possession of no more ground than their waste, and our purchase," one colonist asserted, "may now by right of Warre, and law of Nations, invade the Country, and destroy them who sought to destroy us: whereby wee shall

enjoy their cultivated places."³

Committed from early on to an exclusively white state, the English colonists shunned a common life with the native population, enacting instead a policy of separate development. "Virtually every American president since the formation of the government," reports Ronald Satz, "had seriously considered the feasibility of transferring the Indians to areas outside the geographical limits of the United States." George Washington, for example, envisaged a "Chinese wall" to keep whites and Indians apart. Subsequent U.S. administrations conceived transfer west of the Mississippi as the chief means for resolving the Cherokee question.⁴

The American colonists, posing as innocent victims desperate for peace, maintained that the war with the Cherokee was one of self-defense. Israel in 1948 (and after) was reading from an old script. Negotiating with Carolinian settlers in 1777, the Cherokee leader Corn Tassel took a jaundiced view of American protestations: "You only want our land and not to make peace."

In fact, Americans did press for the cession of Cherokee territory conquered in the course of the Revolutionary War. The Cherokee nation couldn't grasp, however, why the flight of the indigenous population in the heat of battle gave Americans title to the land: "I don't see how they can claim the land by that, for we drove the white people from their houses too." Subsequent treaties signed by the



The Trail of Tears. As many as half of the roughly 15,000 Cherokees forced from their homes died before the tribe reached Indian Country in March 1839.

Courtesy Woolaroc Museum Bartlesville, Oklahoma

The American independence war, like Israel's, was also a ruthless war of conquest. It possessed a "twofold character," as Roosevelt put it, "wherein on the one hand the Americans won by conquest and colonization new lands for their children", and "on the other wrought out their national independence of the British king." Using the outbreak of hostilities as a pretext, American settlers attacked the Cherokee. Continental commanders were ordered to "make smooth work as you go -- that is you cut up every Indian corn field, and burn every Indian town." Writing to John Hancock, one officer recounted how parties of settlers had gathered to massacre even friendly Indians at their hunting grounds, and that it was "not uncommon to hear even those who ought to know better, express an ardent desire for an Indian war, on account of the fine lands those poor people possess."

Cherokee with the new government of the United States forced on them massive new cessions of land. Although typically promising that "the hatchet" would "be forever buried between the United States and the Cherokee," each new treaty spurred the white settlers to further encroach on Cherokee territory. Between 1785 and 1835, fully 16 such "perpetual" treaties of "peace and friendship" that "solemnly guaranteed" the "lands not herein ceded" were signed between the Cherokee and the United States government.

Focusing on U.S. treaty violations, however, misses the more important half of the story. For the treaties themselves were, and had to be, the results of coercion. Government officials used force, bribery, deception, and threats, among other things, to convince the Indian leaders

to sign land cession treaties. These tactics pointed to the overarching truth that only with the application of force could the white settlers hope to wrest the land from the indigenous population. In words that Zionist leaders in Palestine would repeat a decade later, Roosevelt acknowledged that "under no combination of circumstances was it possible to obtain possession of the country save as the result of war, or of a peace obtained by the fear of war." Accordingly, he argued that the distinction between cessions obtained by treaty, on the one hand, and by war, on the other, was an artificial one. In either case, the historian of the American West freely admitted, they were acts of conquest. "Looked at from the standpoint of the ultimate

the contests arising from this forcible ejection, killing men who had usurped and stolen their lands.... What would a community of white men, situated precisely as these Cherokees were, have done?"⁵

Rapidly assimilating the conventions and trappings of "civilization," the Cherokee nation evolved, by 1830, into a predominantly agricultural society with a constitutional structure that made it a mirror image of the American Republic. Addressing the Cabinet, John C. Calhoun reported that the Cherokee were "all cultivators, with a representative government, judicial courts, ... schools, and permanent property."



The Bridge of Tears. Some of the thousands of Palestinians crossing the bridge to Jordan in June 1967.

Courtesy United Nations

result, there was little difference to the Indian whether the land was taken by treaty or by war. As a matter of fact, the lands we have won from the Indians have been won as much by treaty as by war; but it was almost always war, or else the menace and possibility of war, that secured the treaty."

Cherokee resistance to settler expansion was typically denounced as "savagery" -- yesterday's terrorism. Helen Hunt Jackson, a contemporary of Roosevelt and fierce critic of the U.S. government's Indian policy, deplored the use of the epithet "Indian atrocities" in official documents to designate Cherokee resistance. "To very few who read those records does it occur that the Indians who committed those 'atrocities' were simply ejecting by force, and in

Coveting the valuable land and resources in Cherokee territory, the U.S. was bent, however, not on assimilation but expulsion of the Cherokee. In the ensuing Congressional debate on Cherokee removal, one Rhode Island Senator noted ironically: "Ill-fated Indians! Barbarism and attempts at civilization are alike fatal to your rights but attempts at civilization are more fatal of the two." Secretary of War James Barbour, recalling that the Cherokee had been advised to "assume white ways" for a secure future, likewise deplored the transfer policy: "They see that our professions are insincere; that our promises have been broken, that the happiness of the Indians is a cheap sacrifice to the acquisition of new lands."

The Cherokee publicly pledged to stand steadfast against these new encroachments. "The doom of the

Cherokee was sealed," Helen Hunt Jackson remembered, "on the day when they declared, once for all, officially as a nation, that they would not sell another foot of land."

Pursuant to the "complete expulsion" of the Cherokee, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that Southern states enacted "tyrannous" measures and issued "arbitrary" decrees. The aim -- as with Israel's repressive rule of the West Bank and Gazan Palestinians -- "is to reduce them to despair and force them to go away."⁶

The basic strategy was succinctly stated by Andrew Jackson, who sought to expel the Cherokee with the imprimatur of the rule of law. "You must get clear of them by legislation. Take judicial jurisdiction over their country; build fires around them, and do indirectly what you cannot do directly." With the extension of Georgia law to tribal lands, the Cherokee were left, in the words of a Congressional sympathizer, "at the mercy of firebrand and dagger of every unprincipled wretch in the community."

And in a petition to Congress, the Cherokee questioned: "What better right a nation can have to a country than the right of inheritance and immemorial possession?...What crime have we committed which could deprive us of our homeland?" Recalling that "we are the invaders of no one's authority, nor have we deprived any one of his unalienable privileges," a Cherokee memorial asked, "how then shall we directly confess the right of another people to our land by leaving it forever?" "We have been called a poor, ignorant, and degraded people," it added, "but there is not a man within our limits so ignorant as not to know that he has a right to live on the land of his fathers."

Another memorial recalled the "indignities, imprisonment, persecution, and even death" suffered at the hands of Georgians "though the Cherokee have committed no offense whatever, save, and except that of seeking to enjoy what belongs to them, and refusing to yield it up to those who have no pretense of title to it." A sympathetic white



19th Century Poster. Settlers are enticed to homestead millions of acres at "6 per ct. interest and low prices."
National Archives

Ariel, the Heart of Samaria

Ariel is a charming town built atop the mountains of Samaria in the heart of biblical Israel. The town was founded in 1978 by a small group of pioneers.

Settlers in Ariel are entitled to soft mortgages and government housing grants, which considerably lower the real cost of housing.

November 1999 ad in the Jerusalem Post. Settlers are enticed with "soft mortgages and government housing grants" to live on occupied West Bank land.
Website www.jpost.com

"Oppression," the historian Grant Foreman recounted, "was employed mercilessly to break the spirit of the Cherokee who refused to leave their homes."⁷

In words rich with contemporary resonance, the Cherokee nation, and sympathetic whites as well, publicly decried the removal campaign. To the ultimatum of Secretary of War John C. Calhoun that they concede Georgia's sovereignty else depart, the Cherokee replied: "We beg leave to observe and remind you that the Cherokees are not foreigners but original inhabitants of the United States; and that the states by which they are now surrounded have been created out of land which was once theirs."

urged "the people of Georgia, and the people of the United States to reflect whether they would be willing to receive the same treatment with which the Cherokee are threatened. Would they be content to go into exile?" Or, as the Cherokee unaffectedly put it in one of the memorials, "we intreat those to whom the foregoing paragraphs are addressed, to remember the great law of life, 'Do to others as ye would that others should do to you.'"

Cherokee removal culminated under Andrew Jackson's administration. Jackson publicly maintained that the national government was powerless in the face of settler

encroachments. Removal, he said, was necessary to forestall frontier violence.

To the victims of settler encroachment, however, U.S. government pleas of impotence rang hollow. "Are Congress," asked the Cherokee, "who conquered the King of Great Britain, unable to remove those people?" In fact, disputes did arise in the early years of the Republic, between the national government and the frontiersmen. But even then, tensions were more apparent than real, a quarrel over means rather than ends. Federal officials "had no qualms about finally obtaining the Indian lands," according to Bernard Sheehan, but "did not see how the orderly occupation of the continent...would be advanced by giving over national policy to the initiative of the frontiersmen." ⁸

Once Jackson took office, the national government worked hand-in-glove with the frontiersmen. Jackson "insisted on the spontaneous, popular character of white expansion," according to Michael Paul Rogin, in order to "obscure the essential role played by...government policy decisions." ⁹ In effect, Jackson was "using intruders...to force the tribes to cede their land." A similar pattern of intermittently conflictual but ultimately collusive relations can be discerned between Israel's national government, be it Labor or Likud, and the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories.

Yet the frontier settlers and national government, although mutually committed to expelling the Cherokee, did not share a common cast of mind. The settlers bore the brunt of indigenous resistance to the ever-aggrandizing frontier. Defiant steadfastness on the native side evoked a paroxysm of loathing on the settler side. A future governor of the Northwest territory noted with "astonishment" that the settlers were "actuated by the most savage cruelty, wantonly perpetrating crimes that are a disgrace to humanity." The settlers "have the most rancorous antipathy to the whole race of Indians," an English observer reported, "and nothing is more common than to hear them talk of extirpating them totally from the face of the earth, men, women, and children."

Although sparing no effort to excuse the hatred that impelled and the atrocities committed by the settlers, Roosevelt frankly conceded that they "speedily sunk almost to the level of their barbarous foes, in point of hideous brutality," and "grew to think of even the most peaceful Indians as merely sleeping wild beasts." The Hebron massacre of February 1994, in which tens of Palestinians praying in a mosque were gunned down by a Jewish settler, and the attendant "rejoicing and jubilation" in the Jewish settlements, similarly attested that race hatred spurs and is spurred by conquest. Pressed by a journalist to express regret over the mosque murders, Rabbi Moshe Levinger,

the father of the settlement movement, replied in total seriousness, "I am sorry for everything that gets killed. I am not only sorry for dead Arabs. I am also sorry for dead flies."

The ideological affinity between the West Bank and American West settlers can be yet more firmly established. Thus Roosevelt recalled: "Many of the best of the backwoodsmen were Bible-readers, but they were brought up in a creed that made much of the Old Testament...They looked at their foes as the Hebrew prophets looked at the enemies of Israel. What were the abominations because of which the Canaanites were destroyed before Joshua, compared with the abominations of the red savages whose lands they, another chosen people, should in their turn inherit?...They believed that they were but obeying His commandment as they strove mightily to bring about the day when the heathen should have perished out of the land....There was many a stern frontier zealot who deemed all the red men, good and bad, corn ripe for the reaping."

Indeed, according to Roosevelt, the frontier settlements tended to attract the most depraved types -- "the class...always to be found hanging round the outskirts of civilization," "men of lawless, brutal spirit who are found in every community and who flock to places where the reign of order is lax...to follow the bent of their inclinations unchecked," "desperadoes who were often mere beasts of prey." U.S. officials generally frowned upon the frontier settlers as a "lower order of people," a sentiment shared by many Israelis in regard to the Jewish settlers.

Alongside the impotence of the national government, Jackson conjured a hodgepodge of standard conquest alibis to justify expulsion. The Cherokee cannot "be allowed on tracts of country on which they have neither dwelt nor made improvements," Jackson argued, "merely because they have seen them from the mountains or passed them in the chase." Zionist propaganda depicted Palestinian Arabs as primitive and peripatetic bedouins having no real title to the land.

Cherokee removal, Jackson anticipated, "will place a dense and civilized population in large tracts of country now occupied by a few savage hunters." It would, in the imagery of Zionism, allow for the "desert to bloom." Removal was only opposed by corrupt tribal leaders who had deceived and browbeaten the Cherokee masses. "Were the Indians -- I mean the real Indians, the natives of the forest -- left to themselves," Jackson avowed, they "would freely make this election" to leave. Spearheading opposition to Jewish settlement, in official Zionist rhetoric, were not the "earthy fellahs" or "masses of Arab workers" ("natural allies," it was alleged, of Zionism) but, rather, the "scheming Arab effendis."

Finally, expulsion of the Cherokee would "strengthen the southwestern frontier and render the adjacent States strong enough to repel future invasions." It was, Jackson insisted, vital to American national security. Likewise the expulsion of Palestinians was, in Zionist apologetics, vital for Israel's national security. If, as Samuel Johnson memorably quipped, "patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels," then security is the last refuge of scoundrel states.

On the Road to Oslo

Jackson's concerted campaign of intimidation and assault eventually bore fruit. Cherokee resistance was broken. What ensued prefigures the Palestinian road to Oslo.

A leading faction of the Cherokee leadership capitulated to Jackson. This "Treaty Party," although claiming no alternative, was in fact actuated by personal interest and ambition. Cherokee removal was sealed in 1835 when about 100 members of the Treaty Party signed the New Echota agreement, relinquishing all lands east of the Mississippi River in exchange for land in Indian Territory and the promise of money, livestock, and various provisions and tools.

Few Cherokee actually ratified or for that matter supported it. Writing the Secretary of War, the U.S. army officer charged with implementing the expulsion protested that the "paper...called a treaty is no treaty at all, because [it was] not sanctioned by the great body of the Cherokee and made without their participation and assent." In the wake of the New Echota agreement, the Cherokee embarked on a campaign of nonviolent resistance. The Treaty Party continued to sing the praises of New Echota and colluded with the U.S. government in crushing Cherokee opposition.

With nearly all the Cherokee standing fast, the U.S. army interceded in 1838 to finish the job. The tragedy that unfolded has come to be known as the Trail of Tears, an uprooting that historian Charles Royce says "may well exceed in weight of grief and pathos any other passage in American history."¹⁰ "I fought through the civil war and have seen men shot to pieces and slaughtered by thousands," a Georgia volunteer who later served with the Confederacy recalled, "but the Cherokee removal was the cruelest work I ever knew." A century later, the former vice chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, Count Folke Bernadotte, said of the Palestinian survivors of the Lydda Death March, an expulsion ordered by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and executed by Commanding Officer Yitzhak Rabin, that "I have made the acquaintance of a great many refugee camps, but never have I seen a more ghastly sight than that which met my eyes here."¹¹

Of the roughly 15,000 Cherokee forced into exile, perhaps as many as half perished. As seen through the eyes of the U.S. Secretary of War, however, the Trail of Tears was a "generous and enlightened policy...ably and judiciously carried into effect...with promptness and praiseworthy humanity." In 1838 President Martin Van Buren apprised Congress with "sincere pleasure" of "the entire removal of the Cherokee Nation...They have emigrated without any apparent reluctance." Addressing the People's Council in 1948, Ben-Gurion plainly broke no new ground when he said of the Arabs brutally expelled from Palestine that they had abandoned "cities...with great ease..., even though no danger of destruction or massacre confronted them."

Recalling that Cherokee removal had been accomplished behind the facade of treaties -- "by the most chaste affection for legal formalities" -- Alexis de Tocqueville mocked that the U.S. had achieved its ends "without violating a single one of the great principles of morality in the eyes of the world. It is impossible to destroy men with more respect to the laws of humanity."

Most of the pro-removal Cherokee leaders who signed the Echota Treaty signed their own death warrants. The Cherokee National Council earlier had passed a law that called for the death penalty for anyone who agreed to give up tribal land. The signing and the removal led to bitter factionalism and the death of most of the Treaty Party leaders in Indian Territory.

Like the proverbial phoenix rising from the ashes, the Cherokee nation took wing yet again after the Trail of Tears. The feat was all the more remarkable given the dimness of Cherokee prospects under Jackson's self-rule plan. In laying the blueprint for Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza, Israel seems almost to have stolen a page from Jackson's book. Situated in what is now northeastern Oklahoma, the new Cherokee homeland was nearly all, in the words of a federal official, "unfit for cultivation..., entirely worthless." The autonomy promised to the Cherokee was hemmed in on every side: ultimate control of security and the economy remained firmly in American hands. Nonetheless, the Cherokee nation did manage to survive and even prosper, if only temporarily. In fact, by the 1850s the Cherokee were thriving as never before. Acclaimed as the "Athens of the West," they enjoyed a standard of living as high as if not higher than their neighbors in Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri, and a literacy standard that was undoubtedly superior.

Once again, however, the Cherokee nation was crushed beneath the juggernaut of American power. Fore-shadowing the fate of the Palestinians after the Gulf War, Cherokee support of the Confederacy was used as a pre-

text by the U.S. government to extract concessions already coveted before the Civil War.

The turn of this century marked the beginning of the end of the Cherokee nation. Pressures mounted, starting in the 1870s, to open up all of Cherokee territory to white settlement. As the land-grabbing railway companies moved in, a flood of white settlers followed in their wake. Thus commenced the fragmenting of the last remnants of the Cherokee homeland.

With the hindsight of recent Palestinian history, one reads the historical record with a sense of *déjà vu*. "Some of the white settlers seized land already claimed by the Cherokee, and when the Cherokee protested, the intruders simply drove them off by force," historian William McLoughlin reports. "Frontier whites generally regarded Indian land that was unsettled as open to their settlement."¹² The Cherokee harbored no illusions about the plans afoot. A Cherokee leader, comparing the fate of his nation to the Trojans, linked the illegal settlements, tacitly supported by the national government, to a 'wooden horse' policy of "absorption and disintegration which seems to have been substituted for the old doctrine of extermination."

The Cherokee were eventually prevailed upon to divide among individual members a part of the tribe's communal holdings and to open up for white settlement the so-called surplus, estimated at fully two-thirds the total. Eastern philanthropists and humanitarians, for example, urged the Cherokee to abolish tribal tenure and institute private ownership because "common property and civilization" could not coexist, "selfishness" was "at the bottom of civilization," and so forth.

Once Cherokee communal land was broken up, Angie Debo observes in her classic account, an "orgy of exploitation" ensued that was "almost beyond belief." Within a generation the Cherokee were stripped of nearly all their holdings, and rescued from starvation only through public charity. "One could be certain in approaching an Indian settlement," recalls Debo, "to find only worthless land."¹³

The robbery of Cherokee lands and final ruin of the Cherokee nation were crucially facilitated by Cherokee collaborators who, with a small class of Cherokee entrepreneurs, continued to prosper under the new conditions.

Stripped of its territorial base, the Cherokee nation lost in short order the last semblances of sovereignty. The U.S. government rapidly extended its jurisdiction. Once hopelessly outnumbered by white settlers, the Cherokee were incorporated into the American Republic as citizens of the new state of Oklahoma.

Today the Cherokee have no land base, and though they do have legal recognition as a tribe and elect their own chief, they lack sovereignty.

Certainly few Americans today would want to defend what was done to all those native tribes after whom we have named 27 of our states and countless cities, towns, mountains and rivers. Perhaps Israelis, too, will one day look back with incredulity at what was done to the Palestinian nation.

They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one: they promised to take our land and they took it.

Chief Red Cloud

ENDNOTES

- ¹Theodore Roosevelt, "The Winning of the West" (New York: 1889). Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Roosevelt are taken from this work.
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- ³Kirpatrick Sale, "The Conquest of Paradise" (NY: 1990).
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- ⁶Alexis de Tocqueville in his "Democracy in America".
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- ⁸Bernard Sheehan, "Seeds of Extinction" (New York: 1973).
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- ¹¹Folke Bernadotte, "To Jerusalem" (London: 1951).
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THE VISIT

BY ZOUGHBI ZOUGHBI

It is not surprising to feel that the world is getting smaller. Indeed, in this global village we are increasingly sensitive to events happening everywhere. This co-relationship and interconnectedness is evident through globalization, the Internet, and satellites.

The challenge is that positive interaction is offset by such negative relationships as violence, arms transfers, theft, occupation, and so on. Even though we citizens of this globe are divided, fragmented, and living in our own worlds, we are tremendously affected by each others' situations.

"Injustice anywhere is injustice everywhere," said the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and in the summer of 1998 those words echoed in the minds and hearts of members of a delegation from occupied Palestine who visited the First Nation people in the United States and Canada. First Nation people also have been labeled American Indians, aboriginal people, Native Americans, Red Indians, and Metis. I consider First Nation people to be the most politically correct term.

It started with a map. I learned about the First Nation people from my American wife, who was exposed to their as a volunteer with the Brethren Church. After looking for a while, I found a historical map showing the stages of land dispossession of the First Nation people. I carried it home, framed it, and put it on the wall of my office next to the map of the Oslo Accords, the 1993 land negotiation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. To the staff and supporters of Wi'am the message was obvious; both Native Americans and Palestinians were:

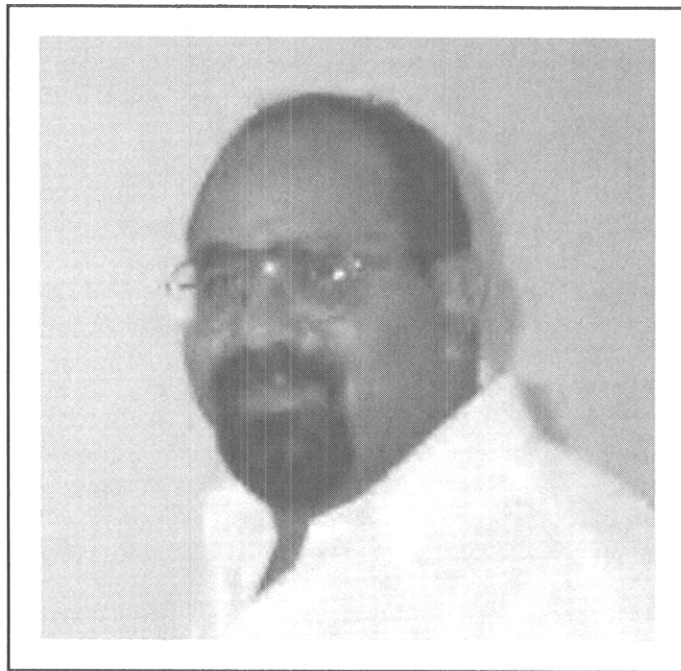
- *native to their lands,
- *colonized by others,
- *told there was a way to live peacefully together,
- *then violently uprooted from their ancestral land,
- *then forced onto reservations,
- *then slowly lost even land to settlers,
- *only to end up being told by the colonizers they were obstacles to peace.

As it happened, two volunteers at Wi'am, Saliba Tawil and Lourdes Habash, were accepted to the summer program in Peace and Conflict Resolution at Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia, where interest in the First Na-

tion people has been growing. Saliba, a biologist who teaches at St. George's in Jerusalem, found himself sharing a room with Rob Burdette, who had worked 12 years with Native Americans, including seven years in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. The two roommates talked about their life experiences, interests, and work. This led to Rob inviting Saliba and three others from Wi'am to visit First Nation reservations in South Dakota and Canada. In return, we Palestinians invited five First Nation people to visit the West Bank and Gaza. Each visit lasted three weeks, but the wounds last forever.

Wounded Knee, in South Dakota, is the site where the U.S. cavalry, in 1890, massacred 153 unarmed men, women and children. It has become a rallying cry for justice, not only in the Americas, but all over the world, wherever there is injustice. One of the famous leaders of the First Nation people, Red Cloud, said, "There was no hope on earth and God seemed to have forgotten us." Palestinians understand this despair. Our visit to the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota was the beginning of our shock of recognition. We found it hard to believe what we heard, saw, and experienced. We too asked Why does God allow this to happen?

Why, for example, have our best and brightest been imprisoned and killed? Big Foot, revered by his Sioux tribe as one of its greatest chiefs, was on the U.S. list of "fomenters of disturbances." Sitting Bull, another honored



Zoughbi Zoughbi is the director of Wi'am, the Bethlehem-based Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center.

Sioux leader, was killed because he was considered dangerous. Similarly, many Palestinians who have struggled for liberation and justice have been on the Israeli wanted list, have been liquidated by Israeli death squads, imprisoned and deported.

Names, places, perpetrators, and numbers are different, but the story is the same. When I asked one person whose ancestors were American Indian what she thinks of white people, she said, "Everyone is capable of doing evil."

As a Christian I am personally disturbed by the work of early missionaries on the Indian reservations. Many missionary groups competed to save the souls of the First Nation people, but they acted in total disregard of the rich heritage of those souls. Missionaries tried to make the aboriginal people assimilate into white culture. They behaved condescendingly towards everything Indian, giving the impression that being Indian was something dirty. The message that came through was "Indians have nothing to give us," "Native spirituality is a myth," Indians are nobodies." This kind of attack on a people's dignity and identity combined with physical attacks and confiscation of land created a shame-based society.

Terrible things happened in some residential missionary schools: racism, prejudice, and sexual molestation. The majority of the people with whom we talked said that residential schools stole the children and raised them in a missionary atmosphere in order to cleanse them from the disgrace of being Indian. Drums, for example, are an integral part of traditional rituals, but missionaries considered them wrong and barbaric.

Such criticism of missionaries does not mean that First Nation people bear hatred towards the church. Rather it shows how those in charge of residential schools didn't know how to be respectful of First Nation values. Indeed, 90% of First Nation people are Christians. Today, many of them are retaining their native spirituality by incorporating aboriginal symbols into Christian services.

We visited the Katew Tekakwitha Parish, an aboriginal Catholic Church, on July 12, 1998. Together we celebrated the Eucharist as one family in a context of respect for the traditions of the First People. It was spiritually uplifting when we participated in the Prayer in the Four Directions to honor the people of the rising sun (the yellow race), the people of the warm winds (the black race), people of the setting sun and the rains (the red race), and people of the eternal sun and complete darkness (the white race). What an inclusive approach in terms of directions, races, names, colors, and senses. It was a powerful celebration that brought tears to our eyes.

Faith and identity are tied to the land of the First Nation people in ways that the white colonists couldn't understand. Although the First Nation people have the image of a warrior culture, it is more truly spiritual. You can't sense that unless you live with the people, share their life style, and get to know their history, religion, and tradition. On several occasions we were honored to take part in the rituals and traditions of First Nation spirituality. We were deeply touched by the elderly who blessed us through the smudging, circling the sacred fire, sharing the pipe, and experiencing the sweat lodge. At such times we felt that our spirits talked with each other. Incredibly, such spiritual practices have been outlawed under the pretext of security, a term we Palestinians abhor because it is a justification for daily harassment.

Voltaire said, "Lie, lie, lie and something always will stay." Propaganda is part of any war machinery. Distortion of the enemy's image is another tactic. "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" is not a strange statement for us Palestinians who so often are labeled terrorists. How pained we felt when we heard such demonization.

"Every Indian is guilty until proven innocent." We Palestinians are in the same boat. It seems as though terrorism, violence, and extremism are the creations of the oppressed. The oppressor is always civilized, democratic, and humane. Does history repeat itself? Colonial powers are quick to learn from one another all the tricks, the unethical ways, the mischievous and devious schemes for oppressing their victims. On July 28, 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted equal rights to all except Indians. It is similar to the laws of other oppressors, such as the South African Apartheid regime or the 2,400 military orders undergirding the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

"They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land; and they took it." Those are the words of the Sioux Chief Red Cloud, but they could have been spoken by any Palestinian. The result of all the agreements and broken treaties between the First Nation people and the European colonists was to restrict First Nation people to 3% of their former land. That is about the same percentage of land in the West Bank under the sole control of the Palestinian Authority.

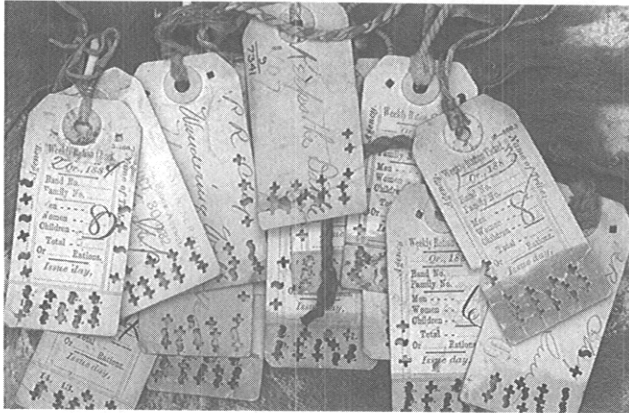
We Palestinians suffer because our land has been colonized, occupied, and more than 440 villages leveled. But we cannot imagine disappearing altogether as a people, which was the fate of many Indian nations, including the Pequot, the Narragansett, the Mochean, the Pokanoket.

There remain today 528 federally-recognized sover-

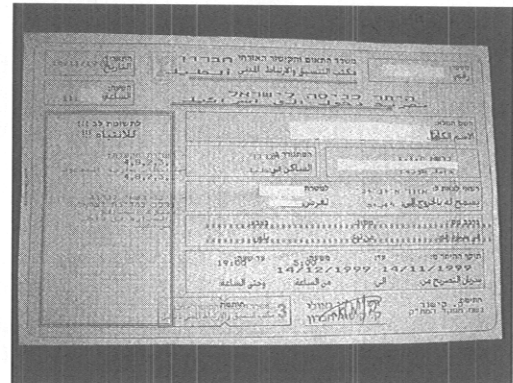
eight Indian tribes within the United States, but they are confined to reservations. When the people who live there gain some level of self-governance and economic progress, Congress threatens to change their borders and appropriate more of their land. If we Palestinians do not learn from this, we are likely to make the same mistakes and reservation-like "Palustans" will definitely emerge.

In 1916, the "Indian Agent" was introduced to control life on the reservations. This reminded us of the "Village

In the case of the First Nation people, the system created rivalry between tribes to run the affairs of the reservation. Thus a system was set up whereby a certain tribe or leader could benefit from the system by keeping the others down. This patron-client relationship is also manifested here in Palestine. Israeli policies manipulate relationships between refugees in the diaspora and residents in the Palestinian Authority area by the denial of the right of return and/or restitution according to U.N. Resolution 194; between Christians and Muslims, as in Nazareth where the



U.S. Government Ration Cards issued to the Sioux after the treaties of 1868 and 1876 for the purpose of confining the tribes to their reservations. *Museum of American Indian, photo by R. Purcell*



Israeli-issued Travel Permit, dated November 1999, permits West Bank holder to travel to certain areas within Israel from 5:00 am to 7:00 pm, at which time holder must return to West Bank. Permit is valid for one month. *AMEU Photo Library*

Leagues" created by the Israeli occupational forces to be an alternative to the leadership of the P.L.O. The First Nation people have opted to have their own leadership, the American Indian Movement, rather than that of the imposed Indian Agent. Palestinians would say that the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.) is their sole and legitimate representative and not the imposed Village Leagues of the early 1980s.

building of a mosque has become a highly sensitive issue, subject to Israeli intervention; between the P.L.O. and Hamas, such as refusing to release Hamas political prisoners; between the West Bank and Gaza by totally controlling who may move where and when and for how long.

The Indian Agent's job was to provide First Nation people with permits to leave the reservation or to live on another reservation. A woman married to a man from a different reservation needs a permit to live with her husband on his reservation. We Palestinians know how this system works. We still live under bureaucratic laws that limit our movement. If you, as a Palestinian living in the West Bank, need to be admitted to a hospital in Jerusalem, you need a permit. If you want to go to a church or a mosque in Jerusalem to pray, you need a permit. If you want to visit a family member or friend in Gaza or if you seek a job in Jerusalem, you risk being put in prison or paying a fine for being in Jerusalem without a permit.

The inhuman conditions imposed on the First Nation people create an abnormal situation on the reservation. The suicide rate is very high, sometimes reaching 20 times the average for the rest of the United States. Alcoholism and drug abuse are other deep problems. As one person from the Hollow Water Reservation in Manitoba told us, it helps us to forget the injustice and pain of the past. Crimes and sexual assaults, too, are the products of the cycle of violence in which First Nation people are trapped.

It is well known that tension and stress are main causes for illness. Diabetes, blood pressure, heart failure, and kidney problems were named as the highest rate of disease among the First Nation people when we visited a reservation clinic. This is true for my people as well. There is not a single Palestinian over the age of 40 who has no problem with stress-related sicknesses. We are one in

Another colonial approach is to divide and conquer.

suffering and we are paying a heavy price for unstable political and economic conditions.

Without justice, violence increases and social and psychological problems intensify. Sexual abuse and social problems were clearly evident on the reservations in Manitoba. In conflicts, displaced frustration and the desire for revenge are the signs of an unhealthy situation.

As an example, when we visited the Hollow Water reservation we were introduced to the traditional way of conflict resolution. A women's committee at a community center was dealing with a case of domestic violence between a father and his daughter. In the process of counseling, first separately and then together, it came out that the father had been abused as a child. This led to healing and reconciliation between father and daughter. Such creativity in dealing with conflicts by having people sit in a circle as equals leads to the hope that displaced revenge and the cycle of violence can be brought to an end. This focus on dealing with stress-related violence served as an incentive for us Palestinians to learn from the mistakes, pitfalls, and challenges of other oppressed societies.

Pine Ridge reservation has a population of 28,000 and is divided into eight districts, such as Porcupine and Wounded Knee. Despite the historic injustice visited on the people on the reservation and in spite of the process of trying to kill their dignity, confidence, and initiative, the people are trying to change their situation. In a spirit of steadfastness, they are challenging injustice with new initiatives. The Porcupine Health clinic is the first independent clinic on a reservation. Pine Ridge has the first radio station that is completely owned and operated by "American Indians." Oglala Lakota college, established in 1971, is an excellent tribal community college.

Such pro-active initiatives reminded us of the steadfastness policy during the Intifada. We had an underground school system when Israel closed our institutions, victory gardens when they prevented us from moving to our fields or when our fields were confiscated, volunteer doctors and nurses who came to us when we couldn't come to them, our own newspapers and leaflets to counter the propaganda of the Israeli media. We even installed our own radio station in the diaspora in order to communicate among ourselves and with the outside world.

The Black Hills are sacred to the ten nations of the Sioux. They consider them the center of their land: their Jerusalem. We understand that attachment to the land. When I saw a bumper sticker saying "The Black Hills are not for sale," I felt I was at home. This was especially so when I visited the Black Hills and saw the new colonies built around them, creating facts on the ground, just as

Israeli illegal settlements surround our towns and villages.

Military might can defeat armies and colonize people, but it cannot kill the spirit of a people. By retaining traditions and reactivating folklore, establishing schools and universities, founding clinics and community centers, the oppressed are able to nourish their sanity to face their troubles. This is the ray of hope shining through the acute darkness that imprisons those who are treated unjustly.

I believe truth is needed from former and present colonizers. Acknowledgement of wrongs committed is a key element for reconciliation. Although the oppressed may hope for contrition from their oppressors, they would accept an admission of responsibility as long as it translates into a change of the status quo. Without this, the underdog will turn to vengeance and the cycle of violence will go on creating more victims.



Author, third from left; Ted Means, center, director of Porcupine Clinic; on his left Amal Jado and George Handal.

We deeply appreciated the hospitality, the warmth and the love expressed to us by the First nation people. We have felt that we are one family that cuts across religion, race and nationality.

Certainly, the traditional approaches of conflict resolution in the two societies have much in common. We can learn from our protracted conflicts, though they occurred thousands of miles apart. This, in turn, can lead to a healthier approach in confronting injustices and maintaining our sanity. The experiences of Native Americans can help us Palestinians rid ourselves of our misery without inflicting misery on others.

When a wounded spirit meets with another wounded spirit, there is automatic healing.

For further information on the author, the Wi'am Center, and the visit to Pine Ridge, see the Center's web site at www.planet.edu/~alashlah. — Editor

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