Decolonial Enactments of Human Resilience

Stories of Palestinian Families From Beyond the Wall

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Introduction

From cellular to cultural levels, ecologically minded social scientists highlight that human phenomena should be understood systemically (e.g., Christens & Perkins, 2008). Multisystemic frameworks of resilience (e.g., Folke, 2016; Masten, 2015; Ungar, 2018) argue for the importance on studying processes and pathways ranging from individual- or organism-level systems (including biological, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and spiritual domains) to the mesosystems (including interpersonal, family, group, and local collectivities) and to the macrosystems (social and political structures). Decolonizing perspectives, critical race theories, and transnational feminisms, however, underscore how we must contend with the messiness of relationality, as human processes do not fit neatly into ecological levels or models (Atallah, Bacigalupe, & Repetto, 2019). According to Whyte (2018), increased attention should be placed on rethinking the complexity of human relationality, which unfolds not only within human relations, but with "different relationships connecting human and nonhuman living beings (plants, animals, persons, insects), nonliving beings and entities (spirits, elements), and collectives (e.g., forests, watersheds)" (p. 126).

When constructs of multisystems, environment, or place are understood as unfolding within and in-between both human and nonhuman relations, we can create epistemological challenges to the Eurocentric, Global North dualist thinking that views humans as separate and superior and where human phenomena primarily exists within hierarchies of humanity (Atallah & Ungar, 2020; Westley et al., 2013). These constructs that mark hierarchies of humanity and

separate humans from nature contribute to the idea that some people should benefit from the exploitation of the environment while others are expendable and must suffer. This tangled set of ideologies has been at the heart of settler-colonialism and the threat it poses. The result has been not only an epoch of despoiled environments (the Anthropocene), but also systemic marginalization of racialized peoples—and here I mean Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples internationally—members of the Global South (Native peoples of the Americas, Africa, southern regions in Asia and the Middle East, and Oceania and Polynesia) who have been historically colonized by actors using European and/or Global North patterns of thinking, action, and power.

As Atallah, Bacigalupe, and Repetto (2019) argue, root causes for differential opportunities for human resilience are shaped by "patterns of inequities and social suffering, determined by life-world conditions and caused by interplays between material, psychological, and sociopolitical processes that create disproportionate adversities in marginalized communities" (p. 3). A core assumption upheld in this chapter, rooted in Global South decolonizing perspectives in psychology, is that to promote human resilience (through linked material, psychological, sociopolitical responses), there is a pressing need for solidarity and allyship, including from psychologists and mental health researchers and practitioners, to advocate for and accompany communities on the front lines of resisting settler-colonialism (Atallah, 2016). When we accompany communities in this way, we are gifted the opportunity to hear into the depths of human suffering, splitting the notion of adversity wide open, finding local as yet unnamed ways of adapting, or better, transforming systems. In the process, we name and analyze all that remains absent from the mainstream literatures on resilience. Before we explore resilience from decolonial perspectives, let us first turn toward expanding our understandings of an adversity that is present in the lives of Palestinian refugee communities where the current narratives analyzed in this chapter are rooted: settler-colonialism, which is an adversity that is not unique to Palestine but, rather, marks the lives of diverse Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities internationally. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the building of understandings useful for addressing root causes that create disproportionate adversities for Global South and racialized groups in particular, as Atallah et al. (2019) suggest, by engaging "social justice perspectives on how resilience processes are marked by inequities and by the consequences of a history of the coloniality of power, oppression, and privilege" (p. 9).

What Is Settler-Colonialism?

> The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall Apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely the system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. (Fanon, 1963, p. 29)

According to Fanon (1963), a core element of colonialism is that the way we see colonialism depends on a system of compartments and, more specifically, which compartment we

are in. Furthermore, it takes courage to name these systems of compartments for what they are and to work to expose the sites of structural violence that the lines, or the walls, of the compartments reveal. Maldonado-Torres (2007) describes colonialism as a complex "relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation" (p. 243). However, there are many types of colonialism. Cavanagh and Veracini (2013) define *settler-colonialism* as a phenomenon whereby migrants that hold a clear sovereign capacity create policies aimed at disappearing Indigenous peoples as they themselves (the migrants/settlers) become the founders of new political systems upon conquered lands. Wolfe (2006) described settler-colonialism as centralized around a cognitive structure—a logic of elimination—which focuses on replacing Indigenous groups on their lands.

Moreover, even after peace treaties are signed, and Indigenous lands and peoples are captured, there are a multiplicity of colonial systems that continue. Quijano (2000) theorized this concept as "coloniality." Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines coloniality as the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (p. 243). Coloniality involves a cognitive model, a perspective on humanness, identity, and place, within which everything (and everyone) that is colonized is transformed, or racialized, as being inferior and therefore as not requiring voice or agency in shaping knowledge and human ways of being. In this way, Indigenous and colonized peoples develop new racialized identities, which result from not only the loss of land, but also the loss of identity and loss of opportunities to partake in productions of knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2000).

Indeed, racialized and Indigenous peoples rooted in the Global South have long responded to White Eurocentric settler domination by recentering the need for decolonial praxis. *Praxis*, as defined by Freire (1970), highlights how knowledge, practices, and places are interconnected and that cycles between reflection and action are required to lead to radical productions of being that can create sustained changes in social realities. In this way, decolonial praxis underscores that the Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies of the Global North are not the only valid sources of knowledge and being. It is this praxis, grounded in communities' decolonial enactments in daily life and in cycles of radical knowledge that emerge, that are core dimensions of resilience for racialized and Indigenous peoples. These dimensions of resilience, not surprisingly, are too often absent, even silenced, in the Eurocentric literature that theorizes what resilience looks like and how it is manifested.

Exploring Resilience from Decolonial and Indigenous Perspectives

When identifying pathways toward healing and racial justice, Davis (2019) underscores the salience of the southern African knowledge system of *ubuntu*, which can be "translated to mean 'a person is a person through their relationships,' . . . [and] emphasizes humans' interidentity and interrelationality with all dimensions of existence—other people, places, land, animals, waters, air, and so on" (p. 18). Whyte (2018) highlights how groups, such as the

Potawatomi Indigenous nation of North America that he himself is a member of, emphasize the importance of restoring customs and Indigenous institutions of sovereignty and promoting ways of thinking and action that highlight interdependence of relationships between humans and environments. Whyte argues that focusing on interdependence draws attention to the responsibility that humans have for reciprocal, nonhierarchical relationships with each other and with their ecosystems. It is these relationships that contribute to reciprocal cycles of well-being for both people and the "natural" world with which they interact.

Therefore, one way of understanding settler-colonialism (and the resulting structural violence and threats to individual and collective well-being that follow), as Whyte suggests, is by engaging the idea of *collective continuance*. Whyte (2018) translates collective continuance from a Native American concept of Anishinaabe intellectual traditions. Whyte describes collective continuance as

> an ecological system, of interacting humans, nonhuman beings (animals, plants, etc.) and entities (spiritual, inanimate, etc.), and landscapes (climate regions, boreal zones, etc.) that are conceptualized and operate purposefully to facilitate a collective's (such as an Indigenous people) adaptation to changes. (pp. 133–134)

Knowledge systems across the historically colonized communities, such as *ubuntu* or *collective continuance,* are examples of Global South understandings that recenter focus on resilience within entirely multisystemic ways of being that are tied to the quality of human relationships and bonds between peoples and places. These forms of Indigenous knowledge highlight the unique type of colonial violence that is the forced separation of families and communities and the displacement and ethnic cleansing of Indigenous peoples off of their historic lands. Addressing these fractures is one pathway to resilience, although not one typically discussed in the mainstream psychological literature.

In this light, settler-colonialism involves complex systems of domination and displacement, which methodically sever Indigenous and racialized communities' access to equitable opportunities for recovery, adaptation, and transformation (all processes synonymous with resilience; e.g., Atallah et al., 2019; Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011; Ungar, 2018), disrupting their relationships with their ancestral communities, lands, environments, and places of belonging (Whyte, 2018). This structural violence can take many forms, however, all of which compromise capacities of Indigenous and racialized populations to thrive. These structural violence of settler-colonialism are becoming exposed and better understood (in academic writings in English) as scholar activists and community allies explore theoretical and practice implications of critical race theory, Black consciousness, Indigenous intellectual traditions, and decolonial transnational feminisms (e.g., Atallah, 2016; Bell, Canham, Dutta, & Fernandez, 2019; Davis, 2019; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1993; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015).

In summary, ethnic cleansing and displacement that occurs within settler-colonial projects not only strips people from their lands, their histories, and their truths—it also reduces colonized peoples to a psychopolitical environment of inferiority: to zones of subhumanity (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Within these "zones," after the colonized are displaced from their

Indigenous lands and their *collective continuance* is attacked, the fabrics of their selves and so-
cieties are ripped apart and the colonized are constructed by settler societies as segregateable,
detainable, or deportable, or in the most frightful of circumstances, as enslaveable, rapeable,
and killable (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Through this settler-colonial process, the racial-
ized groups are displaced into geographies of subhumanity, which are blended territorial–
corporal–cognitive spaces where people are seen and treated as not human enough, or even,
as not human at all (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015).

This (dis)placement of people into geographies of nonhumanness, or not human
enough, sheds light on the importance of reconsidering how we think about multisystemic
human resilience within places or systems where people are locked into zones of subhumanity
and their identities and their Indigenous *collective continuance* threatened or even completely
destroyed. As Wynter and McKittrick (2015) explain, from 1492 onward, Europeans crossed
oceans not only as settlers in the pursuit of lands, safety, and prosperity, but in the ongoing
conquering and ethnically cleansing acts of venturing into environments that settlers con-
sidered to be "cognitively open" (p. 62). In these new geographies, where Indigenous peoples
were racialized as being less than human and therefore gave no cause for cognitive disso-
nance when exploited, settlers gave themselves the freedom to rule over both the land and
the emplaced peoples who belonged to the newly conquered territories. As Said (1993) high-
lights, this process of ruling over both land and people involves creating colonial facts and
truths on the ground, which together work to hide, or invisiblize, the structural violence
of the settlers and colonial systems of domination. In fact, colonized communities, rather
than the settler societies, frequently are seen as the violent ones, while the violence of the
colonizer are obscured and normalized (Said, 1993). This is why part of resilience processes
against colonialism involves making the invisible visible, decolonizing minds and cognitions,
which requires epistemological resistance (Fanon, 1963; de Sousa Santos, 2018) as a strategy
to restore, or restory, historical harms and create new frameworks that can make the institu-
tionalized, normalized violence of colonialism visible and fathomable. As Maldonado-Torres
(2016) theorizes,

> decoloniality refers to efforts at rehumanizing the world, to breaking hierarchies of
> difference that dehumanize subjects and communities and that destroy nature, and
> to the production of counter-discourses, counter-knowledges, counter-creative acts,
> and counter-practices that seek to dismantle coloniality and to open up multiple other
> forms of being in the world. (p. 31)

Decolonial Strategies for Restorying Resilience

Storytelling and truth-telling against settler-colonial oppression can be a means of episte-
mological resistance and a practice of generating rehumanizing counternarratives (Wynter
& McKittrick, 2015). Furthermore, as de Sousa Santos (2018) summarizes when exploring
the work of Amílcar Lopes da Costa Cabral, a Cape Verdean and Bissau-Guinean decolonial
revolutionary and philosopher, "the knowledge born of struggle is the most precious of all,
for it is the one in which the relation between theory and practice is the most complex"

(p. 72). Storytelling can be a powerful way to hold this complexity and shed light on the messiness of human relationality, while contesting the master narratives embedded in settler-colonial discourses, including the ones apparent or hidden within rigorous and empirical scientific studies (Atallah, Shapiro, Al Azraq, Qaisi, & Suyemoto, 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Smith, 2012; Wynter & McKittrick, 2015). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) underscore how Indigenous scholars have "extensively theorized the role of storytelling as practice of shaping and being shaped by place. . . . Stories thus carry out a labor; creating, maintaining, and/or shifting narrative about the places in which we live and how they produce us and us them" (p. 34).

Moreover, a profound example of structural violence associated with the consequences of ongoing settler-colonialism and manifold decolonial enactments of resilience with shifting narratives and resistance can be seen in places beyond the walls in colonized Palestine (Davis, 2016). Salamanca, Qato, Rabie, and Samour (2012) notice that although settler-colonialism has framed conditions of daily life for Palestinians for decades, "the creative offerings of the settler-colonial studies paradigm" (p. 4), have been undertheorized and underutilized across discourses on Palestinian experiences including in the health and social sciences literatures. Furthermore, Palestine is also one of my many homespaces, and one of the locations where my research takes place. Therefore, in this chapter, I aim to contribute to the restorying of resilience from decolonial perspectives as an act of epistemological resistance, grounded in the storytelling of displaced Palestinian families living in refugee camps in the West Bank. More specifically, I will share my reflections on resilience grounded on stories of two families who participated in a research project that I completed (see Atallah, 2015, 2017) in the West Bank, the Palestinian Refugee Family Trees of Resilience project (PRFTR). Before presenting the stories, however, I will first provide brief background information on the West Bank and the PRFTR project to help contextualize the narratives that follow.

Background on the West Bank, the PRFTR Project, and the Research Participants

The West Bank is a territory conquered by the state of Israel. There are approximately 2.79 million Palestinians living in the West Bank, and about one third are registered United Nations (UN) refugees, many living in UN camps across the occupied territory (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2016). According to B'TSELEM (2019), the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, as of the end of 2017 there were 600,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank (many of whom reside in colonies within the Israeli separation barrier—or the Wall—which means that these settlements are often in close proximity to displaced Palestinian communities. In total, there are 131 Israeli colonies recognized by Israel, and approximately 110 settlement outposts, which do not yet have Israeli government recognition; however, they do have significant sovereign capacities to soon become official colonies (B'TSELEM, 2019).

The stories explored in the following text are testimonies of displaced Palestinian families locked within territories that are inside the West Bank behind separation barriers and checkpoints—zones of subhumanity—ghettoized places behind the Wall of ongoing

settler-colonial expansion. As we read through these families' statements, we bear witness to their stories of suffering associated with colonial structural violence, yet also their rehumanizing journeys as decolonial enactments of resilience.

The overarching research questions of the PRFTR project were (a) What is the resilience process of Palestinian refugee families exposed to historical trauma and continuous structural violence associated with the Israeli occupation? and (b) How do Palestinian refugee families transmit resilience across generations (see Atallah, 2017)? Thus, the PRFTR project explored how refugee families respond to and create opportunities for healing and justice within contexts of historical and ongoing settler-colonialism. PRFTR's methodology engaged a critical constructivist qualitative method of grounded theory situational analysis (Charmaz 2006; Clarke, 2005) and decolonizing strategies of community engagement (Atallah, Shapiro, et al., 2018).

Participants in PRFTR were invited to engage in the project through a partnering community-based organization, which was founded in the camp by Palestinian refugees themselves more than a decade ago. In total, 30 participants ($N = 30$) from five extended family networks residing in this camp for several generations participated in the PRFTR project. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 90 years old. All participants were Indigenous Palestinians and survivors of the *Nakba* ("disaster" in Arabic) and their descendants. *Nakba* refers to events where approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced during the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 (Pappe, 2006). The government of Israel refers to this event as the "War of Independence" (Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Since the *Nakba* of 1948, displaced Indigenous Palestinian families have been living in UN refugee camps like the one where the PRFTR project took place, which is managed by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The Palestinian Authority (PA) has influence over populations in these camps as well. The Israeli Occupation of the West Bank began in 1967 and was followed by Israeli settler-colonial expansion, in addition to waves of mass Palestinian protest and resistance (UN, 2009). Therefore, the Palestinian residents of these UN camps essentially navigate three different authorities—none of which represent them: (a) UNRWA, (b) PA, and (c) the Israeli settler-colonial, occupation system. Furthermore, it is important to understand that many of the participating families in PRFTR have lived in the same refugee camp over many generations.

The PRFTR project received approval from the University of Massachusetts Boston Institutional Review Board and complied with high standards of ethical research (Atallah, 2015, 2017). Pseudonyms are used in place of the birth names of the participants from the two families presented in this chapter for the purposes of protecting their privacy. From the first family, the two pseudonyms used will be Hajj Al-Khader for the elderly father who is in his 80s and Cais for the son who is in his 30s (and who is also a father himself). From the second family, pseudonyms Hajja Rinad will be used for the elderly mother who is in her 80s, and Naila for the daughter who is in her 40s (and who is also a mother herself). Hajj, placed in front of the name of the elderly man, and Hajja, in front of the name of the elderly woman, are honorific terms showing respect. By turning to the stories shared by these two families, I do not hope to speak for them as "silenced" colonized subjects, nor are their experiences meant to represent all Palestinian family experiences living under the Israeli settler-colonial

occupation system, the PA, and UNRWA. Instead, I aim to shed light on an alternatively painted language to contribute to the building of the alternative thinking on resilience, a mural of discourses inspired by Palestinian families' fluid, messy, and intersecting processes of becoming and shaping their possibilities for dignity and decolonization. Before turning to the narratives of the two participating families, however, consistent with decolonizing scholarships (e.g., Atallah, Shapiro, et al., 2018; Bell et al., 2019; Smith, 2012), it is important to engage in reflexivity and work toward attempting to make this research and writing more accountable to the people most impacted—in this case—Palestinian refugee families living in the UN camps.

Reflexivity

I would like to underscore that the PRFTR project took place in a UN refugee camp in an area of the West Bank that is directly adjacent the Indigenous village and ancestral place of my paternal ancestors. In many ways, my own family life has been shaped by settler-colonial structural violence, evidenced, in part, by the fact that my grandfather's lands are now sites of Israeli settlements. Therefore, when listening to the families' stories and offering my interpretations in this chapter, I draw not only on interview data from my qualitative research within the PRFTR project and from previously published social science literatures and decolonizing theories. I also draw from my own lived and intergenerational familial experiences of displacement, loss of lands, and the manifold of violent ways that Indigenous *collective continuance* of my native communities have been targeted, damaged, or, at times, even completely destroyed. I understand these issues not only in abstract ways, but I also feel these structural violence survived by my family and communities in my body. Due to the focus of this book, an in-depth exploration of the ways that structural violence associated with settler colonialism impacted my research in Palestine, including my working from positions of relative privilege and power as a U.S. and Chilean academic, is beyond the scope of this chapter. For more on critical reflexivity and the need for it in deconstructing and interrupting colonial relations when engaging in research as enactments of decolonial praxis, readers are encouraged to see Atallah (in press).

Two Stories of Decolonial Enactments of Resilience of (Dis)placed Palestinian Families Beyond the Wall

The first family story is about Cais, a 35-year-old man born in the refugee camp, and his father Hajj Khader, a 86-year-old elder who was born and raised in *Allar* village, which is an area that is now inside the state of Israel. Listening to stories of decolonial enactments of resilience include hearing how Cais and Hajj Khader remember and resist the charting of their lands by the settler nation-state. Decolonization is not a metaphor—it has everything to do with restoring lands and a journey of returning to places of belonging. Decolonization is a declaration of human dignity. Rather than being treated as landless, stateless, "empty" bodies

placed in a refugee camp, Cais and Hajj Khader share their rehumanizing stories related to ways they have worked to affirm their humanity by reclaiming rootedness in their lands.

For example, in Cais's narrative that follows, he shares how he would frequently encounter Israeli attempts to deny his identity, to disconnect him from the land and his Indigenous village. Attacks on his humanity and dignity occurred, in part, through a process of being disjointed from the land not only by being physically removed as a child and growing up in a refugee camp, but also systematically transformed by an imposed identity separate from his ancestral homelands. Cais explains how even as a child he defiantly resisted Israeli state policies of dehumanization by developing decolonial attitudes and voicing his invisible history affirming his roots and his humanity, rather than his chronic state of exile.

> Cais: I remember at school, all the schools were under the Israeli administration during that time, the printed books would all have a map of Israel in them and would not have Palestine anywhere on it. No mention of the West Bank even, just "Judea and Samaria." So, at school, we used to erase and write over those maps and write "Palestine." Even on our birth certificates, it would say Israel. So we would actually cross out this on our birth certificates and write Palestine . . . and I remember once, when we had a demonstration outside our UN refugee school, the next day, an Israeli military officer visited the school. He came to the school because he considered us troublemakers. He came to try to speak to us kids the day after our demonstration. Every time that he tried to ask us where we were from, we wouldn't answer that we were from this refugee camp, none of us did! We'd all answer him by saying the name of our villages. Even, at one point the officer got so frustrated by this he was pulling my ear! He said to me, yanking my ear, "So, again, where are you from boy?" And I still told him, "I'm from *Allar* [which is the name of Cais's ancestral village in lands that were conquered by Israel in *Nakba* of 1948 and are now within the borders of the Israeli nation-state]" He said back to me the name of the refugee camp, but I said back to him, "*Allar*!" He kept pulling my ear but I didn't back down. This was really annoying for the Israeli officer, I was provoking him and I loved it! "I am from *Allar*!" I'd say over and over again! "I am from *Allar*!"

Cais shares how he, alongside his community, developed strong decolonial attitudes to protect his place in this world, scratching out the colonial definitions of self and community. Cais's story reminds us how one of the front lines of settler-colonial oppression incudes the mapping of lands, selves, and communities together, which are produced and sustained by colonial discourses and settler nation-state policies marking identities and citizenships. Cais challenged these front lines despite the multiplicity of ways that Israeli colonial systems attempted to school and control him, measure and mark him.

Furthermore, it is important to listen to how Cais's decolonial attitudes, as resilience, are linked to his intergenerational family trees. For example, in an interview with Cais's father Hajj El-Khader, I learned how he faced the forced separation from his village *Allar*—the lands, homespaces, and trees, which also represented a devastating loss and disconnection within his body, mind, identity, dignity, and ancestors. Hajj El-Khader described the process

of returning to his Indigenous village after it was demolished during *Nakba* of 1948 and an-nexed into the nascent state of Israel. He described how he would return to his village and smuggle his olives across the border back into the West Bank. This was a common practice that many displaced Palestinians engaged in during the years after *Nakba*. Palestinians who transgressed the nascent border were frequently killed or imprisoned if they were caught re-turning to their lands by the patrolling Israeli soldiers. And yet, despite the risk, Hajj Khader continued to cross and harvest his trees. More recently, Hajj Khader has returned with his children, including Cais, showing them their lands, homes, and even the old school in the *Allar* village that Hajj Khader attended when he was a boy in the 1930s and 1940s. In the rare circumstances that they cross the border to return, just for the day, to walk in their native lands, they still do this with the risk of being shot or detained for their transgressions—moving beyond the Wall without permission by the state of Israel.

> Hajj Khader: I was 14 years old during *Nakba*. Years after we were kicked off our land, I still returned. Regularly. I would smuggle myself back. . . . I got strength from my homeland. I depended on my homeland, on the olive trees. When I used to smuggle myself to return to my village, I used to eat the dirt of my village. I used to travel by myself, using the shelter of the night for safety. . . I did this for many years after *Nakba,* even though it was dangerous.
>
> Devin Atallah: There were plenty of olives around you in the area here near the ref-ugee camp, why did you go back to your village to pick those olives?
>
> Hajj Khader: Because these were my olives. This was my sweat, the effort we put into our land over generations. My grandparents took care and harvested these trees! Lastly, I always wished the Israelis would find me and kill me in my village. Even now, I wish I would die in the village. Why did they demolish the village? Because at the time it was part of Arab lands, not Israeli, so they just wanted to make sure we Arabs would not come back, so they emptied the villages. To this day, my village is ruins and no one lives there. It is wilderness. . . . When I return, I rub the dirt on my chest. . . . My blood still flows even today. We were forced to leave our villages but I teach my children, and the children of my children, they should not forget *their* village . . . my land my honor . . . my land my nobility.

In this resilience process, I bear witness to Hajj Khader's courageous truth-telling and transgressions, his rejection of the boundaries enforced by the settler nation-state, which is also a rejection of his chronic condition of displacement and homelessness in the refugee camp. Following his footsteps, however, it is important to understand that this individual action that Hajj Khader takes is actually an enormous multisystemic action. His rejection of the imposed boundaries is a decolonial dismissal of the system of compartments—which strikes at one of the core dimensions of settler-colonialism. Hajj Khader's narrative deepens our understandings of the complexity of human relationality and multisystems and includes a story of the cultivation of radical hope and holding onto the right for self-determination, across not only borders, but across generations. And like Hajj El Khader's olive trees, which

travel through time more than they travel through space, decolonial enactments of resilience are intergenerationally bound.

This envisioning of resilience links healing and justice in how father Hajj El Khader and his son, Cais, both highlighted that remembering and transgressing can be curative, as can be the dirt of the land of their Indigenous village. Hajj Khader eats and rubs this dirt upon his chest in expression of deep suffering, yet also with defiance and radical love, which together form a persisting decolonial attitude that stands up to forced displacement and destruction of their Indigenous *collective continuance*. In so many ways, El Khader's eating and rubbing of the earth on his chest calls us to rethink what it means to be human, and how humans belong to lands, perhaps even more than lands could ever belong to humans. The Palestinian resistance poet Rashid Hussein wrote:

> Tent number fifty on the left – that is my present
> But it is too crammed to contain a future
> And, 'Forget,' they say
> But how can I!
> Teach the night to forget to bring
> Dreams showing me my village
> Teach the winds to forget to carry me
> The aroma of apricots in my fields
> And teach the sky too to forget to rain
> Only then may I forget my country. (Quoted in Shahin, 2005, p. 46)

The second family story is about Naila, a 48-year-old woman born in the refugee camp, and her mother Hajja Rinad, a 81-year-old elder who was born and raised in *Al-Qabu* village, which is an area that is now a state park where Israelis can enjoy camping, picnicking, and other outdoor activities. The home that Hajja Rinad was born in has been destroyed, but the stones of the foundation are still visible, partially hidden by outgrowth of mountain sage, cactus, and thyme.

Naila is currently a social worker providing community-based mental health support to marginalized families in her community. Before becoming a mental health worker, Naila was an activist and has been imprisoned several times throughout her life thus far by the Israeli authorities. She is 1 of 11 children, and her family lived in poverty in the camp throughout her upbringing. Naila lived with her mother Hajja Rinad, her father, and her siblings (13 people in total). For Naila's early years, they all lived together in the confines of one UN unit, which includes one small room and a kitchen. As a teenager, the family moved into two UN units, which still continued the cramped and inhumane living conditions.

Naila's parents struggled to provide food for the family because of their devastating economic situation. Naila describes being frequently hungry growing up, and beginning to actively resist Israeli soldiers and settlers while she was in middle school. Naila recalls throwing stones and protesting her circumstances including the poverty, the Israeli military occupation, the historical and ongoing settler-colonialism, in addition to her father's authority.

Naila: I think that the hardest thing was to try to be sure that we had enough to eat. My mother used to complete the most strenuous tasks to make sure we had food to eat. I remember people used to go to the bakers to get their dough and bake their bread. But my mother started her own traditional oven, we call it *Taboon*, which you have a hole and you cover it with fire and then you open it and put the bread in. My mother had to do all of that by herself, going around to carpenters to get the leftover wood to cover this hole and keep it warm, even the chickens' manure, she would dry it to cover the hole and this would keep the fire going, cook and keep the oven warm for days on end, although it's smoky and smelly. . . . It's very hard work, believe me, just baking bread for your family. When I was like 12 or 13 years old, I was always dreaming of having a super power of changing the world and I would actually take out my anger by participating in demonstrations and just being active . . . so when I was active, it's about, a mix of things: it's about the oppression, about my family, about the poverty and the situation I was living. Even at a very young age I was wanted by the Israelis for my activism. They would send a soldier to my house requiring for my father and I to report to the Israeli military compound in the city [a nearby West Bank municipality]. We would have to spend the whole day there, sometimes every day for weeks on end, sitting at the compound and my father would be lectured from the Israeli soldiers and commander about needing to control his daughter. I still remember that I used to be more afraid of my father than of the Israeli soldiers [with this Naila breaks out in laughter].

Throughout her storytelling, Naila elaborated on her fears, on her radical dreams of changing the world, and how the settler-colonial struggles intersected with her family struggles and her developmental trajectories as a youth. Her father's parenting strategies were directly negotiated in relationality with military forces and settler nation-state policies of domination, mediated through the authority of a local commander who routinely gave "advice" to Naila's father about how to control, or to rule, his unruly daughter.

Naila was imprisoned by the state of Israel for the first time when she was 19 years old. She remained in detention of three years, surviving torture and a multiplicity of tactics of domination, which Naila understood as Israel's attempts to break her. Naila explains how despite the many violence experiences of imprisonment, she grew and developed herself, learning and teaching with the other women prisoners. Naila expressed feeling profound connection with the other women on the inside, especially in their constantly reading and rising together. The literature they were reading was unauthorized by the Israeli prison authorities. This did not stop them. Naila recounts how she would smuggle readings into the prison with the support of friends who would inscribe miniature text on paper folded into tiny capsules then wrapped in plastic. Naila would swallow these writings during visitations with these friends and then they would emerge once back in her cell in the toilet. Naila shared how these writings would be passed around among the community in prison and

nurtured their minds and activisms throughout years in detention and were key to her per-severance (*sumoud* in Arabic).

When released, Naila was discharged back to the refugee camp as an educated young woman, far from broken; instead, despite having survived torture and sexist gender-based violence in prison, she had worked, alongside the other women prisoners, to disentangle the colonial oppressions and how the occupation systems framed their bodies, framed their identities, framed their womanhood, framed their activisms, framed their histories, and yet ultimately, altogether failed at framing their futures. Decolonial enactments of resilience evidenced in Naila's story include her radical dreaming and her working together with other incarcerated women to create conditions for community and to develop decolonial attitudes and knowledge while healing and growing from behind the bars of settler-colonial deten-tion. Incredibly, as a young woman, at the same age that many would be entering college, Naila describes how she partook in the creation of a collective decolonizing university, a community space within the compartments, behind the walls of prison alongside the other incarcerated women. This is evidence of resilience as the promotion of "decolonial attitudes which form the basis for creating rehumanizing praxes for healing from collective trauma. Healing from oppression's pain, with one another, could return us to a state where the self is prized and can rise in and through community" (Bell, 2018, p. 259). Naila's decolonial at-titude and collective activism was strengthened in prison and only continued to rise upon her release.

Furthermore, similar to Cais and Hajj Khader's story, it is important to listen to how Naila's decolonial resilience processes are linked to her intergenerational family trees. For ex-ample, Naila highlights how her mother Hajja Rinad's perseverance through struggles to feed the family as a whole and her reconstructing the Indigenous oven (*Taboon*), really left a mark on her as a child. Furthermore, after Naila was arrested and put into prison, Israeli soldiers immediately came to their home in the UN camp and demolished it as a way to punish the whole family as a system for their daughter's defiant transgressions. Hajja Rinad's narrative that follows describes her journeys in creating a collective, healing homespace after their two UN housing units were destroyed, which emerge as a potent decolonial enactment of resil-ience. In so many ways, collectively rebuilding a home is a powerful practice of perseverance, almost a metaphor for defying the weight of colonial structural violence that subjects families to collective punishment and prolonged dislocation.

Hajja Rinad: The soldiers came right after they arrested our daughter Naila. They looked around just to see how they were going to demolish the house. They came at night, at ten at night, and they asked everyone to leave the house.

Devin Atallah: How many soldiers were there?

Hajja Rinad: A lot of them, it felt like the whole army was there. . . We had two UN units, and the Israelis demolished both of them. When the soldiers came, they al-lowed us to take some stuff, and we insisted on staying there and living in a tent under the olive tree, to make sure, because a lot of the houses that were demolished

in the camp were not allowed to return and rebuild on the land if they had left it. They would lose their land. So, we knew that if we left and settled down somewhere else, the Israelis might not give us enough space one day to rebuild again and we would be completely homeless! So we insisted on living in a tent, on the ruins of our demolished home. We lived in the tent for a full year, and that paid off because we eventually got to rebuild our house again on that same space of land.

It is important to understand that Hajja Rinad's family lived in a tent for a year, all 12 of them (usually they were a family of 13, but Naila was incarcerated). They lived in the tent for a year not because they didn't have the means to rebuild but, instead, because it took the Israeli military a year to issue them a building permit. If Hajja Rinad's family had rebuilt a home instead of a tent without waiting for the permit, they would have risked having it labeled as an illegal structure and therefore demolished once again and more family members taken off to prison. Furthermore, it is important to understand how immediately after Hajja Rinad's and Naila's family home was demolished, the youth of the camp organized themselves and responded by making a shelter. As Hajja Rinad's story continues, she highlights how their community revealed itself as a sheltering force when responding to home demolition and the impact of forced and prolonged homelessness.

> Hajja Rinad: The first night, the youth around, from the neighbors and relatives and the youth of the camp, went to a nearby factory for plastic carpets, and they got some of the debris from our demolished home, and with the plastic they made kind of like a shape of a house for us to live in until we got a tent. . . . I remember when my husband went to another city to get two huge pieces of fabric that would be suitable to create the tent . . . and it was like a visiting tent. People used to come over from everywhere and spend the night with us. Everybody showing solidarity. Wanting to sleep with us to show that we were not alone. People from everywhere would come, from other camps, and even from other villages, and from within the refugee camp, like the neighbors, and our relatives. Everybody. It was a real nice sense of solidarity from everybody. It was not an easy time though. When it used to rain, the water used to go under the tent, and you could see the water coming into the tent, so we used to create a small tunnel, canal, to direct the water outside the tent so the children would not get too wet.

The apparently localized, spontaneous, and informal process of families and neighbors helping each other to rebuild, emerged as a very important and multisystemic decolonial enactment of resilience. These decolonial enactments manifest in response to state-sponsored policies of home demolitions, which are violent colonial tactics, in part, for land-taking or annexing territory, which people face by persevering and seeking shelter under the strength of family bonds, community embodiments of affection, and collective reconstruction. Both Naila and Hajja Rinad's storytelling of their time apart while Naila was detailed, required decolonial enactments of resilience that wielded the power of community, decolonial attitudes, and collective reconstructing of selves and homespaces to break free from the systems of compartments that wall their lives.

Conclusion

The current chapter centers understandings of resilience on stories of two displaced Palestinian families who shared their experiences and perspectives with me during the PRFTR. In doing so, I draw on decolonial perspectives (Atallah, 2016, 2017; Bell, 2018; Dutta, 2018; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Quijano, 2000) with the goal of contributing to the development of alternative thinking of multisystemic, embodied, and intergenerational processes of Palestinians on the front lines of surviving colonial structural violence. When reading and interpreting these stories, I asked that you accompany me in an alternative way of seeing, listening, and reading, so that we could bear witness to decolonial enactments of resilience in ways that called ourselves as readers, into accountability.

These understandings of resilience are born from stories of the silenced, yet never muted, voices of families on the front lines of a colonized, displaced place. The longitudes and latitudes of this place have long been mapped, fortified, and walled-in by colonial, structural violence. Yet, as the stories of Hajj Khader, Cais, Naila, and Hajja Rinad's demonstrate, resilience in this place has long been spoken in native tongues and poems, in the radical dreams and decolonial attitudes of refugees, in the critical knowledge housed in bodies and swallowed dirt, in the elders' stories who are living out life sentences of exile and repeated home demolitions, and in the leadership of defiant and detained women and men front liners that are continually incarcerated by militaries and memories, which no one outside the Walls ever has to return to resee or remember.

Furthermore, these stories obligate that we struggle ourselves and deepen our listening and theorizing practices—to be able to approach comprehensions of a messy multisystemic human relationality. This complex theorization of multisystemic relationality overlaps with the courageous work of transnational women of color philosophers and justice seekers (e.g., Moraga & Anzaldua, 1983), and decolonial feminists in Palestinian contexts (e.g., Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009). These radical women theorists and activists argue that instead of focusing exclusively on dismantling sexist *or* racist structures, systems of patriarchy should be explored within a complex web of power and relationality that includes our interrogating racism, colonialism, militarism, and other structural violence particular to the dilemmas in question—or the system of compartments (Fanon, 1963) that need to be transgressed. In this light, the contestations of patriarchal power in Palestinian social systems, the local militarization and war violence, and the global constraints on the contestations against Israeli colonial rule should be understood as linked processes that cut across scales and systems, rather than being compartmentalized into separate levels, processes, or discourses (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009). To put an end to social silence, forgetfulness, and ongoing colonial dominance, resilience within conditions of settler-colonialism requires intersectional thinking, courageous remembrance, and intergenerational, decolonizing healing *and* justice (Ginwright, 2016; Grant, Marinho, & Crean, 2019; Just Healing Collective, 2014). As Atallah et al. (2019) argue,

> human resilience itself is intersectional. More specifically, resilience processes
> intersect with the human bodies and selves that die, survive, respond, and heal
> in the face of sudden catastrophes and the disasters of daily life in marginalized

communities . . . embedded in the racialized, gendered, and classed structures that enhance and/or obstruct people's responses to suffering. (p. 14)

In conclusion, when shifting, and recentering our gaze on the pressing concerns of Indigenous, racialized, colonized families and communities, such as in refugee camps in Palestine, our understandings of resilience and the possibilities for transformation are deepened. Intergenerational family resilience journeys within colonized communities can hold critical decolonial knowledge and promises. Future research that contributes to shifting thinking of human relationality in ways that afford the emergence of solutions grounded on voices of Indigenous peoples is critical to making resilience more relevant and accountable. But this goes beyond voice and includes vision. As Dutta (2018) describes, "decoloniality entails a fundamental transformation of the terms of knowledge production, striving toward a new vision of human life that is not configured by the imposition of White Euro-American societal ideals . . . [and] necessitate a fundamental shift in vantage point" (p. 273). These shifting visions and vantage points are so critical, as Bell et al. (2019) argue, because the minds and bodies of segregated and colonized front liners are the only ones who hold the knowledge of the ways toward a place outside the Wall—beyond the system of compartments. This is a desegregated and decolonized place of healing and justice. As evidenced in Hajj Khader, Cais, Naila, and Hajja Rinad's stories, their intergenerational family and community trees are also keepers of these knowledge.

Key Messages

1. Critical insights on multisystemic resilience are grounded in Global South knowledge of human relationality. These insights are rooted in colonized communities' embodied and emplaced struggles for healing and justice, for dignity and decolonization, and can be heard in the voices of Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples.
2. The stories shared in this chapter by participants from two displaced Palestinian families living in a colonized West Bank community demonstrate that structural violence of settler-colonialism create legacies of wounds and ongoing war across generations, where participants respond through intergenerational, decolonial enactments of resilience.
3. There is a need to link resilience and justice work to address and repair the multisystemic relational harms and injustices associated with legacies of colonialism and ongoing coloniality—both historical and structural—that settle into our bodies, lands, practices, policies, and family and community lives in intergenerational, nuanced, and complex ways.
4. Psychologists, mental health workers, and transdisciplinary social scientists working within Global North institutions and Eurocentric epistemological traditions have a responsibility to disrupt colonial patterns of power, to listen to, and accompany families and communities who are on the front lines of contesting the conditions, thinking, policies, and practices that make the structural violence of settler-colonialism endure.

Acknowledgments

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