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By Alice Yaser
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Act now to support Palestinians!

Buffalo, New York

The following edited article is adapted from a talk given by Alice Yaser of Workers World Party, Marxist Youth League, at the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions launch event at the State University of New York on Feb. 27, 2024.

The following is a quote from Frantz Fanon's classic book, "The Wretched of the Earth":
"Thus the colonized discover that their life, their breath, their beating heart are the same as those of the settler. He finds out that the settler's skin is not any more valuable than a colonized skin; and it must be said that this discovery shakes the world in a very necessary manner.



Alice Yaser speaks at Lenin Centennial in New York City, Jan. 21, 2024.

"All the new, revolutionary assurance of the colonized stems from it. For if, in fact, my life is worth as much as the settler's, his glance no longer shrivels me up and freezes me, and his

voice no longer turns me into stone. I am no longer on tenterhooks in his presence; I don't give a damn for him. Not only does his presence no longer trouble me, but I am preparing such efficient ambushes for him that soon there will be no way out but that of fight."

[Fanon was an Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist, writer and revolutionary who joined the National Liberation Front of Algeria against French colonialism.] This excerpt is characteristic of all colonial societies, as well as all budding national liberation movements. The current Palestinian resistance is included among them.

The state and its constituents don't agree. They even insist on different terms: "terrorist" or "militant," in place of "liberator" or even "soldier." Terrorists are on one side and righteous defenders are on the other.

A people whose homes and families have been decimated are labeled terrorists! And an occupying force whose legitimacy is predicated upon violence are the righteous defenders!

But remember, colonization is an inherently violent process. Theodore Herzl, who John F. Kennedy had affectionately called the "Prophet of Zionism," admitted as much — that there is no hope of any colonial project without having colonizers first providing a garrison.

A garrison state is the police stations, the army bases, the occupying forces. Why do they exist? And what do they do? To familiarize you with another Fanon quote: "Decolonization is an inherently violent process." It is like this, because it poses a challenge to the already existing order of violence — the superstructure of repression!

Resistance forces are national liberators

And so, it is unsurprising that a decolonization movement developed and acted with such nationalist fervor — for the resistance forces are not terrorists, but national liberators

Before turning our attention to the specific program of action at hand, we must be clearer on a few things. Firstly, we must be clear about who the enemies are and from whom they receive their support.

On the side of our enemies, we have Israel and world Zionism, whose existence is bound with world imperialism. Imperialism extends its interests into the settler-colonial state of Israel and would be undermined by its destruction.

As the British Empire bound their interests to the emerging Zionist movement, so too does the current global hegemon — the United States of America — a settler project itself.

In the first case, the U.S. support for Israel does not mostly come directly from the free will of its people — but it comes from a minority: those who control the economic, cultural and legal apparatus. And it includes the politicians, corporate stakeholders, university presidents

and local council members. It is chiefly their interests which are advanced by the slaughter of Palestinians, while students and working peoples do not benefit one iota.

Working people and students lose! As the contradictions of capitalism intensify, and as our burdens of tuition, wages and debt become cumbersome, we ultimately lose. In fact, it is products of our labor and talents and our money that are sent to Israel.

In fact, it is only because of the expropriation of these things and provision of U.S. weapons that Israel survives. Israel is a settler project — an illegitimate oppressor nation built on stolen land — and a battering ram for world imperialism.

So that begs the question of what to do. What can be done in our position, as we live in the heart of world imperialism — the belly of the beast?

Organize and unite!

We can organize. It is essential that we do so. Our individual efforts can only do so much. As the puppet governments of big capital muddy the waters with divisiveness, we must use our most valuable armament: unity.

On this very question, Kwame Nkrumah stressed this principle in no uncertain terms. At a 1963 conference, where Nkrumah addressed many African heads of state on colonial questions, he said: “We must unite now or perish!” [Revolutionary leader Nkrumah was the first president of independent Ghana.]

We must be united and organized in our actions. But “How do we act?” So, let us suppose that the principal source of the enemy’s firepower lies in its alliance with world imperialism. Let us then suppose that world imperialism draws its strength from appropriating labor power — in the form of consumerism, wage labor and other ways — would it then not make sense that we remove this source — the blood that imperialism feeds on — especially if it is at our expense?

If we are to remain united in action, then we must be united in our campaigns, coordinating an organized economic Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions campaign.

As residents of the imperial core, and as the youth who stand to inherit the earth, we owe it to our siblings in Palestine to assist in their liberation efforts. And as students, we occupy a unique position within the university system.

We can rarely trust authorities to do the right thing, especially when their interests run contrary to any lasting peace. It is always by the pressure and resilience of the people that conditions change. As a young person reflecting on the current conditions of the world, my fate is bound with my siblings in Palestine. Any advance they make is also our advance. And until they are unfettered from the chains of their enemy, we must work tirelessly.

Free Palestine from the river to the sea!

A victory for Palestine would be a victory for the global working class and oppressed. And so, as the brave, young fighters of the resistance take up their arms, we must do so the same in whatever way we can. We should not rest until Palestine is free from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

We should shine a scrutinizing light on a particular facet of the relationship between universities and this genocide. Universities are often thought of as bastions of free thought, innovation and radical ideas.

Looking beyond the surface, we find that this is a bourgeois deception — a clever lie created to obfuscate the underpinnings of the academy that is a neoliberal institution, swayed by the whims of capital.

The young intellectuals enter the academy with hopeful aspirations of applying their talents to meaningful work. Instead, they are inundated with a culture of “publish or perish” and are pushed to fill space in the most prestigious academic journals. They are dismayed by the unnecessary disjunction between the masses of people and their scholarly pursuits, often falling prey to the inertia of complacency, reinforced by financial pressures.

The academy, no matter how ‘radical’ it brands itself, is still an industry. It is a hegemonic institution that dulls the revolutionary edge of otherwise promising student and scholar activists. It exists to dilute the dissension of the young radical, often perpetuating a system of academic parochialism. In a way, the forces that dominate the university ensure that the intellectual rarely scrutinizes the social totality, lest the academic face marginalization.

This is one of the many reasons why counter-hegemonic institutions have been the most vocal about the Palestinian genocide. And why those who depend on academia have hardly said anything at all, at least within the framework of their institution.

In order for us, as students and future intellectuals, to achieve academic freedom and find practical usefulness in our work, insofar as it helps people, we must demand a free Palestine and an end to the system which insists on its destruction.

posted on March 14, 2024
