

Introduction from Cornell faculty member Russell Rickford

I would like to thank the co-sponsors of this lecture, and they are legion. We'd like to thank the Africana Studies and Research Center, American Studies, the Institute for Comparative Modernities, Comparative Muslim Societies, Ithaca Jewish Voice for Peace, the Multicultural Resource Center, the Ithaca Committee for Justice in Palestine, the Ithaca Democratic Socialists of America, Cornell Students for Justice in Palestine, Black Students United at Cornell and the Congo Square Market.

Now while all of these organizations may not all agree with all of the perspectives expressed this evening, they staunchly believe in the open and democratic exchange of political points of view. I promise we will have some vigorous Q&A this evening. First I just wanted to show two very very brief videos.

BLM video: "When I See Them, I See Us"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xsdpg-9cmSw>

AJ+ video: Violence in Israel and the Palestinian Territories: It's The Occupation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4th92-J32Q>

Years ago, the great Black intellectual D.B. DuBois said that most men today cannot conceive of freedom that does not involve somebody's slavery. That statement is still true today. Freedom defined as free markets, as so-called free enterprise, means exploitation and servitude for those who do not own capital.

One alternative is radical freedom. Radical freedom means demanding for all human beings the dignity, the rights and resources you desire for yourself. It means that my freedom is inextricable of all oppressed peoples. It means when liberation comes it must be all of us or none of us. One is reminded of the need for the expansive concept of freedom when one examines the many links between African Americans and Palestinians. The structures of racial oppression force both African Americans and Palestinians to live in an almost permanent state of emergency and crisis. Both African Americans and Palestinians face merciless state violence. Both face white supremacist regimes rooted in the historical phenomena of settler colonialism. While Gaza has long been described as one of the world's largest open air prisons, a virtual police state has transformed many African American communities into militarized zones of detention, surveillance and punishment. African Americans and Palestinians are routinely criminalized as violent and in need of pacification. The forces of occupation deploy many of the same military techniques and material to subjugate and contain the two peoples. In some cases, the same security companies are involved in a repression.

In recent years Black Americans and Palestinians have begun drawing explicit connections between the struggles of their peoples. During uprisings against police terrorism in Ferguson, some black activists expressed support for Palestinian resistance to Israeli apartheid, while some Palestinian activists in the West Bank issued solidarity statements of their own, providing advice for example, on how to cope with tear gas attacks. Last year thousands of Black

students, workers, activists and artists signed a Black Palestinian solidarity statement. It said “We choose to join one another in resistance, not because our struggles are the same but because we each struggle against the forces of structural racism.” Such expressions of solidarity are essential to movement building and understanding the global reach of racism. The politics of solidarity is not about claiming the perfect symmetry between Black America and Palestine. No such symmetry exists. And no political analogy is perfect. But the black Palestinian analogy is extremely useful. It reminds both African Americans and Palestinians that we are not isolated minorities, indeed we are part of the global resistance to oppression and white supremacy. The historical relationship between black America and the state of Israel is complex. Before and after the founding of Israel in 1948, many black leaders supported Zionism, seeing the movement as an expression of the third world quest for self-determination. Relatively few black observers condemned the dispossession of Arabs at that time. In subsequent years however many African American progressives and internationalists came to recognize Zionism as a form of colonialism and to regard the state of Israel as a settler colony engaged in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Now more than ever, the Black liberation struggle, indeed all forces of anti-racism, need the political clarity that such analysis provides.

The corporate media and political establishment routinely portray Israel as a vulnerable victim rather than a powerful military aggressor. Control of the political thought of the American ? is necessary to justify massive US aid to Israel and to continue the policy of shielding Israeli human rights abuse from the condemnation of the world. However anti-colonialists and anti-racists recognize the Palestinian struggle as a struggle against colonialism, apartheid, and occupation. And know that there can be no peace without justice. They understand that freedom and justice in Palestine, black America ending all forms of white supremacy throughout the world. They also understand the need for more courage. Anti-racism does not mean speaking out when it is convenient or comfortable or expedient. Anti-racism requires permanent principled engagement with the forces of racism and colonialism. Freedom does not mean accepting the received wisdoms of the powerful. It means independent thought and analysis. It means dissent, it means exercising our democratic right to stand with the oppressed. It means speaking truth to power, despite attempts by the status quo to suppress the conversation. Genuine anti-racists thus reject the equation of criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. This of course is a long standing strategy for smothering critiques of the occupation of Palestine. Many of the planners of tonight’s program, some of whom you will meet shortly, are staunchly committed to an agenda of anti-racism and anti-colonialism. They are caught up in a multicultural, multiracial effort to prepare young people for critical thought, to build solidarity on behalf of the oppressed. They insist upon the right to oppose racism, colonialism and militarism wherever they appear. An effort to stifle this discussion and similar campus conversations reflects the corporate domination of our education system. The neoliberal university is not designed to prepare young people for critical thought or independent analysis, it is designed to prepare them for efficient preparation of global capitalism and compliance with the existing ?. Overcoming such moral paralysis requires that we find our voice. I’d like to briefly introduce three people who have found theirs. These three organizers will make very brief remarks before we introduce Rev. Hagler.

Beth Harris is a member of Jewish Voices for Peace, she took her first action against racial discrimination in grade school in Indianapolis IN where there were rules and norms that excluded both Blacks and Jews from certain spaces in civil society. Her activism against Israel's occupation and the violation of Palestinian rights began in 1995 when she was chairperson of her Jewish synagogue's social justice committee in Seattle and Israeli peace groups warned that the expansion of Jewish-only settlements and the demolition of Palestinian homes were foreclosing opportunities for peace.

Nadia Chadry (sp?) is a member of Students for Justice in Palestine. She got involved in anti-racist work in the fall of her freshman year through SJP. Her sister was always very aware of race and gender and class actions when she was growing up and she was thus inspired to start the work. And also growing up in an overwhelmingly white environment sensitized her to the need to speak up against racism at home and abroad

Finally Amber ? is a member of Black Students United. As a Black queer woman, Amber felt compelled and feels compelled to engage in social justice and to push for the liberation of our communities. To continue, as well, the black radical legacy of resistance. Since coming to campus she has been engaged in many moments of activism. She's a TA in the Cornell Prison Education Program and she's a proud member of ?? Cooperative.

So first we have some brief words from Beth, Nadia and Amber and then we will bring on Rev. Hagler.

Beth Harris:

As a member of the national board of Jewish Voice for Peace and the local Ithaca chapter, I would like to thank the Africana Center and all of the co-sponsors for hosting this very important event. I would also like to thank Rev. Graylan Hagler for coming to Ithaca and sharing his important experience and perspective. Now it may surprise you that Jewish people disagree about some things. And that includes the role of race, ethnicity and religion in legal and political systems. For some Jewish people, the lesson of the German genocide against the Jews in Europe is that we cannot depend on equal rights in order to secure our safety and freedom. What we must have is a political majority that is maintained through military might even if this requires the violation of rights of others who are in the territory that we seek to control. This position supports Israel's permanent military, political and economic domination of the Palestinian people as necessary for Jewish survival. While I understand the fears that drive this perspective, I disagree. As survivors, I think we have a collective responsibility and that is to resist oppression against all groups of people, including the Palestinians who have been denied their fundamental human rights and political freedom. We must oppose laws and political institutions that put some people outside the protection of law due to their race, ethnicity, religion or economic status. And we must create solidarity with all of those who are oppressed for their human dignity. There is a link between the oppression of Jews, the history of the oppression of Jews and the exclusion of Palestinians and AFRICAN AMERICAN from the protection of their fundamental human rights today. My organization, Jewish Voice for Peace nearly doubled in size in the wake of Israel's war on Gaza in the summer of 2014 when 2,100

Palestinians were killed and 66 Israeli soldiers and 7 Israeli citizens. That means that more than 96% of those killed were Palestinians. This was not an equal fight. During the slaughter, Rabbi Bran Rosen reworked the first chapter of Lamentations and I'm just going to share a short segment. "All along the roads is mourning. The teeming market places have been bombed into emptiness. The only sounds we hear are cries of pain, silent, glaring, bitterness echoing into the vacuum of homes destroyed and dreams denied. We have become Gaza's master, leveling neighborhoods with a mere touch of a button, for her transgression of resistance. Her children born into captivity, they know us only as occupiers, enemies to be feared and hated. We have lost all that was once precious to us. This fatal attachment to our own might has become our downfall. This idolatrous veneration of the land has sent wandering into a wilderness of our own making." May our time together tonight connecting the dots helps us find a way out.

Nadia:

I'm Rehana. I'm here on behalf of Cornell SJP. Since we're talking about occupation, I think it's important to say that Cornell is on occupied tribal lands. I don't have quite as much to say, thank you Beth that was really beautiful. I just wanted to thank Reverend for coming here today to speak to us. SJP was really happy to be able to work with Prof. Rickford to get you here. And basically on a primarily Zionist campus what we aim to do is educate people and raise awareness about this issue and I think that linking it to black solidarity is a really great way to do that and kind of bring it home. Thank you so much for coming and I'm really looking forward to hearing what you have to say.

Amber:

Hi everybody. So I'm Amber, a student in the ILR School and ? Political action for Black Students United. I'm going to use my time to update some of the work that's been going on the last couple of months. Our organization like many ? across the country, a lot of our demands have to do with changing the campus culture, getting more faculty of color, students of color, getting a commemoration for the old Africana building. One thing we did focus on was prisons and Cornell's investment in the prison industry. I'm sure many of you are familiar with where our ? is successful, a divestment campaign at the U. of CA a successful divestment campaign. We're looking to make Cornell the next one on the list. Has anybody here been to the Johnson Museum? Show of hands? That security system ? and it's been like that for a while and that's part of our demands we delivered back in November. Luckily the contract with GPS (sp?) is up for renewal in 6 months, six months from November so that puts us May/June, and according to the administration they are working with us to try to get that switched to a different security system. We're going to continue to put pressure on them and continue to hold them accountable. I have no other updates on that other than the word they've given us at the most recent meeting, but at least it's on their radar, something that was not on their radar a while ago even though these were things that have been talked about way before I got here. So be on the lookout for a successful contract change with them.

Rickford:

Rev. Hagler is the senior minister of the Plymouth UCC in Washington, D.C. Rev. Hagler has repeatedly spoken out against US law enforcement's long tradition of dehumanizing African Americans. The police treatment of black neighborhoods as occupied territories, and the role of Israel in the militarization of police in the US. Born and raised in Baltimore, Rev. Hagler has praised young people from Baltimore to Palestine who protest police and military brutality and occupation and denounced their political leader's failures to address institutional barriers to economic opportunities and political empowerment. Rev. Hagler is a cosigner of the 2015 Black solidarity statement with Palestine. Known for leading a courageous social justice ministry, Rev. Hagler has always connected the dots. Between struggles against oppression within and outside the US. He took a leading role in struggles against segregation of public housing in South Boston and against apartheid in South Africa. He served on the steering committee of United for Peace and Justice which works to end war and oppression and to shift resources toward human need. He's now involved in a campaign to support Washington national Airport workers in their struggle for a living wage, among many other campaigns. We are very fortunate to have Rev. Hagler with us and a quick reminder that Rev. Hagler will also speak tomorrow, 5:30-7 pm at GIAC gymnasium, 301 W. Court St. here in Ithaca. Also if you're interested in continuing the conversation about Black Palestinian solidarity, please be sure to sign the sign-in sheet that is circulating. Among the future events being planned is a community read of Angela Davis' new book "Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson Palestine and the Foundations of a Movement." Please join me in welcoming Rev. Hagler.

Rev. Hagler:

Good afternoon all. Thank Russell Rickford for his introduction and the whole team for all you have done to allow me to be here today, to come from Wash. DC here to Ithaca, NY. I gotta say, you know the subject must be important because today is my birthday and I'm here. That for me is a way to spend birthdays, you get something done and open up some new vistas in which people can see the world with different lenses. I'm no spring chicken. I've been around a little while and I turned 62. But I raise that issue up because...I was talking in the hallway and in 2014, January; we took a delegation to Israel and the West Bank. That delegation was a Black delegation made up of folks like me and the former director of Trans Africa, Bill Fletcher and a number of word artists and spoken artists and we went there under the auspices of the Jimmy Carter Center. What was important was each of us came from different places, the African arena, myself a preacher, one that had been engaged long term, Bill Fletcher a unionist and a human rights worker and Jaserry Acks (sp?). If you have not seen his video that he filmed while he was with us, called "Checkpoint," you can find it on YouTube. You should check it out because he walked around with his camera like this the whole time we were there picking up footage and I kept getting worried that he was going to get busted walking around filming stuff that folks weren't suspicious and didn't want filmed. Then we also had a young woman with us who was a native of Rwanda who had the experience of the genocide of Rwanda and who was with us to look at this with different lenses. It was one of the most telling events and I'm telling you about the configuration of the delegation because I want you to find how black artists and black minds saw it with the experience of race and racism of US and America perceived and understood the situation stepping onto Palestinian soil, stepping onto and into the occupied

territory. Like I said most of the delegation was young and a couple of us like Bill Fletcher and myself had long term experience participating in movements that engage the nation and people in their aspirations toward freedom.

I was one that was a part of the Free South Africa movement in Boston and manned a picket line for over two years as we tried to deal with the Kungler? And tried to get the Krugrand out of the US. So some of us were long term activists and some had just come into it and were seeing for the first time. What was interesting about this was that as we walked around on the second day, it was interesting how all of a sudden everybody started saying you don't need to explain to me what's going on. Because where people were coming out of it was too familiar all of a sudden. It was like they had not left some of the neighborhoods that they were rooted in, they were seeing the duplication of the same tactics, the same type of treatment, the same type of perspective that those who were in dominance were looking at those in the West bank who were occupied. I saw that. I felt that.

My experience also comes to me because I was pastor in Roxbury MA, some of you know Roxbury. And in Roxbury I was there in the 80's and 90's before I went to Wash DC. Now one thing that being in a little church outside Dudley Station where Malcom X ran around, and being in the midst of that neighborhood, I saw firsthand, experienced firsthand of the effects of police patrolling the Black community. I was there when somebody by the name of Charles Stuart, you may know that name, Charles Stuart took his wife to a Lamaze class, birthing class, at Brigham Women's Hospital in daylight and all of a sudden killed her and told the police he'd been carjacked by a black man. My church was in the middle of that. My church was in the middle of that and I knew instantly what was getting ready to happen. Before the news really started crescendoing, all of my women and men were going to be under scrutiny, they were going to be harassed, and sure enough as I was coming from church one evening I saw this image I shall never forget. Riding down Dudley street going home, all of a sudden seeing 15-16 black men up on the wall with their hands in the air like this and with their pants down around their ankles so that their genitalia were showing and the cops were laughing with their guns pointed at them and I knew in that moment enough was enough. I began organizing against the police at these illegal tactics, but again what I'm saying that I saw all of a sudden at the west Bank. I saw that same thing that I struggled against years earlier in Roxbury going on as a daily routine in the West Bank and as people were being harassed because of what they looked like and who they were. You see, these facts are ones that have borne for a long time as Dr. Rickford bore out, it is a worldwide phenomenon of law enforcement and military controlling those who are poor, those who are oppressed, those who have been dispossessed, denied people's rights and justifying it in terms in the language of security and you know as well as I do all you gotta do is say terrorist today and someone refuses to look any further in deciding guilt. That's the way it functions in America that's the way it functions in the world right now. All over.

But who's the terrorist? We have to ask the question what is terrorism? Is terrorism really a neutral term that is used as an objective term? What I mean is those who create definitions and those who create context, they're the ones who can define who the terrorists are and who the terrorist are not. I can remember years ago I was in the Soviet Union before it crumbled and I

was sitting in Moscow and just decided one night I was going to go with my delegation to the ballet because I was kind of tired. So I sat there and all of a sudden in the lobby there was a guy trying to get my attention. And you know how it is, you're in a strange place and you know you really don't know anybody and why somebody signaling you like that, so I turned around to look and it turned out to be a Palestinian from ? University. Before it is he got on the phone and started calling all the Africans who were studying at ? university and all the Palestinians up and so by the time my delegation came back we were 20, 25, 30 strong in the room. So of course my delegation wanted to know what was going on. And so one of the guys who was a Lutheran minister came over and said introduce your friends to us. I didn't know their names so I said they can introduce themselves. And so they introduced and when they got to the guy that was first drew my attention, the Lutheran minister looked at him and he looked at the Lutheran minister and he said to the Lutheran minister, "so you're a terrorist." And the Lutheran minister got all red in the face and he said, "I'm not a terrorist. I'm an American!" And he says "and your bombs killed my sister."

Again, it's where you stand,, and what time you stand, is how you see the world and understand what is going on in the world. And Roxbury I saw the use of dispossession, you can have a separation wall around Bethlehem or you can have a wall of segregation around Roxbury and ? Just like you can have a wall of separation around most of Wash DC right now, where you have poor communities that cannot break out of those poor communities and those are economic walls rather than physical walls. I'm saying all this to give us to understand there is a correlation that exists between the occupied territories or occupied Was DC or occupied Boston MA or occupied Chicago or any of those places around the world. We understood when we got to Bethlehem, there's this amazing wall. Donald Trump, that guy, that guy's preaching racism, he talks about how a wall has been built by Israel and that's what he wants to build, a wall like that on the Southern border to keep those from Mexico out. Same kind of mentality. If you see the wall around Bethlehem, the wall looks like a prison wall. A prison wall meanders all through Palestinian territory and very often on Palestinian land. A prison wall with sniper towers on, barbed wire in many cases. I happen to be in Bethlehem on Orthodox Christmas. Can you imagine coming into Bethlehem on Orthodox Christmas and seeing this wall. And I began to wonder if the three wise men were coming to visit Jesus they couldn't get through that wall and so they would be trapped on the other side because their papers wouldn't be in place, they wouldn't have the proper permit to make the journey. Bethlehem, historic place of Jesus, is surrounded and cut off.

I went back from 1974 when I first went to Israel to 2014 I went back to the store to buy souvenirs in ? Square. And when I was there in 74 the guy's father ran the place. We started talking and one of the things he was complaining about was that it was the high season, just shows you what the impact, it was the high religious season and he could not get a permit to leave Bethlehem to go and pick up supplies in Jerusalem. And so there he was, stuck with the emptying store. The kind of relationship that exists in Bethlehem, this law that stood reminded me of our penal system in the US. Our penal system in the US that over 30 years ago had only about 300,000 people in it, but today more than 2 million black and brown in it. We carry the highest incarceration rate in the world in order to control our ?. The prison wall or the

separation wall makes it clear that the West Bank is probably the largest open air prison ever built. I know people say that about Gaza but if you talk about land mass and you see this meandering wall that controls water, that controls movement, that controls resources you begin to realize that by all means an purposes the people who are inside that wall that is controlled by the Israelis are indeed in prison. They're living under the shadow of the wall. Living under the shadow of the military that is an occupying force, that is controlling and defining life and defining future and defining ?.

Our Black delegation from the US had already experienced in our lives the histories, brutalities and limitations imposed by the American racial system, a racial system that's overt at times, visible and not readily seen at times that keeps Blacks in their place no matter how it is framed. It keeps Blacks in their place in limit our potential and though we may consider ourselves the ? of African American, it is actually not our land, it is not our government, it is not our economic system, nor are its policies designed for us. It is with these kinds of lives, and this kind of sensitivity, informed by historical and racial injustice and from our own personal experience with racism, that we stepped onto Palestinian soil. We saw sights that were historical, sights that were biblical, sights that were ? conflict, that were sacred to the three Abrahamic faiths, yet it was also unholy and broken in its historical context. What was interesting to me was that I had this picture in my mind from 1974 when I was 20 years old and I could get on a bus and go from Jerusalem to Bethlehem or I could get up to Nazareth, just travel around, get on a bus, grab a cab and just go. And then to come back in 2014 and to see such militarization, militarization at every turn almost at every place, the kinds of scrutiny and paranoia that exists where everybody who did not look like they were Jewish was a suspect and who'd be stopped and arrested. I was in Hebron, some of you know the story of Hebron because in the 80's there was a massacre in the mosque in Hebron, where one of Meir Kahane's disciples went into the mosque and killed numbers of men, women and children. I went to that mosque.

Then on the other side there is a synagogue so I went to that synagogue and I looked around to see what was going on and I walked through the park across the street and looked at all the plaques and all the folks who had donated money to support that park and to support that synagogue. And then it dawned on me that as I went to that park and walked around and looked at the synagogue that when I arrived there was one armored vehicles and now there were five armored vehicles and they were all looking in my direction. I'm from Baltimore so I know it's time to step off. And step off slow so that you don't look like you're running from something and I went and slowly wandered back to find my delegation and just as I found my delegation a platoon of these folks came running at us with their automatic weapons pointing at us screaming for our papers at the tops of their lungs. I told this story before and there I am I'm standing with my delegation and I got my hand on my passport and I'm holding it, I can feel its pages, my delegation produced their papers. My arm would not move. I don't know if it was because I was being resistant to what was going on or there was some kind of post-traumatic stress that was going on in me but my arm wouldn't move. And now I'm the only one who hasn't produced the papers the guy is sitting there and he's shaking his gun in my face and he's saying "Papers, papers!" and I knew I couldn't incite him, I knew I couldn't argue the man had a gun. And so the only thing I could think to say was, "Why?" And to my surprise he answered. He

said because Arabs are not allowed on this road. And with that, he kind of broke my eyes and I said well then you don't need to see my papers. I didn't say because I'm not Arab but he said it in pretty good English and so I turned around and I turned back and I said, "Boy, where you from?" And he turned out to be from Chicago. And at that point I said "aint' no way in the world you're going to see papers from me unless I say pimply faced white boy people are gonna quote that and quote that but he had pimples and he was white and therefore I wasn't going to let no pimply faced white boy from Chicago point a gun in my face and get me to produce papers you better shoot me right now and I turned around and walked away. And my God I got away with it, my delegation was shaking and they wanted to argue with me afterwards but I told them remember this, because I had an American passport I had a little bit more power than a Palestinian would have had. Because a Palestinian would have been shot down for doing the same thing that I did, the thing is that God's grace was with me and I was able to walk away from that, but sisters and brothers I vowed from that moment on that everything from that moment that happened to me in the West Bank and in Israel I was going to have to resist with every fiber of my being because I realized one thing.

There's a relationship between the racism that is going on in Palestine and the West Bank and Gaza perpetrated by the Israeli government against those people, there is racism and I also know this that racism is a cancer, if you don't resist it will eat you up. If you don't challenge it over here you're going to meet it over there. So no one can be exempt from this kind of racism that exists. What I saw there is the continued colonialization of Africa for example or the extermination of native people from the soils here in America because someone always arrived just like they arrived in the Zionist argument as they came out of WWII in Europe, the argument was simple, I call it the colonialist argument. And the colonialist argument is we're people without a land and Palestine is a land without a people. Just like folks did not recognize native culture in this country or in the Americas but felt that they had a right to take it and not coexist. You see the issue is, the issue is we have to begin to try to look at the world through different lenses, we have to challenge injustice wherever it is or it will truly eat us alive.

Look at what's going on right now, here in the U.S. You know the fact is I am enjoying Donald Trump. I'm gonna tell you why I'm enjoying Donald Trump because Donald Trump has stripped away any illusion of what conservative politics is about. Conservative politics has always been the politics of white supremacy, it has always been that it always will be that. The fact is when you come to Was DC and the conservative political action committee, all of those organizations have historical patterns of being connected to the Klan, to the possess out there, to the militia, and they're dressed up in suits and hey look good and the press goes to see them, and every conservative politician goes down there to listen to them and speak to CPAC. And if white supremacist organizations, that's what we're encountering, this resurgence not really resurgences not an exposure of white supremacy. I was on a talk show the other week and I was having this conversation with this conservative. One of the things that he was complaining about, he was saying, we're sick and tired, meaning whites, we're sick and tired of being politically correct. And I know you've heard that argument before and I looked at him and I decided I'm gonna talk about Obama a little bit, but not in a negative way. But I said it this way. I said, I don't know who your mama was or how your mama raised you, but my mama taught

me to be respectful of everybody, to treat people with dignity, respect and care and it seems to me that that is being politically correct. So I don't know what your mama taught you, maybe calling the N word, you call me I'm gonna knock you on your butt. The issue is we got to stop having the kind of intellectual conversations that are ignorance.

And also the issue is that we gotta stand up. **We gotta challenge racism and discrimination and hatred wherever it is and Zionism is racism.** We've gotta to stand up and challenge it sisters and brothers because the fact is it's not gonna go away on its own unless we as people of conscience and goodwill pose some kind of challenge to it. Just like we had to fight South Africa against apartheid and what I try in fighting against apartheid in South Africa, I remember being called into the president's office, I was in school. And he says you need to leave that mess alone because they're communists. And you wanna keep on doing that you cannot do it here because they're communists. You know, that was part of the old argument to dissuade people from being engaged with the freedom movement in South Africa because they were after all of them Communist.

Or it's like the struggle around Palestinian rights it gets framed that all of them are terrorists. So if you raise up the issue – or this, if you want to raise up the issue about Palestine, then you must be a Israel hater. You must be one who is anti-Semitic and hates Jews, you must be one who wants to dismantle Israel. Well, the issue is as a person of faith, I don't want to destroy anybody, I don't want to see anybody harmed in any way or capacity, but what I want to do is I want to see people free, I want to see people being able to live as sisters and brothers. I want people to have dignity, I don't want people to have a lopsided sense of justice. I don't want people to talk about a two state solution and then you move all these settlers into Palestinian territory and the settlements get larger and larger so it's a ridiculous argument to keep talking about a two state solution unless folks pack up and go back to the other side and leave continuous land to the Palestinians. Or the blockade, the thorough blockade that is on Gaza from land and sea and air that keep people there living at the bare minimum and can bomb people at will and therefore people can't even get out of the country and people can't even get into the country. Just look at my dear Benjamin and Code Pink as they were trying to take a flotilla into Gaza and they grabbed her at an airport and broke her arm. That's the kind of struggle.

People always come back and say Reverend you're being anti-Semitic. But I'm not. I'm not anti-Arab at all. I'm not anti-Semitic because I'm not anti-Ethiopian because Ethiopia is Semitic. I'm not anti-Eritrean. I am not anti-Semitic because I'm also not anti-Jewish. I am not anti-Semitic but the fact is I said that because I'm going to show you that folks have captured terms and have basically reframed discussion of concepts and changed the narrative so that the narrative is no longer factual because narratives don't have to be factual. Narratives have to be used and formulated and pushed forward so people eventually buy into those narratives. Such as conservative rather than racist. Or the Holocaust. Whoops, there he goes. I remember a "Sex in the City," and I think Charlotte, very WASPy woman was having a conversation with the guy she was dating, I think his name was Goldenblatt and he was worried about them being exposed in a relationship because his mother he said lost a lot of people in the Holocaust and there was

silence all of a sudden. And so he turned to Charlotte and said why the silence and she said you brought up the Holocaust and now I can't say anything else. You see, what I'm getting at, the way things are used is to shut down discussion. Just like Donald Trump says, all of a sudden you want to talk about Israeli policies you're anti-Semitic. Right? Or you're one of those people who don't believe in the Holocaust. I got news.

One of my peeves around the Holocaust is this: there was and is and don't get me wrong a Holocaust that happened in Europe. But it's not "the" it's "a" Holocaust because we're standing on soil right now that belonged to somebody else and they were wiped out as a consequence of it and that was a holocaust. The Northwest Passage was a holocaust. The rape and pillage of Africa was a holocaust. All of the stuff that's gone on, the slavery that took place over 400 years, that was a Holocaust, so when we start saying "the" Holocaust we are practicing this exceptionalism where you're saying this is more important than anything else, this is more important than what happened to you. And the fact is that those holocausts that took place are just as devastating and painful to every single group that has been through one. You can't lessen one over the other. But then also if we're not careful, if we just lean into our pain and we own our pain, then all of a sudden we start justifying ourselves and our misconduct against others by holding onto our pain. You know what I'm saying? Am I making sense here? With all the stuff that Black folk have been through, if we held onto our pain we would hate most of you. It would create a psychosis in us. And so somewhere along the way, we got to live into our history but we cannot hold on to anything that happened us to as a justification to do to you what was done to us.

We were in a battle in the United Church of Christ and this was interesting because the United Church of Christ had this thing go on. We passed a resolution about Israel and its occupation of Palestinians, and then all across the country numbers of rabbis and folks we had relationship with said to some of those United Church of Christ ministers, we really like you and you're a really good person but we really can't sit down with you and have a discussion until you change that reprehensible resolution. It was a mild resolution. So we convened a meeting of our partners, Israelis, Palestinians, rabbis, United Church of Christ ministers and we sat there day after day in a room in Cleveland and one of the things that came out that I thought was interesting, one of the Israelis on the fourth day screams at this 70 year old Palestinian woman who was a Quaker by the way, and she keeps saying one thing, I know about all the resolutions, I know about all the history, I know all that, but what I really don't know, is I got a five year old grandchild that I haven't been able to visit in 5 years. She says that's what I do know and she kept saying that over and over again, a very human argument. And finally one of the Israelis on the fourth day looks at her as she says that again and he goes, "Damn it. I'm glad we got the power, I'm glad we got the power so we can do it to you before you do it to us." I leave that? There it is.

It was the same thing that I faced when I worked in Mozambique, was that you had white settlers saying I'm glad we have the power because we can do it to you before you can do it to us. There wasn't a blood bath in Mozambique except for the blood bath orchestrated by South Africa and the US. But it was the same argument in South Africa among the white minority

government was that we're glad we got the power so we can do it to you before you can do it to us. There wasn't a blood bath of white folks in South Africa – there was a blood bath of blacks in South Africa but not of whites. The issue of what I'm getting at is that folks hold on to their pain and therefore by holding on to their pain they do to others what was done to them. And we gotta break that cycle. We cannot live caught up in that cycle of you give me I give you. We can't even live in that cycle because that cycle is damaging. We gotta break beyond it in order to construct a world where people can actually be at peace and live in peace because I got news for you. Peace is not just the absence of conflict, it is the presence of justice. It's the presence of justice. And so we decide equally and not lopsided as being discussed right now, when folks say the Palestinians don't want to negotiate, well the Palestinians want because no one wants to talk about the right of Palestinians to return. That's an issue. Or how can you have because they say we want to coexist with a demilitarized Palestine. Are you gonna demilitarize also? Because that's the only way in which you can have equality in that formula, is when everybody decided to lay down arms, everybody decides to put it away. Otherwise you still have a lopsided form. That's the way racism is. It exists in Palestine, it exists in the US, it is a lopsided formula.

But I got news for you. If you want to save Israel, we need to bring Israel legitimately to a table to talk peace. The BDS movement is one way to do it. Boycott, divestment and sanctions. You say it won't work, it worked against South Africa. Mandela walked out of jail because of the boycott movement against South Africa. It also helped to avert a blood bath in South Africa. You can solve things different ways, one is by economic pressure, we've had enough guns and enough bloodshed and enough bullets and missiles and rockets and all that other kind of stuff, we've had too much of that kind of stuff. It's now time to go another way. And one way that, since a million Palestinians have called for the solidarity of boycott, divestment and sanctions. Folks say it won't work. That's why you got Congress voting on anti-BDS bills. That's why you got state legislatures voting to try to take your First Amendment right on anti-BDS bills because it is working. It's working around the world. And it's not, it's not, it's not, let me repeat it one more time, it's not to destroy Israel, it may be the thing that saves Israel, because you cannot walk around armed to the teeth and so militarized and that not affect your psyche and drive you absolutely crazy with your own power and your own sense of privilege and your own sense of purpose because eventually you're going to die.

If somebody understands biblical history, great King Solomon, rich King Solomon, by the time he came to the end of his reign the country was broke up and there was going to be a coup d'état because he'd sold weapons to everybody and he had to have a larger and larger standing army in order to defend himself and in the end he was broke. And in the end he couldn't feed nobody. All that militarization will not make Israel any safer. But also remember this, remember this is part of the psychosis. You may have heard Netanyahu say, "Oh Israel lives in a bad neighborhood." Heard that now? Was he talking about my neighborhood. What I'm getting on is the racist overtones of that line. The way it is understood, because when we talk about oh, it's a bad neighborhood, lock your door, put your dog in. It continues to come. If you don't think it's racist, when Netanyahu came and spoke to Congress and ignored the President of the United States because he was black he proved it was racist. As I say to everybody, when I go to

a church you stop by and ask the senior minister of that church is it all right for me to be, I don't care you chair the deacon board, it's protocol it's the right thing to do. This was a tweak, a smack in the face of the president because he was a black man. Because folks have disagreed with Israel before.

When we were there some Africans had broken out of prison and we went to find them. And they were in a work prison, forced labor and they broke out and they marched? Went up to Tel Aviv and . They were from Somalia and Sudan, Eritrea. And you can imagine if you look at the geography they walked there. But Israel will not call these Africans refugees. They're instead called infiltrators. They're called infiltrators because of the international law refugees should be given certain rights. So Israel uses the military term and refers to them as infiltrators. Infiltrators are usually shot. Just think of it, the narrative all over again. That's what is being faced by many people. I look at this as you're going to begin to play word games. I'm not going to call you refugee I'm going to call you infiltrator, that's like ? of a human being. That was to promote the southern politician and delegation of southern states in congress by counting slaves but not giving them the full humanity because that would open up some new issues of how you can enslave those folks who are wholly human. There's a relationship between all of this. I know this. That black lives matter, that's gotta be our struggle, ? got to say black lives matter. Why does black lives matter because the world has said that black lives don't matter. Black lives matter because the world responds as if black lives don't matter. That is an assertion to the world but it's also an affirmation to myself. Because I gotta see it and understand it that black lives matter. I have dignity, I have rights even if you don't give it to me, God has given them to me, God has endowed me with rights, with dignity, feet march, hands move, spirit begin to soar, to lift up human rights and dignity and just as black lives matter, Palestinian lives matter as well because it doesn't matter in the scheme of Israel Palestinian conflict and we must continue to stand and link arms around the world as it says in the book of Amos, until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like an everflowing stream. God bless you for taking the time to listen to me this evening.

Q&A:

Hagler:

One reason the assertion "black lives matter" is that for the dominant culture, white lives automatically matter. So when I talk about the Palestinian lives matter it's because in the context in which you exist, Jewish lives obviously matter. When you've got settlers that are walking around in an occupied territories beating, attacking and shooting Palestinian farmers because they're trying to work their land, there's a different scenario that's existing. I understand what you're saying. Did you live in East Jerusalem or West Jerusalem? East Jerusalem. One of the things I'm saying in the midst of all this, you're talking about the neighborhood in which you live and the approach to it. Let's be honest. There was a real wave after the collapse of the Soviet Union of Russian Jews arriving that really seriously radically changed the body politic and the discussion and it became more conservative. It became more conservative and more virulent in its opposition. [Tehia: actually...???] I can't talk about that, because you also have riots in Baltimore happening, you have riots in Jerusalem of Ethiopian Jews who are rioting against police profiling they felt was taking place in Jerusalem against

them, or the kinds of jobs that Ethiopian Jews have. Which again sets up again that whole racial paradigm, all the military front lines, those types of things.

Q#2

Things have become more overt. And part of this comes of a couple things. One, I got a term for immigrants who come into the US. Everybody talks about we came in and we were discriminated against. The truth is that the groups that came in that was racist, that was what I called anti-feelings. Because a generation later you got people who are mobile enough that they basically merged their narrative into the dominant white narrative of the country, of course with their own nuances to it. Then they become the oppressors of people of color. And we see that over and over and over again. It's like you have Ted Cruz and what's the other one's name, Rubio, right? Latinos trying to be white. They're gonna be white. They'll get there, because they're already there now trying to oppress everybody. What I'm getting at is there's this mobility that takes place and takes shape, and what happens is even when people think that they're liberal, just like we were talking today. We live in places where we don't know each other. I don't care what we're talking about. There's ghettos after ghetto that exists in the US of America. You've got neighborhoods that are still pretty much exclusively white, liberal neighborhood that's still exclusively white. It's like all this ? you see, drives people crazy when people say it's not really racism it's class. And one thing I can truly say in DC, so take me to the poor white neighborhood, because it doesn't exist. It's not class, it's race, but everyone wants to deny race so they can feel that they're liberal.

Q3: Given the nonviolent African American struggle for equality, don't you think it's rather offensive to compare their peaceful tactics with those of Palestinian Islamic terrorists bent on murdering Jewish men, women and children in the streets with knives and bombs? Terrorists who hack a mother to death in her home in front of her children, who fire rockets from the roofs of hospitals and who build terror tunnels underneath kindergartens on the boarder of Gaza? (many in the crowd started to snap fingers at the questioner to show a hostile response who happened to be a young Jewish student, a very intimidating tactic)

Good question. But you should have the same outrage when settlers burn up a Palestinian family and then dance about it in a religious service. What I'm getting at here is that if we're going to advocate for justice and peace you had better advocate for all around. Because the thing is that we discover, and I'm writing a whole chapter right now around the narrative that exists, I was a child of the west. Cowboys and Indians and Indians were bloodthirsty little rascals that were just messing with them poor white settlers and killing them, scalping them. So no one wanted to be an Indian, they wanted to be a cowboy and you find out the narrative is the opposite. That Indians were fighting off genocidal policies that were destroying their life, their way of life, their history, their family, their culture and stealing their land. And so their act was a defensive one because they didn't matter to the dominant culture. Remember this. When people very often respond with violence it's because nobody's listening. Nobody's listening. Nobody's acting like they're listening and nobody's acting like a life matters. That's what I'm talking about we gotta break that cycle that goes on. When the stuff blew up in Baltimore it's because nobody was listening. Nobody was listening and politicians had not cared. I grew up around there where Freddy Gray was killed, locked up and killed, my grandmother's house was four blocks away from there so I knew that neighborhood. I knew that neighborhood when

there was investment in that neighborhood and I watched that neighborhood get systematically get disinvested from. People didn't matter, there was violence all around. And that particular spot set people off. But it had been going on for years. Nobody was listening. Time for all of us to listen. And your pain is as important, yes it is, as somebody else's pain. But your pain is no more special than somebody else's pain.

Q#4 [what makes this situation with Palestinians unique when you're not fighting for right of return in all these other countries where people were displaced when wars lost?]

I was there. And just like you were there, you should be organizing and working to right the wrong if you see there's a wrong. That's what I'm doing from where I stand and with what resources I have. The fact is that so many of us sit back and were apathetic to the injustices we can do something about. I don't want to do that, I'm tired of doing that. I'm going to die on my feet because I'm not gonna be on my knees for anybody. I'm going to deal with racism wherever I see it I'm going to come face to face with it. If that is ? to you, fine.

That was the argument of South Africa. Folks would look at you because you were standing up for black South African and they would say what about the Boer War which was white folks fighting in each other over who was going to control the land. The Boer Wars did not justify what was taking place in South Africa. That was a war that folks fought. Wars don't settle, wars don't bring justice.

[questioner: your analogy is completely irrelevant to what happened in Palestine and Israel in 1948]

You're making the argument that they won the war and war doesn't bring justice.

Q#5 (about if boycotts damage left-wing Israelis)

Probably Jewish Voice for Peace can answer that better than I can. I do know there's a ? myth about the peace movement, or what was the peace movement or the left being outflanked, basically at this point being disempowered in terms of body politic of the country, the country has gone further to the right and been more virulent in terms of continuing to propagate the Zionist policies. Anybody can answer that about the right?

answer from Beth Harris:

The left is under attack in Israel. When I say the left it includes human rights organizations like B'Tselem that's been getting death threats and offices that are searched and people are questioned. There's a group called Break the Silence which is soldiers who have talked about the war crimes that they were involved with and I actually was there when they had the opening exhibition and they had been under attack as well. They're treated as traitors and called liars and so there's the culture makes it also very hard to get jobs. You don't want to take this kind of a stand but people are, there are still groups but it's they're very much under attack and need support. They're different kinds of groups. There are some against the occupation and the settlements, like Peace Now which is a very large organization and then there are others kinds of organizations that are against the racism within Israel as well. There is boycott within Israel, so there is a range of groups but they're small and they're very much under siege. [response from Tehia inaudible]

I hear you but you're not talking about a real democracy when you have second class citizenship that exists and it does. It does. It does even with Arab Jews who are there. They are the ones who met with me in Tel Aviv to tell me that their oppression got really severe when the Ashkenaz arrived. They were telling me that they were basically, understand what the

complexities are. All of us want to look at things, someone wrote me the other day. Maybe Trump was in the race because he wanted to help Hilary out. And that's wishful thinking. But sometimes you just gotta call for what it is when you see it and racism got called for what it is. When I begin to hear about people being discriminated against even in the US that claims to be a democracy as well, the fact is we have discrimination that goes on all the time. And that's a part of it and so we gotta really begin to be critical if we want to get better. I remember Onesco Carvenal (sp?) he was the minister of culture in the Sandinista government. He was a priest and they interviewed him after they had won the revolution and he says, "we gotta fight for the revolution" and the reporter says, but you won! And he says but it's not the kingdom of God yet. And the thing is we push for perfection. We push for perfection and part of getting to perfection is we gotta stop the denials that exist and we exist in this country in a whole lot of denials. It's the worst thing you can imagine, just think of a person of color, when we feel something is a racist attack upon us we are made to prove it by the dominant culture. And the dominant culture always belittles it by saying, there you go playing the race card. There you go being hypersensitive to race all over again. Everyone who's a person of color knows you gotta prove it. And that's a part of the double standard, the lopsided agenda that exists in this country and around the world. Even when you go to a place like Cuba. And I love Cuba but you got black folks picking up garbage and the janitors and that's why I'm saying it is a worldwide phenomena. Again of colonialism, neocolonialism, racism and the patterns of race that exists.