

Pride With Prejudice

No to
Pinkwashing

No to
Israeli Apartheid

Decolonial Reminders

- ▶ This presentation is being given on occupied and stolen Mahican land
- ▶ This year marks the 71th year of the illegal occupation of Palestine by Israelis
- ▶ The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is modern day colonialism
- ▶ Reminder: There is no country on the planet that does not have a serious problem with homophobia and transphobia. To this day Trans and Queer bodies are killed in the United States.
- ▶ Defining our terms

Overview

- ▶ Anti-Zionism vs Antisemitism
- ▶ Hasbara and Brand Israel
- ▶ Intro to Pinkwashing
- ▶ Pinkwashing Exposed
- ▶ Queer Critique of Pride
- ▶ Calls to Action

Anti-Zionism vs. Antisemitism

NOT the same thing!

Definitions

▶ Anti-Zionism

- ▶ (n) Opposition to Zionism.
- ▶ This can take many forms, including but not limited to:
 - ▶ Criticism of the policies and government of the State of Israel
 - ▶ Opposition to the settler colonial occupation of Palestinian land
 - ▶ Criticism of, or opposition to, Jewish ethno-nationalism

▶ Antisemitism

- ▶ (n) Hostility towards or discrimination against Jews.
- ▶ This is NOT okay.

False Claims of Antisemitism

- ▶ “All criticism of Israel is antisemitism, because Israel is the Jewish State!”
- ▶ “Focusing on Israel’s human rights violations is antisemitic, because other countries commit human rights violations, too!”
- ▶ “Talking about pinkwashing erases the identities and contributions of queer and trans Israelis, and is antisemitic.”

Hasbara

- ▶ A form of propaganda aimed at an international audience, primarily, but not exclusively, in western countries. It is meant to influence the conversation in a way that positively portrays Israeli political moves and policies.

Brand Israel

A project of the Israeli government to market Israel as a safe haven and the “only democracy” in the Middle East, despite the fact that it is a white supremacist ethnocracy.



Intro to Pinkwashing

Pinkwashing

- ▶ Pinkwashing is a term that refers to the use of Israel's supposed positive record on LGBTQ human rights to distract from the occupation and colonization of Palestine
- ▶ It is part of the "Brand Israel" PR campaign sponsored by the Israeli government to improve the image of the Israeli state
- ▶ The essence of Pinkwashing is to make the Zionist project appeal to queers worldwide, and has recently shifted to trying to guilt trans people into supporting the Israeli state
- ▶ It also assumes its position as the Queer LGBT savior of all the queers in the Middle East.

Israeli Manifestations of Pinkwashing

“Within global gay and lesbian organising circuits, to be gay friendly is to be modern, cosmopolitan, developed, first-world, global north, and, most significantly, democratic.” Jasbir Puar

This has manifold effects: it denies Israeli homophobic oppression of its own gays and lesbians, of which there is plenty, and it recruits, often unwittingly, gays and lesbians of other countries into a collusion with Israeli violence towards Palestine.

More importantly, it dilutes solidarity with the Palestinian cause by reiterating the terms upon which Israel justifies its violence: Palestinians are too backwards, uncivilised, and unmodern to have their own state, much less treat homosexuals properly.

Homonationalism

- ▶ Reframing queer identities as not only compatible with but exemplary of the agenda of imperialist states - defining queerness as a western phenomenon
- ▶ Western political discourse of American exceptionalism and Western supremacy marks particular bodies (ie. Arab and/or Muslim bodies) as inherently outside both the normative and nonnormative circles of sexuality.
- ▶ The West produces a discourse in which it is the safeguard of the non-normative and actively needs to save non-normative bodies from their cultures' backwards understanding of sexuality.
- ▶ Increasing gay rights have caused some people of good will to mistakenly judge how advanced a country is by how it responds to homosexuality.

A TRANSGENDER JEWISH EDUCATOR FROM ISRAEL



panels of gay and lesbian rights activists
and leaders to go around the United States

J. Jewish

5 Tropes of Pinkwashing

- ▶ While defenders of the Israeli State often claim that pinkwashing merely highlights “LGBT Israel,” their materials and statements say differently.
- ▶ Most common pinkwashing claims or statements contain one or more of these 5 tropes:
 - ▶ Western Exceptionalism/Westernizing Contextual Claims
 - ▶ White Saviorism
 - ▶ Military Worship
 - ▶ Appeals to Jewish Acceptance or Supremacy
 - ▶ Racism and Islamophobia

Western Exceptionalism

- ▶ “Israel is a Western Democracy!”
- ▶ This claim plays on a simplistic Orientalist trope of Arabs and Muslims as uncivilized or lesser.
- ▶ Yet it is also a more complicated claim to analyze
 - ▶ Israel *is* indeed a Western-style Democracy and shares a settler colonial past
 - ▶ Built on stolen land, while constantly denying rights to the living indigenous people of the region
 - ▶ Imperialist military and foreign relations
 - ▶ Disenfranchises people of color in voting
 - ▶ Other characteristics
 - ▶ Israel is even an EU Associate Country
- ▶ This trope, on a deeper level, is about claiming queerness and transness as inherently White, Western, and “good,” while framing homophobia as “other,” “foreign,” and “Eastern.”

Westernizing Contextual Claims

- ▶ “Israel has the best LGBTQ rights record in the Middle East”
- ▶ Underlying racist and Islamophobic trope:
 - ▶ The idea that all Arabs and Muslims are inherently homophobic and hate gay people
- ▶ In reality, most other countries in the region that have homophobic laws retained those laws as a result of British Colonial Codes against homosexuality
- ▶ Homosexuality has been decriminalized in the West Bank since the 1950s, when anti-sodomy laws imposed under British colonial influence were removed from the Jordanian penal code, which Palestinians follow.
 - ▶ It's not Arabs and Muslims who are homophobic, it was the White folks who colonized them and injected homophobia into their culture

White Saviorism

- ▶ “Palestinian queers love Israel/are only safe in Israel.”
- ▶ This, on its face, is a ridiculous claim. The idea that any Palestinian is safe in Israel is rooted in pure fallacy.
- ▶ Israel does not accept LGBTQ refugees from Palestine, or any other Arab nation.
 - ▶ Apparently, Israel’s positive record on LGBTQ human rights only applies if you’re not Arab
- ▶ The Occupation, and Israel itself are built on the dehumanization of, theft from, and continued oppression of, the Palestinian people, and there is no such thing as a Palestinian who benefits from the Occupation.
- ▶ In 2014, a report revealed that Israeli intelligence operatives had an unspoken policy of blackmailing gay Palestinians, in order to use them as informants.
- ▶ This trope plays on the idea that queer Palestinians can only ever be victims, or are constantly in need of saving, in this case by White Jews.

Military Worship

- ▶ “The IDF allows gay and trans people to serve openly!”
- ▶ And?
 - ▶ They are making gay and Trans IDF soldiers tools of the colony - in fact, putting them in direct danger that results from the Israeli Occupation
- ▶ This plays off the IDF’s constant justification of its actions, because it is the “most moral army in the world,” whatever that means.
- ▶ No state-sponsored army can ever be inherently moral
- ▶ Queer and trans people’s ability to live safely is not enhanced by military participation
- ▶ The ability to be sent to kill for the state that you live in does not make you free in any meaningful sense of the word
- ▶ This trope plays off the stereotype of Arabs and Muslims as violent, savage, and constantly attacking the human rights of others.

Appeals to Jewish Acceptance or Supremacy

- ▶ In reality, Judaism - like many religions - has a fraught history of interacting with queerness and transness.
- ▶ Many right-wing Jews (who happen to hold a significant amount of power in the Israeli government) are deeply homophobic.
- ▶ Homophobic and transphobic actions are committed by Jews in Israel with a similar frequency to other countries
- ▶ This trope plays on the stereotype that Islam is an inferior or violent religion, and that Judaism is inherently superior.
- ▶ Real Jewish queer solidarity is not nationalist!

Racism and Islamophobia

- ▶ “They throw people like you off of roofs over there!”
- ▶ “Why don’t you go (insert country here) and see how you like it/ how they treat you!”
- ▶ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Congress that the Middle East was “a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted.”
- ▶ The U.S. and imperial powers are instigators of homophobia in their treatment of Arab states and Neo-colonialist ventures
 - Cyclical logic and hypocritical politicians ie. George W. Bush
- ▶ Blatantly racist and/or Islamophobic statements made to cast Arabs and Muslims, and specifically Palestinians, as inherently homophobic and transphobic, or just simply violent
- ▶ Take away agency from Queer Palestinians and Arabs
- ▶ While none of these statements are factually accurate, they are asserted as fact by pinkwashers in an attempt to discredit queer and trans activists who challenge their claims

Queer Palestinian Resistance and Agency

- ▶ Erasure of Queer Palestinian voices:
“At the checkpoint your sexuality and the sexuality of the soldier doesn’t matter... you are read as a Palestinian threat regardless of sexuality.”
- ▶ Reject Israeli narratives and fight homophobia in their own communities through looking at the sexual diversity of Islamic and Arab past while creating language for the future.
- ▶ Support queer Palestinian organizations!
 - ▶ Al-Qaws: Arabic Language videos
 - ▶ Aswat : Femme centered organization
 - ▶ Palestinian Queers for BDS
 - ▶ Queer Palestinian Empowerment Network

Pinkwashing Exposed

The background of the slide is composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in various shades of pink and magenta. These shapes, which include triangles and polygons, are arranged in a way that creates a dynamic, layered effect, particularly concentrated on the right side of the frame. The overall aesthetic is modern and minimalist.

Nothing to be Proud of

- ▶ Important to punch some holes in the supposedly flawless LGBTQ image that the Israeli state tries to portray
- ▶ Israel does not perform same-sex marriages
- ▶ Israel has its own version of a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)
 - ▶ Individuals who claim that homosexuality or transness violate their religious beliefs are allowed to refuse services to queer and trans people
- ▶ Many of the same organizations in the US and elsewhere that provide major funding to Israel and the Israeli government are intensely homophobic and transphobic.
- ▶ Again, there is no country on the planet that does not have a serious problem with homophobia and transphobia.

“What about LGBT Israeli activists?”

- ▶ Are we trying to erase the activism and accomplishments of queer and trans Israelis?
 - ▶ No
- ▶ Pinkwashers often charge anti-pinkwashing activists with intentionally disregarding or dishonoring the activism of queer and trans Israelis
- ▶ Clearly, the few rights that queer and trans Israelis enjoy had to come from somewhere, and were not benevolently gifted by the government
- ▶ There have been many Israeli activists that deserve praise for their struggles for gender and sexual justice
- ▶ It dishonors the legacy of those activists to hold them up as a shield to distract from the brutal injustices committed by the Israeli State against Palestinians

Queer critique of pride

Broadening the conversation: from the U.S. to Israel/Palestine



Calls To Action

What Can I Do?

- ▶ Educate others about Pinkwashing!
- ▶ Support queer Palestinian organizations!
 - ▶ Al-Qaws
 - ▶ Aswat
 - ▶ Palestinian Queers for BDS
 - ▶ Queer Palestinian Empowerment Network
- ▶ Are you queer?
 - ▶ Refuse to take part in events or organizations that refuse to talk about the Occupation or about Palestine
 - ▶ Join Palestine solidarity organizations and demonstrations!
- Are you Jewish?
 - ▶ Join local leftist Jewish organizations

Connecting Back to Williams

- ▶ History of pinkwashing on our campus
 - ▶ Ephs for Israel flyers
 - ▶ Gay IDF soldier brought to campus

Join Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)!
Sign up for our list serv!

Questions, Comments, Concerns

We will not let them Pinkwash our movement!