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Rethinking Palestinian Refugee Communities in Pre-War Syria and the Right of Return

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Rethinking Palestinian Refugee Communities in Pre-War Syria and the Right of Return

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by

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"I love it [Yarmouk Camp] a lot. I love its details. I love living in it, I don't know why. I hope to never leave it, I hope to remain living in it, I hope that my circumstances become better and I remain living in it. If I could produce only one play per year, and to stage it in the camp only, I'd have no problem. I would be content and happy, and no one will get to know me, I don't want to become famous or become anything. I only want to remain living in this place, and to be able to work in theater and to remain an ordinary person, not more than ordinary. I don't want to live in anything other than an ordinary situation, in this situation I would be very happy. These are my hopes."

-Interview with Hassan Hassan in 2008, who died under torture in a Syrian Jail in 2013.

Travel Tickets

On the day you kill me
You'll find in my pocket

Travel Tickets
To peace,
To the fields and the rain,
To people's conscience.

Don't waste the tickets.

Samih al-Qasim
Translated from the Arabic by Abdullah al-Udhari

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Introduction

Until the outbreak of Civil War in 2011, Palestinian refugees in Syria were integrated

into Syrian culture, politics and economics. They had the right to public education, to own

property, to hold public office, and to serve in the Syrian military.[1] Before 2011, only one third

of Palestinian refugees in Syria were living in camps. The rest were either in unofficial camps

scattered around the country or had integrated fully into Syrian cities. The camps themselves

eventually became indistinguishable from the cities around them; after sixty years they had

turned into suburbs, without a tent in sight. Palestinians had "initial expectations of

temporariness."[2] However, as time passed, families began to realize their stay was more than

temporary. Abu Ahmad, who left what was then the Palestinian city of Safad in1948 and now

has family in Syria, stated that, "when we first came we thought that we were staying for a week,

ten days; a month; it was only later that we realized that the whole situation was messed up. We

didn't become refugees; we became beggars."[3]

Palestinian refugees made up 2% of the population in Syria by 2011; they were therefore

little economic or social burden on the state and were "institutionalized through laws and

bureaucratic practices."[4] Critically, Palestinian exiles were encouraged to join political

movements within the pre-existing Syrian framework for doing so. Anaheed Al-Hardan notes

that Syrian unions as well as other tools of popular mobilization were open to Palestinian

refugees from 1948.[5] This resulted in Syrians and Palestinians becoming closely aligned and

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[1] Nell Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering: Syria's Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 19.

[2] Anaheed al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria: Nakba Memories of Shattered Communities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 63.

[3] Anaheed al-Hardan, "The Right of Return in Syria: Building a Culture of Return, Mobilizing Memories for the Return," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 63.

[4] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 66.

[5] Al-Hardan, The Right of Return Movement in Syria," 67.

quelled would-be Palestinian movements against the Syrian government. From 1948, Syria

integrated refugees "while preserving their separate Palestinian identity."[6] While legally

Palestinian, the vast majority of these refugees were born in Syria, their grandparents the last

generation with real memories of "home." Palestinians were encouraged to explore their identity

as exiles and as Palestinians, most likely so that integration and assimilation could occur without

Palestinians disappearing into Syrian society completely - thereby remaining a problem for

Syria's neighbor, Israel. Nell Gabiam writes that because of hostile relations with Israel, "the

[Syrian] government has generally been welcoming and protective toward Palestinian refugees

living on Syrian territory."[7] Abu Hosam, a second generation Palestinian refugee in Damascus

wrote in 2005 that "we were warmly welcomed in Syria and we were treated well. Some kind

Syrian people distributed food, clothing, money and so on. They were very kind."[8] He adds,

"they don't have racism and everyone knows that Palestine, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon are one

country. Colonization separated them."[9]

Palestinian refugees faced radically different situations in other host states. In 1948,

Palestinian refugees in Jordan, in or outside of the camp, received full Jordanian citizenship;

now, one in every three Jordanian nationals is of Palestinian descent.[10] The case is unfortunately

the opposite in Lebanon, where influxes of Palestinian refugees brought a huge increase of Sunni

Muslims to the already fragile balance of religious minorities upon which Lebanon's peace

depended. Palestinians in Lebanon continue to be ostracized and stigmatized; considered

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[6] Al-Hardan, "The Right of Return Movement in Syria," 67.

[7] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 18.

[8] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 19.

[9] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 20.

[10] Wadie E. Said, "Palestinian Refugees: Host Countries, Legal Status and the Right of Return," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 38 (2003): 90.

outcasts, they are denied almost all rights associated with citizenship.[11] This is largely the case across the region

Syria is therefore unique because until 2011 Palestinian refugees had enjoyed stability for six decades, and had "civil rights shared by no other disenfranchised Palestinian refugee community."[12] Although denied citizenship, Palestinian refugees in Syria enjoyed a great degree of socio-economic integration. Gabiam writes that "Syria generally did not see its refugees as a threat to Syrian employment or natural resources."[13] Only when Syria went through difficult economic periods were Palestinians recognized as immigrants, and they were almost unrecognizable as refugees until the beginning of the Syrian civil war.[14]

However, despite integration into Syrian society, Palestinian refugees formed strong attachments to their homeland. These refugees identified strongly as Palestinians, often protesting camp development and integration into Syrian society. By emphasizing the Palestinian aspects of their identity, Palestinian exiles made a conscious separation between their own struggle and Syrian political movements.

Cultivation of Palestinian identity and memory centered around the "right of return," a section of UN resolution 194, published on December 11, 1948. The resolution states that under international law, "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practical date."[15] Since 1948, this right of return has "guaranteed" by the UN, and has been demanded by almost all Palestinian refugee

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[11] Rex Brynen and Roula El-Rifai, *The Palestinian Refugee Problem: The Search for a Resolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2014), 50.

[12] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 62.

[13] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 21.

[14] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 21.

[15] Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2003), 140.

communities, including from internally displaced Palestinians in refugee camps throughout the West Bank.

During the Oslo Peace Accords, the right of return seemed suddenly possible for the vast majority of Palestinians living within 100 miles of the Israeli border.[16] However, in 1993 and again in 2000, it became clear that President Clinton would neither be able to solve the refugee problem nor realize Resolution 194 during his time in office. It was then that the possibility of the right of return collapsed diplomatically. In September 2003, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) executive Abu Mazen gave a speech in which he stated that "refugees should give up calling for their right of return."[17] After the 1990s the right of return for Palestinian refugees seemed impossible. Palestinian refugees in neighboring host states felt abandoned by the PLO as well as the international community, both of whom had promised the right of return.

As "return" lost its realistic property, the idea behind it "becomes an abstract principle, the miracle solution to all problems."[18] Helena Schulz tells us that while the right of return has no tangible reality, "it is around the hope of return that millions of Palestinian refugees have formed their lives."[19] While "return" is not something to be viewed realistically, "it would and must happen."[20] When refugees felt most abandoned by the international community, as well as the PLO, the Right of Return Movement emerged in camps in Syria, spreading across the Palestinian diaspora.[21] As peace talks failed, grass roots political movements grew in diaspora

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[16] Said, "Palestinian Refugees," 93.
[17] Said, "Palestinian Refugees," 93.
[18] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 184.
[19] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 3.
[20] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 207.
[21] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 73.

communities based around the right of return. These communities clung to the vision of return even as it became an ever-impossible political reality.

Why did this happen? After all, not only were Palestinian refugees already socioeconomically integrated into Syria, but the actual return process itself would prove extremely complicated. The reality potentially millions of Palestinians physically returning to what is now Israel and reclaiming their land, while completely legal under international law, is practically impossible.[22] Furthermore, it is uncertain that whether given the choice, the majority of Palestinians in Syria and beyond would choose to return to an unfamiliar home. An internally displaced Palestinian living in the West Bank stated in an interview in 2010 that "I finally realized those feelings towards the camp are the same as my feelings towards my village when it was occupied, and that I will never forsake my rights in the camp even after my return."[23]

In this paper, I seek to examine the Right of Return Movement (RoRM) in Palestinian communities in pre-war Syria. What does "return" and the RoRM mean for Palestinians in Syria? What does it mean to call for something that is accepted as impossible in practice? Why did Palestinian refugees in Syria call for their right of return despite socioeconomic, cultural and physical integration? What do these formations of a separatist identity tell us about the condition of being stateless in our state-centric world? This paper tackles these questions by rethinking key concepts, something necessary when examining statelessness apart from the confines of the nation-state.

Many scholars have written on statelessness and the plight of refugees. Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben shape the modern discourse on refugeehood, laying the groundwork for further scholarship and shedding light onto the critical weakness of the nation-state and its role in

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[22] Abu Sitta Salman, "The Feasibility of the Right of Return," *Palestine-Israel Journal* 15, no. 4 (2001): 1, JSTOR.

[23] Marwa Al-Lahham et al., "الرؤية" [Vision], *Campus in Camps Collective Dictionary*, April 18, 2012, 46, accessed April 15, 2017.

this problem. However, this Palestinian case does not fit previous notions of what a refugee is and how she should act. Palestinian refugees in Syria are not excluded completely from the polity; their voices are beginning to be heard as they claim political agency. This refugee community therefore highlights a new phenomenon present in long-term refugee communities, one not accounted for in most scholarship on statelessness. Palestinian refugees in Syria defy state-centric assumptions - they no longer can be understood as silent in their exclusion; "the scum of the earth."[24] This case can teach us something new about statelessness today, as we see refugeehood becoming a very permanent condition - one that holds potential political importance. My argument therefore turns to the plight of Palestinian refugees in pre-war Syria to reconsider larger ideas of identity within exilic communities and to question the state-centric paradigm that dictates the way we understand statelessness. This case develops broader understandings of separatist identity formation despite socio-economic integration. Specifically, I will examine the Right of Return Movement to answer larger questions about political agency and action in stateless communities.

While conducting interviews with Palestinians in Syria, Victoria Mason comes to view the notion of home in this case as "a multifaceted concept."[25] The meaning has changed - it morphed when President Clinton and the PLO told refugees in camps and cities across the Middle East that return could not be implemented. Return and the Right of Return Movement must also be viewed as something utterly different than what they represent in a physical, legal sense. The right of return critically becomes about the right to choose to stay or return - what Arendt calls "the right to have rights".[26] I argue that paradoxically, as the right of return became

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[24] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1951), 276.

[25] Mason, Victoria. "Children of the 'Idea of Palestine': Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28 (2007): 280.

[26] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 267.

less of a political reality, it became more important - more of an idealistic movement towards

security and rights - representing a collective wish passed on from one generation to the next.[27]

This paper does not seek to question the plausibility of the right of return, but instead examines

the factors that lead a community to call for something accepted impossible.

      In making my argument, I will reconsider notions of citizenship and recognition, striving

to understand this problem outside of state-centric paradigms that see the nation-state as the

hallmark of a progressive and liberal democratic ideology. In rethinking these terms, the

fundamental weakness of the nation-state must be highlighted. Citizenship must be reinvented as

not status but practice. It should be defined by its results instead of its attributes to uncover the

reality of its inherent exclusivity.

      I begin this paper with an examination of Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben - their

critique of state-centrism - as well as the limits of their theories when applied to the case of

Palestinians in Syria. In comparing the development of these long-term camps to the spaces

Arendt and Agamben imagine as they examine the camp, one can begin to understand this vital

difference in the way long-term, integrated camps defy the limitations placed on them. In

Chapter Two, I discuss citizenship, critiquing calls for citizenship as the cure for statelessness,

and redefining the word not as status but practice. I also critique the politics of recognition,

arguing that citizenship and recognition are both ideals created by the nation-state with the goal

of containing and controlling its polity. I use the work of Engin Isin and Patchen Markell to

locate the nation-state at play in these notions of inclusion in an attempt to question them. In this

chapter, I also highlight some of the similarities and differences between this excluded

community and other disenfranchised groups, namely Black Americans in the United States. In

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[27] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 130.

studying the exclusion of Black Americans from the American polity, despite their citizenship status, we see the failure of state mechanisms of inclusion.

In my final chapter, I use this rethinking of citizenship and recognition to try to understand the Right of Return Movement in relation to other excluded groups. I argue that calling for the right of return is an enactment of rights in itself - a claim to be included in the polity outside of the confines of a call for citizenship that inherently reinforces the necessity of the nation-state. I draw on the "sans-papiers" movement in 1990s' Paris, as well as David Walker's 1829 "Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World." I compare these claims to inclusion to the Right of Return Movement and the phenomenon of the activist refugee politicized in exile. I argue that in claiming the right of return, even if impossible, refugees claim rights, inclusion and political agency. In calling for rights, a community is included politically while remaining completely outside of the nation-state framework. It is this power to act in defiance of the state that empowers stateless communities. Overall, I seek to redefine key terms through which these ideas have been thought of in past scholarship, eliminating the need to fall back on the nation-state as a necessity in world politics.

In recent years, we have seen the highest number of refugees across the globe since 1945. We're learning that this phenomenon is not an anomaly; it is a result of the state-centric paradigm in which our world functions. Palestinian refugees are the largest refugee community in the world in the most protracted situation of statelessness. This paper examines the case of Palestinian refugee communities in Syria to rethink and redefine assumptions made about the nation-state, citizenship, integration, identity, recognition and the condition of being stateless in a state-centric world.

Chapter One

Arendt, Agamben and the Nation-State

      To understand the case of Palestinian refugees in Syria and their claim to the right of

return, this chapter examines two important paradigms within the scholarship on statelessness,

evaluating both their usefulness and their limits. These two paradigms stem from the work of

Hannah Arendt and her contemporary Giorgio Agamben. In this chapter, I will examine Arendt's

theories compared to Agamben's. Their theories deserve examination because they provide the

foundational theories for subsequent work on statelessness, namely, a critique of the nation-state.

However, while Arendt and Agamben's work lays the foundation for further scholarship on

statelessness, their theories have inherent weaknesses. Both scholars understand the camp and

the refugee as being completely excluded from the polity. Even Agamben, who sees political

inclusion created explicitly through acts of exclusion, does not account for integrated and

politically active refugees. Palestinian refugee communities in pre-war Syria defy aspects of this

scholarship dealing with the camp. Refugee camps in Syria are not static or isolated, but

constantly shifting, political spaces created not through enforced borders but through a collective

identity. Despite its shortcomings, Arendt and Agamben's work is useful because it allows for a

rethinking of this Palestinian community outside the confines of the nation-state- one that I will

try to make in the following chapters. Their scholarship highlights the need for a fundamental

shift in the way we think about the refugee in the 21st century.

Arendt and the Exclusivity of the Nation-State

      Nation-states frame the refugee as a temporary problem to be solved rather than a

permanent symptom of a system of states and borders.[28] The phenomenon of statelessness needs

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[28] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 275.

to be understood as the rule instead of the exception in order to see the refugee as Arendt does: "the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics."[29] In a nation-state, state institutions have the power to decide what is the norm and what is an exception. As a state of exception is placed over refugees, the nation-state gains absolute authority over the law all in the name of security. Arendt sees the state of exception as placed over refugees by nation-states to "escape their obligations under international and European law."[30] Framing the refugee as an anomaly allows the nation-state to address the horrors of statelessness while leaving the system itself untouched. Rhetoric used to describe refugees such as "emergency" and "impermanent" similarly work to benefit the nation-state and to minimize the global reaction to these never ending "crises."

Arendt sees the refugee as completely excluded from world order. She tells the reader that expulsion from a political community is expulsion from humanity itself, as loss of citizenship becomes a loss of human rights.[31] Human rights have become only the rights of citizens - insiders recognized by the state. Arendt traces this exclusive connection between human rights and citizenship to the French Revolution, which "combined the declaration of the rights of man with national sovereignty."[32] States are unable to ensure universal rights - instead only accountable for citizens within their borders. Arendt writes, "the rights of man, supposedly inalienable, proved to be unenforceable - even in countries whose constitutions were based upon them - whenever people appeared who were no longer citizens of any sovereign state."[33] Arendt's discussion brings to light a paradox in the international system, because we have in

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[29] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 277.

[30] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 292.

[31] Ayten Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights: Hannah Arendt and the Contemporary Struggles of Migrants* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

[32] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 272.

[33] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 293.

current world order a "simultaneous affirmation of equal personhood and territorial sovereignty," resulting in a "constitutional inability" of nation-states to ensure even the most basic of human rights.[34] In this way, despite superficial declarations of human rights and calls for equality, a nation-state has in mind only its own polity, with no obligation to ensure human rights past its borders. Arendt writes that refugees "were welcomed nowhere and could be assimilated nowhere. Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth."[35] This is illustrated in this Palestinian case through the fact that, as Susan Akram writes, "the actual rights and status of the refugees remain subject to political and security considerations of the Arab governments. There is no formal legal status for Palestinians in most legal states, their legal position depending primarily on administrative policies that change constantly."[36] Highlighting Arendt's argument, Akram describes rights becoming privileges for stateless people.[37] Since the implementation of nation-states and borders in the Middle East after World War One, Palestinians have been forced into the gaps of international society as states violate the same rights they supposedly uphold.[38]

What refugees lack, as Arendt writes, is a "right to have rights;" the right of every person to belong to a polity.[39] Arendt argues that this right should be inherently guaranteed to every human, yet the paradox she identifies in the right to have rights is that it can never be realized in a state-centric world where notions of the human are tied so closely to the citizen.

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[34] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights*, 219.

[35] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 276.

[36] Susan M. Akram, "Palestinian Refugees and Their Legal Status: Rights, Politics, and Implications for a Just Solution," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 31, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 44.

[37] Akram, "Palestinian Refugees," 44.

[38] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights*, 43.

[39] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 267.

Arendt was aware of the dangers of the nation-state. A German-born Jew, she fled

persecution in Europe and in 1941 travelled as a refugee to New York. Arendt knew first hand

that failure of a nation-state led to violence. But while Arendt highlighted the flaws of the nation-

state system, she was equally skeptical of world government.[40] Arendt ultimately sought to find a

solution within the state-centric system. She does not call for a radical shift in world order;

instead, her theories contest rightlessness through "navigating and reworking the perplexities of

human rights."[41] As a result, many scholars engaged with Arendt's work strive to find a solution

to statelessness within the state-centric paradigm.

Ayten Gündogdu, like Arendt, believes that there is a solution within the system found

through redefining conceptions of rights, citizenship and society.[42] Emma Haddad writes that we

have "little choice... but to accept the hypocritical international arrangements and take action

within it."[43] And Seyla Benhabib argues that, "the nation-state is both indispensable and at the

same time in need of deep repair."[44] This is the argument of many scholars engaged with Arendt:

we have to fix the system we have, we have no other option. Benhabib believes that while

Arendt is critical of the nation-state, she is a political realist aware of "historical

inevitabilities."[45] Benhabib writes,

> Arendt thought that only the restoration of their national rights could guarantee
> disempowered minorities the rights of membership; she also thought that an
> organized humanity could act as a guarantor of the rights of the dispossessed

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[40] Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 61.

[41] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights*, 24.

[42] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights*, 24.

[43] Emma Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society: Between Sovereigns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 95.

[44] Benhabib, *The Rights*, 95.

[45] Seyla Benhabib, "Political Geographies in a Global World: Arendtian Reflections," *Social Research* 69, no. 2 (2002): JSTOR.

through the creation of an international normative order, even if it had no executive power.[46]

Benhabib is optimistic, seeing the nation-state as the answer to this problem of statelessness. And while Arendt points to the flaws of state-centrism, she does not call for its end, but a rethinking of key concepts.

<u>Giorgio Agamben: Inclusion through Exclusion</u>

Arendt's theories and arguments are engaged in the work of Giorgio Agamben, who locates the paradox of the nation-state through her work. Like Arendt, Agamben sees state-centric order as being inherently violent.[47] For Agamben, the state of exception as well as the camp is an inherently Western phenomenon - a recreation of colonial power structures.[48] When sovereignties place refugees in a state of exception, they place themselves in a state of exception as well, giving themselves an authority above the law. Agamben similarly illustrates the paradox in the state of exception, explaining that through the state of exception a nation-state can simultaneously ignore universal law - the right to have rights - while claiming to be applying the law in order to secure the state.[49]

Arendt sees the refugee as completely excluded. Agamben reaches further: refugees are in fact included through their exclusion. Agamben uses the example of the *Homo Sacer*, a man reduced to nothing but his biological existence, to emphasize the ambiguities surrounding the existence of the refugee. *Homo Sacer*, like the refugee, becomes "suspended in a zone without rights," neither in nor out of the state.[50] Peter Nyers summarizes Agamben's point, writing,

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[46] Benhabib, "Political Geographies," 560.

[47] Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), 65.

[48] Richard Ek, "Giorgio Agamben and the Spatialites of the Camp: An Introduction," *Geografiska Annaler* 88, no. 4 (2016): 368.

[49] Nikos Papastergiadis, "The Invasion Complex: The Abject Other and Spaces of Violence," *Geografiska Annaler* 88, no. 4 (2006): 434, JSTOR.

[50] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 73.

"what it [the state] cannot internalize, naturalize, or co-opt, it excludes, displaces, and alienates."[51] In other words, because stateless people are neither within the state's jurisdiction nor entirely outside it, the state cannot "internalize, naturalize, or co-opt" refugees, instead creating the refugee as both an anomaly and a threat. By treating the refugee as the exception, the nation-state can legitimize any action against her. The *Homo Sacer* is utterly removed from the political community, yet still vulnerable to the law.[52] Therefore, the refugee is included because of her exclusion. Agamben writes,

> The relation of exception is a relation of ban. He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it, but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the judicial order.[53]

Agamben places the refugee between nation-state and exile. He notes that the verb "to ban" in romantic languages simultaneously means "at the mercy of" or "excluded," as well as "free" and "open to all."[54] What's more, Agamben argues that through her exception, the refugee is included in the polity and is in fact a powerful tool. She has no place to act - excluded from the state - yet she does act, outside of the polity. Agamben writes, "the exception is included in the normal case precisely because it does not belong to it."[55]

Agamben seeks to undo the normalization of the nation-state in global politics. His work addresses problems at the very heart of a state-centric political system, brought to light by the figure of the refugee. Arendt, while condemning the nation-state, sees a tenable future within the modern liberal-democratic system. For Agamben, the state-centric paradigm must be turned on its head, and the refugee holds the power to do so. Agamben calls for a "politics that renounces

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[51] Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 17.
[52] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 73.
[53] Agamben, *Homo Sacer,* 29.
[54] Agamben, *Homo Sacer, 29.*
[55] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 22.

all concepts tied to sovereignty, including human rights and citizenship," offering a critique that rids us of these normative concepts.[56] Arendt's theories are realistic; Agamben's are radical.

Calling for a "radical break" from the "infinite negotiations" with the nation-state, Agamben sees the tensions and paradoxes in the relationship between stateless populations and nation-states as "nothing other than the impasses of biopolitical sovereignty understood as the power to make decisions over life - a power that has manifested itself in different forms of Western politics and metaphysics for more than 2,000 years."[57] He seeks no solution within the state-centric paradigm. Like Arendt, Agamben sees the refugee as the symptom, not the anomaly; unlike Arendt, he sees no solution in current world order.

The difference in Agamben and Arendt's work can also be seen in the way Agamben engages Arendt's idea of the "right to have rights." Agamben uses Arendt's theory to debunk the sovereign state itself, writing: "the rights to have rights reveals the arbitrariness of modern sovereign power."[58] However, Agamben goes further than Arendt, taking the radical position that the state in fact needs refugees to exist. Through the refugee, the nation-state defines normality and exception, security and emergency, as well as the boundaries of the polity - who is in or out of the state. The nation-state was founded upon the principle of citizenship, granted to those included in the polity. Therefore, whoever is outside, expelled, unwanted, becomes equally as important to the existence of the state. Agamben places the refugee at the center of his analysis of the nation-state because the refugee is excluded and therefore has the capacity to act outside of the polity and in defiance of the nation-state.

Arendt and Agamben engage in a dialogue which seeks to understand statelessness in our state-centric world. Their theories allow for a critique of the nation-state that is vital in

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[56] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 51.
[57] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 51.
[58] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 124.

understanding more fully the role of unquestioned norms and assumptions in the discourse surrounding statelessness. The relationship between the refugee, human rights, and the state is vital to understanding the condition of statelessness today. Approaches to statelessness vary throughout scholarship, but this critique of state-centrism is the cornerstone of Arendt and Agamben's thinking and lays the foundation for future scholarship on statelessness.

A Reexamination of the Nation-State

State-centrism largely functions in our world unquestioned and unnoticed. Nyers tells us that "the success of statism as a social movement has rendered these alternatives either unacceptable or unthinkable… like capitalism, the state just seems like a part of normal life, and people enact its routines - and hence recreate the state - day by day."[59] The state is a socially constructed phenomenon, playing such a huge role in world politics that land becomes state, communities become society and humans becomes citizens.

The phenomenon of statelessness began with the creation of the modern nation-state in the 17th century.[60] As Arendt points out, the French and American revolutions transformed universal notions of human rights into fundamentally statist understandings. Therefore, so long as there are borders creating an inside, there will be refugees who create the outside.[61] This dichotomy leaves statelessness as a given, unquestioned by all those inside the nation-state.[62] As this state-centric paradigm is accepted, states have little incentive to allow refugees inside their territorial boundaries, because in doing so they question the sovereignty and legitimacy of another state. Instead, states work together, mutually recognizing each other as sovereign states to uphold and reproduce the state system. This mutual recognition of nation-states allows

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[59] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, xii.

[60] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 30.

[61] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 7.

[62] Marc Schuilenburg, *The Securitization of Society: Crime, Risk, and Social Order* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 2.

governments to frame refugees as an international problem - theoretically the responsibility of everyone, when in reality, the responsibility of none.

State-centric assumptions are so deeply embedded within understandings of international order that is becomes difficult to recognize them or consider an alternative. Examining humanitarianism is one way to reconsider the banal acceptance of statist assumptions. Humanitarian aid and action supposedly function on a nonpartisan and international level, when they fact they reinforce the state-centric paradigm. Arendt critiques humanitarianism, arguing that despite good intentions, responses remain "within the confines of a state-centric international law and fail to provide guarantees for a right to have rights."[63] Humanitarian action, according to Arendt, condemns a system while reproducing its necessity. Agamben also argues that humanitarianism legitimizes current world order, writing that humanitarian organizations, usually with a political agenda in mind, "maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight."[64] Humanitarian action is in response to crises and emergencies with the implicit goal of restoring refugees' "statist identities" so that they may become citizens, and part of the international states system.[65] What's more, liberal humanitarian representations of refugees often remove all agency from the refugee, painting pictures of scared, helpless people, devoid of any political voice.[66]

Nyers points out that humanitarian action, like human rights themselves, functions under contradictory UN conventions.[67] UNHCR and UNRWA efforts to develop Palestinian refugee camps fall within "the framework of a Western-dominated and state-centered understanding of

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[63] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 6.
[64] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 133.
[65] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 23.
[66] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 16.
[67] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 45.

progress."[68] And while UNRWA claims to represent Palestinian refugees, they achieve

extremely little in terms of actual protection.[69] While claiming to transcend politics,

humanitarian action is deeply embedded within international political norms, hypocritically

supporting the system it endeavors to fix.

The paradoxical notion of human rights embraced by the nation-state is visible today in

many universal declarations of human rights. Even within the most historic peace treaties and

human rights declarations, contradictions are embedded within the language of the documents

that undermine human rights through the reproduction of state centrism.[70] Nowhere in the 1951

UN Geneva Convention, which defined a refugee and refugeehood, is the right to asylum

given.[71] Therefore, while the right to seek asylum is recognized as a human right, it is in no way

guaranteed. The right to grant asylum continues to be decided by individual states. Emigration is

a universal human rights issue, while immigration is the concern of states only.[72]

Arendt and Agamben condemn the nation-state as inherently violent - the cause of exile

and suffering. The nation-state is "organized hypocrisy," claiming one principle while acting on

another; calling for human rights while abandoning their universality.[73] Arendt and Agamben's

critiques of the nation-state show its power to deny supposedly global human rights.

However, do Arendt, Agamben, and the scholars engaged in their work on statelessness

answer the question of Palestinian refugees living in Syria? Are their theories enough to explain

why Palestinian refugees in Syria imagine themselves as different, despite integration, or the

Right of Return Movement despite its impossibility? The lived reality of Palestinians in pre-war

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[68] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 145.
[69] Akram, "Palestinian Refugees," 43.
[70] Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, 11.
[71] Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, 69.
[72] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 87.
[73] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 94.

Syria cannot fully be understood by examining this scholarship alone. Arendt and Agamben's theories need to be rethought to account for the reality of statelessness today. While Arendt proposes a philosophical and political solution to state-centrism, her theories are sometimes intangible or unrealistic. Benhabib writes,

> Arendt clearly saw that to attain true democratic sovereignty and to establish justice beyond borders, one needed to go beyond the state-centric model of the twentieth-century… nevertheless, in her reflections in the paradoxes of the right to have rights, Arendt took the framework of the nation-state, whether in its ethnic or civic variants, as a given.[74]

Agamben's example of a camp is Auschwitz. Can his ideas be transferred to such a vastly different situation, one in which refugees are finding political agency and voice? This Palestinian refugee community highlights a new way of understanding statelessness outside of the theoretical confines of Arendt and Agamben's scholarship.

Palestinian Refugee Communities in Pre-War Syria

Arendt and Agamben, with the scholars they engage, create a discourse that highlights the rhetorical power of the nation-state in defining the phenomenon of statelessness. However, the example of Palestinian refugees in Syria complicates their arguments. Arendt sees refugees as politically and physically excluded from the state. In Syria, however, Palestinian refugees until 2011 were integrated into Syria socially and economically. Agamben challenges Arendt's ideas, but he also fails to address the political self-identification of refugees. Agamben saw the refugee as "driven out to the margins of society… alienated and marginalized, shut out."[75] This is not the case with Palestinians in Syria. Umm 'Izz al-Din, a 35 year old from Haifa and a survivor of the Tantura village massacre stated that,

> We stayed for sixty-five says. I almost lost my mind… the people of Tantura eventually received permission to go to Damascus… we were placed in

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[74] Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, 64.

[75] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 113.

> Mosques... There were one hundred families… we stayed there for seven years, and we were the first people to rent (private lodgings).[76]

Palestinian refugee communities in pre-war Syria defy statist assumptions made about statelessness and citizenship, both in length of their exclusion and in their reimaginings of the camp.[77] The camp itself can intervene to complicate this discourse on statelessness, telling us something new about integration and the creation of communal identity in the camp. Scholarship on stateless populations tends to make assumptions about the space of refugee camps which do not describe the situation for millions of refugees today. What do scholars imagine when they examine the camp? Usually, an inherently non-political and isolated space. These arguments need to be rethought when examining the Syrian case, in which refugees were not only integrated but also sought to maintain their Palestinian identity.

Arendt sees the camp as the physical manifestation of the refugee's complete exclusion from the nation-state. She writes that the state constantly asks itself: "How can the refugee be made deportable again?"[78] In this sense, the refugee camp is the physical representation not only of exclusion but also of the state of limbo; the refugee, isolated in the camp, is never integrated - she waits in the camp until she is pushed outside of state boundaries again and becomes the problem of another nation-state. The camp for Arendt is a space completely cut off from states, a confined space with refugees inside and citizens out.

Agamben, likewise, writes of the camp as the "pure, absolute, and impassable biopolitical space, insofar as it is founded solely on the state of exception."[79] Spaces of exception such as Guantanamo can be applied to Agamben's theories, which vitally help us to understand the role

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[76] Al-Hardan, "The Right of Return Movement in Syria," 65.

[77] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 24.

[78] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 284.

[79] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 123.

of the nation-state in creating and reproducing what Agamben calls "human made hell."[80] Agamben sees the camp as utterly separated, cut off from humanity. His theories fall into assumption that the camp is a "sealed and impermeable space."[81] Critics note that Agamben's theories overlook the reality of refugee camps in the 21st century, and the fact that these spaces are home to political resistance and dissent.[82] Instead of understood as isolated, the camp must be seen as a productive and constantly evolving space.[83]

Despite their insufficiencies, these theories have been used to explain the Syrian Palestinian case. Schulz writes that, "meaning of place is situated in its capacity to separate an 'inside' from an 'outside'."[84] She uses the word "ghourba" (غربة), meaning isolatedness, discomfort and homesickness, to illustrate the space of the camp as the symbol of separation and difference.[85] However, the Palestinian case in general, and particularly in Syria, does not fit into this model of the isolated refugee camp. Their camps are physically and culturally integrated into the larger Syrian communities that surrounded them.

The Palestinian camps are spaces that create new ways of understanding statelessness. Refugee camps as understood by Arendt and Agamben do exist today - camps completely shut off and isolated from states, home to powerless, scared families fleeing persecution - as we see and read about continuously in the news. However, these are not the camps I will address in this paper, nor are they a true testimony to the reality of refugeehood today. The average time a person is a refugee is seventeen years. These camps as described by Arendt and Agamben signal the start of a journey through statelessness. Mourid Barghouti, a refugee in Gaza, writes that "a

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[80] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 123.
[81] Papastergiadis, "The Invasion Complex," 430.
[82] Papastergiadis, "The Invasion Complex," 430.
[83] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 1.
[84] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 15.
[85] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 113.

person gets 'displacement' as he gets asthma, and there is no cure for either."[86] The reality of the statelessness and of camps, once tents, now apartment buildings, is what I hope to address in this chapter, and what is unexplainable through the work of Arendt and Agamben alone.

The Camp: Yarmouk

Yarmouk, an unofficial Palestinian camp bordering Damascus, embodies the need for this rethinking of the camp. Yarmouk was created out of tents and make-shift shelters in 1957; it is now a neighborhood of the larger Syrian city, indistinguishable as a camp and home to many Syrian nationals.[87] Nell Gabiam, in her research conducted around Damascus and in Yarmouk, writes that Yarmouk should be seen as "a success story for refugees who overcame exile and dispossession and turned their camp into a thriving community."[88] Yarmouk symbolizes the blurring of boundaries between camp and city, refugee and citizen. Yarmouk is particularly noteworthy because the (unofficial) camp and its inhabitants fully integrated into Syrian culture, while maintaining a strong Palestinian identity in the camp.[89]

While integrated into Syrian society, Palestinian Syrian refugees still imagined themselves as different from their Syrian neighbors. This identity was maintained not by the Syrian government or public, but was upheld by the refugees themselves through the continuation of cultural traditions practiced publically in the camp, and through communal memories passed down through generations.[90] The camp was imagined as separate and purposefully isolated by the refugees as a reminder of a history of suffering, and as an insistence on its impermanence. Gabiam writes that Yarmouk became a "transitory space… preserving

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[86] Ilana Feldman, "Home as a Refrain: Remembering and Living Displacement in Gaza," *History and Memory* 18, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 11.

[87] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering, 7.*

[88] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 2.

[89] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 2.

[90] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 118.

their history of forced displacement."[91] Saleem, a young Palestinian refugee from Yarmouk

stated in 2008 that, "I won't give up on my house in Yarmouk, inside the camp, because I was

born here and I want to stay here in the camp and I will stay until I return to my country,

Palestine."[92] An older Palestinian man, Ibrahim, living in Yarmouk, stated that "the camp for the

refugee is a symbol of return, you see that's why we like to keep this name 'the camp'. Whatever

it is, it's still a camp from inside. Inside the people it's a camp. And [it] is the symbol of

returning: OK, I'm here in the camp so I will return."[93]

  While conducting interviews with Yarmouk residents, Gabiam came to understand the

camp more generally as a space integrated by Syrians but imagined by Palestinians as indicative

of "emotional longing" - a physical testimony to their communal history of struggle - not

something to be hidden, but to be maintained and remembered. Gabiam writes,

> The camp was exceptional in the way it combined socioeconomic integration into
> Damascus and its status as a major commercial center with an enduring identity as
> a refugee camp known for its political activism around the Palestinian cause…
> The example of Yarmouk underscores the fact that a camp is not simply a
> physical space. Camp boundaries are produced and reproduced by refugees
> through their sociocultural practices including political activism around the
> Palestinian cause.[94]

Gabiam uses the concept of identity, rather than space, to understand what it means live in a

camp.

  Yarmouk is one example of this phenomenon occurring in camps across Syria before the

outbreak of war in 2011. It illustrates how these Palestinian refugees sought to maintain their

difference. More generally, Yarmouk shows that camp and homeland are created by the people

inside them. Richard Ek, in his critique of Agamben, writes, "objects are space and space is

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[91] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 124.
[92] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 122.
[93] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 121.
[94] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 131.

objects, rather than space existing as an entity over and above objects and their relations and extensions… space is the product of processes and events rather than processes and events taking place in space."[95] This shift occurs in long-term Palestinian camps, as identity creates a space that otherwise might not have existed. After six decades, the camp is recreated as a space dependent upon the people inside of it, rather than the physical limitations or regulations placed upon it. Waleed, a young Palestinian from Yarmouk, illustrates this idea, stating in an interview in 2005 that "the meaning of 'camp' for me is a collection of Palestinian people that are still active socially, still active political, and still connected."[96]

Conclusion

Arendt and Agamben begin a discourse that illustrates the foundational weakness of the nation-state. Through their work, we can view the phenomenon of statelessness as well as this specific Palestinian case apart from the rhetorical confines of state-centrism. When we discredit the authority of the nation-state, the Right of Return Movement and claims to citizenship look radically different. What does a claim to citizenship mean when the nation-state is removed? Arendt and Agamben do not offer an explanation as to why these refugees, despite integration, sought their own social, political, and increasingly physical separation from the only place they could truly identify as home: Syria. They also cannot explain the power of the Right of Return Movement despite the unlikeliness of its success. Arendt and Agamben lay the foundation for asking these questions, allowing future scholarship to begin to look beyond the assumptions of the nation-state. The case of Palestinians in Syria however can help us to rethink the modern condition of statelessness and to see camps not as isolated but as developing, shifting spaces home to politically active populations.

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[95] Ek, "Giorgio Agamben," 376.
[96] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 119.

Chapter Two
Rethinking Citizenship and Recognition in Palestinian Refugee Communities in Syria and in Black American Communities in the United States

Arendt and Agamben highlight the fundamental weaknesses of the nation-state. Their work allows us to examine the role of the nation-state in this Palestinian case free from the assumption that the state can provide the solution to these paradoxes of human rights. However, neither Arendt nor Agamben can show us what a claim to rights looks like when the nation-state is removed. If we remove the nation-state as a potential solution to these problems, how can we understand the Right of Return Movement and its call for return? Furthermore, how can we make sense of this case when we lack the essential conceptual vocabulary to grasp it?

In this chapter, I examine memory, identity and their role in a state's historical narrative. I will complicate and redefine conceptions of recognition and citizenship, to argue that while citizenship is understood as the guarantor of human rights, in reality it ensures very little to minority communities already historically excluded. I debunk statist assumptions about citizenship and recognition through examining other excluded communities who also seek inclusion promised but not delivered by the state. According to the state-centric paradigm, refugee "problems" and "crises" are solved through citizenship and recognition. Black Americans living in the United States attest to the realities of these state-sanctioned forms of inclusion. A comparison of Black American citizenship and Palestinian claims to inclusion helps to understand both the importance of the Right of Return Movement and what the movement calls for. In this chapter, I propose a rethinking of citizenship as contingent upon not its legal definition but upon its social reproduction and action.

The Right of Return Movement (RoRM)

The Right of Return Movement (RoRM) emerged following the failure of the Oslo Accords in 1993 to find a solution to, or even discuss, the issue of the five million Palestinians living as refugees in the Arab world and beyond. When it became clear that President Clinton would leave office with little progress made towards any groundbreaking peace deal, Palestinian refugees felt abandoned by the international community as well as by the PLO, both of whom had promised refugees rights and recognition. As Oslo fell apart in the late 90s and early 2000s, the RoRM came into being. This movement was thus largely motivated by Palestinian refugees in Syria who began to feel their condition ignored and their rights bargained away. In her research in Syrian camps, al-Hardan writes that RoRM activists cite Oslo as the spark that ignited the movement, as Palestinian refugees faced the biggest and most direct threat to their rights since 1967. RoRM activists see the Camp David final-status negotiations in 2000 as "a turning point" in the rise of the movement.[97]

As this development suggests, the RoRM was in part a stand against the PLO. Palestinians in Syria felt that the PLO had written them off completely at Oslo; there was a perceived danger that the PLO and the Palestinian Authority (PA) could use the right of return as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Israel.[98] Al-Hardan writes, "operating in local communities within the broader context of grassroots nationalist commemoration, RoRM groups largely aimed at mobilizing the refugee communities in order to prevent the PLO and PA from negotiating away the right of return."[99] In Syria, the RoRM also aimed to legitimately represent

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[97] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 79.
[98] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 10.
[99] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 82.

the refugee's voice.[100] After the crackdown on the PLO and Fatah in the 1980s in Syria, the RoRM also strived to fill the political void left behind.[101]

The RoRM began in Yarmouk camp, the center for Palestinian political movements in Syria before 2011.[102] The movement grew, quickly spreading through refugee communities across Syria, eventually emerging in Lebanon and Jordan as well as inside the occupied territories. The movement merged with other grassroots activist groups centering around the right of return. These groups included the Refugees and the Right of Return Committee (RRRC), the 194 Group, and Ai'doun, a group both in Syria and Lebanon fighting for the right of return.[103] The RoRM brought these groups together, leading the movement while also working to engage all Palestinians in Syria in grassroots political action.

Formations of Memory

To fully understand the RoRM, we must also examine the intersection of Palestinian identity and memory. The RoRM used a Palestinian identity already present in the camp, building off this identity to unite and mobilize Palestinian refugees within their movement. Since 1948, Palestinian identity has been defined through experiences in exile. Paradoxically, Palestinian national identity has been shaped by the experience of statelessness.[104] Only when forced into exile did Palestine take a deeper meaning as the "homeland" for Palestinians never allowed to return.[105] Despite the Syrian majority in Yarmouk by 2000, the camp's identity was always Palestinian.[106] Cultural events took place regularly in the camp, and streets were named

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[100] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 10.

[101] Al-Hardan, "The Right of Return Movement in Syria," 73.

[102] Nidal Bitari, "Yarmouk Refugee Camp and the Syrian Uprising: A View from within," *Institute for Palestine Studies* 42, no. 1 (2013): 61, JSTOR.

[103] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria*, 73.

[104] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 2.

[105] Bitari, "Yarmouk Refugee Camp," 62.

[106] Bitari, "Yarmouk Refugee Camp," 62.

after Palestinian towns now destroyed. The names and faces of Palestinian martyrs killed in the

Intifadas cover apartment buildings and shop fronts throughout Yarmouk. Syrians living in

Yarmouk came to be "Palestinianized" in a way, so powerful was the Palestinian identity in the

camp.[107] The importance placed on remembrance was achieved, even before the RoRM, through

a determination never to forget injustice. Schulz writes that,

> The exile condition is by necessity a rootless condition, a condition of
> 'wandering' and unwanted 'mobility'. Rootlessness has a tendency to trigger
> sometimes desperate searches for roots that have been lost. A state of nostalgia, of
> a sad interrogation of the past, of the homeland that is grieved and longed for is
> very much true of the Palestinian diaspora, nurturing a constant dream of
> reversing the present condition of denial, exclusion, humiliation and estrangement
> into a triumphant return.[108]

These "desperate searches" for a home have created a strong identity for Palestinians in Syria

who have never set foot in Palestine. Fawaz Turki describes home as "a mystical healing

incantation that affirms that the link between the world in me and the world around me has not

been inseparably ruptured."[109] The case of Palestinian refugees in Syria suggests that the

condition of exile can create an even stronger attachment to one's "homeland" than can be

formed while living there. As chaos and insecurity defines the condition of statelessness, "home"

becomes as anchor to safety and normality. Yet, a new "wandering" identity, an "identity of

suffering," plays a role for Palestinians in Syria who will never be allowed to return.[110]

It is easy to imagine the memory of Palestine overwhelming refugee communities,

making anger and pain the outcome of these memories. An obsession with memory can cause

communities to become stuck in the past. William Booth writes of memory's potentially

destructive abilities: "remembrance draws us to what is dead and to the irreversible. It is

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[107] Bitari, "Yarmouk Refugee Camp," 62.
[108] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 86.
[109] Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 16.
[110] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 2.

nostalgia, bitterness, and the thirst for revenge."[111] Memory, the kinds of memory that mold

Palestinian identity, forces communities to cling to the past while sacrificing the present.[112]

However, the RoRM sought to utilize Palestinian memories of home to produce tangible political

change. The RoRM worked to memorialize Palestine in Yarmouk by looking to the past not

simply to remember injustice but to act upon it to gain something positive for the future. Before

the RoRM, there was identity formation through memory in Yarmouk camp. Bitari writes that

"Palestinian camps everywhere are social incubators of Palestinian identity and culture, places

where links to Palestine and the idea of return are kept alive and Palestinian tradition and

heritage are preserved."[113] The RoRM took this memory and transformed it into action - memory

used to fulfill a specific political goal.[114]

The RoRM documented Palestine through repetition and remembrance of oral histories,

practices and traditions. As fewer Palestinians with a memory of home live to tell their stories,

the RoRM sought to capture these histories and memories so vital to constructing a "culture of

return."[115] Focusing on younger generations of refugees who had no lived experience of their

"homeland," the RoRM sought to use collective memory to mobilize their movement. One

teenage Palestinian refugee, interviewed in Yarmouk in 2005, stated:

> On May 15 of every year, a speaker on the podium bores us to death with
> quotations from Israeli founding leaders who once said that our 'old will die and
> the young will forget.' We are pleased with ourselves and we clap as we
> remember our Nakba… this is our great achievement after sixty-five years of
> defeat: we remember.[116]

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[111] W. James Booth, "The Unforgotten: Memories of Justice," *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 4 (December 2001): 783, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3117713.

[112] Booth, "The Unforgotten," 783.

[113] Bitari, "Yarmouk Refugee Camp," 62.

[114] Booth, "The Unforgotten," 787.

[115] Al-Hardan, "The Right of Return Movement in Syria," 73.

[116] Al-Hardan, "The Right of Return Movement in Syria," 72.

RoRM activists sought to link the Nakba (the Catastrophe) to the importance of remembrance. Artistic and cultural events often took place in the camp, its inhabitants capturing the inarticulable aspects of the condition of exile, as remembrance became a political project for the RoRM.[117]

For younger generations of refugees, the camp also symbolized a connection to Palestine; "thus, there was a certain clinging to camp life and refusal of integration that served a functional purpose of underpinning Palestinian political demands."[118] Willing separation and isolation should be understood as a move by refugee communities against forgetfulness and political passiveness. Without a Palestinian identity, the RoRM would have no foundation - no unified call for the impossible to be made a reality. Palestine was remembered and reproduced through the passing down of cultural and social practices. The importance of family becomes clear - familiar memories of the homeland are some of the only ways younger generations of Palestinians understood and imagined their "home".[119] Family stories, descriptions of streets or markets or doorways, are passed down as shared memories that form identities based on personal connections to Palestine for third generation refugees. 'Homeland' in this became a powerful symbol unifying displaced peoples through memory.[120] Many Palestinians in Syria have in fact kept the keys to their old houses as physical symbol of hope and of return.[121]

The formation of a Palestinian identity in pre-war Syria is also particularly noteworthy because of the layered identities Palestinians in Syria imagined for themselves. They are Syrian, identifying with the only place where they have lived. However, they are also Palestinian, as well

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[117] Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 12.

[118] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 116.

[119] Victoria Mason, "Children of the 'Idea of Palestine': Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 28, no. 3 (2007): 273, JSTOR.

[120] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 16.

[121] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 206.

as part of a community permanently forced into exile. Home becomes a "multi-faceted" idea

within this community - a layered notion stemming from communal Palestinian memories, a

lived reality in Syria, and a feeling of solidarity with a larger exilic community.[122] Edward Said

writes that while most people have one culture, one home, "exiles are aware of at least two, and

this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions."[123] Said and Homi

Bhabha use ideas of duality to explain the layered identity of Palestinians in Syria. Bhabha uses

the term "hybridity of identity" to engage this idea, Said using the word "contrapuntal;" a

musical term used when two different melodies are played in tandem.[124] Bhabha and Said

illustrate the multiple ways Palestinians envision their own identity through personal and

collective memory. Mredd al-Barghouti, a Palestinian refugee and poet, stated in an interview

that,

> the occupation has created generations of Palestinians who are strangers to
> Palestine, generations who are familiar with every alleyway of their places of
> exile, but who are ignorant of their homeland… these generations are condemned
> to love an unseen lover, a distant, difficult lover, separated from them by guards
> and fences and sleek terror. The [Israeli] occupation has transformed us from the
> sons of Palestine into sons of the idea of Palestine.[125]

With an unknown home and uncertain future, identities have formed around this homeland as a

way to remain one unified community.

The Palestinian Syrian refugee lives in the gaps between Syria and Palestine, trapped

between hope, reality, and memory. In Arabic, the word "watan", meaning "the home you live

in" is translated into English as "homeland." Historically, "watan" has no emotional content. It is

a literal description of the place you live: a practical and almost temporary notion of homeland.

But Palestinian refugees in Syria have made deep roots in their host state - the only home they

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[122] Mason, "Children of the 'Idea of Palestine'," 275.

[123] Edward W Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001),148.

[124] Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 148.

[125] Mason, "Children of the 'Idea of Palestine'," 275.

have in the literal sense of the word. "Watan" therefore is as much about the lived reality of experience and connection as it is about historical, communal memory.[126]

Within this complex, layered community, the RoRM sought to transform communal memories of Palestine into political awareness and action. In examining these formations of identity fostered through communal memory, Palestinian identity becomes a resource for return. Al-Hardan tells us that the PLO's failure to deliver on the right of return resulted in a growing discourse centered around "memory as a guarantor of return."[127] Memories were in fact the only way for young refugees to connect with their homeland and national identity.[128] Furthermore, the RoRM's mobilization of memories created a space where people could realize themselves through exploring their own layered identities.[129] In creating the space for communities to share memories of Palestine, refugees used this movement to understand the reality of their own condition in Syria.[130] Aysar al-Saifi, a Palestinian refugee and college student stated that "refugeehood doesn't pass away but rather transfers from one generation to the next."[131] RoRM activists used communal memories to produce political unity behind a continued call for the right of return.

Black American Memory

The cultivation of Palestinian memories in Syria exists in stark contrast to the memorialization of Black American experience in the United States. In examining Black American history, we can see the vital importance of the RoRM's communal remembrance of

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[126] Shadi Ramadan, Naba Al-Assi, and Murad Odeh, "المواطنة" [Citizenship], *Campus in Camps Collective Dictionary*, January 15, 2013, 10, accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/citizenship/.

[127] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 67.

[128] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 71.

[129] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 92.

[130] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 92.

[131] Aysar Al-Saify and Murad Odeh, "المسارات [Pathways]," *Campus in Camps Collective Dictionary*, June 18, 2013, 23, accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/06-the-pathways/.

injustice. Moreover, the reality of life for people of color in the United States is strikingly similar to that of Palestinian refugees internally displaced within Israel, as well as in the Palestinian diaspora. I emphasize this connection in this chapter in order to understand the reality of Palestinian claims and the apparent merits of citizenship and recognition. In theory, Black Americans in the U.S. have what Palestinian refugees in Syria seek: citizenship and recognition. However, their lived experiences highlight the emptiness of these legal forms of inclusion.

P.J. Brendese writes that "how we grapple with memory of the past is intimately tied to how we acknowledge and understand our differences in the present."[132] If the RoRM helped Palestinians to preserve their history and the truth of their injustice suffered, Black Americans have been stripped of this.

American identity does not include Black Americans. Brendese writes that "by 'searing' the public memory of African American struggle, white supremacist historiography has obliterated the black experience."[133] This whitewashing of history has created a segregated memory within the United States. Americans live in a world created through and because of slavery, yet the connection most White Americans have to the history of the United States and the role of slavery is distant. America's narrated history is one of inclusion. However, those included fit a very specific category. For example, in 2015 a Texas high school history textbook used the term "workers" to describe slaves brought to America during the slave trade. This had happened as a result of a 2010 Texas Board of Education approval of edits to textbooks that also encouraged Christianity and capitalism, what the textbook called the "free-enterprise system."[134]

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[132] P. J. Brendese, *The Power of Memory in Democratic Politics* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014), 2.

[133] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 60.

[134] Ellen Bresler Rockmore, "How Texas Teaches History," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2015, accessed April 15, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/22/opinion/how-texas-teaches-history.html?_r=0.

"This is erasure," stated the mother of the high schooler who noticed the wording. "This is a revisionist history, retelling the story however the winners would like it told."[135]

Black American history is framed so as to seem distant and disconnected from the present. The history of American slavery as narrated by White thinkers and policymakers is made to seem far in the past, with no real significance in relation to the current state of American society, economics and politics. This forgetfulness allows inequality to remain unquestioned and White Americans to live amnesiac legacies.[136] The invisibility of the past allows White Americans to support equality and democracy while remaining ignorant of the role slavery plays in modern life, namely through the privatization of the prison system, but also more broadly through economic inequality. Black history has also been made to seem violent - almost too violent to discuss - and in this way it is a hushed up history. Brendese writes,

> democrats are guilty of the most politically perilous kind of forgetting. They agitate for what they call a 'radical' democracy that grows up from the roots. But they fail to remember the roots of their own civilization. These roots lie not in the consensual social contract of philosophers; they lie in forms of domination too bloody to speak of in polite company.[137]

The whitewashing memory is connected to the segregated polity of the U.S.; through a lack of connection to a past, the "smiley face of white supremacy" imagines America as inclusive.[138] Through lack of connection, there is a denial of the reality and fundamental violence of American history. Brendese writes that "a compulsive white disavowal of the past that disconnects slavery and segregation from their implications in contemporary politics allows argument for a desegregation of public memory to be painted as a dubious con… and a failure in

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[135] Manny Fernandez and Stephanie Hauser, "Texas Mother Teaches Textbook Company a Lesson on Accuracy," *The New York Times*, October 15, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/06/us/publisher-promises-revisions-after-textbook-refers-to-african-slaves-as-workers.html.

[136] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 12.

[137] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 20.

[138] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 12.

black personal responsibility."[139] Slavery has been forgotten, and when it is remembered, it is seen as "a fruitless opening of old wounds" by Black Americans.[140]

This forgetting of the history of enslavement indirectly shows us the power of the RoRM in its memorialization of memory and determination never to forget bare truth. Palestinians in Syria memorialized Palestine through preserving items brought from "home" - such as keys and photographs.[141] Activists in camps like Yarmouk held Palestinian cultural events and memorials on the Nakba and Naksa days to keep this history forever present. The RoRM facilitated a huge push to record oral histories of the last people who had actually lived in Palestine.[142] Of the millions of Black Americans who died in enslavement in the U.S., there are less than a hundred slave narratives that survive today.[143]

Booth writes: "to remember is to preserve the truth of the phenomenon."[144] The truth of American history has been forgotten through controlling and confining narratives until history becomes the story of the oppressor. Palestinian refugees in Syria rejected not only Israel, but also most nation-state's narratives, determined to preserve the truth in their search for justice. This connection between the history of struggle of Black Americans and Palestinians in Syria is one that I will return to throughout this paper. Examining Black American history tells us a great deal about this refugee community because both these groups search for inclusion that cannot be provided or explained through the language of the state.

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[139] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 61.

[140] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 61.

[141] Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 12.

[142] Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 12.

[143] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 83.

[144] Booth, "The Unforgotten," 781.

Citizenship

The RoRM took force when return seemed the farthest from reality. Al-Hardan writes that in Yarmouk after 2000, "there were truly popular feelings among the refugees concerning the unfolding of something threatening their rights and interests."[145] Furthermore, whether physical return was the ultimate goal of the RoRM is uncertain. After the failure of the Oslo Accords, return was accepted as all but impossible. With the Syrian Civil War displacing Palestinians for a second time, the RoRM is no longer active in Yarmouk. Return is now as distant as it will ever be. What's more, it is not certain that whether given the choice, Palestinians across the globe would choose to return at all. What, then, is the RoRM calling for?

Citizenship is understood through the state-centric paradigm as the de facto ideal - the cure to statelessness. Within this paradigm, it is citizenship that the stateless seek: legal inclusion and security. Scholars who understand citizenship as the end goal of the stateless see the Syrian Civil war as demonstrating to Palestinians how, without passports, they are temporary in even the most integrated society. It can therefore be argued that the Palestinian call for the right to return is in reality a call for citizenship. As stated in Chapter One, as rights are inherently tied to citizens, a struggle for human rights becomes a struggle for citizenship. Citizenship is seen as the harbinger of "public respect," "agency," "empowerment," and "social standing."[146] Gabiam writes that "the lack of any formal citizenship… has had serious consequence for Palestinian's ability to seek protection in times of crises."[147] Likewise, Haddad tells us that citizenship is the tangible goal called for by the RoRM.[148]

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[145] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 79.

[146] Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2.

[147] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 25.

[148] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 114.

The difference between Palestinians in Syria and other more permanent minority groups is citizenship status. Black Americans are recognized citizens of the state. And yet, in comparing this claim made by refugees to Black American citizenship status in the U.S., we begin to understand citizenship as a false promise of inclusion, and we can see that a call for meaningful inclusion must come from outside the confines of the nation-state.

American citizenship is first and foremost exclusive, alluded to by who it cut out: slaves, native Americans, and women.[149] Judith Shklar notes that this exclusive nature has left its mark on American politics, even as these communities receive citizenship.[150] Today, although Black Americans are legal citizens, they are denied citizenship in a number of meaningful ways. In the decades following the Civil War, despite gaining citizenship and receiving this initial step to inclusion, Black Americans were effectively under military rule - the citizens but more so the subjects - their daily lives governed for them. Black American communities suffered despite becoming citizens; they were denied the civil, political, social and economic rights afforded their white compatriots.[151] By the 1960s, 90% of Black Americans in the South were prevented from registering to vote; Southern politicians were "extremely creative" in enforcing democratically permissible systems that prevented racial minorities from voting through the implementation of poll taxes, property and literacy tests, and eventually the Grandfather Clause, all "constitutionally sanctioned, democratically legitimate mechanisms of disenfranchisement."[152] From the nation's beginning as an independent republic, Americans were torn by "glaring inconsistencies between their protested principles of citizenship and their deep seated desire to

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[149] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 16.

[150] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 8.

[151] Rebecca B. Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion: African Americans in the United States and Palestinian Citizens in Israel* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002), 7.

[152] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 4.

exclude certain groups permanently from the privileges of membership."[153] Black Americans

quickly became second-class citizens, suffering loss of respect, recognition, social standing and

inclusion, treated not as free, rights-bearing actors in the polity, but as subjects ruled over by the

state.[154]

In examining Black American rights and citizenship, one can see that nation-states, even

liberal democracies, not only oppress and discriminate against outsiders but also against people

legally included in the polity.[155] Rebecca Kook writes that the lives of Black Americans "attest to

a veiled aspect of democratic reality - the existence of differential categories of citizenship."[156]

The experience of Black Americans in the U.S. following the Civil War, as "citizens," illustrates

the ambiguities and weaknesses of citizenship status, and its failure to uphold rights and legal

protections for communities already oppressed. After its abolishment, slavery was

institutionalized through "exclusionary and discriminatory cases and practices," pitted against

claims of equal citizenship.[157] Shklar writes, "there is a real pattern to be discerned in the

tortuous development of American ideas of citizenship," based not around equality but through

exclusion.[158]

Black Americans hold citizenship, and are officially recognized by the state. However, in

reality, there are boundaries in place for racial minorities in American society. The paradox of

citizenship can be seen in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, where Black Americans

fought for basic human rights despite already being citizens. It can likewise be seen in the Black

Lives Matter (BLM) movement today in its struggle for basic equality in the face of

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[153] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 17.
[154] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 17.
[155] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 4.
[156] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 4.
[157] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 14.
[158] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 14.

overwhelming cases of police brutality and murder and the state's response or lack thereof. Since the Civil War, Black citizens have had to fight for the most basic of rights associated with citizenship. Citizenship status has done little to ensure equality or to include Black Americans in the American polity.

The Politics of Recognition

The state's answer to this exclusion lies within the politics of recognition. In the search for inclusion, the idea of recognition is considered a primary objective of the RoRM. Charles Taylor explains that this movement towards return is in other words a movement towards recognition. The RoRM as understood through Taylor's theories becomes a struggle for recognition; a "demand for inclusion in the polity."[159] Taylor sees recognition as necessary for an inclusive, democratic society. Benhabib also calls for recognition; what she calls "universal respect," constituting a community of people with equal, tangible rights - the true meaning of political equality.[160] Taylor sees recognition as emancipatory - a way to gain inclusion away from the state-centric paradigm. Through recognition, groups become part of the polity. Recognition is considered by the state to be the social inclusion communities like Palestinians seek.

However, an examination of Black American identity again locates an oppressive reality in the politics of recognition. A critique of Taylor's work and the politics of recognition can be found specifically in examining identity politics in Black American identity in the United States. It also helps us to further understand the denial of Black American's role in American history.

Michelinos Zembylas argues that through misrecognition, the categorization of immigrants and minorities in the United States has successfully erased populations from the

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[159] Shklar, *American Citizenship*, 3.
[160] Benhabib, *The Rights of Others*, 13.

polity.[161] Through misrecognition, Black American identity has been confined by the state. Greta Fowler Snyder writes that, "drawing from a vision of Africa that was significantly shaped by (racist) Western readings," the politics of recognition at work in the United States reinscribes the "romantic mythology created by European ideologues that associated civilization/reason with whiteness and nature/emotion with blackness - thereby giving credence to the oldest of racist stereotypes."[162] We can locate racist stereotypes in aspects of American life today, for example, in examining the crack epidemic of the 1980s and American's response.

Although this spike in drug use affected White and Black Americans, the face of the addict was always a black one.[163] Ekow Yankah writes that "we were warned of a new wave of 'super predators,' young, faceless black men wearing bandanas and sagging jeans."[164] The fault of the rise in drug use was placed upon "welfare mothers" and their violent black sons, and America's response to this crisis in the 80s was militarized police and jail cells.[165] Almost forty years later, we face another drug epidemic as the use of cocaine and opioids increase. The difference here is that the majority of users are white; cocaine is an expensive drug and its increased availability has primarily affected White Americans in the Northeast. The response to this new epidemic has been drastically different than in the 80s, as many police departments change their policies to provide addicts with treatment instead of making arrests. Police departments have been outspoken about their life-saving role of taking people to rehab. After nearly four decades of the "War on Drugs," police departments now claim to see the rationale for

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[161] Michelinos Zembylas, "Agamben's Theory of Biopower and Immigrants/Refugees/Asylum Seekers," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 26, no. 2 (2010): 34, JSTOR.

[162] Greta Fowler Snyder, "Mutlivalent Recognition: Between Fixity and Fluidity in Identity Politics," *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 1 (2012): 252, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1017/s0022381611001563.

[163] Ekow N. Yankah, "When Addiction Has a White Face," *The New York Times*, February 9, 2016, accessed April 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/09/opinion/when-addiction-has-a-white-face.html.

[164] Yankah, "When Addiction has a White Face."

[165] Yankah, "When Addiction has a White Face."

support rather than incarceration - and they do not see this shift as contingent upon race.[166] Not only the response, but also the denial of the reasonings behind the shift point to a total indifference towards Black life.

Black identity and culture have been "calcified."[167] While supposedly upholding equality, mis- or non-recognition in reality forces a homogenization of culture so as to be controlled by the state. This mis- or non-recognition by the state has impacted the memory of Black American history. Through recognizing this population in a specific, closed way, the state has likewise framed their history, depicting it as distant and almost fantastical. When nation-states do think about race, they think of it from a white, male, European narrative. In this way, a state can commemorate a history while also ignoring it; American historical narratives deal with the Civil Rights Movement from the absurd perspective that this history is over and that these injustices have ended. In fact, "a disavowal of memory can happen under the banner of public commemoration."[168] In recognizing a population, the state chooses the terms of this recognition. This shapes the way a population is understood, and creates a static, homogeneous perception of populations that in fact span huge difference.

For most of American history, Black Americans have been excluded from the polity.[169] Shklar writes,

> the disenfranchised and the excluded were members of a preferred democratic society that was actively and purposefully false to its own vaunted principles by refusing to accept these people or to recognize their right to be voters and free laborers. As slaves, they were less than subjects of any modern state; as black freedmen and women they were at best no more than that. They were mere "subjects" in a constitutional democracy that certainly offered more to everyone

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[166] Yankah, "When Addiction has a White Face."

[167] Snyder, "Mutlivalent Recognition," 253.

[168] Brendese, *The Power of Memory*, 4.

[169] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 7.

else, and that refused to recognize how very far it was from realizing the "blessings of liberty."[170]

Examining recognition allows us to see the glaring inconsistencies in state-sanctioned inclusion. Despite the flaunted importance of equality and the granting of citizenship, minority groups across the globe continue to be excluded and denied rights. Like Black Americans in the U.S., Palestinian refugees are expected to play a specific role to gain recognition from the international community - that of the fearful, helpless refugee.

Recognition is the state's answer to exclusion and inequality. Charles Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition" paints recognition by the state as the way to achieve real inclusion.[171] However, Taylor fails to question the nation-state's role in reproducing and sustaining the injustice it claims to address. Patchen Markell writes, "the pursuit of recognition involves a 'misrecognition' of a deeper and different kind: not true misrecognition of an identity, either one's own or someone else's, but the misrecognition of one's own fundamental situation or circumstances."[172] Taylor's mistakes are like "blind spots built into the 'grammar' of a theory or a practice." - they are deeply embedded in his work.[173] Markell's examination on the other hand defines how the state is involved the conflicts it pretends to transcend.[174] Markell credits Taylor with positively understanding recognition as emancipatory. But even Taylor's critique of arrogance "turns out to be conditioned, in the end, on the deferred and displaced, but never quite abandoned, aspiration to sovereignty."[175] And even if Taylor is aware of the insidious role of the

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[170] Shklar, *American Citizenship.*

[171] Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* by Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[172] Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5.

[173] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 9.

[174] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 125.

[175] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 58.

nation-state in the politics of recognition, he gives the state an inherently privileged position that allows it to control the terms under which a community is recognized.[176]

The difference between Taylor and Markell's approach is revealed in their examination of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Taylor uses Hegel's master-slave relationship to illustrate his ideas about relational, mutual recognition. While Taylor accepts Hegel's view, Markell argues that Hegel's work can in fact be seen as a critique of recognition because the specific master-slave relationship is against everything that recognition means in reality.[177] The reader can more fully understand the point Markell is trying to make when examining Hegel's work in relation to his views on women. Hegel did not believe in female education, nor did he write on equality for women or women's emancipation.[178] Although similar statements can be made about most 18th century Western philosophers, for Hegel, recognition had little to do with equality. Hegel recognized women as equal people, yet only equal when fulfilling a very specific and inherently subservient role. Women who defied their place in society were left out of his understanding of women - unrecognized and ignored. Hegel formed a space for woman while demarcating the boundaries of that space. In this instance, recognition becomes imprisonment. Markell writes that,

> Hegel's assignment of women to the family is not a radical exclusion of women from ethical life altogether. Instead, it is, as we have seen, precisely a way of accommodating and preserving difference within a larger totality - but one that systematically restricts and confines some members of that whole in the service of aspirations and self-image of others.[179]

Another way to understand Markell's critique of Taylor is through examining the role of heterosexuality in the United States. Heterosexuality is recognized and expected; the nation-

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[176] Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 33.

[177] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 17.

[178] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 11.

[179] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 121.

state, through economic incentives until recently only open to heterosexual couples (e.g. marriage), recognizes only the sexuality it can understand and therefore control.[180] Many scholars debunk the politics of recognition through examining the way queer communities have become trapped inside the state's misrecognition and stereotyping. As Michael Warner writes, sexuality "is not required to be tidy, normal, uniform, or authorized by the government."[181] Recognition still functions only for those the nation-state wants to include. Through these examples, Markell illustrates the subtler effects of recognition - regulating difference while failing to address much larger problems of inequality and injustice.

<u>Rethinking Citizenship</u>

In the current world order, one can argue that without citizenship, without a passport, little can be achieved by Palestinian refugees. However, I hope to challenge that. What we learn from these examinations of citizenship and recognition is that excluded groups, regardless of citizenship status, cannot use state mechanisms or rhetoric to gain inclusion. Instead, these ideas need to be completely reimagined and redefined to end the injustice embedded in their very definitions. A rethinking of citizenship must therefore take place.

"Citizenship" in its static, legal sense is exclusive. The history of citizenship immediately cuts out large groups of people: it is defined by what or who is outside. While the idea of citizenship has gone through many shifts and historic changes, it has remained "a dynamic institution of domination and empowerment that governs who citizens (insiders), subjects (strangers, outsiders) and objects (aliens) are, and how these actors are to govern themselves and

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[180] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, 182.

[181] Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 35.

each other in a given body politic."[182] In Western Constitutions, the sites of citizenship are

unchangingly white males.[183]

We need a new vocabulary for citizenship that does not concede to the nation-state

framework calling citizenship the cure for the very problems it creates. We need to locate the

meaning of this word in its ideal to uncover what a call for citizenship can mean. Citizenship

needs to be understood not only legally as membership but also as "political self-understanding,"

the idea that the meaning of the word can change based upon social understandings, productions

of, and claims to the word itself.[184] States recognize communities as boxes - containers of certain

identities that are only understood within specific boundaries. We must change our thinking so as

to view citizenship as an activity - with boundaries constantly shifting. Isin writes:

> The challenge for theorists of citizenship is not to develop a theory of citizenship
> by fitting it into already existing 'political' theories or revising theory to
> accommodate changing realities; rather it is to theorize citizenship as an
> institution in flux embedded in current social and political struggles that constitute
> it.[185]

Citizenship is often regarded as status. However, it can also be understood as practice -

something "in flux" that can come and go, rise and fall with social reproductions or norms, fears,

feelings of boundedness, and "othering." Isin adds that one can no longer think of nation-states

as "containers of citizens."[186] Citizenship as nationality or legally as a "member of a body

politic" is not sufficient to describe a social phenomenon enacted and recreated by people

themselves.[187] Palestinian refugees in Syria, as well as Black Americans in the United States,

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[182] Engin Isin, "Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen," *Subjectivity* 29, no. 367 (2009): 371,
JSTOR.
[183] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 374.
[184] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 374.
[185] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 370.
[186] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 368.
[187] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 371.

strive to find a new vocabulary for inclusion, standing, and recognition - one that allows them to act as citizens in the ideal sense of the word, thereby turning citizenship into an activity.

Instead of asking "who is a citizen?" we need to ask "what makes a citizen?"[188] Palestinian refugees in Syria redefined citizenship because in their exclusion they nevertheless enacted inclusion, finding alternative grounds for being politically active. In Yarmouk, these political movements began in a space assumed as devoid not only of culture and community but also of politics. The state has told us that only with citizenship comes inclusion, and with this recognition and the capacity for actions to have political relevance and outcomes. However, this stateless community has shown us that citizenship status is not needed to form political society and to take significant political action. I am not arguing that citizenship does not achieve anything, or that refugees would not benefit from becoming citizens of a state, merely that this kind of socially active community can and does appear outside of the nation-state. The inclusion this community seeks cannot be reached through citizenship status alone. This inclusion comes from something other than state mandated inclusion: from the idea of citizenship as practice.

Through mechanisms of exclusion, the state maintains stability.[189] The ability to recognize certain communities means that the state can confine their identity and control their role in the nation-state. If nation-states hope to exclude minority populations through hierarchical citizenship and mis- or non-recognition, it is these marginalized groups who must redefine their inclusion. Marianne Marchand writes, "the process for considering alternatives to temporariness would benefit from dialogue with a wide array of voices, because there is no stable citizenship model… the ongoing struggles of state and societal actors make and remake the conditions and

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[188] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 383.
[189] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 182.

terms of formal and substantive citizenship."[190] The RoRM can be understood as engaging "a wide array of voices" to rewrite the meaning of citizenship. Minority groups, regardless of citizenship status, have to break down barriers to the main channels of the polity in order to be included.[191] For example, while American citizenship is exclusive, American identity, because of its "universalistic ideological character," is defined as "open to anyone who willed to become an American."[192] The definition of citizenship likewise has to be expanded to include groups willing to enact citizenship in its ideal. It is not citizenship in its legal sense but the theoretical attributes of the word that Palestinian refugees in Syria sought. The citizenship imagined and enacted in this claim expands the boundaries of the term delineated by the nation-state.

College students in a camp in the West Bank study the idea of "citizenship," finding that the term is based around a universal normalization of Western political paradigms. One student concluded:

> Arabic history does not include this term citizenship. Most importantly, why should we be bound to this term, its obligations and its rights? What makes the term citizenship a criterion with which to measure our loyalty to a country? And who is charged with imposing these rights and obligations upon us?[193]

Palestinian identity formulated in Syrian camps as I have examined in this chapter speaks to the idea of something more than recognition or citizenship altogether being sought through a call for return. The RoRM's insistence on return despite its impossibility and the importance placed on Palestine as homeland suggests that the final goal of this movement was much more than citizenship in its formal, legal sense. In claiming the right to impossible return, instead of citizenship explicitly, Palestinian refugee communities reject a superficial form of inclusion and

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[190] Marianne H. Marchand, "Mexican Migrant Transnationalism and Imaginaries of Temporary/Permanent Belonging," in *Liberating Temporariness? Migrant, Work, and Citizenship in an Age of Insecurity*, by Leah F. Vosko, Valerie Preston, and Robert Latham (Quebec: McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 54.

[191] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 45.

[192] Kook, *The Logic of Democratic Exclusion*, 45.

[193] Ramadan, Al-Assi, and Odeh, "[Citizenship]," 22.

instead assert their fundamental "right to have rights." They side step the nation-state in an attempt to gain real inclusion - something more than citizenship in its legal sense. States understand this as a call for recognition, but as examined in this chapter, recognition confines and stereotypes communities through purposeful mis- or non-recognition. In this search for a new, liberating vocabulary, I will return to the work of Markell in Chapter Three to argue that acknowledgement is what Palestinians in pre-war Syria sought. Acknowledgement, not only of other's difference, but also of a hierarchical and oppressive social condition, is what the RoRM sought. Markell tells us that through the politics of acknowledgement, real inclusion is achieved without the confining authority of the nation-state. In Chapter Three, I will address this term more deeply and highlight its importance in conceiving of a new definition of citizenship.

<u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter, I have examined the RoRM and its claims. The RoRM was a call for return, but more broadly for rights and inclusion. The state has controlled these ideas, turning rights into citizenship and inclusion into recognition. However, in studying Black American experiences of both citizenship and recognition, we see the emptiness in the legal definition of these terms, and how they are created by the state to confine. As Isin and Sassen argue, citizenship has to be understood in new way - as an activity - so that it can be defined not by its legal definition but through practices of inclusion, enacted by excluded communities. Citizenship as practice can turn its meaning towards total inclusion and acknowledgement. Likewise, recognition needs to be redefined, or discarded, as we shift to the politics of acknowledgement to understand inclusion in its ideal form.

Palestinian refugees in Syria, despite integration, joined the RoRM because citizenship was never given to them: they were unrecognized by each state they identified with. But more

importantly, in claiming the right of return, Palestinian exilic communities in Syria call for something outside of the confines of citizenship or recognition - something that aims at questioning the nation-state and the very confines that create citizenship and recognition as mechanisms of the state. This specific call for rights in Syria is fascinating because it is at once a claim to be a citizen - to be included and accepted by a nation-state and to take an active role in international society - and at the same time a claim that breaks down all confines placed upon the idea of citizenship by the nation-state. In claiming rights, a right to return that will not be realized in this generation or the next, this stateless population claims inclusion in the polity while coming from a place completely excluded, ignored, and written off by nation-states.

Chapter Three

Rights and Inclusion through Enacting Political Claims to a Utopian Citizenship: the Right to Claim a Right

Through the cultivation and mobilization of communal memory, the Right of Return Movement kept the idea of Palestine as homeland alive for Palestinians living in Syria. In demanding return, the RoRM also claimed inclusion into the polity. This demand was not a claim for citizenship or recognition, but something outside of the nation-state's mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. This is called acknowledgement, a concept I will consider later in this chapter.[194] However, the politics of acknowledgement do not answer the question of what it means to call for something accepted as impossible. What does this claim achieve, what is its purpose? To answer these questions, I will first examine other instances of excluded groups calling for inclusion. The examples of David Walker's Appeal in 1829, as well as the sans-papiers movement in Paris in the 1990s help us to understand what occurs when excluded groups demand inclusion. In making these connections, I argue that this Palestinian community can be understood in a new way - as part of a permanent community of excluded populations enacting citizenship through political claims. Through these claims, citizenship as status is turned on its head.

<u>A Claim as an Enactment of Rights</u>

In 1829, David Walker, an abolitionist and anti-slavery activist, published "An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World," a document calling for Black unity against slavery in the United States. Rhetorically, Walker sets his argument apart from other declarations against slavery. Walker's stated purpose is to "awaken in the breasts of my afflicted, degraded and slumbering brethren, a spirit of inquiry and investigation respecting our miseries and

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[194] Markell, *Bound by Recognition.*

wretchedness in this Republican Land of Liberty!"[195] This "spirit of inquiry and investigation"

into the history of slavery and its injustices is a call to action to the Black American community.

Walker asks: "how we could be so submissive to a gang of men, whom we cannot tell whether

they are as good as ourselves or not, I never could conceive. However, this is shut up with the

Lord, and we cannot precisely tell - but I declare, we judge men by their works."[196] Action here

is vital for Walker. In condemning White Americans for decades of assault, murder and

enslavement, he is also calling Black Americans to act against it. Walker calls upon the

oppressed to enact their rights through rejecting their exclusion.

Walker's condemnation of slavery serves multiple purposes. While renouncing state

mechanisms of oppression and exclusion, he directly engages with American politics, thereby

creating a space for himself in the polity. In engaging with the polity, he includes himself, a

black man, into the American political community, thereby performing his citizenship. Walker

examines and directly quotes the Declaration of Independence in his appeal, working within the

system. The Declaration of Independence states that "when a long train of abuses and

usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute

despotism, it is their right it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new

guards for their future security."[197] When the Declaration of Independence was written, African

Americans, as slaves, were not included in the equality the document calls for. However, in

using the Declaration of Independence as evidence of his right to act against the government and

the polity, Walker includes himself within it. In his appeal, Walker condemns the state, but also

redefines it to include himself. Walker goes on to appeal to "the American people." He writes,

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[195] David Walker, *Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (Boston, MA, 1829), 5.

[196] Walker, *Appeal*, 20.

[197] Thomas Jefferson et al., "U.S. Declaration of Independence," US History, last modified July 4, 1776, accessed April 27, 2017, http://www.ushistory.org/DECLARATION/document/.

> now I appeal to heaven and to earth, and particularly to the American people themselves, who cease not to declare that our condition is not hard, and that we are comparatively satisfied to rest in wretchedness and misery, under them and their children. Not, indeed, to show me a colored President, a Governor, a Legislator, a Senator, a Mayor, or an Attorney at the Bar, but to show me a man of color, who holds the low office of a Constable, or one who sits in a Juror Box, even on a case of one of his wretched brethren, throughout this great Republic![198]

Walker's appeal therefore calls into existence a new way of thinking about his own inclusion and how that can be constituted, while also calling for tangible, real change, relying on the mechanisms of the state to include his community. He appeals to the state so as to change it.

Walker's appeal is simultaneously in and outside of the state-centric paradigm. He engages with the polity in an attempt to gain inclusion. In this sense, he is not freeing himself entirely from the nation-state paradigm. However, he is also completely outside of the system. His appeal engages him with the polity, yet he does not bow to its injustice. He writes, "they think that because they hold us in their internal chains of slavery, that we wish to be white, or of their color - but they are dreadfully deceived - we wish to be just as it pleased our Creator to have made us, and no avaricious and unmerciful wretches, have any business to make slaves of, or hold us in slavery."[199] Walker's appeal is powerful because he rejects his misrecognition while carving himself a place inside the state.

Walker redefines how someone can constitute themselves as a political actor included in the polity.[200] Melvin Rogers writes that Walker calls into existence "a political status otherwise denied to African Americans… that status affirms the equality between claimant and recipient apart from legal recognition."[201] Walker demands rights and inclusion, and also respect, for Black Americans in the United States. Rogers points out that although rights and inclusion are

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[198] Walker, *Appeal,* 10.
[199] Walker, *Appeal,* 14.
[200] Melvin L. Rogers, "David Walker and the Political Power of the Appeal," *Political Theory* 43, no. 2 (2014): 2.
[201] Rogers, "David Walker," 4.

both sought after, they are not the same. Walker's appeal for citizenship is made to the nation-state, but his demands for inclusion and acknowledgement are not.

Rogers writes, "appealing to one's fellows, as Walker does, is a rhetorical move to be sure, but it is one that serves an important political function - a way of capturing citizenship as an activity."[202] In acting citizenship, Walker includes himself into the political society around him that functions through white dominance and oppression. Walker's "engagement with his white audience and the intensity of it emerges from a belief that democracy is fundamentally tied to offering judgments regarding the social and political worlds we inhabit - judgments that may very well envision American democracy in more inclusive terms."[203] Like Engin Isin, Walker sees democracy, citizenship and inclusion as active, socially produced phenomena. Walker's belief in the ideal of American inclusivity begins to make this utopian vision a reality.

Rogers writes, "this is the political power of this pamphlet - it exemplifies the logic of self-governance."[204] Self-governance, but also political agency, is what becomes so important here - the ability to enact rights and to enter into the political community through an appeal to (or against) it. Walker's appeal strives to radically transform the standing of Black Americans through democratic logic, and his rhetoric manufactures this new reality. When citizenship is viewed as practice, not status, practicing inclusivity is how it becomes a reality. The title of Walker's appeal: "An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World," is indicative of this. "Colored Citizens" did not exist in 1829 America. But in naming them as such, and by acting upon this claim to citizenship, Walker "calls into existence" the status of Black Americans as included.[205]

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[202] Rogers, "David Walker," 3.
[203] Rogers, "David Walker," 5.
[204] Rogers, "David Walker," 20.
[205] Rogers, "David Walker," 1.

This phenomenon of enacting rights in order to be included into the polity can also be seen in the "sans-papiers" movement in France in the 1990s. In Paris, a group of undocumented migrants, unable to ensure basic human rights and threatened with deportation, illustrated the idea of a claim creating something in itself. The sans-papiers conducted sit-ins in government buildings, occupied public and religious spaces, protested, and, like David Walker, engaged with the founding documents of the state; the sans-papiers wrote and published their own version of the French constitution.[206] This movement has enduring relevance for scholars for this very reason; as Isin writes, "it was this claim to the right to stay that was enacted by occupying a church not with a language of human rights but political rights of subjects who did not possess the rights. So the claim was not only the right to stay but also the right to claim a right."[207]

Like David Walker, the sans-papiers create themselves as citizens through claiming the very right to claim rights.[208] This claim, or political action, situates the actor inside the polity without ever formally being put there. The claim itself therefore becomes a productive political act. Gündogdu writes,

> to establish themselves as subjects entitled to rights and to validate their rights claims, 'sans-papiers' have engaged in inventive political practices such as designating a name for themselves, occupying politically strategic sites, and perhaps most importantly, articulating their demands in a manifesto mimicking the eighteenth-century declaration of rights.[209]

In claiming their rights, these undocumented, excluded people include themselves; taking political agency and asserting their voice where it has been previously denied.

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[206] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 24.
[207] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 380.
[208] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 381.
[209] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 24.

The Palestinian Call for Return

David Walker's appeal and the sans-papiers movement both make political claims to something I will call utopian citizenship. Through these enactments of rights, both populations become part of a political genre of claims making through enacting citizenship in its ideal (citizenship as practice). In both cases, claims are made which include excluded populations through giving themselves "the right to have rights," or the right to claim a right.[210] These oppressed, excluded communities have created new forms of political action outside of the nation-state. In other words, the excluded actor asserts her political inclusion, rather than seeking it through state mechanisms. These communities have new narratives and fundamentally new ways of understanding international society.

Through the RoRM, Palestinian refugees in pre-war Syria become part of this group of excluded communities making political claims. Within their exilic community, abandoned by all state institutions (the PLO included) after the failure of Oslo, these refugees were suddenly aware of a new loyalty to their own community in exile, one that rejected helpless victimhood and instead called for a utopian rethinking of inclusion through making claims to rights. The actions of the RoRM and their call for utopian citizenship place Palestinian refugees in Syria within this larger community of subaltern groups gaining inclusion through making political claims to and thereby enacting a utopian citizenship.

The RoRM's claim was for return: return to Palestine on the condition of UN Resolution 194. While return is all but impossible, the claim is not invalid. Isin understands citizenship as constantly shifting - a reproduced social phenomenon. What "acts," then, make actor citizens? Isin writes, "being a citizen almost always means being more than an insider - it also means to be

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[210] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism.*

one who has mastered modes and forms of conduct that are appropriate to being an insider."[211] The act of making this claim, while specifically for return, simultaneously symbolized and realized inclusion. It is this impossible claim to return, like the san-papiers attempt to stay in Europe and David Walker's endeavor to create a political space for Black Americans in the American polity, that connects Palestinians to this larger political genre of claims making. These claims do not fall into the rhetorical traps of the nation-state, rather, they challenge the fundamental notions of state-centrism altogether.

It was in exile that resistance was first thought of and cultivated. With the help of nation-states, refugee communities often internalize processes of victimization and helplessness.[212] However, the RoRM used the exilic condition in a precisely different way - to join stateless populations around a cause and to claim their "right to have rights."[213] Schulz writes that a kind of nationalism in the camp was necessary for action.[214] She writes, "their weapons are what they have always been: refusal to forget, anger, and a remarkable capacity for collective survival."[215] A refugee college student illustrated this point, writing in 2013 that "instead of rights, we have resistance, and instead of duties we have struggle."[216] Nationalism plays a part in this examination of the RoRM because a certain vision of Palestine unified the community around return. Nevertheless, this Palestinian nationalism exists around a place that largely no longer exists. There is no return for Palestinians to the Palestine imagined through these memorializations of home taking place in the camp. The Palestinian villages and cities that refugees remember are now either Israeli cities or settlements, or simply don't exist. This

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[211] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 372.

[212] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 2.

[213] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianis,* 267.

[214] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 186.

[215] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 124.

[216] Ramadan, Al-Assi, and Odeh, "[Citizenship]," 34.

nationalism therefore exists through an almost fantastical idea of the past - in turn redefining ideas about nationalism and the nation-state. Salih writes, "Palestinian refugees are forming a 'political society,' comprised of new claims, narratives, and political practices, which they base on a broader moral and political ground than that of nationalism and the nation-state."[217] In the same way David Walker is in and outside the polity in making his claim, so too are Palestinian refugees in Syria who cultivate nationalism around notions of a Palestine of the past. Feelings towards Palestine and the RoRM are nationalistic in the sense that they centered around a nation. In this case, it is nationalism beyond the nation-state.

Palestinian refugees in Syria part of this political community can be called "warrior refugees."[218] Warrior refugees - political activists - challenge all principles of political participation.[219] "Refugee" and "warrior" are two terms that fundamentally contradict each other in statist discourse, yet they existed together for Palestinians in Syria. Through political action, the warrior refugee redefines her inclusion in the state. The idea of the warrior refugee also connects this community again to other excluded groups; Walker's appeal and the movements of the sans-papiers constitute these groups not as warrior refugees, but as activist citizens - communities gaining rights through the enactment of claims to them.

In examining this idea of a claim as an enactment of rights, we see Arendt making her own claim through announcing "a right to have rights."[220] If we understand her claim as productive, liberal democratic agenda can shift in its direction. Arendt's call for "a right to have

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[217] Ruba Salih, "Reconciling Return and Rights: Palestinian Refugees and the Emergence of a 'Political Society'," *Jadaliyya*, November 20, 2013, 3, accessed April 14, 2017, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/10814/reconciling-return-and-rights_palestinian-refuge.

[218] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 98.

[219] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 99.

[220] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 267.

rights" becomes "a proposal that affirms the rights of everyone to citizenship and humanity."[221]

Her claim would mean a fundamental shift in the way we imagine sovereignty, borders, and the

state. Judith Butler argues that as Arendt declares "a right to have rights", she simultaneously

calls upon it to be enacted.[222] Butler, like Arendt, understands freedom "not as an inner

disposition or a given status but instead as a political practice."[223] Butler writes,

> Freedom in its political manifestation denotes the capacity to 'call something into being which did not exist before, which was not given, not even as an object of cognition of imagination,' and declaration, understood as an inaugural speech act, is an exemplary practice of freedom. Accordingly, Arendt's call for a right to have rights can be taken as a new beginning, which brings forth a right that was not known or given in the existing international order organized around the principle of nationality. Understood in these terms, it invites us to rethink human rights in terms of practices of political founding and draws attention to the vital importance of declaring rights in this regard.[224]

Arendt defined being political as "the capacity to act."[225] According to Arendt, "to act

means to begin. It is not just to begin something new, but to enact oneself as that being that

makes a beginning."[226] Arendt's words point to the notion of acting as fundamentally important

to modern liberal democracy with an inclusive polity. Homi Bhabha agrees with Arendt here,

writing that the state of exception is in fact also a state of emergence.[227] Through enacting

inclusion, people and populations transform themselves into politically included, relevant beings.

As Sassen points out, these new enactments "explode citizenship's legal boundaries."[228] While

the nation-state limits who it includes and protects, populations of non-citizens are enacting

citizenship and thereby redefining its meaning. When unrecognized, undocumented, ignored,

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[221] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 13.

[222] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 267.

[223] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 171.

[224] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 171.

[225] Arendt, Hannah. *On Violence*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1970), 179.

[226] Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition.* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), 177.

[227] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 23.

[228] Sassen, "Towards Post-National," 287.

victimized and oppressed people enact "citizenship," its definition shifts, its meaning broadens, to mean whatever is enacted through it. Citizenship not in its legal sense, but for its ideal, is what is sought.

Acknowledgement

What does this utopian form of citizenship look like? The state argues that it is recognition that includes communities in the polity. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, recognition leads to systematic inequality through mis- or non-recognition by the state in an effort to contain identity. Markell, like Agamben, finds attempting to locate a state-centric solution a waste of time. He seeks to remove the nation-state completely from his conceptions of inclusion and equality. Markell writes, "there is nothing...that will deliver us once and for all from the problematic circuits of desire that sustain the politics of recognition."[229] Recognition is unavoidable, but the terms and the agents of this recognition need to be rethought. In Chapter Two, the recognition of Black Americans highlights these inherent inequalities at play in the politics of recognition. Al-Hardan puts the problems of recognition in focus through the treatment of Palestinian communities: "how can one begin to think through moving beyond a recognition whose structural realities have allowed Israel to continue its denial and violence as well as the de facto repeated destruction of various Palestinian communities in both Israel and the Arab world?"[230] How can we begin to move away from recognition as the hallmark of acceptance into a polity?

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[229] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 177.*
[230] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria,* 190.

Arendt writes that " if it is good to be recognized, it is better to be welcomed, precisely because this is something we can neither earn nor deserve."[231] Markell adds, "to welcome someone says more about the welcomer than the welcomed: it represents a slackening of the urge to convert an uncertain activity into a predictable process by settling and enforcing strict boundaries to participation."[232] This is what Markell is striving for - a form of recognition that instead accepts inherent "uncertain activity," and welcomes vast difference, without trying to contain it. Markell calls this acknowledgement. Acknowledgement, as opposed to recognition, "demands that each of us bear our share of the burden and risk involved in the uncertain, open-ended, sometimes maddeningly and sometimes joyously surprising activity of living and interacting with other people."[233] Acknowledgement is not only the acknowledgement of one's own identity, but also is more about inclusion - acknowledging others and other communities for their specific histories without judgment or action.[234] While acknowledgement is the term that I will use, this rethinking of recognition can be called many things. Kelly Oliver names it "witnessing" in her critique of recognition.[235] The idea is "a matter of experiencing and responding to one's connection to and dependence upon others - including, crucially, bearing witness to, and acting responsibly in the face of, the ways in which one's relation to others has been shaped by injustice."[236] Acknowledgement highlights a community's current condition as well as its history of struggle and oppression. The politics of acknowledgement is as much about acknowledging people as who they are as an awareness of our own conditions - our habits of

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[231] Arendt, Hannah. "Emerson-Thoreau Medal Lecture." (Lecture, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, April9, 1969), 1.

[232] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 180.*

[233] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 7.*

[234] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 35.*

[235] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 37.*

[236] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 37.*

categorization, confinement and control.[237] Acknowledgement means acknowledging

hierarchical societal structures that create inequality through state acts of misrecognition.

The politics of acknowledgement recognizes privilege. For example, Markell calls for the

importance placed on Christianity in the United States to be fundamentally rethought.[238] Markell

is direct in his critique of Christianity, and he backs it up legitimately: "from the perspective of

the politics of recognition, such a diminishment appears to be denying someone a good; from the

perspective of the politics of acknowledgement, it is denying someone a mild but real form of

institutional privilege."[239] This is a key difference between recognition and acknowledgement -

acknowledgement seeks to acknowledge individual difference as it does an entire system of

oppression. It seeks equality above all. In the politics of recognition, the state mediates equality.

Claims for recognition are inherently claims dependent upon the state as the agent of inclusion.

Acknowledgement, unlike citizenship or recognition, doesn't depend on the state.

Acknowledgement widens the field of who can be involved in the project of inclusion. Claims

can be made from a place of political-emptiness - they defy the state in their existence - they do

not work within its boundaries and paradigms.[240]

Acknowledgement is this utopian citizenship. The nation-state has confined our thinking,

making us certain of the idea that citizenship is the cure for statelessness. However, it is not

citizenship as status, but as practice that stateless and other excluded populations seek.

Acknowledgement is what Snyder calls "multivalent recognition," and what Elizabeth Alexander

means as she argues that blackness should be able to "coexist side-by-side" and "in

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[237] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 121.*
[238] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 181.*
[239] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 181.*
[240] Markell, *Bound by Recognition, 124.*

contradiction."[241] It is even the best of what Taylor sees in the politics of recognition - acknowledgement achieves what Taylor calls for, while refusing to fall back into the state-centric rhetorical trap of trying to define these ideas for us. Acknowledgement gives us the vocabulary the nation-state has tried to remove, allowing for political action and change outside its prescribed parameters. Palestinian refugees in Syria, through the RoRM, are simultaneously claiming acknowledgement while working completely from exile, excluded, forgotten by international paradigms. Citizenship status would of course include Palestinians into the polity, but an examination of citizenship as formal inclusion has shown us how little in reality it can bring a person or population. It is citizenship in its ideal - acknowledgement - that Palestinians in Syria call for through the RoRM, fostered through Palestinian communal memorialization of home.

Sassen writes of a "distinction between powerlessness and the condition of being an actor even though lacking power."[242] Palestinian refugees in Syria learned this distinction - and became the actors, and therefore the beneficiaries, of acknowledgement. As stated earlier, "return" would in reality be exceedingly complex for Palestinians living in Arab host states. The idea for many Palestinians has therefore little to do with return, but "might instead point to processes of regaining control over one's life."[243] Fadwa, a Palestinian living in Germany in 2001, stated in an interview, "no, I don't think it's possible, I don't think it's going to work. But it has to. Maybe not everyone can return. But I will never give up."[244] The right of return and the RoRM uncovers refugees who have given themselves political agency and who are calling for the principles of the rights they do not yet have.

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[241] Snyder, "Mutlivalent Recognition," 253.
[242] Sassen, "Towards Post-National," 285.
[243] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 214.
[244] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 211.

<u>Depoliticization by the State</u>

Nyers writes, "what it [the state] cannot internalize, naturalize or co-opt, it excludes, displaces and alienates."[245] This is exactly the case with stateless populations. The phenomenon of the refugee warrior challenges humanitarianism and the nation-state itself, highlighting its limits and threatening the very basis of its paradigm. The state has therefore depoliticized refugees so as to silence them. The refugee's identity was manufactured by the state to be either an innocent victim or a radicalized security threat. These images help exclude the refugee - widening the gap between citizen and abject, perpetuating orientalist, racist ideas about political consciousness and identity.[246] Schulz writes, "diaspora populations are often seen as not only placeless but also devoid of culture."[247] While "exile" as opposed to "refugee" is often poeticized and romanticized, there is no actual space for refugees to explain the reality of their experiences or struggles, or in which to claim political agency.[248] Here, we glimpse the power of recognition: "refugee," as defined in media and popular culture, but also through human rights declarations and peace treaties, are expected to fit into a certain trope of the silent victim.[249] And we see this today. When we think of refugees, we think of terror and of fleeing in a boat in the middle of the night. We think of tents and food rations, when overwhelmingly this is not the condition of refugees around the world. Long-term refugees, second and third generations of stateless people, have no place in media or state-centric rhetoric.

The depoliticization of refugees has occurred in peace treaties and human rights declarations since 1919. Refugees have to look and act a certain way to be recognized as refugees. UN agencies also function through statist assumptions. The UNHCR has two ways of

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[245] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 17.
[246] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 155.
[247] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 16.
[248] Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society*, 68.
[249] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, xv.

dealing with refugees; either as part of short-term problems or emergencies, or as part of longer-term, post conflict situations, in processes of resettlement.[250] No solution for return has been found for Palestinian refugees; hence, they are placed in a seventy-year-old state of emergency, as UNRWA continues to be given temporary status by the UN.[251] Akram writes that "certain states have requested UNHCR to agree that it will under no circumstances exercise any mandate toward Palestinians residing in their territories."[252] UNRWA was created to specifically protect Palestinians. Yet, the move away from the UNHCR created a gap in the legality of who is responsible across the globe. States are constantly confused by what to do with Palestinian refugees. Therefore, again, instead of being protected as an extremely vulnerable population, they fall into legal holes where no state or international body can be held responsible. There is no way to understand this phenomenon of the politicized refugee within the paradigm of the nation-state. Therefore, international law states that refugees are prohibited from acting politically or supporting potentially violent political groups.[253]

Much of the scholarship on refugeehood leaves little room for the notion of the refugee politicized in exile. "Exile" is seen as a black space, never imagined as an active platform for change. Arendt writes:

> his [the refugee's] treatment by others does not depend on what he does or does not do… they are deprived, not of the right to freedom, but of the right to action; not of the right to think whatever they please, but of the right to opinion. Privileges in some cases, injustices in most, blessings and doom, are meted out to them according to accident and without any relation whatsoever to what they do, did, or may do… its loss entails the loss of the relevance of speech… of some of the most essential characteristics of human life.[254]

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[250] Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy, *Western Sahara: War. Nationalism, and Conflict Irresolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 128.

[251] Qussay Abu Aker et al., "Sustainability," *Campus in Campus Collective Dictionary*, January 15, 2013, accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.campusincamps.ps/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/sustainability.pdf.

[252] Akram, "Palestinian Refugees," 45.

[253] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 103.

[254] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 298.

Within this paradigm, refugees are mute. Now, however, we see the refugee acting in direct opposition to these assumptions. Through movements like the RoRM, excluded people and populations defy the image of the scared, silent and helpless refugee.

Nation-states, but more importantly international institutions, allow the Palestinian problem to disappear because they have no way of understanding this new political body. Akram notes that when states interact with Palestinian political movements, they do so through the PLO.[255] States know how to interact and react only within the state-centric framework - with other states and state-like institutions. They speak the language of the nation-state, and when a community or group begins to act politically in ways that transcends this framework, the state does not know how to act or to communicate. During the first intifada for example, Israel worked exclusively with the PLO, despite the fact that the PLO had little influence over the uprisings. It was the PLO that Israel, the United States and other nation-states negotiated with, despite the uprisings themselves coming from a broader, more popular base.

In these depoliticized spaces - in camps - radically leftist political movements arise against oppression. These movements like the RoRM come from communities that do not function within the state-centric framework. Interestingly, these groups also hold a distrust for the PLO - in its negotiations with nation-states and therefore its role in the oppression of Palestinian refugees. Palestinian refugees are depoliticized because they reject this system altogether, and act in defiance of it. While this has meant decades of oppression, it also highlights the inherent power of the refugee.

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[255] Akram, "Palestinian Refugees," 44.

Power of the Refugee

In calling for acknowledgement, Palestinian refugees insert themselves in the international conversation. What's more, in forming a political society with almost nationalistic visions, refugees begin to change the future of political interaction. These political societies formed in subaltern communities have outlined a new task for the world; they are a testimony to the idea of a "sub-, post-, and trans-national allegiances, aspirations, claims, and solidarities."[256] These political societies are fundamentally invested in equality rather than modernization, economic progress, and securitization advanced by the state.

In this chapter, I have argued that Palestinian refugees in pre-war Syria, aided by the RoRM, have become part of a genre of enacting utopian citizenship through political claims making. These comparisons to the sans-papiers and David Walker's appeal transform the way we think about statelessness. However, in comparing refugee communities to more permanent minorities, I do not wish to make their history disappear. Through analysis of the RoRM, we see this community seeking inclusion and fighting forgetfulness, acting against integration into the Syrian polity. Labeling Palestinian refugees as a permanent minority should not nullify their desire to return or the fact that the problem and pain of their existence cannot end until the nation-state no longer dictates the way societies interact. Minority populations and refugees strive together for acknowledgement. Black Americans call for acknowledgement of a difference and of a history of white supremacy. Palestinian refugees in Syria call for very similar things: acknowledgement of the Palestinian history of struggle and the violence and exclusiveness of the nation-state. Palestinian refugees in Syria are part of a global population outside the boundaries of the nation-state, creating inclusion through enacting citizenship. Making these connections help us to understand what it means to be included, and how this inclusion can be created.

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[256] Salih, "Reconciling Return," 2.

However, despite these similarities, it is also vital to note that there is something new that comes from exodus, because the people most capable of conveying the inherently oppressive nature of the nation-state are the people completely outside of it. Arendt and Agamben hint that because of the lack of human rights given to them, stateless populations have a unique vocabulary that contests the equality attached to citizenship.[257] While not accepting the nation-state and their exile, Palestinians came to recognize their condition as reality.[258] Palestinian refugees are involved in this system, yet they are outside its confines in forming a political society that destabilizes all configurations of the nation-state.[259]

The refugee is different from more permanent minority populations because the voice of the stateless, completely and purposefully excluded from the nation-state, creates an entirely new political space by challenging and redefining the patterns of exclusion. This power of the refugee partially comes from the continual memorialization of Palestine. In remembering Palestine as it was, through the transmission of memory passed down through generations, Palestine is remembered in its own ideal form - unaffected by nation-states and their borders. Al-Hardan writes,

> they [Palestinians] are therefore also belonging to an idea of a Palestine and a Syria of the past, during which their borders did not exist, and also of their potential future. The realities of Palestinian refugee communities in Syria as explored through Nakba memories… embody political potentialities that may have been a product of, but also transcend, the nation-state order left behind by the British and the French in the Arab East.[260]

The Palestinian call for return can in this way be understood as a radical call for something beyond the nation-state - beyond what the PLO or PA can offer within the state-centric paradigm. The RoRM calls for acknowledgement and acts outside of all state confines - in

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[257] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights,* 9.
[258] Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 39.
[259] Salih, "Reconciling Return," 5.
[260] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria*, 192.

camps, assumed dead spaces of fear, never of political action. This is a vital difference between stateless and minority - minorities seek acknowledgement within their nation-state. Here, inclusion must be understood in its literal sense as well as in a much broader, uncertain way. Black Americans calling for acknowledgement do so within a nation-state (the U.S.). Although acknowledgement expands the state's notion of citizenship, it is still acknowledgement within a nation-state. The same can be said about the sans-papiers, who called for inclusion into the French polity. Refugees likewise seek to gain inclusion, but in what nation-state? Who would Palestinians refugees in Syria receive acknowledgement from? Palestinian refugees rejected socioeconomic integration into Syria. Israel/Palestine, as discussed in Chapter One, will not accept refugees. Furthermore, the event that forced Palestinians into exile – the creation of the nation-state of Israel - was mandated by the UN.[261] Akram writes, "the obstacle to their repatriation was not dissatisfaction with their homeland… but the fact that a member of the United Nations was preventing their return."[262] This acknowledgement when called upon by Palestinian refugees thereby expands the boundaries of the nation-state. Palestinians refugees in Syria are calling for acknowledgement from a body that transcends the nation-state. There is no legal reason why Palestinians have not been afforded basic human rights.[263] This is the power of the refugee - to reconfigure these boundaries by calling for something that while guaranteed in all human rights declarations, does not yet exist.

Nyers casts the refugee as the foil of the citizen: "All that is present to the citizen:" agency, security, participation, "is absent to the refugee."[264] However, Palestinian refugees in

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[261] Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 40.

[262] Akram, "Palestinian Refugees," 40.

[263] Akram, "Palestinian Refugees," 48.

[264] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 98.

Syria are no longer helpless; they take agency and action. They are no longer ignored; they have

objectives and demands. They defy the static definition of the refugee that best suits sovereigns.

The state strives to depoliticize statelessness as it sees refugee communities taking

political action, exemplified by the RoRM. Arendt examines the refugee as the greatest danger to

state-centrism. She writes, "the 'alien' is a frightening symbol of the fact of difference as such,

of individuality as such, and indicates those realms in which man cannot change and cannot act

and in which, therefore, he has a distinct tendency to destroy."[265] Depoliticization of the refugee

by the state has a specific purpose - to silence and trivialize a voice that in reality may have

consequence for the future legitimacy of a state-centric world. Refugees are completely

excluded, expelled from humanity. However, Arendt continues, "the abstract nakedness of being

nothing but human was their greatest danger."[266] Agamben, along similar lines, writes, "the

refugee should be considered for what it is, namely, nothing less than a limit-concept that at once

brings a radical crises to the principles of the nation-state and clears the way for a renewal of

categories that can no longer be delayed."[267] He continues, theorizing that the camp "will appear

as the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity."[268] While confined in aspects of their

thinking, as addressed in Chapter One, Arendt and Agamben point to a vital aspect of the

condition of statelessness - its unique power to challenge state-centrism. The refugee is

automatically part of a community that functions beyond the confines of the nation-state.[269] Said

writes of exile "not as a privilege, but as an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate

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[265] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 301.

[266] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 300.

[267] Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Cesare Casarino and Vincenzo Binetti (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 22.

[268] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 123.

[269] Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees*, 32.

modern life."[270] He concludes, "exile is life led outside habitual order."[271] Refugees therefore hold the rhetorical power to be understood not as part of a crisis but as a direct result of state-centrism.

One way this power can be illustrated is through ideas of mujawara (مجاورة). Mujawara, literally meaning neighborhood, is translated as "the ability to be in a group, to learn things from each other, and to derive our ability and our strength from within us and that which surrounds us."[272] Mujawara symbolizes strength and power, devoid of authority, found in a community where every person is the "co-author of meaning."[273] Warrior refugees highlight the strength of mujawara - in breaking apart paradigms through personal and communal experience as opposed learned assumptions. These activist refugees create a discourse devoid of the supposed legitimacy placed on notions such as citizenship.

I am not arguing that because of this rhetorical and symbolic power, or that through their claims to rights and inclusion, refugees will be able to rise up and take on the nation-state. In making the claim to the right of return, refugees are not instantly included, or even powerful. There is no plausible answer to the RoRM, other than this claim. However, while it cannot be a tangible, sought after goal, it transfers power to the refugee. In gaining inclusion, even in the form of being the outsider, the position of the stateless is elevated. The claim itself, like that of David Walker or the sans-papiers movement gave Palestinians a political voice. Ilana Feldman writes that "this claims also enabled a kind of self-sufficiency as Palestinians took on

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[270] Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 146.

[271] Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 149.

[272] Nedaa Hamouz et al., "مشاركة[Participation]," *Campus in Campus Collective Dictionary*, January 15, 2013, 25, accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.campusincamps.ps/projects/participation/.

[273] Abu Aker et al., "Sustainability," 60.

responsibility for their struggle themselves."[274] One RoRM activist, now an Ai'doun activist in

Lebanon, stated in an interview that

> given the spread of return committees all over the world, it has now become an
> issue that is advanced… basically, just talking about it, or if there is a threat to it,
> there is an immediate mobilization against that threat. So the return committees
> have put forth issues… the issue of the right of return has become an issue that is
> discussed on the Arab level, on the Palestinian level, and on the international
> level.[275]

This step towards inclusion is vital.

In Syria before 2011, the RoRM created a politically vocal community that forced the

world to rethink the differences between nation and camp, exclusion and inclusion, citizen and

refugee.[276] Through this examination we can see the emergence of new actors with political

agency, from inside and outside the nation-state, constituted by their loss and their practices of

claiming rights.[277] Isin writes, "the emerging figure of the activist citizen calls into question the

givenness of that body politic and opens its boundaries wide."[278] Inclusion is being enacted and

reproduced by "the practices of the excluded" in new ways, not through citizenship, but

acknowledgement.[279]

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[274]Feldman, "Home as a Refrain," 40.

[275] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria*, 82.

[276] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 157.

[277] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 376.

[278] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 384.

[279] Sassen, "Towards Post-National Citizenship," 288.

Conclusions

> [The Nakba anniversary] last year was different. It was a day in which the refugee's fear was broken and a day in which they reclaimed their voice and image. What took place that day was legendary. [280]

-Khalid Bakrawi, who died under torture in Syrian prison in 2013.
Interview inYarmouk Camp, 2008.

In December 2012, Asad's troops entered Yarmouk. The camp, now considered a stronghold of Damascus, has seen the very worst of the fighting and destruction in the battle for Syria's capital city. Fighting continues in the camp between government forces, the Free Syrian Army, and Da'esh (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant).

In 2015, after Da'esh took control of the camp and government forces began attacking the area, pictures began to appear depicting a mass exodus from Yarmouk. Once again, thousands of Palestinians were forced into exile. Many of those who stayed in the camp have starved as the surrounding area has been cut off from aid convoys intermittently for almost five years. Of the 160,000 Palestinians living in Yarmouk before 2011, less than 20,000 remain today.[281] For months, the UN was not able to reach Yarmouk - UNRWA has no way of telling how many people are left alive. In 2013, Sheik Mohammed Abu Al-Khair, the imam of a Yarmouk mosque issued a Fadwa allowing the starving residents of Yarmouk to eat their pets - including cats, dogs, and donkeys.[282] Yarmouk before the Civil War was a bustling hub of Palestinian culture and political activism, a space of exception, and a home for thousands. That place does not exist today.

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[280] Al-Hardan, *Palestinians in Syria*, i.

[281] "Statistics," Action Group for Palestinians of Syria, last modified November 4, 2016, accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.actionpal.org.uk/en/post/5050/news-and-reports/palestinians-of-syria-april-23-2017-statistics.

[282] Jonathan Steele, "How Yarmouk Refugee Camp Became the Worst Place in Syria," *The Guardian*, March 5, 2015, accessed April 15, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/05/how-yarmouk-refugee-camp-became-worst-place-syria.

The Syrian Civil War has removed yet another home for Palestinians, highlighting their ultimate vulnerability as refugees. While Syrians, "armed with passports," have been able to find at least a degree of refuge in neighboring countries, stateless Palestinians are turned away at every border, forced back to war in Syria.[283] Palestinians are a confusing community by international institutions. They are double refugees in a sense - fleeing Syria and unable to return home, or to Palestine. They flee with their Syrian neighbors from the only home they have known, to be turned away at borders, trapped in an open air prison in Syria because of their Palestinian descent.

In conclusion to her research in Yarmouk, Al-Hardan writes: "the communities of which I wrote, and the Syria that made their memories and history possible… continue to be devastated."[284] In her interviews with Palestinians from Yarmouk now living in Beirut, the word Nakba is used to describe the Syrian war today: "another Nakba."[285] The destruction of Palestinian homes once again has changed the meaning of Nakba, illustrating the attachment Palestinians in Syria felt to their Syrian homes. Once again, violent exile has created a strong sense of attachment to ones homeland.

Because of the war, we might never truly understand the RoRM and what it aimed to accomplish. While still active within Palestinian communities in Lebanon, the future of the movement is all but memory. What, then, is the point of studying this community and these social movements and institutions if they no longer exist?

Palestinian refugees in pre-war Syria formed part of a larger group of excluded communities enacting inclusion through claiming rights. The connections made between

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[283] Nell Gabiam, "Humanitarianism, Development, and Security in the 21st Century: Lessons from the Syrian Refugee Crisis," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 48, no. 2 (2016) JSTOR.

[284] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 260.

[285] Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering*, 267.

excluded minorities such as Black Americans highlight the limitations of inclusion through state mechanisms. The comparison in Chapter Three to David Walker's appeal and the sans-papiers movement places Palestinian refugees in Syria into this group, where we see state-centric notions of inclusion redefined. Despite the RoRM's fragmentation as a result of the Syrian Civil War, the connection between this movement and other political communities point to its symbolic and growing importance.

In 1989, African specialist George Houser visited a refugee camp in Western Sahara. In the camp lived Moroccan refugees who had been stuck in a state of limbo for twenty years. Houser wrote of his trip:

> Never have I seen a group of people more self-reliant or better organized. Indeed, I found it impossible to think of them as refugees. They have turned to other countries for food and clothing to be sure, but politically, they are independent of outside control… the people have organized themselves according to their own way of life. In the camp, I had a feeling I was visiting a nation in exile.[286]

Today, we see the largest number of refugees since 1945. Furthermore, as citizens, racial minorities across the globe face similar exclusion, as citizenship for these communities proves to be hierarchical. Both these communities point to the growing voice of the excluded, demanding inclusion. Marchand writes, "as they [excluded minorities] come to grips with such conditions of work and employment, many migrant groups are becoming increasingly active and vocal about their human rights."[287] Across the globe, more and more excluded populations begin to speak and be heard. From Mexican immigrants in the United States to native and indigenous populations in Australian and the Western Sahara, excluded groups are claiming rights, taking political agency and redefining inclusion.

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[286] Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara*, 113.
[287] Marchand, "Mexican Migrant Transnationalism," 298.

Arendt and Agamben's theories founded a critique of the nation-state that is vital to rethinking its power. Using their critique I try and locate the dangers and weaknesses of the state. However, Arendt and Agamben's theories cannot explain the case of Palestinians in Syria. They cannot account for the way these refugees are integrated yet take political agency. In studying this case, we see a gap in the literature examining modern refugeehood.

This comparison is useful because it tells us something larger about excluded groups regardless of citizenship status, but also about refugeehood specifically. In this paper, I have sought to use this specific community and movement to highlight larger problems with the way refugees are understood today.

The RoRM mobilized communal memories of Palestine in camps to keep their movement alive. While the RoRM was successful in bringing Palestinians who had never lived in Palestine closer to "home," the movement was not about return in reality, but instead acted as a way for refugees to gain political agency. This claim for rights and inclusion is not however a call for citizenship or recognition as defined by the state, but acknowledgement. As discussed in Chapter Three, a call for acknowledgement achieves something very different than a call for recognition. Recognition is part of the language of the state because it ties identity to citizenship. A call for acknowledgement expands and redefines citizenship.

Through acknowledgement, Palestinian refugees can be included in the polity without the language or confines of the nation-state. Through acknowledgement of their condition and their history, refugees can take center stage in world politics, because in order to truly understand state-centrism, we need to examine a call for acknowledgement, political agency, and inclusion. It is the call for inclusion that separates stateless people from other oppressed communities. Palestinian refugees, in calling for inclusion, transform the notion of the nation-state, because

they call for inclusion from a body that does not yet exist. Schulz writes that "resistance was a strategy to be launched not only against Israel, but against exile, against being defined as refugees… it represented resolute rejection and negation of outside labeling; in fact Palestinians were to show the world that they were the opposite of the categories that were designated by others."[288] Refugees defy the nation-state in each action they take. Acknowledging this community as deserving of rights and inclusion points to the great need for something other than the nation-state to guarantee this.

Booth writes, "what we do not remember is as if it never happened."[289] He continues, "if the cites of mass crime are left faceless and nameless, if the house, manner, and place of their last moments are unknown, they are outside the light of truth, lost to forgetting. The world is left incomplete; its integrity broken; its reality undermined."[290] The RoRM fought against this. Although it is not an active group today, the power of this movement lives on. The RoRM and the memorialization of Palestine helped Palestinians become warrior refugees, fighting for rights and a political voice in a world where stateless people continue to have none.

Arendt, while not as radical as her counterpart Agamben, was skeptical of the nation-state. Arendt anticipated that the creation of Israel would lead only to conflict. A refugee crises "fixed" through state-centric mechanisms leads only to violence. She writes that "the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs… since the peace treaties of 1919 and 1920 the refugees and the stateless shave attached themselves like a curse to all newly established states on earth which were created in the image of the nation-state."[291] A state-centric solution only reproduces the problem. Arendt forecasted violence and conflict from

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[288] Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora*, 121.
[289] Booth, "The Unforgotten," 781.
[290] Booth, "The Unforgotten," 782.
[291] Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 290.

1948. Nevertheless, she does not call for the destruction of the nation-state, but instead a "radical rethinking of these key concepts."[292] These key concepts, namely citizenship, certainly need to be rethought and redefined, and to do this, the voice of the refugee must be centered. We need to create conditions in which voices can be heard that reimagine citizenship and that foresee radical alternative futures that lead to inclusion. The refugee's power lies in her rhetorical and practical ability to defy state-centrism.

As Said wrote, ours is "the age of the refugee."[293] To truly understand the condition of statelessness and for the stateless to begin to act, we must listen to the voices of a community emerging from the shadows of the nation-state, armed with unforgotten history. Only through centering historically disenfranchised voices can the state-centric narrative be disrupted. We need to listen to the voices that have been silenced - exiled to a permanent temporal space - to reimagine ways of interacting and acknowledging on personal and trans-national levels.[294]

Scholars have begun pointing towards these divergent voices to rethink statelessness. Deepa Rajkumar, in her research on East African refugees in Canada, points to their creative writing as a way to hear voices devoid of state-centric paradigms placed over them. These poems, like documented memories of Palestine, keep a piece of the reality of statelessness alive in truth. One refugee writes: "Present / Everywhere / And nowhere / In academics / In policy / In everyday understandings. / Absent / In everyday / In stories of everyday / In life."[295] Another writes: "By questioning the border / Everywhere / Aha, by not being in or out of it, but at the

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[292] Gündogdu, *Rightlessness in an Age of Rights*, 52.

[293] Said, *Reflections on Exile*, 137.

[294] Deepa Rajkumar, "Temporariness: Other than Permanence, and in the Lives of People - Always...," in *Liberating Temporariness? Migration, Work, and Citizenship in an Age of Insecurity*, by Leah F. Volsko, Valerie Preston, and Robert Latham (Quebec: McGill-Queens University Press, 2014), 306.

[295] Rajkumar, "Temporariness," 308.

border. / Which then can't be / The border, closed / But open."[296] In this second poem, this refugee highlights the exact point I am trying to make: her presence at the border has thrown uncertainty over it. Her presence at the border has in fact opened it. The refugee is the herald of these redefinitions. Through testimony of a lived reality, she breaks down barriers to inclusion and points to a future where her uncertain, temporary yet permanent, unjust existence will no longer exist. This would mean the dissolution of state borders. The refugee must be placed at the forefront of our studies - we must see the refugee for what she is: in complete contradiction with the nation-state as the de facto ruler of international order.

> Engin Isin writes,
>
> An as yet unnamed figure is making its appearance on the stage of history. It is unnamed not because it is invisible but because we have not yet recognized it. It is inarticulable. Otherwise, it is quite visible. We have categories to describe this figure: foreigner, migrant, irregular migrant, illegal alien, immigrant, wanderer, refugee, émigré, exile, nomad, sojourner and many more than attempt to fix it. But so far this figure resists these categories not because it has an agency as such but because it unsettles the very attempt to fix it… the unnamed figure is unsettling because it belies the modern figure of the citizen with singular loyalty, identity and belonging.[297]

Refugee communities form political societies that can function similarly to states. Yet they are completely outside of the state. The future of sovereignty needs to be rethought; rebuilt with stateless populations and the refugee at the center of its analysis.[298] In order for the refugee to gain this power, we need to shift our thinking about the nation-state, from what it should include, to what it stigmatizes, trivializes, ignores, then pushes out. Refugees are no longer helpless, afraid beings as the state-centric world tried to push them into being through stigmatization, victimization, oppression and misrecognition. They are active, political and aware individuals

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[296] Rajkumar, "Temporariness," 310.
[297] Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 368.
[298] Ek, "Giorgio Agamben," 367.

beginning to speak up and include themselves in the practices of being human and being part of a polity.

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