

TRANSCRIPT

Sayed Kashua

“Transgressing borders: Culture as a vehicle for socio-political change”¹

Anyway, I live in Champaign and I moved from Jerusalem, and I think that, I don't know, I always start with this joke about Champaign. And yeah, they are going to kick me, I think, from Champaign, (short laugh) for a ---. The --- is just wonderful, it's great, and it's the city is too flat, if you been in Champaign. And I remember when we landed it was traumatic in the summer of 2014. We landed in Chicago and I just wanted to make my kids, I have three kids. My daughter is 16 and then the boys are 11 and 5. They're now "trick and treating" in Champaign. They feel American. We will see what's going to happen next week. But meanwhile I don't feel American.

So I remember that we landed in O'Hare and then rented a car and I started driving from Chicago to Champaign following the GPS and just wanted to make it feel like home for the kids. And we just went out of Chicago and they pointed at the first cornfield, and they said "Look, it's a cornfield!" Like it's a magic. Because I didn't know it was going to be the same cornfield all the two and a half hours so on the way to Champaign. (laughter) And I remember my daughter, she was 14 back then, she says "Well I thought we were coming like America daddy, Beyoncé and Drake and stuff." (Laughter) Champaign, we had no idea what to do then. Like even the basic things, where to go, and it's just nice to order food, you know, you enter the Subway. That's the most American. That's, if we want to be Americans we have to eat Subway, the first meal should be Subway. And but it was so, I was so nervous because you have to like...and then I realized fast food is not only served fast, but you have to also order very fast. And remember it's six inch or twelve inch, I have no idea, what is six inch or what the big, the pick; the pick, wheat, white bread, the white, Italian, and she was, the lady there in Subway was so mad at me because I don't know, how to, and now I order just in seconds the Italian sandwich with the... (Laughter) Whatever, so but it was tough.

And the Cicadas, how it's called? The Cicadas? Yes and that was a lot of noise. And also it rains in the summer and I'm not used to it, that it rains in the summer. And I remember that my little son was three back then, and he got a little fever and I didn't know even what to do. We went to the pharmacy and they got him a --- thermometer, how it's called; and it was 100.7 or something but I didn't know what is 100.7, it didn't mean anything to me if he had a fever or what. And then we go to the walk-in clinic and it costs just \$150 because for all things.

So it's so terrifying opening a bank account and credit history. I just discovered that I have a problem with history and always thought it was my history of being Palestinians and what we call Al-Nakba; no I have a big problem with credit history here. (laughter) And it was, everything was so...and the house that we rented from Sabbatical Homes was nothing like the photos that we saw on the internet, (laughter) and even the people were not yet at the University

¹ Wilson Governance Room in the Scot Center at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, October 31, 2016, at The College of Wooster. The event is sponsored by the Global and International Studies (GIS) program as part of its "Challenging Borders" series. Kashua's visit is also supported by Political Science, Middle Eastern and North African Studies, Kornfeld Fund, OISA and the Cultural Events Committee.

of Illinois just to be in touch everyone was on this vacation. And I remember that it was, like it was so sad being in financial pain at the beginning of the...

And then I also tell the story that when I start when, that I started to love Champaign. At one point I had to register my kids to the public schools in Champaign and they have this office, so I asked the people and they told me; oh you'll have to, and I googled it, unit for school is called, so I took my three kids and we went to the unit for the school and I was dealing with the forms there and, everything is just, I was so nervous.

And then at one point there was a form with the race. I said again, like I'm escaping the whole idea of race. I just wanted a vacation from the race issues and now I have to deal with race again. So I was looking for my race in the list of the races, and I was looking for the Arabs. There were no Arabs and, I said; "What, whoa, like what did they do to the Arabs?" (laughter) And also I had taught my kids two things when we arrived to the States, like I always feel like I have to be a parent, teach my kids something as a father should do, but I never do actually. So I tell them "You have to remember a few things here in the States, people here do stand in line" because in Israel no one stands in line. And the other thing, if anyone asks you where you're from because we are not yet familiar with, you know, we know that the States are huge supporters of Israel. If you ask where you're from, you say Jerusalem, and according to their response you choose if its east or west Jerusalem. That's the dignity that I have when it comes to national identity.

So I was looking for the race and there are no Arabs, and I'm carrying Israeli passport because I'm Palestinian, but still it says on it Israel, and we know all about Judaism, trust me, like I will pass as Jewish in any test and my kids as well, their Hebrew was perfect, of course. And so I was looking for Jewish in the list of the races and there were no Jews on there. (laughter) I remember like it was a White, a Black, Asian, uh something like that, no Arabs. Hispanic, no Arabs and no Jews, that was confusing. And I could easily sign my kids and list my kids as Asian because they can easily pull that Jerusalem is part of Asia, but I could, I didn't want to lose my Visa, a [J1 Visa?] in the very first week that we arrived. (laughter) I know it sounds bad and racist maybe, but I'm Palestinian so I can be racist... (laughter) But I thought, if I register my kids as Asian because I say, hmm maybe they will be good in science one day or something like that." (laughter)

And then I raised my hand because I don't know what's my race and this lady came to me, "Yes sir, how can I help you?" And I said, "I don't know what is my race?" And then she said "Oh where are you from sir?" And I said "from Jerusalem" like, giving this look to my kids like, 'learn how to survive.' (laughter) And she said, "Oh, you're from the Middle East?" "Yeah, yes". She said, "Oh you are White, sir". I said, "thank you." (laughter) It was the happiest moment. (laughter). And I remember, but and just to my kids like once, and they looked at them differently with a new kind of respect. (laughter) Not that they know what to do with being White. So I had no idea what to do with it, but I remember that it changed with my whole life; like okay, okay we love Champaign, and now we are white people in Champaign (laughter) and I don't know what does that mean?

So the next morning I bought the Jeep Liberty for a reason, I don't know, I thought that's the way that you can be white, (laughter) and so yes. And that's it, but since then I think I discovered that the... that I'm not that white, and instead of walking with my whiteness and, thinking yeah, yeah there are things like that.

But we came from Jerusalem. And I was born in Tira. And Tira is a village and I write so much about Tira. It was always Jerusalem and Tira, it's the two places that I lived in. I was born in Tira in 1975, and I always refer to that because the first novel also deals a lot about Tira and about the stories in my childhood in Tira. And actually also now that I've --- that I'm working for so many years actually now, hopefully I will finish it by the end of this year. Again it's about Tira and Jerusalem.

And you know it's when you ask the Palestinian citizens of Israel; is this group of Palestinians who remained in the village after '48, the establishment of the State of Israel and they became second citizens. It's unlike; there are different groups of Palestinians. Yes, there are the Palestinians who became... Most of the Palestinians became refugees during the war in '48. In refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, and Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria, and huge refugee camps also in Jordan. In Jordan the situation was different because that was the only, for political reasons, that gave the Palestinian refugees a Jordanian citizenship. The rest are not Palestinians around the world. I think around 12 million Palestinians altogether around the world, including Israel and the West Bank. But Jordanians gave the Palestinian's citizenship because they wanted to make a favor, and solve their refugee problem for the Israelis.

So, but when we talk about these people inside Israel and the Palestinians inside Israel, we used to be called Israeli Arabs still, actually we can be referred to as Israeli-Arabs or the Arabs of Israel. The hometown Tira is the place it will be, from, uh how do you say, *watan*. Anyone speaks Arabic? (audience – it's homeland)

Homeland. Homeland. Yes, it's your homeland because that's the place usually and that's the immediate identity. If you're asked where you're from you will say I'm from Nazareth or I'm from Tira or from Taybeh or any other Palestinian village. That's the immediate connection, it's the village. And sometimes it's not even the village, it's the neighborhood or the place that you are, the family if you're lucky that after '48, that you received some piece of land. So I was born there and it's always in my first book and I always referred to my grandmother.

I was terrified as a little boy. I really hated the dark and I was scared, not because it's an Arab village, but I was like that; I was scared from the dark, thieves and everything, every little sound out of the window would scare me. So I was, and my parents used to work very hard and they went to bed early. So I would always wait until my parents fall asleep and then sneak to my grandmother's bedroom. She was really, actually, it was her house before '48 so she used to live with us, but actually that is, was her house, we used to live with her. And she was a fantastic storyteller. She was a wonderful storyteller and she knew that every night I would come from my bedroom, sharing with my three brothers, I had three brothers, no sisters. And I'd come to her room and she would tell me the stories that they... And so the majority of the stories in my first novel *Dancing Arabs* were about my grandmother, and my childhood in Tira. And she was a wonderful storyteller, although she was illiterate.

And that's the case of most of the Palestinians who remained in Israel after '48, years, but not talking here about the city or of an educated person. And if you know a bit of history so you know that in '48 most of the coastal villages in Palestine of course Jaffa, Haifa, <inaudible>, were almost completely demolished. And the people who remained in the villages as citizens; usually we are talking about farmers who used to work their lands, not educated, nationality is a completely new idea for them. So my [grandfather...he means grandmother] doesn't understand

to discuss the area and the narratives. She doesn't know what is Zionism and what is narratives and what is the Palestinian narrative of anything like that.

So that was the case, most of what, first when we talk about women, they didn't know why to read or write, but still, she was very sharp, and very brilliant, and told me so many stories from the Qur'an about the Prophets and just fairy tales of the Hassan and the magic boxes. That story teller they used to tour the villages before '48 was about them growing up under the Turkish Empire and then the Brits and then Israel.

But a major part of her stories were about the war. Always the awful war. My grandmother didn't know, says, you know the war in '48, you know. So the Palestinians call that Nakba, the Israelis call that the War for Independence. She said she was talking about the war. This awful war that her husband, my grandfather, was killed during the war in '48. And my father was one year old and back then in '48 when his father was killed.

And she was talking about this, so this war and the way she protected their son when the fighting's went ugly around the village in Tira. And there were big fights around Tira actually and how she escaped from Tira. She took cover and would get into the mountains to hide with her son, my father. And yes the --- our part of the West Bank, there's a wall separating Tira, back then that those were the Palestinian cities that you will go for school and just walk there, or ride the donkey or the horse to go to class of [inabudible].

So it was the awful war and, how she needed to cover sometimes with her body, like my father, like in the fields when because of the shootings. And then I was raised like that, the war is the most awful thing that can happen to a person. And they always, but maybe the saddest part in my grandmother's story for me, as a child, was when the war was over, actually. My grandmother, she didn't know there were all these agreements or the deal with the Arab states, with the Jordanians, and the Israelis, and drawing the maps that mean line. But she was told that the war was over and she was so happy. She said, "Finally the awful war is over and then I can go to the fields and bring some food for the orphans," like my father and there were others.

And the saddest part for her, the tragic part that she always cried telling that story, that when the war was over she wanted to go out from the village. From now on, when I talk about Tira as a village, I will talk about the houses and not the lands of Tira. That's the majority of Tira, more than 80% of Tira actually was occupied in '48.

And she always cried telling me that there was an Israeli soldier. She said "where you go?" she said, "To my fields to bring some food for the kids," and he said, "You don't have land anymore." And she always cried. And that's for her the whole thing. It's not about the house that she had in Tira, you know it's all about the stories, and the camels, and the cows they used to have. And they spent the whole summer and the season of the spring and didn't come back only with the first rain back to the village, to Tira. And spent the whole actually season in the fields. They have a different house in the fields called [Inaudible] and they were working the land. That's the source of life.

But she lost all of her land and that's the meaning of the Nakba. That when the Palestinians talked about '48 and they mention the Nakba, meaning the catastrophe is. So what is for the Israelis to get Independence Day it's the Nakba. We talked earlier about the narratives. And the Israeli narrative of establishing or building the state, and the Palestinian narrative of the biggest

catastrophe that happened to the Palestinians. And creating maybe, more than anything else the unified Palestinian identity, yes. The Nakba plays a huge part in establishing this Palestinian identity shared for both refugees, people who stayed in Israel, people in the West Bank, everywhere. So it's about the Nakba.

And sometimes as I mentioned earlier, we were sometimes the people who became citizens of Israel, yes we were called Israeli Arabs, we can be blamed and accused by Arabs from the neighboring Arab countries of being; how come you are a citizen of Israel, you are traitors? Sometimes because they are not aware of the reality of being Palestinian from Israel. But I remember that we were always told; at least we didn't become refugees. And to be a refugee and to lose your home, according to them, to the Palestinian experience, of course, is the worst thing that can happen to a person, to a human being. Yes we're talking here about if you're just living in tents, losing their homes. So we used to, say that at least we didn't become refugees. But I do think that, although we remained in our villages; most of us who remained in the village, we are refugees. We are refugees because suddenly we are citizens of the Jewish state and disconnected completely from the Arab world, from the Arab culture, from the Arab identity, from the nationality of being Arab.

And we are talking here about, you know, it's the years that the Arab nationality, of course, we can see that it's failing, but was starting to be established in the Middle East. So disconnected from the language, from the culture, and finding yourself actually a refugee. Although, so we are some kind of a proof that you can become a refugee even if you never leave your village. I think that, of course there's also a very huge percent of Palestinians who became refugees, but in the state of Israel.

For example, both of my wife's parents and they are a little bit older than my parents, they were born in a village called [Miske] near Kfar Saba and it was completely demolished, yes, they were forced to leave; actually, they were asked to leave within two hours, the village. So their parents left the village and some of them continued to [alqahr] and after '48 became Jordanians, and some of them stayed in Tira as refugees and became citizens of Israel. So a lot of people who received the Israeli citizenship after '48, they are also refugees because they lost their lands and their villages, yes, more than 500 villages were destroyed during the war in '48.

So those are the stories that I grew up listening to and they didn't know exactly what does that mean? I used to live in Tira. I had no idea that we are poor or that we are, because I didn't need anything to compare it to. I knew that there was a war, an awful war, and there are Jews and Arabs. And, but they just used to live in Tira and it was for me this protecting environment back then. Nothing of from the stories that I was hearing from my grandmother about the war and the Nakba the land was mentioned in our books. We belong to the Israeli education system, although in Arabic, but it's the Israeli education system that still to this very day you can't hire a teacher or a principal for the education system and for the Arabs since in Israel without the permission of the Israeli security, intelligence person. So education of course played a huge part, and in this.

So the war of Palestine was never mentioned. You cannot find it in our books. There's nothing like Palestine in the history books or in the civic books or anything. We just study, we were forced to study the Zionist Israeli narrative and we never heard about Palestine or the history of Palestinians.

We do study the history of Islam in a very tragic way, but that was not part of the curriculum, it was not part of the...so it's confusing. You hear the stories at home, but there's nothing like that in the history that we used to study in the school. Actually, my mother maybe was the first woman, female in Tira to finish high school and to go to study and teach a seminar in Haifa and she became a teacher, but maybe the first one. But usually to become a teacher in Tira it was enough to finish the tenth grade, and you have the right connections, and you are considered to be a good Arab you'll be hired. But my mother finished the high school and went to the institution. She studied education and became a teacher, but because of the political involvement of my family, my father was active... (tape cuts out -100:32 to 100:27)

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and completely. And that was my nickname [Hiposhiyot] And the dry schnitzel in the dining room, and everything, my accent and not understanding the language. I knew Hebrew, like I studied Hebrew in my school, but it's of course not the Hebrew that I needed in order to follow any of the teachers. So everything was just...I just knew that I don't belong here. Like it's absolutely a huge mistake and they have to go away. And one of the best things that happened to me in that school, the very first weeks, is that you realize that Jewish people, as soon as the school year begins, they go back for Rosh Hashanah for one week. That was the happiest Rosh Hashanah ever. Like until this day I celebrate Rosh Hashanah. I pack my bed sheets and everything, took my Hawaiian shirts, and said; I go back home and explain to my parents what I'm facing here there's no way they will send me to this school.

So my father took me from Tira to Jerusalem and that was the first time ever that I get to take a bus. Now do you know that in '48, yes, we became citizens was something like 2,000 inhabitants, and now we're talking about 45,000, and still there's no public transportation in Tira. So for me it was the first time.

And my father used to study and labor at the university. My grandmother actually, this lady that lost, the illiterate woman that lost her land, realized that education is the only ticket out of this situation. So she did her best to send her son, my father, to the Hebrew University. And actually she worked as a worker in the fields for Israelis. Sometimes working in her own private fields. Like she picked fruit from trees that she planted as a hired worker. But she managed somehow, taking loans and things like that to send my father back under the military regime, which was rare, to study in the Hebrew University. But he was in his third year, at the university my father was arrested because of his political activity and he spent two years and a half in Israeli jails and it was tough. He didn't talk much about it. Just now I am doing the research and someone asked me "How are you doing about the research" so always I do of the research; my father passed away last year and so I'm writing about him.

And so he was arrested for the political activities in Jerusalem. And there was a bomb in the cafeteria of the university and the people were students, Arab students, were arrested, and, but also many other activists who were arrested under what is called, 'administrative detention' yes. It's a rule, emergency rules from the British mandate and it still happens until this very day. Meaning that you are not charged, you don't see, you are not charged of anything. It's just enough to decide that you are a threat, a political threat for the state of Israel in order to hold you in prison and renew it every six months. So he spent two years and a half in Israeli jail.

Anyway, so he knew Jerusalem and it was that Rosh Hashanah I was to go back home; I packed everything, I'm not going back to Jerusalem. That's it, that's the end of it. I will explain to my parents and they will understand. So I had to take a bus and my father just left me a note from you know back then when he told me "You go to the bus station in Jerusalem, central bus station. You go to platform number 6. You take bus number 947. You'll get to Kfar Saba, that's the Israeli town next to ours, and I will pick you from there." So, I did all of that. I followed my, you know, my father's note and went to the central bus station and took the bus. And I had no idea how long it should take. And I remember I sat right next to this lady and after half an hour and 40 minutes after leaving Jerusalem the bus stopped, and I asked the lady next to me, "Is this Kfar Saba,?" I said no, this is Ben Gurion airport." So that was the first stop. And the bus stopped at the entrance of Ben Gurion, I've never been there. And then this Israeli soldier entered the bus and I was less than 15, I didn't carry ID because according to the law I should be 16. It took the soldier two minutes to realize who is the Arab with the Hawaiian... (laughter) clothes. And he approached me "You have an ID?" I said "No, I'm 15." And "Where are you from?" I said "from Tira." "Do you have bag?" "Yes it's in the cargo." "Okay, you" uh... So he asked me to get off the bus and I was terrified. And so I was standing there and the soldier was checking my bag and asking questions, "What were you doing in Jerusalem" and "who are you" and things like that? And for me it's uh, I felt back then; I am a kid, and I'm in front of an Israeli soldier for the first time in my life. And I started crying because I was terrified. I know that it was the years of the first *Intifada* I saw what Israeli soldiers are doing to the West Bank. I know that they arrested my father and that I know that they killed my grandfather and I'm here answering questions for an armed soldier.

And then at one point the bus left me with the soldier at the entrance of Ben Gurion and I was just left there. So I started crying even harder. And the soldier was entering a panic, "What happened to you? Is this your first time?" I said "First time and last time ever, trust me you will never see me again in your life. Just please my father is waiting for me in Kfar Saba, I will never go back to that school." He said this is Ben Gurion and I'm not allowed to enter. The bus driver got to stop there. He will pick you up from, he knows, the driver knows he will stop and will pick you up from that bus stop. So I just took my bag and, I had no idea. And I went to the other bus...and to the other stop and yes, it took five minutes or something, and the bus came back to the same stop, the door was open, and I entered again the bus.

And I think that was when I started to realize that; well that it's true that it was difficult to be in school, but then it was, I remember this, you know, the look of the passengers on the bus. And not being able to sit in my seat again, because you don't want; you know this threat to sit next to others. Now with this, the approval of the soldier that they know that I'm different and that I'm a threat. I remember I just went to the stairs of the back door of the bus and just like tried to do my best not to cry until we reached Kfar Saba,. And I think that was the first time for me to start to realize; what does it mean to be Arab, to be Palestinian in Israel, like in person, in a personal way, what does that mean. And it was just horrifying for me. The first bus ever that I took in my life and I was stopped by a soldier.

There I went down to Kfar Saba, and my father was there waiting for me. And I cried in front of the soldier, but when I saw my father I even cried harder. And my father went "And the soldier, at Ben Gurion, at the airport, and they arrested me!" And my father goes "What happened, What happened?" And I said, and then it took him a while to realize that relax; are you crying because of the soldier at the entrance of Ben Gurion? So first of all, I was struck that he didn't think that

it's an important matter that he should put in his note, yes? (laughter) At platform number 6, yes, being arrested at Ben Gurion; he didn't think that he should mention that. (laughter) So I was shocked that he knew about the soldier and didn't say anything about it. "You cried because of the soldier at Ben Gurion, are you sure you are my son?" When the soldier at Ben Gurion confused me with Israeli and didn't take me off the bus, I will stand up with my ID and shout "[You mother fucker I'm Palestinian take me off the bus?]," (laughter) and you're crying? Are you kidding me?" So I was never a hero like my father and was okay, you can do whatever you want.

I went back to Tira, to the high school in Tira, I was so happy to be there. Some of the students thought it was a failure, you know because everyone in Tira knew that I was accepted to that smart Jewish kid's program and that, it is the best school. And there was among one of two Arabs who were accepted that year, into that school.

And I remember like I said to my parents "That's it, I cannot do it." I just spent the whole week just trying and focusing, and not doing anything. And I remember that it was like I was breaking the hearts of my parents. And my father said, now I need to talk to you. You know it's your decision. Millions of kids want to be instead of you. And that I understand you, it's hard for you, and it's difficult, but you have to understand that for us it's a disappointment. Because for me it was like I was so proud to know that my son is good in science and is going to study physics and math with the Israelis in a very good school. And maybe to be the first Palestinian to build an atomic bomb that we can destroy this shitty state. (laughter) If you're going to miss that, it's your decision. (laughter)

So, I thought okay, you know, well it's something that you cannot fight. So basically my father convinced me to go to study with Jewish kids in a Jewish boarding school in order to build an atomic bomb to destroy it. So I went back home and I remember so very, I told my father; okay, like okay but there a few conditions that they have, you have to do before I go back. I said, "whatever you want." I said "but you have to Kfar Saba, and buy me clothes for Jews." Like actually it's Jewish factory for clothes. I didn't know what does that, what that's mean, but he went there and asked for a Walkman, and because all of the kids in school they have the Walkman, you know. Do you know what is Walkman?

A: Yeah.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: Ah okay. Okay so you know what is a Walkman. It's with a cassette, you know what is a cassette? (laughter)

A: Yeah.

So, my father went and he promised me, and then I had to shave, I shaved my mustache the first time ever. I went into to shave that and my father came back and he said it's Jewish clothes and, they had wrapped the Walkman and it says Aiwa. And they started crying so much because Aiwa means yes in Arabic and I sure that he bought me an Arab Walkman, although it was a wonderful Japanese Walkman (laughter) that was very interesting. It said it was Aiwa. And then I took the same bus again; it's the same bus, there's no other way. If you want to go to

Jerusalem from Kfar Saba, you have to take 947 or 945 if you have to go through the Ben Gurion airport. I was, like my heart was beat, I was with no Beatles, nothing just the empty Walkman, no cassette just the headphones (laughter) and, with the Jewish clothes I don't know what does that mean. I very much want my clothes. And they hoping that it was before, we had the like a reading in Hebrew, that was the first...

33:00

The first novel was Kul Hahaiim Lefanav or All of Life is in Front of Him. Like I translate it from Hebrew. And the second book that I didn't read that, of course, that's a book in Hebrew why should I read it? I graduated. Now the second book that we were asked to read was the *Catcher and the Rye*. I just opened it just to fake and then won't be reading it. And with the headphones and my heart beating so strong and the solider again, from Ben Gurion and he yeah, came into the bus. And until this very day, I don't know if it was like "Dude respect just for the fake." (laughter) I don't know if I passed as Israeli or just it was like; okay this is for the effort, I'm keeping you on the bus. (laughter) I was never asked to get off the bus again in my life, so it was just the first time. Just the first time that I took the bus I was not arrested but questioned and humiliated deeply. I was always scared when I took that bus and they did that hundreds of times while studying at the Hebrew university. But there was never a take off the bus as much as the first time. And always was scared with them, and since then, I'm just, I became a master of faking identity and passing as Israeli.

But I started reading, *The Catcher and the Rye*. That was the first novel that I read, and it had, I always write about it. I wrote about it so many times about the influence, probably I don't remember much about it; actually now my daughter needed to write about the book. Made the, ramkol ---, how you say that? Like they choose six songs that uh... It's like in a movie you have the soundtrack, the soundtrack of the novel, so I remembered a little bit then, but I remembered how much it was for many reasons, but first of all I can read, maybe it took me month to finish that novel. And so, but I can read Hebrew. I can read Hebrew, I can read a novel in Hebrew.

The second thing was; this is something that I never experienced in my life. I didn't know that you can write that way. I didn't know you can be mad that way, that you can curse that way, that you can be furious that way; and it was magic for me. I remember when we used to be little, you know kids and we used to watch the cartoons on the Jordanian TV. My father would enter the room; and say "Are you kidding me; Again the cartoons? Just take a book from the library and read it." But we didn't have a library. (laughter) Not at home and not in Tira and not in the school. The first time that I saw a library was when I moved to this boarding school. A real library. Of course all of the books were Hebrew and a little bit of English.

My father thought that he got a library, but basically there were three novels in the library; it was Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky. (laughter) Trust me and I was trying to find the romantic.. and the drama and calculating the value of the work in Russia for many, many, years. So for me that was beneficial. So it was the library. And it was maybe because of all the kids that told me that your music, and again, it's not that they were like a nasty Jewish kids saying; oh your language is primitive and dah, dah, dah. Its kids can be nasty and they make jokes, and until this very day my roommates and my friends from the boarding school are my best friends. It's just the way it is. It's not like, oh you are primitive. It's just you feel it, you grab it. It's not because they hated me or something like that.

Actually the school was some kind of a green house. But it's something that you, know you internalize that thing, you know, that this is your situation. That Oum Kalthoum is primitive and that your music, and your language, and your literature, and your mess, and if you want to become part of us, and I wanted to become part of them, is you have to culturally go there and understand. So more than physics and math, it was sitting in the library and it was listening to, and taking sometime teachers, and reading, and listening to music in the alternative. You know at one point, in the second year in high school, people who listened to the Beatles, I didn't talk to them: "Its not alternative bro! If you cannot sing at least two CD's of the Pixies I will not talk to you, are you kidding me.

So my goal was is to know more literature than them, and more music and more art than the Israeli kids, that was the goal. And completely neglecting the Arabic language or the Arabic music, and it felt bad. I remember that after that when my father kept picking me from Kfar Sabah and he would play Fairuz or something I would say bad things about it, "But this is primitive!", I would say to my father. Great it's good, not to say it's not, but anyway. No I stopped also in tenth grade to listen.

And of course then writing. And you know it took me to go to a Jewish boarding school and to have wonderful history teacher, back then Dr. Rav Hen to start hearing from him even after the class about what the Nakba means. He is part of what was called afterwards, now he teaches Hebrew University right now, what is now considered one of the new historians in Israel.

You know, and then only in high school I started to understand what is... what is ideology. What is Zionism? And what is a "national home"? And what happened in '48; Although still from a very Zionist-Jewish perspective, but then I understand why my aunt became a refugee in a refugee camp in Tulkarem, and what does that mean and what's the meaning of nationality? Still I don't know; what's the meaning of nationality? It's I started to figure out, and actually to realize how the situation is even more difficult and complicated than I ever thought. And I think it was then reading the famous Israeli's beside the translated literature, but reading Amos Oz, Benjamin Tammuz, Aharon Megged, Shai Agnon and many others. And I was reading about the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister of Israel, the soldier back in '48.

And then I started to realize, wait a minute, I know a different story. I have been told the story from the other side, from my grandmother, from my father. This is not the story that I have been told, and they have to start writing in Hebrew in order to tell a different story, another story; the truth according to me. And I said uh-oh, and because I don't believe much in the narratives. And even though after 1982, and actually literature much more than similar, the Israeli's "left wing" yes, and even though already 1967 that they were Israeli writers against occupation, [of] the West Bank, and so it was more advanced politically, I mean than Cinema or other activities Literature got it's own.... It's always in Israel, atleast it's ahead or used to be.

And even then when you read the Arab twins in Amos Oz and if you read the Arab characters with a lot of empathy of David Grossman, the most wonderful writers and huge supporters of my work. You know this is not the Arab that you, even if it's like a good Arab that you should sympathize with his misery and being a victim; this is not the Arab that I know, something is wrong here.

So I started writing, and Hebrew of course became... Back then I was not fully aware of the meaning of the importance of language in creating nationality and an identity, yes? Back then it

started with a want to be part of the strong people; I want to be like them and I know their language, and it's not only that I knew their language, it's, I know what they used to sing to their kids, and I know what stories they used to read when they were little. It's like speaking the Israeli, it's not speaking the Hebrew. It's, I felt like if I want to write in Hebrew I need to know what my friends in high school write when they were four or five or whatever, and the music that they used to listen to. And I think that I achieved that. And I started at a very young age to publish short stories.

I went immediately after high school to study at the Hebrew University and then when I was 21 actually I was already what is, what we can consider a professional writer. I joined Kol Ha'ir it was a wonderful local newspaper back in Jerusalem. We thought that we were going to change the world and again, it was the first honor to be in that newspaper. So I joined that newspaper in 1996 and since then Hebrew is the only language. So it changed.

At the beginning, they thought, yes this is the majority, this is the language, this is the language that I have been reading literature since the age of 15, and I want to be part of the "strong people", yes? But meanwhile Hebrew became the only language that I can use express myself, and write, it's the only language. And when I write it's much more easy. And as a writer my Hebrew is way better than the way I talk. There are words in Hebrew that I don't know, and I don't dare sometimes to pronounce, you know, but I know how it's written, and how it's read in a novel in a book. And so that's what I've been doing all of my life.

And then slowly, slowly recognizing also how difficult it is. And sometimes how un-efficient it is, the use of the language, yes? Again, everything is so political, of course, everywhere but especially there. And so I remember that when the first novel was published, I was just 25 or something like that. I never thought that they were going to publish my book. It was published and released wonderful reviews and like, and again I didn't know if I was going to publish it, but it was on the bestseller book.

And I remember the critics that they received some newspapers in Arabic and they was completely shocked, and at the beginning because they thought that I'm doing; you know I also grew up in a house that, you know, that the good writers. The good Palestinian writers who want the people to write about them, and the case of Palestine, yes? **the cause of Palestinians, it's Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmoud Darwish, Samih Al-Qasim, Emile Habibi, very political** writers. And I thought that, I thought that I'd grow up to be a national Palestinian writer writing in Hebrew, and in a very satirical way. I think I was naive enough. So, I was criticized just because of that, because of the Arabic, yes? And the Arabic for the Palestinians, people who lives in Israel it's more holy sometimes than the Arabic for the Jordanians because it's part of the National War. It's also after '48 the Arabic language became maybe one of the only tools that you had in order to protect your identity. You don't have many tools. It's only the Arabic that's disconnected from the Arab world. You're disconnected from your country so it's the Arabic became so holy. And you're stuck in a stuck; you live in a Jewish state that Hebrew is the language. All of the Arabs in Israel speak Hebrew very fluently.

And, but when it comes to culture, its identity. It's culture. It's establishing identity. The national identity. So, you know it's confusing. You are criticized for that, but it's still the only language that you can, you can write in. And it took me a while to realize that it's okay, I can be confused. I think that I am my confusing in a very decent way. I can be confused for the use of the Hebrew because I was born as Palestinian in a Jewish State; and then I can be confused when

sometimes, you know what I'm criticized by the Israeli's, always anti-Semist and "he's just cursing the State of Israel", oh "but he's a huge success here". But I think yes, I am also at the time criticizing Zionism and the government in a very decent way, because I am a Palestinian minority in Israel, and the situation is deeply sad and Tira that I left, although it was terrible to being poor, but you know that I left it in the end of the 90's, nothing to compare of Tira of today. Is, I don't care about being poor, but the fact that the violence.. you can't see any hope in Tira.

And the protecting place that they thought that they left, it's not worth living anymore. When I see my brothers just most of the day just caring about their own private personal safety, because there's no, because there's nothing like law enforcement when it comes to the Arab cities, yes, and when I talk again about the village of Tira, it's the case of all of the [Palestinian] villages inside Israel. And sometimes Israeli's want to blame it on your culture and your mentality; no, that's not our culture, that's not our mentality. If you neglect a village for so long, that's going to be situation. And most of Israeli's I don't know how they think, blame it on the culture. When we talk about Tira, the same Tira almost the same village that was 2,000 people, it's almost the same size of the land that you're allowed to build, 25,000 and all of the people are not allowed to leave their villages, yes? You just live there. So it's a town, it's called a town now, not a village, but still we call it a village, but it's a town because in Israel if you have more than 20,000 residents then it immediately becomes a town. But it's a village, it's a village. The same families, the same eight or nine families that established Tira in 1948 are the standing families here. So yes, you can be educated and you can study at the university, but you are forced to go back and live in the village and to keep the patriarchal family structure. There's no, you cannot talk about democracy really in an Arab village when it's still a family structure. And it's the same villagers. Not even one Arab village. I'm not in support of establishing segregated places for Arabs and Jews; but that's the situation, we are not part of Israel society.

Tel Aviv is the biggest city in Israel, a town. Even Nazareth, Nazareth is just one big village still based on families. There is no... A student here talked to me and asked me about our organization. Much was written about the absence of the Palestinian city, of course, when it comes to '48. There is nothing like that. If you are born, you can study, but you go back to your village, that's the only place. So the Arabs in Israel, the citizens are 20 percent almost of the population and they live on 2.5 of the land of Israel.

And by law because the Israeli laws that, you know the Jewish Agency it's just the land is for the Jews. You are not allowed to live in a Moshav or Mitzpeh, and legally you are not allowed as an Arab, so the segregation is almost full. And even in a city you need...it is so difficult for an Arab to move from, to a city.

Yes, a few years ago there was a petition of 50 Rabbis of the biggest cities in Israel asking not to rent houses even to our students. So the segregation is there and it's nuts. Sometimes of course also it was, most of the Arabs would like, I think, to move, but there's no opportunity. So some, not even one Arab village was established since '48, we're talking inside Israel, I'm not talking about settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. More than 700 villages or settlements for Israeli's were established since 1948, and not one Arab village. And that's the situation. You can't create democracy. You can't really talk about modernity in this mutation between a village and the big town; between educated people facing, you know international changes and global changes, but they cannot really practice it, because again, there is the force is the structure of the

family. And it's not like I'm a huge admirer of a city or an organization or modernity, I think that I would live in a village, if you have the way to live in a village. But it's not the village.

So that's the situation and since '48 that was the equation. You go to back to live in your ghettos and your, you know, as I'm sure I wrote, you know cheap, big cheap motels for workers. It was easy because you were never a part of the Israeli society. The village is so small, so if you're in Tira you can work on the streets of Tel Aviv and in the evening, by the end of the day, we'll go to sleep in Tira and you're never part of the culture or society or you are not in the scene of the Israeli and society. You live in the village.

So at the beginning it was also, you know for the Arabs it's the way to protect their identity you know, to live in the village, but now most of the Arabs would like to go out because it's impossible. It's crowded, it's violent, not because of their mentality, but it's impossible. I think I talk too much, and we should leave some... Yeah?

End of Speech...

Q and A Begins

Okay any questions? (laughter?) You ready for the exam? (laughter?) Okay. Yes?

Q: So when you decided to leave Israel, did you consider any other countries besides the United States? And why did you choose here?

A: Yes, I, honestly it was not that. It was not like I decided to leave and then you know I was like exiled; we had to leave before I can advance. The plan was to spend 10 months. I was invited by a... they sent an offer from the University of Chicago, that was a little idea, and that was for one quarter. And then also, and I knew that it's still short so I was trying, my agent was trying to find another place, and she contacted the University of Illinois because she got some contact with the Jewish studies there, and they immediately were happy to sponsor me for one semester. So we knew that we're coming to the States for ten months as some kind of vacation, because I used to work very hard back then on TV and productions. But, at one point we left a much earlier than the original plan. I just left in the middle of shooting, Real Drama with the writers who escaped last year in Israel. And basically --- because of things like that. So I left in the middle of the shooting, and the shooting not in Gaza but, (laughter) the TV show. And then I decided that I'm coming here and trying to stay.

But before that, before that summer, I never thought that I'm going to stay one day longer and actually it was more my wife that wanted to take this opportunity, we need to relax a little bit, and being in the States for one year is good for the kids, for the English, and we need also some kind of vacation, what was more, I believe very hard the last 20 years before we moved ---, so that was the idea.

So the offer was already there, it's not like; okay what do I do now, choose something? But I think I'm... Yeah, I'm not sure if there was another state. And sometimes you know when you hear awful things in the news and so you think about; where should I go? Like where is there a safe place for Muslims; awful bad Muslims, but still Muslims? Is there a safe place for refugees or for foreigners? I don't know. That's starting and, do you have any suggestions I...? (laughter) I really don't know.

And sometimes I think about like, I don't think about Europeans something, or usually I think about, I don't know, like maybe Vietnam or something like that. I swear to God, I don't know, I don't know. Something like that, it was Indonesia or, I don't know, something like that sometimes I think, because it's a, it's not like; hmm, this place is invaded with Arabs, we'll go there. (laughter) And probably ever if there's a country and we said we really love Arabs, like the slogan of this country is, we really... like I will never go there. (Audience Laughter?) I don't want to go there. I want to be, you know, I don't want people to hate me, but not threaten my safety, you know what I mean? (laughter) I still need to make a living out of racism, it's like the only thing, that's the reason that they write, but no, you understand what I mean.

That's, it's frustrating that, and when I left, yes everything was also a disappointment from what we thought would be the Arab Spring, you know and always...because again in Israel, the Israeli's; I say Israeli's, it's yes the Israeli's are my friends, my partners, my producers, my neighbors, my kid's friends at school; so for me the Israeli's is the government, it's not the people; yes, I explain to make that clear. It's after all it's the friends that I miss and it's the families at bilingual school, and then my daughter's school that they miss so much. And it's my wonderful neighbors, and the wonderful things that, you know in the newspaper, and the production company, but it's the policy, it's not... I don't think the neighbor actually had a personal problem with the Israeli's, it's, but you know it's when you join frightening things that's the problem.

So I'm sorry this sad and the frustration was also because of the Arab Spring yeah. And for the Israeli's that it was always we know that you're discriminated. We know that you are not equal in Israel, but still; you should be thankful because you are the only Arabs in the Middle East that have the right to vote. And you are the only Arabs in the Middle East that live in a democracy, although it's not a democracy when it comes to us, yes, even Israelis scholars will call that ethnocracy, it's not a democracy. And yes you are discriminated and this state is not for you. I'm talking only about [the Arab] citizens, I'm not talking about the situation, the occupation over there, the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, yes? The citizens. And then and that's the thing, you know, and then and you should thank God because we are bringing the light and democracy and modernity to you. And look would you like to live in the, in the old neighborhoods in Cairo or in Syria, or in Iraq, or in Yemen? So you should just shut up and be thankful. And that's so frustrating and again, it's at one point you internalize that. You look at the Arab world and you have this feeling; maybe they are right. You know we didn't believe that for many years and you blame it on the regimes and then thought; well just is the way it should be, but it became so difficult. And even, you know, it's looking also that in general there may be problems in Palestinian society, yes? And I mentioned earlier than that, and the threat of Israel, that they fights more than anything else maybe the meaning of Palestinians to see the Hamas and the Palestinian authority, and all the powers fighting each other and that was not the case two decades ago. And that's frustrating.

It's to know that you cannot raise your kids as Arabs. It's not about the language. It's not about the perfect Hebrew that my kids have and being part after all of the Hebrew literature, yes, and the Israeli culture. And it's not about the clothes that you wear. It's not about what passing, yes; it's about if you are Jewish or not. If you have a Jewish mother or not. That's the only thing that makes you be equal in the State of Israel and, so that was the case.

And then the frustrating thing, is when we left, people were marching the streets of Jerusalem looking for Arabs just to beat them. That was the reality of Jerusalem back then. I decided to move before even the attack on Gaza or the war in Gaza started, and we left. It was after they kidnapped the three teenagers, the settlers and then they found the bodies. And then the day that those teenagers was burned alive; that was when I called my agent and said; "I'm leaving now!" It took us of course a week to find the tickets. Meanwhile the war in Gaza started and it was even just a...but it was completely, as I mentioned earlier; I was just crying for peace. I couldn't do anything. I felt so stupid like everything that I was, I had been told by both sides from the Israelis when I moved to live in a Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem, because I don't accept that. They always brought that up, but it's a Jewish neighborhood, this is a state. I'm a citizen. It's Western Jerusalem and I deserve to live there.

And there, we were the only Arab family in that neighborhood, absolutely, (and I'm just kidding)... (short laugh) And from the other side, and so the Israelis; "Why do you choose to live here?" "Why don't you live in the village?" Because, your mentality, according the Israelis is to live in the village, that's your "natural culture" Really? When we, aren't we forced to live in the village? So my answer would be; "Go ahead yourself and live in Arab village". And for the Arabs the same thing. I remember my father, like, "Okay you're sending your kids to the bilingual school, now Hebrew is better than their language and now you're leaving from East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem and to live in a Jewish neighborhood; what's going to happen with the identity, the identity and the rules, and you know the culture; what's going to happen to your kids in the American life? "

When my daughter went to junior high and it was in Leyada the best school in Jerusalem, in junior high, and she was the only Arab kid to be accepted there and my father was like; "What happened to you"? If one day your daughter will come back home and say daddy meet Yoav this is my Jewish friends what's going to happen then? So it took me a while you know, and then I thought, about my father, and I said; "I think we can count on Yoav's parents to do the dirty job for us so we can still "deliver us". When it comes to it, the Israelis are so anti-integration so they will, they will make that not work. But that was the situation; he was thinking about being in love with a Jewish or an Arab, so I mean it wasn't for me it was not the issue, at all.

So it's everything, it's where to move. If you move to a city it's a problem because there's no education system to support your culture. And the use of the language is a problem. And then, and so what are my alternatives? To go back to Tira, this to patriarchal family? Again, when I talk about Tira I'm talking about 25,000 people, yes it is family structure, it is very violent and kill many people. One of them recently, but also for Men, you know, burning cars and shootings it's a daily basis. But again, you have to remember that, in order to ruin the life of 25,000 people it only needs 100 people with guns to destroy that life. But there is nothing like law enforcement in the Arab society.

And it's their mentality. That's the crazy thing. Is it all mentality? We owe the State of Israel, the forces, the security, the police, the education system, the health; it's all Israel and we don't have anything. The Arabs in Israel are not equal in anything! Not even the one governmental hospital was built since 1948 in Arab villages. Not even one industrial zone was built, in the Arab society. There's like a complete, it's they shout at you very clearly, that "This is not your state. This is not where you belong." This is not, this is not for you.

And the amazing thing that it can be, that's the state for someone who cannot speak Hebrew and who like never visited the state. If you have a Jewish mother that's your state more than it's my state and my kid's state. And I lived that all my life. I was acting and fighting through culture as a citizen. As a citizen, seeking equality. I don't want to destroy the State of Israel. I do care much about my friends and even though, you know, it was based on colonialism or whatever, yes, but there's a state and people live there, and many especially, the Mizrahi Jews who were forced to leave their countries and in '48, there's a new reality. And people deserve to live there. No one is talking about destroying. But, everything that you write, you know the comments; it's oh, you want to destroy the State of Israel. Really? Because I care about the state because I want it to be a democracy and because I fight the same way, I just wanted my kids to have the same future as the kids of my neighbors that used to send their kids to the same school. And I want the same future, the same rights.

Is that meaning that they want to destroy the State of Israel? Is fighting against the Zionist idea of a real Jewish state, and only a Jewish state is a problem, it's wanting to destroy the State of Israel? It's absolutely nuts. That's not my thought and my idea. So there's no alternative. It's either you raise your kids to completely forget that Palestinian nationality and such a rule; and then still you are not going to be accepted as equal. Never! They will always remind you that you are less, and that you are primitive, and that you are horrible! No matter what you do.

There is always this Arab thing inside of you, you know? Is it okay? It was this feeling that they were always looking for a mistake, you know that exposed the Arabness out of him. You know it's a hidden thing that you cannot control. It's not about money, economical situation, education; it's deep in their genes. And that's racism. I think that we grew up to hate Israelis. Never as superiors than the Israelis. I don't think that the Palestinians were raised to hate Israelis. Pray for them and then being the occupiers, and the soldiers. You know.

But in Israel, yes, it's this feeling that you're a better person and no matter what you do, again, very general statement, it's a huge part of the Israeli mentality, of the Israeli education system. And the Arabs also it's not a picnic. So it's Champaign and Wine, I'm white, thanks God I'm white. (laughter) And, yeah?

Q: I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about how history is taught, this complicated history really. How is it taught in..

A: In Israel?

Q: Yeah.

A: Or in the education system you mean or...?

Q: No, are there any historians who tried to capture the complicated nature of this history?

A: Oh yes of course.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about them?

A: I'm not a historian so I know a little bit from, you know personal interest and some studies, you know, so you will study a few things. But not as an historian. So what I know about the history of the beginning, of the establishment of the State of Israel is to build the history as we have to build the nation. We have to build the nation, and we have to bring stories

to connect it from the Bible and to connect it to the establishment. It's the revival in a very European way. The essence is it's very much like inventing the... how's it called Masoret ... (inaudible)

A: Tradition.

Q: ... Tradition, yes, to create that, like in the very beginning because there is nothing in Israel, so it's parts of history of the culture of Palestine; parts from the Jewish diasporic, a little bit, a little bit. The English really wanted to erase that historic to create a new and then based on history, yes. Just the way that it's a plan, a very strategic plan of building nationality based on the European experience, yes? The bad experience of the Jewish people in Europe, of course, but how we can take that, create the language, create the history, and make it national history. To take that, to connect it to the land ---, to take the myths of Masada on different things and to create like a, you know, to make the nation to the ancient and to make the history that is connecting the all people of Israel as it's a nation from 3,000 years ago until this very day, coming back to that homeland.

In the history of Israel, all the Israelis, all are so convinced that they belong to Abraham. And no, it doesn't matter the color or whatever or different groups of Israelis, it's like a family yes. There's a blood relationship and that was built by history. And, so that's the beginning. And if you knew the history of Israel or the history of how history was used in the beginning... (cross talk)

Q: Is, well I mean is...

A: But again, there are historians so the beginning history and historians as serving nationality. As even the religions of the beginnings, as the theater in the beginning, as even the art in the beginning, the art is a little bit in '48, already this group of Israeli artists said, "Art for the Art", not for the national cause. For the cinema... So it was all focused on establishing the history and creating the nation. I think it's only in the late 80's and especially in the 90's that there were Israeli historians doubting the hegemonic stories of the establishment of the State of Israel. And it was not based on uh... Just last week there was a debate in Haaretz, between Benny Morris one of the historians who has written a lot of the history of the Nakba and a few other historian writers, yes. So Ben actually wrote about the expelling of the Palestinians in '48 basing that on the Archives that was released in the 80s and the Israeli historians. Never asking the victims. Never tell them go ahead and ask the refugees about their experience. So it's always we are looking for the papers. It's better if it's written by Israeli's though, someone that we might trust.

So there was this movement of the new historians Ilan Pappé, he left, he just couldn't stay. There was a discourse in the 90's after the Oslo Agreement, we were talking a little earlier about it, of the new historians, the post, so I'm talking about post Zionism you know, was not a curse anymore, yes. People were talking about Zionism as a movement, a national movement that they both Zionism was over with establishment of the state, that's then all of a national movement and then we have to focus on the state creating democratic modern liberal state. But it was that was discourse was ended. And most of those historians left.

Still you'll find that the Israeli Academy are wonderful people. Against occupation, wonderful socialists and historians, and ones that are against occupations and the teaching that history in the

academy. Sometimes at first a person can feel persecuted. The thing is it's not difficult only for a Palestinian writer these days to work in Israel. It's also hard for left wing, it's called radical left wing Israeli scholars, and writers, and they're also accused of being traitors. We have a very right extreme wing government in Israel. Sometimes wonderful writers like (Gideon Levy and Amira Has ?) you know blame it on, it's the violence, uh can be threated and can be lynched almost during the Gaza war because of the stories that can, that they are bringing.

Yes, we are talking here about the --- mancal, CEO of B'Tselem, it is human right movement. He gave a speech at the UN just two weeks ago about that, the need of international... and he's Israeli. The need of the international involvement in order to end apartheid at the West Bank and end the occupation. You should see how the Prime Minister is talking about it to punish him and he's a traitor; that's the way, that's the way it works there now in Israel.

And then the problem is it's not only the right wing. It's not only the Military and Likud talking about this guy. It's also the Labor party is attacking him and the mainstream [inaudible] ..the center. So problem is it's a few, it's just a small minority in Israeli Jewish people who support such things, you know. You are a traitor if you talk against Israel and different platforms. So yes, so --- the hegemonic history that you teach that's very much control in the history in Israel.

Like two years ago the one who was responsible for the civic studies in Israel was fired because of his political view, that the new civic book written, and it was debated about I think three or four months ago, of new civics, is up on civic...yes. It was that there almost no mention for the Palestinians and the Nakba. There was a huge thing about it, like how come? And so much control. So I very carefully talk about the history, the way we teach it to the kids, or the army, or how we teach it at the university. But I can assure you that some of the scholars are persecuted by the students; I know that from my friends. By the right wing extremely powerful movement of students in Israel. And sometimes professors are fired just because of writing. One professor though the other day was fired because they invited Yossi Sarid. [Yossi Sarid] used to be a minister and the problem is that, he was considered left wing, so one professor who invited him was fired. It's an amazing thing, but still it doesn't mean that there are no wonderful historians working there. They have them, you know, you should uh direct intellectual (audience - debates) dignity or whatever, but it's becoming much, and much more difficult than the 90's.

The 90's was with the Oslo Agreement that was a different kind of discourse, yes. I'm talking about the Nakba and now talking about the two state solution and, in the 90's, they even wanted to include some of the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, the national poet, and the Israeli's--- and not to talk about the Palestinians from the very start, that never passed, that was denied. At least they talk about it. And then Yossi Sarid was back then the minister of education, but since then it's just; it's getting worse.

Q: Do you believe that the Palestinian Authority and Hamas have failed the Palestinian people that they represent.. through, either by not waging war, or not fully...?

A: For what, waging?

Q: --- by fighting the Israeli state by; yes, so do you believe that they have failed by not abiding by many agreements or by not breaking from promises?

A: First of all, the Palestinian has failed the Palestinian people; probably the Palestinian people who live in West Bank and Gaza, realized that maybe one month after the arrival of the Palestinian Authority. The corruption of the people they voted the yes the PLO of the outside. They came from Tunis and, you can see their Mercedes's and their money, and they were in the power, and you see the locals.

Yes the teacher would earn \$200 that was when I was a journalist back then, writing, I can see it that reality there. It was corrupted since the beginning. People became millionaires, usually, again, Palestinians would come from the outside, used to belong to the PLO, and the institution of the PLO. And it's true that the Israelis is the major reason for the break-out of the second Intifada but the corruption and the Palestinians authority had also a huge role to play there.

I believe very much that Arafat back then he was played, he was against Intifada but he couldn't stop it. Because he knew that if he used forces against his people the Intifadah is going to be against him. And so yes, and even if you read Amira Hass, the Israeli writer, the Palestinian authority have failed very much. And it doesn't...of course it failed. It still until this very day they believe in negotiation while Israel is telling them no. And the problem that Israel made is planning to fail. And they still have the, to open 20, uh like the security. They still working with the Palestinian authority that's against the will of the Palestinian people as well, of course. And the Palestinian authority is now working so hard in order to forbid or to stop the next Intifada that's for sure.

Many Palestinians are calling the Palestinian authority just to give the keys back to Israel and make it, again, as it is reality, they don't have any power and just make it a direct and occupation. So yes, the Palestinian authority failed and the Palestinian authority failed, Abu Mazen (aka Mahmoud Abbas), I trust him very well when he says that he doesn't believe in the language of power and violence and after he goes to the UN because he's getting no achievements whatsoever. Yes, and Israel for them Abu Mazen is no partner, yes, and he is the enemy and he's a working on inciting (inaudible - interruption)

Yes, so even Abu Mazen was considered to be the more than any other Palestinian against violence, and is working with them and is considered not important for Israelis, of course it's a failure. Palestinian authority, they cannot fight settlements, they cannot fight anything, they just, [inaudible] and once in a while one person would say; if this next step is not going to happen there's no reason for Palestinian authority, but is still in power, and still not clear who is going to replace, and they're still fighting, yes. They know when they will, they're going to have their elections. And then Hamas, in no way, like I had a lot of sympathy, and love to the people of Gaza, but they don't have our sympathy to go after Hamas.

Like the Hamas people, Hamas, they grew up and they are powerful and I do think there will be elections now, there would be the only positions for the Palestinian Authority and they will win and also in the West Bank that's, that's what I believe. Even as a journalist back then between '96 and 2000, I've been as a journalist as a reporter back then in the West Bank and Gaza; to see the behavior of the people of the Palestinian authority, you knew that Hamas is the only, if you want to really resist the corruption, you will vote Hamas. I'm not sure that you would vote Hamas now after experience Hamas will vote for them again, but that was the reason. Have they failed anything? Yes, of course. But Hamas is just, you know, that's what happened in Gaza.

So Israel, that's the thing is when you believe that it's only about the families and power. Yes the Israelis for them, the same as Palestinians understand the whole thing back then. The Arabs, they understand only the language, fight who is in power. And the same thing for the Palestinians. But I think that we were taught by Israel, that Israel respects only the language of violence and power. They're not talking to Abu Mazen, but sometimes they make deals with Hamas. Of course after killing 2,500 people last summer, but they will reach agreements with Hamas. Meaning that they will respect you only if you...if use power, if you use violence, otherwise you just shut, shut up and like, and don't say anything, don't resist us.

And any kind of resisting by Palestinians is not accepted. Now to view them as they are traitors and they are animals. Demonstration, anything. Like Israel is not accepting anything from the Palestinians; but shut up and we will tell you what to do, we will keep to taking your land and you just have to be thankful. And that's the problem.

And the problem is, basically, I started this story about the Nakba, that it never ended. Of course it's not that fast and that's powerful, but taking the land, and the slow ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and it's still taking a land even for Palestinians living in Israel, so the South, yes it's still there are villages inside Israel for citizens who are older than the State of Israel, we say the unrecognized villages, yes, and especially in the south in the Negev.

So with the Nakba, the problem is that instead of, it's continuing for the Palestinian people so of course the Palestinian authorities this is why the Palestinian people. The Arab world is disappointing the Palestinian people, the international community is disappointing the Palestinian people. The White House is disappointing the Palestinian people. And even few things like; okay Israel just stop the settlements. You know just follow the international law. It's not even happening. So yes, a lot of things can miss the mark in Palestine.

End of Q&A