

Invited to Witness: Solidarity Tourism Across Occupied Palestine. **Jennifer Lynn Kelly.**
Durham: Duke University Press, 2023.
323 pages. \$104.95 cloth, \$28.95 paper,
\$29.99 eBook.

Reviewed by Charles Finn

Jennifer Lynn Kelly opens and concludes her 2023 book, *Invited to Witness: Solidarity Tourism Across Occupied Palestine*, with the "circumscribed invitation" Palestinian guides offer to tourists: 'Welcome to Palestine/Your Work Is Not Here' (p. 252). Kelly, an associate professor of Feminist Studies and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies at UC Santa Cruz, often parrots this invitation to signal what tourism across Palestine is about – the tourist may visit Palestine, but they cannot stay. Accordingly, "solidarity tourists in Palestine/Israel are repeatedly told that their work is not in Palestine but back in their home countries...[solidarity tourism] is, simultaneously, a pedagogical exercise, an anticolonial praxis, an income-generating industry, and a

voyeuristic and exploitative enterprise" (p. 11). *Invited to Witness*, beginning and ending with this invitation, navigates the ambiguous and multiple ways in which tourism exists across the extent of Palestine/Israel.

Methodologically, Kelly utilizes an 'interdisciplinary ethnographic' approach that drew on, "participant observation; interviews with guides, organizers, community members, and tourists; Palestinian cultural and literary production on displacement and return; and archival material activists have compiled in the wake of solidarity delegations to Palestine since the first intifada" (p. 16). Even though Kelly had participated in one hundred solidarity tours herself, she does not solely rely on her own experience. This methodological approach is vital because it articulates how her own experiences with solidarity tourism cannot explain tourism at-large across Palestine/Israel. Kelly's mixed methodological approach, along with her vigorous citational practice that emphasizes the intellectual production of Palestinians themselves (p. 14), provides a guide to how non-Palestinian researchers can conduct research that neither essentializes or erases Palestinian knowledge and experience.

Invited to Witness unfolds over seven chapters and a brief conclusion that span from the first intifada to the present day, and across the spatial entirety of Palestine/Israel. With a focus on Palestinian time and space, Kelly's work reflects Mark Rifkin's (2017) conceptualization of

'temporal sovereignty' against 'settler time', and Brenna Bhandar's (2018) theorizing of the co-production of race and property in colonial contexts. The binding line throughout the chapters is that the main characters are the Palestinian guides leading solidarity tourists across Palestinian space and through Palestinian time. For instance, chapter three travels through time by tying the landscape in the West Bank both to its past and to its potential futures, with the action of planting, harvesting, and destroying olive trees as the key practice guides use to show Zionist narratives of land and how Palestinians work against them (p. 88). The fifth chapter makes one of the key interventions of the entire book by using a spatial approach to interrogate solidarity tours in Israeli spaces built on top of Palestinian ruins. In this chapter, Kelly refuses to spatially divide 'Historic Palestine' from the West Bank and Gaza (p. 139), and articulates that solidarity tour guides in Israeli spaces insist on an end to occupation across the whole of Palestine, not just in the West Bank and Gaza (p. 178). Chapter six focuses on how Palestinians in Gaza use virtual space to connect themselves to the rest of Palestine and international audiences with virtual performances and projects of solidarity tourism (p. 180). In doing so, guides once again refuse the spatial segregation that settler colonialism installs in Palestine/Israel. The first six chapters, taken together, described how solidarity tour guides challenge all of the layers of occupation through time and space, and in doing so, organize an anti-colonial praxis aimed at the decolonization of the whole of Palestine.

The seventh chapter takes up the largest provocation that Kelly offers: why do tourists, despite the numerous ways in which Palestinians have presented their own struggle, need to 'see it to believe it' (p. 214) in Palestine? This idea, that tourists cannot trust Palestinians until they see for themselves, runs throughout the book. Kelly's point here is in specific reference to Said's 'permission to narrate' (p. 215) and Spivak's complication 'can the subaltern speak?' (p. 243). Palestinian guides at once refuse to ask for that permission, but are at the same time set in a relationship with the tourist defined by the epistemic violence that Spivak outlines (p. 243). It is within the tension between narration and extraction that Palestinian guides navigate their audience.

As a US citizen who has participated in solidarity tour delegations in the West Bank, I am interested in Kelly's own position in her research. While she does explain her position as a "settler in two places" and as a person who could move across Palestine with much more freedom than Palestinians themselves (p. 17), more explanation of how her own position informed her research would have been instructive. If the opening and closing invitation of this work is 'Welcome to Palestine/Your work is not here', how did Kelly navigate the fact that her work was very much there? Nonetheless, I do believe that Kelly's methodological approach was useful for performing research from an outsider's perspective that centers the experience and knowledge of Palestinians.

Kelly's book is a welcome addition to the literature on global phenomenon in Palestine, placing tourism within and alongside work on topics such as race (Feldman, 2017), refugees (Allan, 2014), human rights (Allen, 2013), neoliberalism (Haddad, 2017; Rabie, 2021), and settler colonialism (Collins, 2011). Exploring occupation and the possibilities of decolonization through the lens of the tour guide is a novel approach. Solidarity tourism is an undoubtedly global phenomenon and Kelly's approach can provide a framework for how it can be more than a voyeuristic or exploitative enterprise that continues to 'other' colonial subjects. Instead, Kelly presents solidarity tourism as a complex action full of contradictions, but if it centers decolonization, it can contain a liberatory potential.

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