

EXPULSIONS AND RECEPTIONS: PALESTINIAN IRAQ WAR REFUGEES IN THE
BRAZILIAN NATION-STATE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Expulsions and Receptions: Palestinian Iraq War Refugees in the Brazilian Nation-state

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This dissertation examines the resettlement of a group of Palestinian Iraq War refugees in Brazil. In 2007, Latin America's largest democracy and self-proclaimed racial democracy made what it claimed was a humanitarian overture by resettling 108 Palestinian refugees displaced from Baghdad as a result of the Iraq War. The majority of them had escaped from Baghdad in 2003 and had been living for nearly five years in a makeshift refugee camp on the border of Jordan and Iraq. Utilizing a multi-method approach, this work examines how Brazil, with its long history of Arab migration, incorporates this specific re-diasporized group into the folds of its much-touted racial democracy, an important arm of Brazilian exceptionalism. In order to address the particularity of Palestinian refugees, and while considering pluralism discourses and other important socio-political dynamics, I engage and extend Edward Said's framework of Orientalism by analyzing its machinations in Brazil.

To closely assess the particularity of the resettled Palestinian refugees (but also Arabs more generally), I consider how already stereotyped Brazilians construct Palestinians in Brazil through an Orientalist lens. This Orientalism, I argue, is a product of a *Neo-Orientalist glaze*. This formulation takes into consideration the racialized and

exoticized constructions of Brazilians in order to examine how these essentialist ideas are reconfigured and reproduced to “Orientalize” *other* others.

In examining the near and distant history of this group, interrogating labor histories and contemporary labor practices, dissecting their incorporation into Brazilian public policies, and interrogating discourses of cultural misrecognitions and problematic Palestinian cultural constructions, I have made significant theoretical interventions and highlighted distinct ways in which members of a minority community are de-subjectified and re-subjectified in the Brazilian context. Moreover, this analysis provides insight into the Brazilian nation-state and the scope and scale of its neoliberal form of statecraft.

Considered together, my dissertation engages and traverses a wide range of literatures, crosses disciplinary boundaries, and contributes to multiple fields of study. At the same time, it illuminates in fine detail the daily lives of a group of refugees whose experiences can help us re-imagine the lives of multiply-displaced persons in other times and places.

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	SELECTED ABBREVIATIONS
ASAV	Associação Antônio Vieira
ASPA	South America-Arab Nations Summit
CIBAL	Central Islâmica Brasileira de Alimentos Halal (Islamic Center for Halal Foods)
CDIAL	Centro de Divulgação do Islam para América Latina (Center for the Dissemination of Information about Islam for Latin America)
CONAPIR	National Conference for the Promotion of Racial Equality (Conferencia Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial)
CONARE	Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados (National Committee for Refugees)
CDDH	Centro de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos (Center for the Defense of Human Rights)
CNIg	Conselho Nacional de Migração (National Council on Migration)
FAMBRAS	Federação das Associações Muçulmanas do Brasil (Federation of Muslim Associations in Brazil)
FEPAL	Federação Árabe Palestina (Palestinian Federation: a national Palestinian organization in Brazil)
MOPAT	Movimento Palestina Para Todos (The Palestine Movement for Everyone)
SEPPIR/PR	Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality)
SUS	Sistema Único de Saúde (Single Healthcare System: Brazil's publicly funded healthcare system)
UNHCR/ACNUR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (in Portuguese ACNUR: Alto Comissariado das Nações Unidas para Refugiados)
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near

INTRODUCTION



(Fig. 1: This is a photo taken by the author of “pracinha da mesquita” [the mosque square], located across the street from Mesquita de Mogi in São Paulo. These large concrete slabs are etched with Qur’anic verses, and just below the framed perimeter, they are translated to Portuguese. The centered slab reads, “Bismillah al-Rahman al-Rahim” [In the name of God, most gracious, most merciful])

“We cross borders, but we don’t erase them; we take our borders with us.” –Ruth Behar (*Translated Woman* 2003, 320)

When I first arrived in São Paulo, in late January 2009, to conduct field research on Palestinian refugees I was overwhelmed by the size and scale of the city. This was my first time in South America’s largest metropolis, home to 11.5 million people. São Paulo’s transit system alone gave me pause. Not because it was harder or easier to navigate than any other large urban system, but because it was unfamiliar; and whether I took the metro, train or bus, it was always packed with people. My regular trips from the center of São Paulo to one of its outer municipalities, Mogi das Cruzes, the primary site

of my fieldwork, entailed taking the metro, then a train. In comparison to New York City's transit system, the cleanliness was quite remarkable. Unlike New York, however, most São Paulo vehicles did not have air conditioning, and the sheer number of bodies on board during the hot summer months intensified discomfort.

While I struggled to make familiar this unfamiliar place, there was something that always struck me; it was a gesture I saw and experienced time and again. The first time it happened to me I was coming back from meeting my very first field research contact, who volunteered as a translator with resettled Palestinian refugees. On a crowded bus on Avenida Paulista, the primary artery in the city's business and cultural center, there was standing room only. It was early February--the height of summer in Brazil--and the air was hot and thick with humidity. This together with the jerking motion of the manual gears in stop-and-go traffic was giving me motion sickness. As usual, my backpack--loaded with more than I needed--was weighing heavy on my shoulders. In an effort to make room for those behind me, I moved the bag to one side. Two long stops after boarding the bus, the woman whose seat I was standing in front of extended her hands toward me, without saying anything. She must have seen the puzzled look on my face (likely accompanied by a furrowed brow), so she articulated what her hand gesture implied; she offered to hold my backpack [*mochila*] on her lap. I thanked her but said it was not necessary. How odd, I thought. But then I began to notice how common this gesture was in São Paulo's transit system.

Many people, irrespective of sex, who were seated on crowded buses, subways, and trains, were literally willing to bear someone else's load for a while. I thought about the big city where I lived and decided this gesture would not work there. With the

militarization of public space after the events of September 11, 2001, where the public has become an extension of the police and surveillance apparatus and people are encouraged to act *policingly*, such a gesture would seem suspicious at best, and an affirmative response would also be considered odd. As Leela Fernandes posits in the “Boundaries of Terror,” “the state encourage[s] and relie[s] on ‘ordinary citizens’ to report suspicious activity and to serve as an informal part of the surveillance apparatus...blurring the boundaries between state and civil society” (2005, 67).

Backpacks have been especially targeted as items of concern, and pictures of them are often seen in the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) campaign “If you see something, say something.” This public awareness campaign has since been licensed to the Department of Homeland Security and has spread nationwide. Thus, what is considered a common act of kindness in Paulista civil society would be viewed very differently in the United States. That contrast encouraged me to think in more nuanced ways about how much our daily practices, social interactions, and organization of ideas are informed by time, space, and place. And it also made me consider more deeply Ruth Behar’s reflection noted above. Behar reminds us that physical border crossings do not eradicate the interior and layered borders we carry within us. My initial reaction to a woman’s willingness to share my burden by holding my backpack indexed one of the many borders and boundaries I carried with me. More importantly for this study, Behar’s insight captures the multiple borders that Palestinian refugees from Iraq, who were resettled in Brazil, carry with them.

In 2007, Brazil, Latin America’s largest democracy and at times a self-proclaimed racial democracy, made what it claimed was a humanitarian overture by resettling 108

Palestinian refugees¹ displaced from Baghdad as a result of the Iraq War.² The majority of them had escaped from Baghdad in 2003 and had been living for nearly five years in a makeshift refugee camp on the border of Jordan and Iraq. Before this particular war, they had been granted refuge in Iraq after having been displaced from their original homes under a variety of circumstances. Upon arriving in Brazil from the Ruweished camp, the refugees were divided and resettled in two states, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. Two Catholic NGOs, *Cáritas Brasileira* and *Associação Antônio Vieira (ASAV)*, in collaboration with the UN Refugee Agency, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), were charged with overseeing the resettlement. They were responsible for arranging direct services, such as language courses, housing, medical care, and for facilitating integration into their respective local communities. Twenty-four families, consisting of 56 people, would be resettled in São Paulo, and twenty families, numbering 52 persons, in Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul.

The NGOs had different approaches to the resettlement process. In Rio Grande do Sul, the Palestinians would be further divided and resettled in five distinct municipalities. According to representatives from Antônio Vieira, this was the standard model for refugee resettlement in that state. Since the majority of refugees with whom the organization worked were Colombians fleeing political persecution, placing them in separate towns reduced the possibility of reprisals from warring political factions.

¹ Except for a Christian family of four, all of the refugees were Muslim.

² Based on data the author obtained from the UNHCR spokesperson in Brasília, Luis Godinho, the group consisted of 36% females and 64% males. Almost 70% of them were between 18-59 years of age. A little over 10% of the refugees were above the age of 60, and 11% were between 5-11 years old. Furthermore, with the exception of a Christian nuclear family, consisting of four members, all of the refugees were Muslim.

Furthermore, for the Palestinians particularly, such dispersal facilitated integration by not allowing refugees to form an ethno-religious ghetto. Lastly, their dispersal assured that no single town was burdened with a large group of refugees who needed access to multiple social services. On the other hand, the refugees sent to São Paulo were located in one municipality by Cáritas, and lived in relatively close proximity to one another, in rented apartments or houses, and to the local mosque in the small city. This, according to the resettlement director, was intended to engender a sense of community.

While the approaches were very different, one can see the hand of the state in both NGO resettlement practices and their preoccupation with the refugees' potential actions and behaviors. In this sense the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, where government is concerned with managing people and things rather than a territory, is at work here. According to Foucault, "The things...with which government is to be concerned are [wo/]men, but [wo/]men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those things that are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities...[wo/]men in their relation to those other things that are customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, and so on..." (208-209).³ Within this power dynamic, the more concise and oft-quoted Foucault phrase "conduct of conduct" is useful to conceptualize the very meaning of government and the primary concern of corresponding institutions (341).⁴ That is, the management (conduct) of behaviors (conducts) is central; or as Foucault notes, "The exercise of power consists in guiding the

³ "Governmentality," in *Michel Foucault: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (Paul Rabinow, Series Editor), 1994

⁴ "The Subject and Power," in *Michel Foucault: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, 1994

possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome”(1982, 221).⁵ While the exercise of power over the Palestinian refugee resettlement varied between the two NGOs, the motive was the same. Each one, in its respective state, desired to orchestrate the actions and behaviors of the people being resettled. Although fieldwork for this project was conducted in both Rio Grande do Sul and São Paulo, I spent significantly more time in São Paulo. Thus, the dissertation focuses primarily on the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in that state. Nonetheless, recognition of the alternate model followed in Rio Grande do Sul ensures that the trajectory of the process in São Paulo will not be viewed as the only, or natural, course of events.

While this dissertation centers on the resettlement and experiences of a group of Palestinian Iraq War refugees, it also attends to the longer history of Arab migration into Brazil. This recent resettlement is important to examine in light of and in juxtaposition to Arab--often synonymously referred to as Syrian-Lebanese--migration to São Paulo. The legacy of this historic migration, their incorporation and participation in social, economic, and political processes in Brazil are crucial to consider. As such my project is deeply informed by John Tofik Karam’s *Another Arabesque: Syrian Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil* (2007).

Using a combination of historical analysis and rich ethnographic research, Karam traces the shifts in social positions and changes in national discourses regarding Arabs/ ‘turcos’ in Brazil. The author demonstrates how Syrian-Lebanese have transitioned from marginalized outsiders to contemporary neoliberal partners. This shift is primarily attributed to Brazil’s globalizing economy, where trade with Middle Eastern countries

⁵ “The Subject and Power,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, 1982

has intensified thereby making Arab identity more significant. As such, the Syrian-Lebanese, as an ethnic group, have gained a distinguished and more privileged form of visibility in the nation. Importantly, Karam builds on Jeffrey Lesser's work (1999) on ethnicity in light of Brazil's racial and racial mixing ideology and its interconnections to nation-building efforts. Thus Karam, while demonstrating the margin to center movement of Syrian-Lebanese in the country, provides us with critical and nuanced insights about the importance of ethnicity in neoliberal statecraft.

Similar to Karam, I examine the history and significance of Arab presence in Brazil and its importance in recent neoliberal regimes. More specifically, however, I consider how Palestinians factor in this calculus. Where Karam's focus is on the established (mostly Christian) Syrian-Lebanese elite, my dissertation engages with but moves away from the elite and points to critical ethnic, class, and religious (mostly Muslim) distinctions within the broader Syrian-Lebanese [Sírio-Libanês] category under which Arabs are subsumed (and often subsume themselves).

Karam demonstrates how Syrian-Lebanese historically contributed to Brazilian nation building. He highlights São Paulo as the epicenter of this production. And broader discourses point to the importance of this group in various areas of social, political, and economic life. Influence in business, medicine and the arts have been recognized at local and national levels. Additionally, Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil have had an influence in nation building processes in their countries of origin too.

Both in Brazil and in their original home locations, Palestinians as a group have not had the same influence. The specificity of these dynamics will be explored in the content of this dissertation. However, in a broad overview, the formation of the Israeli

nation-state and later the military occupation of Palestine have had a direct impact on Palestinians in Palestine and an enduring influence on those in the diaspora, both in their relationship with their adoptive country and their home country. Those who maintained ties to family often sent home remittances; however, unlike the Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil who were able to contribute to their home countries' economies in multiple ways, Palestinians had a different experience. For instance, after the 1967 Six Day War, the Israeli military occupation and continued expropriation of Palestinian land and property, together with an ineffective Palestinian leadership, hinder(ed) the growth of a national economy from the inside and the outside. Even if broad, this is an important distinction between Palestinians and the Syrian-Lebanese in Brazil and thus points to the focus of this dissertation as being a minority within a minority. Moreover, the specific group of Palestinian Iraq War refugees this project closely examines is also a minority within that subgroup.

There has been a growing body of literature about Arabs in Latin America (and the Americas in general), but there is still a dearth of publications about Palestinians specifically.⁶ However, John Karam has recently made an important contribution to the field of Palestinian diasporic studies with his article, "On the Trail and Trial of a Palestinian Diaspora: Mapping South America in the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1967-1972" (2013). Karam traces the political discourses in South America regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict immediately after the 1967 war. He attends to this by focusing on a 1970 shooting in the Paraguayan Israeli embassy in Asunción, involving two Palestinian refugees from Gaza who were "resettled" in the country. Through this incident and the

⁶ This dissertation engages relevant and available scholarship about Palestinians in Latin America more generally and in Brazil particularly.

court trial that ensued, the author describes political plans at work in Israel after the six-day war, which included a secret project to transfer Palestinians out of their homeland and into South America.⁷ The details of the trial, including the Palestinians' Syrian-Lebanese legal representation and elite allies from this group, provide a layered look at the role diasporic Palestinians had in connecting the socio-political climate in Paraguay, and in South America generally, to post 1967 Palestine/Israel. Importantly, Karam suggests that pluralistic discourses in Latin America and specifically Paraguay provided an arena to accommodate the interests of both Arabs and Israelis (2013, 770). As this dissertation will show, these and more nuanced pluralism discourses saturate current Brazilian foreign and domestic policies. They are implicated in the decision to resettle Palestinian Iraq War refugees, are present in the country's position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and permeate broader, if problematic, discourses about Arabs and the Middle East. In order to address the particularity of Palestinian refugees, and while considering [harmonious] pluralism and other important socio-political dynamics, I

⁷ Ignacio Klich in his article, "The Chimera of Palestinian Resettlement in Argentina in the Early Aftermath of the First Arab-Israeli War and Other Similarly Fantastic Notions" (1996), documents a similar phenomenon. Israeli officials, who were interested in transferring dispossessed Palestinians--and Palestinians within the newly established Israeli state--away from Israel's borders after the 1948 Palestine War, proposed to transfer them to Argentina and other Latin American nations. Additionally, since Argentina was home to a sizable number of Jews at the time, they sought to encourage Jewish migration to Israel to strengthen the Jewish population there. The strategically planned population transfer project never took place. This newly invigorated and secret Palestinian resettlement effort by Israeli officials (principally constructed by Moshe Dayan) after the 1967 war detailed by Karam, however, succeeded in convincing some young refugees from Gaza to emigrate to 'America' (many were unaware Paraguay was their final destination), by promising them documents (even Paraguayan passports), assistance, and work opportunities. Several were also assured they could return home. Leaders within Paraguay's authoritarian government were complicit in this project. Karam indicates there is documented evidence for 21 Palestinians from Gaza who arrived in Paraguay in late summer 1969 (757). Based on an interview conducted by Karam with one of the two men implicated in the Israeli embassy shooting, they had gone to the embassy to demand the money and assistance promised them. While there may have been more, with the two men involved in the shooting, there are 23 documented cases, in total, of Palestinians resettled under the Israeli secret plan.

engage and extend Edward Said's framework of Orientalism by examining its machinations in the context of Brazil.

In his book, *Orientalism* (1978), Said demonstrates that Orientalism is a specific project with specific historical and political references, emerging from an imperial and colonial encounter, which has worked (and continues to work) to produce knowledge about the East in and for the West. This has functioned to construct binary oppositions and establish a perceived superiority of the West over the East. Said notes, "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience...European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (1-3). Also critical to these Orientalist ideas are representations of Muslims and Islam. However, these pervasive constructions imposed on the "Orient" are no longer uni-directional.

As Said indicates, these discourses began to shift the ways Orientalized others constructed themselves. "[D]espite its lamentable jargon, its scarcely concealed racism, ...Orientalism flourishes today. Indeed, there is some reason for alarm in the fact that its influence has spread to the 'the Orient' itself: the pages of books and journals in Arabic are filled with second-order analyses by Arabs of the 'the Arab mind,' 'Islam,' and other myths" (1978; 322). Leila Ahmed builds on the impact of this influence in Arab auto-constructions in her memoir, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* (2012 [1999]). She writes:

The Europeans began writing their meaning of the word 'arab' freely and indiscriminately all over the Middle East...when the region as a whole fell into their hands...And so in those years they scribbled their meaning of 'arab' all over the landscape, in their acts and in the lines they drew on maps, tracing out their meaning in a script at once cryptic and universal...And in time, quite soon, their meaning of the word 'arab' would enter our meaning of it too...It entered it

corrosively, changing it from within, as if the European meaning were a kind of virus eating up the inside of the word ‘Arab,’ replacing it with itself—leaving it unchanged on the outside...The European meaning of ‘arab,’ then, hollowed out our word, replacing it entirely with itself...The Europeans were defining us and we, falling in with their ideas. (267-268)

Thus, Orientalist discourses are pervasive and have worked their way into self-definitions of Arabness and Muslimness.

Moreover, we have also come to understand hegemonic essentialist conceptions of people, culture, and cultural others outside of the imagined geographical boundaries of the East. They have been widely circulated and permeate ideas about individuals and communities affiliated with the Middle East who live outside of it. And while global discourses about Orientalized others are enshrined in broad gendered, racial, religious, and cultural notions of Arabs and Islam, they are subject to distinct manifestations in the national and local settings where they emerge. For instance, in Brazil dominant Orientalist discourses about Arabs (Muslim or not) also underscore an intrinsic ability for business ventures together with a cultural propensity for shrewd negotiations in commerce. Arabs are often also broadly framed as being cheap (*pão duros*) and conniving in business dealings and in their day-to-day exchanges. These constructions are significant and, as this dissertation will show, have consequences at the local and national levels. Furthermore, the wide and often monolithic circulation of ideas about Arabs and Islam bears comparisons to other groups who have been read and reduced to essentialist conceptions, and, similar to the above descriptions, begin to imagine themselves in kind.

While the contexts are considerably different, there is similarity between the ways in which Brazil and Brazilians have been conjured and imagined, laden with cultural and corporal excess and have come to construct and imagine themselves through the same

prism. Taking this into consideration, and in order to closely assess the particularity of the resettled Palestinian refugees (but also Arabs more generally), I examine how already stereotyped Brazilians construct Palestinians in Brazil through an Orientalist lens. This Orientalism, I argue, is a product of a *Brazilian Neo-Orientalist glaze*.

In this formulation I consider the racialized and exoticized constructions of Brazilians and examine how these essentialist ideas are reconfigured and reproduced to “orientalize” *other* others. I use glaze here to indicate the “finishing” that is placed upon particular bodies, which thickens and locks in the gaze. But I also deploy it to indicate the “film” through which the subaltern body is conjured, seen, and read, and subsequently conjures, sees, and reads another subaltern body or group. In this lateral refraction, the essentialized other then delimits or “finishes” the *other* other’s body into an essentialized object. This palimpsestic formulation of the Western gaze indicates its pervasiveness and its transformation. Moreover, the neo-Orientalist glaze assures that essentialist constructions are not only developed from the outside in but are reproduced from within.

In addition to broad notions of Arabs (mostly men) being shrewd business venturers and inherent entrepreneurs, Orientalism in Brazil emerges in complex and varied ways. It is influenced by historical colonial discourses that were predicated on a Christian white male hegemonic order and which today have resonance and are inflected through ideas of race, ethnicity, gender, class, religion, and sexuality. These are also constitutive strands of the nationalist Brazilian ideology of racial democracy, which insists that the legacy of racial mixing (*mestiçagem*) among Europeans, Indians, and Africans stands as a testament to racial conviviality (Freyre 1956 [1933]). This is despite the fact that “whitening” (*embranquecimento*) the nation surfaced as the

quintessential element of this hybridity and was supported and promoted through immigration policies that privileged Europeans and were carried out from the late nineteenth to the better part of the twentieth century. Thus, as David Theo Goldberg encapsulates, “even as the Brazilian project of racial democracy took itself to be opening up to hybridity and its virtues, the terms of engagement and elevation, success, and satisfaction remained deeply indexed to the presumptive superiority of European stock” (2009, 200).

Moreover, it is important to emphasize that within Brazilian Orientalism are specific ideas about the otherness of Islam too. This again bridges “Islamic Orientalists” thoughts about the Orient as Said traces in his text. He writes, “Islam simply intensified their [Orientalists’] feelings of superiority about European culture, even as their antipathy spread to include the entire Orient, of which Islam was considered a degraded (and usually, a virulently dangerous) representative” (1978, 260). Within the conceptualization of the neo-Orientalist glaze are highly gendered ideas about Islam and Muslimness. This operates in tension with a fear (phobia) and at times fascination (philia) with gendered Muslim bodies.

As feminist scholars have brought to the foreground, evident in colonial histories of South Asia and the Middle East were monolithic discourses centered on the predicament of women and their male oppressors. Women’s status and oppression, predominantly highlighted through cases of child marriage and widow immolation in India, for instance, and veiling practices in Algeria and Egypt, were used as tropes to undergird and justify “civilizing” colonial missions and endeavors, despite the fact that colonial powers did not provide support for women in these contexts and upheld

misogynistic policies at home (Spivak 1988; Ahmed 1992; Lazreg 1994; Mani 1998). Furthermore, as Lila Abu-Lughod indicates in her review essay, “Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies” (2001), Feminist scholars have underscored European colonial women’s role in producing and reinforcing depictions of the Orientalized other. In her text, *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), Leila Ahmed depicts the union of colonialism and feminism--or “the language of feminism”--to serve colonial endeavors as “colonial feminism” (151). More recently, these arguments, still with ideas about gendered and racialized-religious others at their center have been recuperated, reconfigured, and utilized in Euro-American discourses to justify war (for peace) and neo-colonialist projects (for freedom and to “save” Muslim women), most especially with the “war on terror” (Abu-Lughod 2002; Fernandes 2005; Mahmood 2008; Maira 2009).

As this dissertation will show, in Brazil racialized and gendered Orientalist framings are also animated and intensified by essentialist ideas about Islam broadly and in connection to Palestinian Iraq War refugees specifically. These constructions must be viewed in concert with class, ethnicity, and sexuality, where at times these elements coalesce and magnify in the neo-Orientalist glaze and at other times one element independently intensifies and becomes the axis to produce and reproduce racialized and gendered monolithic representations of the [othered] self and the other “Other”. Such formulations partly emerge from ideas of miscegenation and racial mixture and merge with outside constructions of Brazil and its inhabitants and inside constructions by and of Brazilians themselves.

Accordingly, utilizing historical, political, social discourses, together with rich ethnographic accounts, this dissertation will show how the Brazilian neo-Orientalist glaze

functions in varying nuanced and explicit manifestations in relation to the resettled Palestinian Iraq War refugees and the place of their resettlement.

THE RESETTLEMENT CITY

The city of São Paulo boasts a rich history of migration, and as noted above this includes Arabs. However, members of the local resettlement team, even before the arrival of the Palestinian refugees, decided that the city center would be too overwhelming and costly to situate the newcomers there. In order to better negotiate their daily routines, the NGO Cáritas, along with UNHCR Brazil, shopped around for the most viable smaller city in the Greater São Paulo area to resettle the refugees. After speaking to community leaders in a few municipalities, it was agreed Mogi das Cruzes (commonly known as Mogi), approximately 40 kilometers from the capital and home to 375,000 inhabitants, was the best place. One benefit of Mogi was that it already has a small but significant Arab and Muslim presence.⁸ The existence of a beautiful mosque, located on a hill in the Alto Ipiranga section of town, stands as a marker of this presence. The actual mosque was commissioned by the Benevolent Islamic Society of Mogi das Cruzes (Sociedade Beneficente Islâmica de Mogi das Cruzes), whose president is a prominent businessman in the city. Construction began in 1991 and was completed in October 2003. Mahmood Asaad has been the president of the Islamic society in Mogi since 1975 and is the head as well of a notable southern Lebanese family that is an economic powerhouse in the

⁸ I do not mean to imply here that all Arabs are Muslims or that all Muslims are Arabs, but in Mogi das Cruzes the majority of the Arabs there are Lebanese and Muslim.

commercial center of town.⁹ Their furniture stores dot the downtown area, where the sidewalks are narrow and the storefronts broad.¹⁰

The train ride from the capital city to Mogi das Cruzes requires a transfer midway to the outer municipality. Multiple towering urban concrete buildings characteristic of São Paulo's dense cosmopolitan cityscape begin to scale down in size and the multitudes continually thin with each passing station farthest from the metropolis. The shift is noticeable as the locomotive continues its route east toward Mogi—the penultimate stop on the train line. In between stations weathered cement buildings are replaced and interspersed with trees and brush that make for greener landscapes, and dirt earth patches line the train tracks two and three meters at a time. A couple of kilometers before arriving in Mogi's city center, passengers see views of lush green vegetation, which has earned the municipality a place in São Paulo's famous greenbelt [cinturão verde] because it contributes to the agricultural economy of the state.

⁹ Most personal names in the corpus of this project have been changed to protect the subjects' confidentiality and at times minor details were altered for protection. Changes were also made to names of organizations whose members were only willing to speak on condition of anonymity. However, the names of public officials who have been interviewed in this capacity have not been changed.

¹⁰ Besides the Lebanese presence in the city, there is also a rich history of Japanese migration. Many Japanese immigrants arrived in Mogi to work in agricultural production. The city was and still is considered part of the greenbelt [cinturão verde] of São Paulo since mushrooms, tomatoes, and other vegetation abundantly grow and contribute to the agricultural economy. Today this Japanese history is reflected in the structures of the city. There is a large city park on the outskirts of town called "Parque Centenário da Imigração Japonesa" [Japanese Immigration Centennial Park]. The park was inaugurated in 2008 to celebrate the century anniversary of Japanese migration into Brazil. In the park there are artifacts that stand as representations of Japanese culture and migration histories. There is a small museum, a traditional country house (circa 19th century Japan), and an attention-grabbing massive ship structure representing the mode of travel the Japanese [and other migrants] used to reach the shores of Brazil. The structure is a replica of the ship *Kasato-Maru*, the ship that transported the very first Japanese migrants to the port of Santos in São Paulo in 1908. These artifacts on display demonstrate not only the history of Japanese migration but also the political and cultural capital this ethnic group has in Mogi das Cruzes. Moreover, to cater to the culinary interests of this community, agriculturists have recently begun to grow plants that are part of traditional Japanese gastronomy (See "Agricultores de Mogi das Cruzes, SP, investem no plantio do shisô": <<http://g1.globo.com/economia/agronegocios/noticia/2013/03/agricultores-de-mogi-das-cruzes-estao-investindo-no-plantio-do-shiso.html>> Accessed December 19, 2013). For more on Japanese migration to Brazil, see Jeffrey Lesser's work (1999, 2007).

The train station in Mogi das Cruzes is located in the city's commercial district. Small buildings and weather muted pastel-colored storefronts surrounding the station give the area a quaint feel. Upon walking several blocks Northwest from the transport hub, one sees a minaret craning high in the sky. From there the muezzin calls the Muslim community to prayer (adhan).¹¹ The Mesquita de Mogi (Mogi mosque), like the minaret, stands tall and picturesque on the hilltop of Alto Ipiranga. From a distance, lush green trees frame the white and blue structure. And at particular times of day the minaret casts a shadow on the domed mosque roof. Choosing Mogi das Cruzes as the resettlement city for Palestinian refugees was further facilitated by a welcoming imam. Sheikh Hamdi is the religious leader of the Mogi mosque.¹² He is originally from Egypt and had been in Brazil for nearly eight years when we first met in February 2009. And it was through him that I was able to establish my first contact with the resettled Palestinians.

During the initial stages of fieldwork, I experienced a bout of deep *ethnographobia*—a neologism borrowed from John L. Jackson's *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity* (2005). The term seeks to capture “not only writers apprehensions” but “it is also meant to emphasize some of the fears endemic to fieldwork, reasonable fears about conducting something as murky, qualitative, and jumbled as fieldwork” (25). In addition to having general and very real concerns about conducting this kind of research, I was uncertain about how to make initial contact and meet the resettled persons. Moreover, I was concerned about my own position as a scholar from a U.S.

¹¹ The call to prayer was audible in the community surrounding the mosque. According to the imam, this was the only mosque in Brazil in which the call to prayer was broadcasted through loudspeakers.

¹² Sheikh and imam will be used interchangeably, as they both mean Muslim religious leader.

institution, the nation-state primarily¹³ responsible for the latest displacement of the very people who would be the subjects of my research. Initially, my intent was to volunteer with *Cáritas*, the NGO in São Paulo, to help this connection. Two days after arriving in Brazil, I contacted the director and offered my services. While awaiting a response, I pursued research at the *Museu Memorial do Imigrante*/ Immigrant Memorial Museum and the *Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo*/ Public Archives of the State of São Paulo in the city and considered making the one-hour plus commute to Mogi das Cruzes. After two weeks, despite being uneasy about getting there, I took the train to the outer municipality. The Mogi mosque factored into the resettlement equation, but at this point it was not clear how or how much.

I arrived at the mosque just after noon on a Wednesday. Unlike the pictures on the Internet, the mosque, which took up about half a city block, was enclosed by a wall—a feature common in São Paulo that kept out unwanted intruders, while simultaneously locking people in.¹⁴ I circled the entire perimeter of the wall, perplexed at how to enter. On the northern side two men were chatting and I asked if they knew how to get inside the compound. One of the men directed me to a bell adjacent to a door I had not noticed. The bell rang in the imam's quarters, which was also enclosed by the wall. A few moments after ringing the doorbell a kind-faced, middle-aged man with a closely trimmed beard opened the door. His interaction with the two men standing outside was easy and pleasant. I greeted him and introduced myself, letting him know I was a

¹³ I use “primarily” here because the displacement of Palestinians had everything to do with the US invasion but was also brought about by the persecution of Palestinians by militias after Baghdad fell in April 2003. However, the leading cause of why these Palestinians were in Iraq in the first place was because of their (or their parents’) displacement and dispossession by the formation of the Israeli nation-state in 1948 and their inability to return. This will be addressed in Chapter 1.

¹⁴ For more on the urban landscapes and spatial segregation of São Paulo, see Teresa Caldeira’s work, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* (2000).

doctoral student pursuing research on the resettled Palestinian refugees. I asked if he had time to talk with me but said I understood if it was too near “salaat al-dhuhr” [midday prayer].¹⁵ He said he had time and led me through what I deduced was his house. The backdoor of his home fed into a walkway and then the foyer of the beautiful stained-glass windowed mosque. Inside I could see several young, bearded men gently rocking the recitations of the Qur’an.

Dressed in jeans and a three-quarter sleeve T-shirt, and not wearing a veil, I was directed by the imam to a shelf along one wall of the foyer. He told me there were clothes there for me to wear and said he would be back. I rifled through the garbs, but could only find long, white slip skirts with an elastic waist. Well aware this was a critical moment, I panicked when I could not find a headdress; I felt my heart in my throat. I finally remembered the headscarf and a long button-down shirt in my bag, packed in anticipation of a moment like this one. I quickly dressed and sat in the chair the imam had indicated, just left of the wide arched doorway of the mosque—where I could still see the young men in rhythmic movement—and waited. The imam came back after a few minutes and led me inside the mosque. As I followed, the thick firm carpet massaged the soles of my bare feet. We came to a small table where there were white pamphlets, in Portuguese, about Islam and the Mogi mosque. Sheikh Hamdi invited me to sit and we talked for nearly two hours.

He told me the Palestinian refugees in Mogi das Cruzes had encountered a lot of difficulty since arriving there in late 2007. These difficulties had been exacerbated by a tense relationship with Cáritas, the NGO locally charged with overseeing the resettlement

¹⁵ This inquiry about mid-day prayer proved to be invaluable. The imam later disclosed he met with me precisely because I was aware it was prayer time.

program. Health problems among the refugees abounded, along with difficulty finding employment and trouble with language acquisition. Many called on the imam himself to translate and help with day-to-day issues. He indicated that even his own relationship with the Cáritas director and resettlement coordinator, Antonio, had been tense. When asked why, Sheikh Hamdi said, “Because I have been direct and forthright about the failings of the resettlement program and he doesn’t want to hear it.” The imam cited inadequate housing, incompetent Cáritas workers, and the unavailability of translators, among other issues. He proceeded to give concrete and at times shocking examples of how the program had failed many people. Toward the end of the conversation, he told me I would confirm all of what he said when I talked with the refugees themselves. Then Sheikh Hamdi gave me the names and numbers of four resettled persons.¹⁶

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

“no production of knowledge in human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in [her] own circumstances” (Said 2003 [1978], 11).

I came to my project and these first four refugees with relatively broad questions. My initial research questions concerned how Palestinian Iraq war refugees, who had been multiply and transnationally displaced, would come to feel a sense of belonging in the Brazilian nation-state. More specifically, I asked: to what degree would the Palestinian and mostly Muslim refugees reinforce, modify, and/or challenge still salient nationalist

¹⁶ A couple of days after meeting with the imam, I received a response from the Cáritas director, Antonio, about my request to volunteer for the NGO. He offered to have me accompany him on a visit to Mogi and said I could potentially volunteer with the organization. Fortunately, I had already met with Sheikh Hamdi and based on this meeting knew volunteering with the agency would be disastrous for fieldwork since there was so much tension between the Palestinian refugees and Cáritas.

perspectives of Brazil as a racial democracy? Moreover, what were the distinct and gendered ways in which Palestinian women and men negotiated becoming national subjects in Brazil in light of these discourses? How would these subjects be read, produced, administered and governed by mechanisms of the state, taking into consideration critical nodes of subjectivity such as gender, religion, class, race, age, and ethnicity? These factors influence the architecture of personhood and impact the ways in which populations are hierarchized and managed within a nation-state.

Yet this ethnographic project also entailed much broader political and global processes, which were at work in the displacement and resettlement of these specific Palestinians. To address these issues required multiple and intersecting theoretical perspectives. Initially, feminist theoretical interventions were crucial to my analyses of the gendered, racialized, and economic effects of migration. This heuristic was also useful in examining the state, war, and military conflict. Thus multiple texts provided insight through which to consider and analyze my project.

For instance, Aihwa Ong's ethnography, *Buddha is Hiding: Refugee, Citizenship, The New America* (2003), elucidates the varied experiences of Cambodian refugees with US governmental and non-governmental institutions. While attentive to larger global forces, she examines disciplining processes of citizen-making in the "technologies of government" and the implication of class, gender, and race in making and marking citizen-subjects. Ong maps the historically explicit "racial logic" attached to US citizenship and the more implicit continuation of this logic in contemporary dominant discourses about immigrants. Other works that examine migration and the critical intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, class, and labor were beneficial to consider (Foner

2000, 2003; Parreñas 2001; Nakano Glenn 2002; Hondague-Sotelo 2003). And texts that explicitly address an intersectional analysis of the state and zones of military conflict were also critical.

Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman bring together a collection of essays, *Sites of Violence: Gender and Conflict Zones* (2004), that address specific areas of conflict (such as Guatemala, Sudan, Ghana, Palestine/Israel, among others) and the importance of a feminist analysis to understand gendered, racialized, and economic dimensions of violence in times of war and peace. The essays analyze how systems of power (i.e., governments, corporations) intertwine and support each other and alter ideas of war and security that impact lives and produce varied scales of oppression. Moreover, because civilian space has increasingly receded in contemporary war practices (as Leela Fernandes also suggests), we must also consider how places and spaces are racialized and gendered by local and global social, political, and economic processes.

Begoña Aretxaga's feminist ethnography, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (1997), provides an incisive analysis of "the Troubles" of Northern Ireland through a focus on gender, class, and religio-ethnic anti-colonial struggle. She highlights the significance of women as political agents in the resistance against British rule and their parallel struggles within the republican nationalist movement. Another important contribution by Begoña Aretxaga that informed my analytic interventions is her collection of essays released posthumously, *States of Terror* (2005). The book is comprised of several previously published articles where the author critically examines the state and political formations of violence. Aretxaga insists on the importance of fully understanding historical and transnational

processes leading to violence through the lives of ordinary people at the local level. This is where we could understand the gendered, political, economic, and social production of state violence and the creation of political subjectivities. Aretxaga traces the “state of exception” as the vehicle through which state violence is committed against civilians within a nation-state and through which military interventions are sanctioned outside of it. She argued that the war on terrorism, however, newly configured and set “the stage of war not as state of exception, but rather as a permanent state of affairs in which the state of exception has become the juridical norm and the legitimating right of police and military intervention” (2005, 275).

These contributions by feminist scholars from various disciplines point to important methods of research and analysis. Bridging these literatures is critical since the forced migration and displacement of Palestinian refugees is a consequence of war, and their specific resettlement in Brazil resulted from the Iraq War. But to fully understand these developments also requires insights provided by Foucault’s conceptualization of “governmental rationality” or governmentality as well as other theorizations of neoliberalism, humanitarianism, and citizenship. In addition, this project necessitates an engagement with historical texts to provide context and depth to the ongoing displacement of Palestinians and to explore histories of migration and nationalism in Brazil.

In order to attend to the overarching questions guiding this study, and while engaging with multiple and intersecting theoretical literature, I also develop a theoretical framework. This configuration at once addresses national discourses of racial harmony and examines the production of “cultural others” in hegemonic discourses about Brazil

and Brazilians, but also about minorities in Brazil. As I indicate above, to analyze these multiple and layered margins, I develop the concept of the neo-Orientalist glaze. This framework, informed by Saidian logic, together with a diverse interplay of theory also attests to the multi-method approach and varied fieldwork modalities I employ in this project to grapple with a complex site of study.

My encounter with the imam unequivocally facilitated my first contact with resettled persons in Mogi and provided me with social, ethnic, and religious capital. Still, this assistance from the imam was not disconnected from my own subjectivity, which helped me to navigate the different spaces I entered. My religious, ethnic and national positionalities afforded me the ability to highlight some elements of my background in order to gain entry and access to people and spaces of research. In speaking to “officials,” I often highlighted my North American-ness, announcing myself as a doctoral candidate from a U.S. institution. This almost always gained me interviews with federal and local government representatives and UNHCR employees. (With the latter, initial email contact and subsequent interviews were in English). While I might have eventually been granted access anyway, I was advised by other researchers in Brazil that deploying my North American credentials would lend more seriousness to my project and encourage a swifter and positive response to interview requests. Invariably, I wondered how complicit I was in reproducing the hegemonic power narratives I was very vocal about critiquing. While this made me uncomfortable in multiple ways, it did not keep me from heeding the advice. However, in requesting interviews and speaking with direct service providers, I often highlighted my Brazilian-ness, even while I was forthright about my university affiliation. My name, pronounced by silencing the “h”, invoked

familiarity, echoing the name of the northeastern state of Bahia, and thus did not provoke questions about my ethnicity. Hardening the “h” in these encounters could have led to questions I did not have the desire to answer and might have diminished my chance of gaining the candid perceptions and disclosures from interviewees (See Chapter 4, for instance).

At the same time, in meeting the imam, the Palestinian refugees, and other Arab descended Brazilians or migrants, my first name (with a hardened “h”) and last name pointed to an “authentic” Arab and Muslim-ness. Despite initial worries about how I would be received by the Palestinians because of my U.S. affiliation, this never emerged as a point of contention. In fact, it sometimes provided them with more liberty to make critiques about Brazil and the resettlement process. And my multiple migrations, despite bearing no comparison to their experiences, established camaraderie and served for some as another example of the life of Palestinians in the diaspora. Thus, by using linguistic strategies and my multiple positionalities, I was the architect of my own self-coding, revealing elements I thought were relevant and veiling others I construed as obstructive to my research. Still, there were certainly unanticipated effects.

As the “murkiness” of ethnographic research suggests, my first encounter with Sheikh Hamdi and two subsequent encounters early on in my fieldwork gave me a particular religious capital as an “authentic” Muslim about which I was ambivalent. I participated in two informal gatherings at the mosque (*halaqa* circles), where members from the local community (consisting of recent converts, and more long standing practitioners), discussed Islam and society. The people gathered there included Heba, who became a primary interlocutor and whose story and interventions are interspersed

throughout the chapters of this work. In one discussion, the role of women in Islam emerged, and the imam invited me, on the spot, to make a presentation about women and Islam in the United States. Unsure how to proceed, I referred to and discussed the hegemonic Orientalist constructions of “the oppressed Muslim woman,” which was operating in full scale in the US, in light of the “War on Terror.” I then referred to Lila Abu-Lughod’s article, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving,” and Saba Mahmood’s ethnographic study of the women’s mosque movement in Egypt¹⁷ to counter these hegemonic discourses. At this point the imam broadly assessed the distinction between Muslim Brazilians and Muslim Americans—a distinction for which he presumed I served as an embodied example. He claimed Muslims in Brazil (referring more specifically to Arab Muslims) were not as attached to their faith, and this could be seen in their children who had very little knowledge of Muslim jurisprudence. In the United States, however, Muslims had more “knowledge” of Islam and this knowledge and practice of faith was passed onto their children. To root his monolithic and totalizing conceptualization of these two places and spaces--which failed to account for multiple valences of Muslim knowledge, adherence, and practices *within* these spaces--he affirmed “Lá são unidos, aqui são perdidos” [There they are united, here they are unguided (lost)]. While my discussion and discourse was more indicative of politics *than* piety, the imam conflated the two, which provided me with greater socio-religious capital as well as credibility as a researcher.

Ethnographic research for this project was conducted over the course of three relatively short trips to Brazil. Data was gathered through observation, structured and semi-structured interviews, and insights gained while living with a family during my

¹⁷ *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2004)

second and part of my third round of fieldwork. There were hours of recorded interviews with resettled persons, including Palestinians and other Arabs who had migrated to Brazil at different moments, as well as interviews with NGO service providers, local and federal governmental officials, and activists. Some of the Palestinian refugees, while consenting to interviews, were not willing to have them recorded. In these cases, I generally took notes. Additionally, interview methods varied. Some were conducted face-to-face, others were mediated by technologies, such as Skype, and still other interviews were conducted using a tag-team approach with another researcher.

My longest research trip lasted three months in Spring 2009. During this time, I conducted research in São Paulo and spent two weeks in Rio Grande do Sul. After returning from this initial visit and because of the ever-evolving situation of the resettled persons, I maintained contact with some via Skype and email, while being attentive to local media coverage through Internet sources. Connections made with other researchers and activists during my first visit also allowed me to remain informed while away from the field. During my second and third round of field research, December 2009-January 2010 and June-July 2010, another researcher from Brazil whom I met on my first trip, Sonia, began conducting fieldwork on the same group of resettled refugees. A scholar at the University of São Paulo noticed similarities in our projects and suggested we discuss our research.¹⁸ As indicated above, we frequently partnered up and conducted interviews together.¹⁹ Additionally, interviews that had been postponed for one reason or

¹⁸ We initially met virtually via Skype.

¹⁹ This process worked well. For me, however, the potential drawback to a tag-team interview is that it compromises the possibility of fostering a more intimate engagement with the person being interviewed. Nonetheless, since the vast majority of interviews we conducted together were with resettlement officials, and sometimes this involved meeting with and interviewing two or more people at once, the possibility for a more intimate exchange was already foreclosed. Another potential setback is that follow-up questions at

another while I was in the field were conducted by her and passed on to me. This collaboration allowed for a continuation of fieldwork in absentia. At the same time, I conducted interviews in the US and passed them on to her. This exchange of data, as well as interchange of sources and contacts within our distinct networks, was critical to each of our projects. Furthermore, for my last phase of fieldwork, I travelled to Brasília, where I stayed for two weeks and met with representatives from UNHCR and CONARE (Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados) before proceeding on to São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. Thus, in addition to the US, this study was conducted in three distinct geographical locations in Brazil: São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Brasília.

NEGOTIATING THE FIELD AND THE TEXT

One of the most important aspects of my research, which I had never planned or anticipated, was living with one of the resettled families. That idea always seemed to be too intrusive, raising a variety of ethical questions. I also envisioned it as taxing since it meant not having any reprieve from fieldwork and always having to be “on”. As noted above, during my first round of research, I primarily lived in São Paulo and commuted back and forth to the municipality of Mogi das Cruzes. During this time, I came to know a refugee named Heba and her family well, and we developed strong ties. Knowing I would return at the end of the year, Heba insisted I stay in her home during that second visit in December 2009 through January 2010. Despite my reluctance, I agreed, but insisted that the only way I would stay in her home was if she accepted rent and board for my stay. She finally agreed. I was well aware of the family’s financial situation and

the moment of the interview, which often develop spontaneously and lead in unexpected directions, can be a bit more labored when there are two interviewers.

knew the end of the monthly assistance from the resettlement program was imminent. At this point Sonia was coming to São Paulo, and she planned to stay in the home too. The family was residing in a run-down three-bedroom home, which had a separate room adjacent to the house with its own entrance from the enclosed yard. I arrived in São Paulo first, at which point Heba said she wanted me to stay inside the house and the other researcher would stay in the adjacent structure, which had its own shower and bathroom. Despite my initial hesitation, staying with the family provided me with key insights and access that piece meal participant observation could not afford. I also learned that exchanges that occur during fieldwork may appear in one way initially, but then gain an entirely different meaning over time.

At the outset, living with Heba's family raised difficult ethical dilemmas. This form of ethnography seemed to leech knowledge and insights from people, research at its most blatantly invasive. However, I soon learned how power articulates itself in complex ways during such exchanges. After returning home from this second field visit, I had a conversation with Heba. Sonia had remained in her home and would stay for an additional few weeks. In a jocular manner, Heba told me the researcher was not allowed to leave until I returned. When I asked her why, she laughed and said "because having you two here kept my in-laws from moving in." The timing was crucial. When we arrived at Heba's, it was still unclear whether the resettlement program slated for two years, including rent and a monthly stipend, would come to an end. Some had received letters indicating the program was coming to a close and others had not. When it became apparent the program was definitively ending for all but vulnerable cases, Heba's husband's parents suggested they all move in together in order to economize. Having

people occupying the spare rooms in the home and paying for their stay prevented this from happening.

One final conundrum that shaped this research was language. As much as this project, its subjects, and its author crossed borders, so too were language borders crossed. Structured or semi-structured interviews were conducted or obtained in whole or in part in Portuguese, English, and or Arabic. And there were also times in which a combination of languages was used in the interview process. In an attempt to provide greater transparency, when interviews were conducted exclusively in Portuguese and or data obtained was in Portuguese only, I have provided the original Portuguese text and the accompanying English translation (all translations are my own). However, when interview data was only in Arabic, or a combination of languages, I have not done the same. Instead, I have just included the translated English text. The reason for this imbalance is because I did not have the required Arabic language software to produce the text in the original Arabic alphabet, nor do I have the fluency in written Arabic to effectively produce the text in that language. Inserting transliterated Arabic demands an enormous amount of time so I have opted to provide only the English translation. The same is true for those interviews or discussions in which a combination of languages was used (i.e., English and Portuguese; English and Arabic; Arabic and Portuguese). Since some of the refugees spoke some English (competency varied), they would often try to speak to me in that language, claiming that in Brazil and in refugee camps before then, they had little opportunity to practice or maintain their English language skills. Some had also acquired proficiency in Portuguese as well. Thus, at times conversations would slip in and out of languages. Data from those conversations and occasions have been

characterized in English only text. In many ways this “language gliding” speaks to my own positioning in the field.

As suggested above, there were tense relations and conflicts to navigate throughout my fieldwork. These included relations between the resettled persons and the NGOs, UNHCR, and governmental institutions. How does one conduct fieldwork which necessitates access to and conversations with all of these groups without further agitating relations or getting caught in their crossfire? A useful concept here is “Calculated Dimness.” In *Real Black*, John Jackson discusses an ethnographer’s use or deployment of “affective postures,” including during interviews, and how this factors into the process of soliciting information. Included in this rubric is a seeming dimness or lack of knowledge while conducting ethnographic fieldwork. This technique helps researchers avoid conjecture, acquire thorough information from subjects and attend to their circumstances, even at the risk of being considered an idiot—which Jackson’s subjects were at times willing to point out. From my perspective, this “calculated dimness” offered a good strategy to deploy in Brazil for two reasons.²⁰ First, I thought being saturated with information was better than being given bits and pieces, as Jackson suggests, and this was more likely to happen if I appeared to know little about a situation or issue. Secondly, using information acquired from those who might be construed as biased or hostile sources to problematize responses during interviews could aggravate tensions and might compromise my own position in the field. This was an approach I initially used with refugees, NGO employees, city service providers, government officials, and other actors. Cultivating a competency in non-competency served its

²⁰ Jackson references Grant D. McCracken’s text, *The Long Interview* (1988), and his discussion of “calculated dimness” during the interview process to solicit more detailed information and to also avoid assumptions.

purpose in field research where I had to contend with multiple actors, multiple sites, multiple languages, and multiple dynamics.

A NOTE ON THEMES

Using the methods noted above, I compiled countless hours of recorded interviews and hundreds of pages of hand written and digitized field notes and collected over 700 pages of judicial proceedings. Moreover, I also analyzed many newspaper reports, local media footage, still images, documentaries, videos, literary texts, magazines, and even tele-dramas, which required close reading. There were also historical and contemporary laws and public policies to examine for this study. Culling through and aggregating this extensive and multi-form data to sort out major themes and important connections was challenging. Invariably, making decisions about which themes to explore in this dissertation meant making tough choices about what to exclude. Throughout the writing process, I focused on recurring and salient themes that emerged in lives of resettled Palestinian refugees, while bearing in mind how these themes simultaneously illuminated the specificities of the Brazilian context in this resettlement process. Considering these two issues together allows me to contribute to discussions in multiple fields of study.

In this project, I interweave historical and political developments, which cannot be disarticulated from the contemporary experiences of Palestinian refugees. These developments interpenetrate and interconnect, forming and informing refugees' experiences. Not recognizing these social and political histories, and their intersections, would produce a violent erasure already prevalent in hegemonic discourses about

Palestine and Palestinians, and would certainly be an act of violence toward the subjects of this project. Therefore, in several sections of this dissertation, I move between the past and the *then* present, which was the way in which my subjects lived their day-to-day lives. Historical formulations were inextricably linked to more contemporary trajectories and play an important role in the articulation of this dissertation. Moreover, during the process of field research, there were things I learned about but which I cannot write. Sometimes this involves protecting the anonymity of my subjects. Other times incidents were too difficult to pursue in interviews and engage with in the practice of writing. Reconciling these limitations, principally my own, allowed me to establish some boundaries relative to the scope of this project and also made me acutely aware of the ethics and politics involved in research and writing. How could I discuss the scales of ‘unfreedom’ and suffering my subjects encountered, without relegating them to a messy if layered victimhood? Their stories and their critical manifestations of agency created ruptures in their victimization that could then emerge in my analysis. Indeed, at times their own deployment of victimhood was used as political fodder to make demands on local resettlement agencies and UNHCR. Conversely, there were moments when these agencies relegated the refugees to victimhood. Because of the violent political history through which they lived, rife with persecution and dispossession, officials often constructed them as “ungrateful” for the life-affirming efforts made by the Brazilian government in their humanitarian overture. Analyzing the dynamic interplay between victimization and agency, oppression and strategy was crucial to this dissertation.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Because language acquisition and expression emerged as an omnipresent, multi-faceted, and at times contentious issue for the refugees, I document it throughout the chapters of the dissertation, rather than crafting a single chapter on language. This allowed me to consider language in multiple realms and multiple scales.

Chapter 1 provides the background to the resettlement of Palestinians in Brazil—a non-traditional resettlement country. In it I trace the international events, processes, and people leading to the resettlement there of a group of just over 100 Palestinian refugees from Iraq. I examine national policies and humanitarian discourses and mine the international terrain making the arrival of the Palestinian refugees in Brazil possible. The chapter brings to the foreground the circulation of images—print and moving—to introduce the refugees to Brazilian authorities and subsequently to introduce Brazil to the refugees. Film was a crucial medium in this process, but it also produced and circumscribed their imagined subjectivities. Moreover, the film used to introduce Brazil to the refugees re-articulated the nation-state's nationalist discourses. While analyzing these films, I interweave historical events, national and international policies, and ethnographic data to deepen and challenge what is more topically introduced in the films. I also consider the ways in which nationalist discourses of harmonious plurality produce a particularized Brazilian exceptionalism. I consider how the latter operates in humanitarian discourses and its implication in Brazil's aspiring role in global governance and South-South political and economic exchanges.

Chapter 2 elaborates some of the themes introduced in Chapter 1 by focusing on historical and contemporary labor patterns and labor histories. While the primary focus

of this ethnography is the resettled Palestinian refugees, I interweave analyses of Arabs more broadly in the Brazilian labor market. The refugees were haunted by Orientalist ideas and imagined potentialities of this earlier migration and comparisons were often drawn between the Palestinian refugees and earlier Arab labor migrants--who had very different trajectories. Importantly, I analyze how historical and contemporary labor practices, converge, diverge, and intersect with Brazilian discourses of plurality and multiplicity and factor in a neoliberal and an increasingly globalized economy.

Specifically, I examine the legacy of Arab masculinized labor in the form of peddling, which gave way to a particularly ethnicized entrepreneurial class, alongside the contemporary gendered labor practice of Halal animal slaughter, which incorporated the majority of young resettled refugee men. I explore the role these old and new labor patterns had and have in Brazilian nation-building and economic global expansion. Furthermore, this chapter explores how distinct Arab ethnicities, class, gender, religion, and age are implicated in labor patterns and differently incorporated into Brazil's neoliberal economy.

Chapter 3 interrogates the refugee resettlement program and considers the ways the refugees were administered by state and local agencies. By examining policies, as they relate to an ethics and politics of care, which lie at the intersection of neoliberalism and humanitarianism, I seek to provide critical insight into healthcare and social benefits for non-citizen, sick and elderly persons and to map a larger discursive field of belonging. I thus explore Brazil's humanitarian discourses and the continuities and discontinuities in existing state policies and practices. I demonstrate incompatibilities in what the state says and what it does. Moreover, I explore the manner in which the refugees used their ill

and/or elderly bodies to make political claims by judicializing their rights as (non) citizen-subjects and politicizing their sick bodies to enter and transcend the Brazilian body politic.

Chapter 4 documents the fissures in Brazilian discourses of plural harmony by examining discordant realities. While analyzing the gendered racial-cultural discourses launched about the Palestinian refugees by direct-service providers as well as (dis) encounters with structures of power, such as educational institutions and the police, I dissect a particular form of Brazilian Orientalism and Islamophobia that has had a direct effect on the refugees' lives. This chapter also examines and addresses the more explicit ways in which Brazil has been culturally framed and imagined by outsiders and insiders. Through my formulation of Brazilian Orientalism and its corresponding *neo-Orientalist glaze*—a stereotyping by the stereotyped—I instantiate the particularities and peculiarities of Brazilian orientalist constructions. Lastly, by examining teledramaturgy in this chapter, we can extend our understanding of these constructions and the effects they have not only of reproducing essentialist ideas of “the Arab Muslim” *other* but also further entrenching monolithic ideas of Brazil itself.

In this dissertation I set out to understand if and how Palestinian Iraq war refugees could find belonging in the Brazilian nation-state. I wondered how their complex and entangled histories and subjectivities would be imagined, read, and incorporated in the new geographical and geopolitical space in which they found themselves. At the same time, I examine how Brazil, with its long history of Arab migration, would incorporate this specific re-diasporized group into the folds of its much touted racial democracy and harmonious plurality, an important arm of what I have dubbed as

Brazilian exceptionalism. By examining the near and distant history of this group, interrogating labor histories and contemporary labor practices, dissecting their [dis] incorporation into Brazilian public policies, and interrogating discourses of cultural misrecognitions and problematic Palestinian cultural constructions, I have made significant theoretical interventions and highlighted distinct ways in which members of a particular minority community are de-subjectified and re-subjectified in the Brazilian context. Nuanced examinations of the incorporation of this minority group into Brazilian society are crucial to the larger analysis. For instance, the religious labor of Halal animal slaughter reveals a new masculinized labor niche for Arab Muslims and a market-driven reformulation of Islamic piety in neoliberal Brazil; the implications and complexities of resettling elderly refugees illuminates a demographic for which there is a dearth of sources; and distinct formulations of Orientalism in Brazil challenge more universalistic versions of this concept, grounding theory in rich ethnographic data and local ideas of cultural selves and cultural others. Moreover, these analyses provide insights into the machinations of the Brazilian nation-state and the scope and scale of its neoliberal form of statehood.

Considered together, my dissertation engages and traverses a wide range of literatures, crosses disciplinary boundaries, and contributes to multiple disciplines and fields of study. It contributes to immigration and diaspora studies, critical ethnic studies, women's and gender studies, refugee studies, cultural studies, critical race studies, Latin American studies, anthropology, sociology, and studies in humanitarianism, transnationalism, and globalization. At the same time, it illuminates in fine detail the

daily lives of a group of refugees whose experiences can help us re-imagine the lives of multiply-displaced persons in other times and places.

CHAPTER 1

MEDIATED SUBJECTS: STILL & MOVING IMAGES

In June 2010 (winter in Brazil), I interviewed the Coordinator General of Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados/National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), Renato Zerbini, in his office in Brasília. Immediately, a UNCHR calendar standing upright on the corner of his desk caught my attention. The image embossed on the colorful, glossy page for that month showed my primary interlocutor, Heba, and her husband Nasser inside their local mosque. The caption read: “Refugiados Palestinos na mesquita de Mogi das Cruzes/ Palestinian Refugees in the Mogi das Cruzes mosque.” Noticing the direction of my gaze, Zerbini handed the calendar to me. Each month depicted a photo of refugees from different countries (Colombia, Myanmar, Syria, etc.), with details about the cities in which the photo was taken. The information about specific locations was perplexing since UNHCR staff, as well as staff members from Cáritas and Antonio Vieira—the local resettlement authorities—had repeatedly said they were very careful about disclosing any such data regarding refugees. Since refugees generally had protected status and had fled persecution, images identifying them and their location, or the disclosure of information about what led to their displacement, could compromise their safety. But then I realized that this was not unusual when it came to Palestinian refugees from Iraq. Print and moving images of and about these refugees were widely circulated from the time they were in the Ruweished refugee camp in Jordan through the end of my fieldwork in Brazil. The dissemination and circulation of these images in different locations, at different times, and by different people served different purposes.

“This camp is a graveyard for the living...a graveyard for the living.”
Nowhere to Flee

That quote is from the documentary *Nowhere to Flee*, filmed in Al-Tanf²¹ and Ruweished camps in October 2006 by Adam Shapiro and Perla Issa—both of whom are Palestine solidarity activists and filmmakers. It captures the sentiment of a Palestinian woman who at that point had been living in Ruweished for three and one-half years with her husband and four children. Her words resonate with the accompanying images of her family. The camera pans from face-to-face with a close shot of each family member, inviting an intimate engagement with and by the audience. The children, three girls and a boy, range in age from 17 to 6, with a 15 and a 12 year-old in between. The woman continues, “We feel like we are in a prison. What is our crime? A prisoner at least has committed a crime and knows when he will get out. We don’t. What is this life? What did we do wrong? What is our crime for the whole world to punish us?” And while pointing to her four children, she asks, “What have these kids done?” Her 15-year-old daughter, clearly frustrated and choking back tears, says, “I have been here for three years, with no education or anything. My future is gone. Nothing. There is nothing to say.” When she is asked what she wants to be when she grows up, she hesitates and her mother chimes in “A fashion designer”—to which her daughter’s face opens with a wide but shy smile. The couple’s 12 year-old daughter is prodded by her father to say what she wants to be, and she quietly but with confidence says, “I want to be a doctor.” This is one of several vignettes that provide deeper portraits of who the people in the camps are and why they wound up in these outposts.

To Adam Shapiro the latter was most important, as he explained to me:

²¹ Al-Tanf camp was located in No Man’s land on the Syria and Iraq border. It permanently closed in February 2010 (see <http://www.unhcr.org/4b67064c6.html>).

In the filming process, mainly I was asking...my main concern for what I was trying to do to get them attention to get out of the camp was to ask more about what happened to them in Iraq. To prove that they were persecuted by the army--that they were being targeted because of their national identity.

Shapiro is very knowledgeable on the history of Palestine, the Israeli occupation, and the on going dispossession and forced displacement of Palestinians and Palestinian refugees. He is co-founder, along with Huwaida Arraf, of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). The movement was founded to resist the Israeli occupation through direct, non-violent action and to document the day-to-day lives of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories under Israeli military rule.²² Shapiro, an independent filmmaker and human rights advocate, is able to demonstrate through this documentary the Palestinians had indeed been persecuted in Iraq.

When Baghdad fell on April 9, 2003, as a result of the US invasion, there were an estimated 34,000 Palestinians living there.²³ For the most part, their presence resulted

²² Currently Shapiro is part of the Free Gaza Movement, which aims to break the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip by bringing humanitarian aid to Palestinians who have been living under an Israeli blockade since 2006, after Hamas was democratically elected. (There are more than 1.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip under this blockade.)

²³ After the events of September 11, 2001, Saddam Hussein was the only leader in the Arab world not to condemn the attacks on US national soil (Tripp 2007, 271). Instead, he implicated the United States as bearing part of the responsibility for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, because of its long-standing policies in the Middle East. This served to frame Iraq as a nation whose leader was a threat to the U.S. Allegations that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons and the potential for nuclear weapons began to mount. By November 2001 when Iraq had once again refused to allow the United Nations, Monitoring Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) entrance into the country, the pentagon had already begun to plan an invasion (Ibid). The US administration's primary justification for waging war was claiming Iraq had Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and Hussein's regime would likely use those against the United States and/or other nations if there was not a military intervention to stop him. Since Hussein's regime utilized ambiguity about military capabilities as political capital--most likely because it did not want to fully disclose its weakness to border nations, such as Iran--this became further fodder to justify the US and Allied forces military intervention. The second justification for preemptive war was Iraq's deplorable Human Rights record. And of course the third claim for military intervention was that Hussein's regime was implicated in transnational terrorism and shared responsibility, along with Al-Qaida, for the September 11 attacks in New York (Gregory 2004). Although it seemed Iraq did not pose an imminent threat to the Middle East region, since no evidence of WMDs had been found and no links had been made to the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Bush administration was determined to implicate Iraq. The opportunity to secure US interests globally seemed to have motivated the preemptive war on Iraq. Falsifying information, such as the documents presented to both the United Nations Security Council and

from forced displacement at three different historical moments—the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the Six-Day war in 1967, and the Persian Gulf War in 1991 (Human Rights Watch 2006). When Saddam Hussein’s regime fell, militias targeted Palestinians. Many were kidnapped, tortured, and murdered for allegedly supporting Hussein’s repressive regime. These allegations were launched despite Palestinians’ having only had “guest status” in the country under Hussein’s rule. That is, they were never granted juridical citizenship, even if born in Iraq, or the right to own property. When asked why militias targeted Palestinians, one refugee answered:

Because Palestinians were considered part of the previous regime. With the knowledge that the previous regime didn’t offer us anything other than shame. It didn’t give me citizenship; it didn’t give me a home; it didn’t let me own a car. Meaning it kept me at a minimum. You buy a home and you have to register it under the name of an Iraqi. *Nowhere to Flee*

The first Palestinians, about 5,000, entered Iraq in 1948 (Takkenberg 1998, 154). Many of them came from Haifa and Yaffa--Palestinian coastal cities now part of the Israeli nation-state. War ensued in May 1948, after Palestinians rejected the UN Partition Plan the previous November, which granted the majority (56 percent) of historic Palestine to Israel. Iraq became one of the largest single Arab forces involved in the conflict (Tripp 2007, 119), dispatching 18,000 troops to aid the Palestinians. This act of solidarity marked Iraq as one of the more welcoming Arab countries for the refugees who were dispossessed of their land by Zionist forces. However, in Iraq, similar to other host Arab states, Palestinian refugees were given Refugee Documents (RDs) and never granted permanent status (Shiblak 1996). This practice is widely thought to preserve the

the US Congress alleging Iraq had WMDs, was a route the Bush administration was willing to pursue, despite global outcry against the war.

Palestinian Right of Return, yet it left many refugees and their families in legal limbo.²⁴

Although Palestinian refugees in Iraq could occupy various professions, after the imposition of UN sanctions against that country in 1990, the government began to enforce more restrictions on their employment because of the debilitated economy.

Similar to Egypt and Lebanon, Iraq subjected Palestinians to the same labor laws imposed on “foreigners,” even if they were born in the country.²⁵ This meant they were foreclosed from the “equal opportunity and benefits” granted to Iraqi nationals (Shiblak 1996). Palestinians were also denied property ownership, as noted above. Prior to the 1990s, and in exceptional cases, there were some Palestinians who “owned” property, but the deed was never in the Palestinian purchaser’s name, but rather in the name of an Iraqi or the Iraqi Treasury (Shiblak 1996, 45).

After the fall of Baghdad in 2003, Palestinians were not the only ones targeted by militia in the midst of the political, social, and economic upheaval wrought by war. Other minority groups targeted for political and religious based violence by sectarian groups²⁶ included Chaldo-Assyrians and Syriac Christians, Mandaean, Yazidis, Jews, Baha’is,

²⁴ The large majority of Arab nations claim that giving Palestinian refugees permanent residency and full citizenship in a host country, would compromise UN Resolution 194, granting their right of return to Palestine.

²⁵ Because the PLO publicly supported the Bath’ist regime’s incursion into Kuwait in 1990, home to the largest exiled Palestinian community in the world at the time, numbering 400,000, after the 7-month Iraqi occupation ended, the Kuwaiti government implemented austere measures on Palestinians. Considered traitors because of the PLO’s support for Hussein’s actions in Kuwait, Palestinians were deported by the thousands. Those who had expired refugee travel documents were left in limbo. Not being able to return to countries such as Jordan or Egypt, places from where they obtained these documents, and denied by Israel the ability to return into the borders of the 1967 Occupied Territories, 30,000 Palestinians were left with no place to go. The Iraqi regime allowed thousands to enter its national territory. However, more restrictions were placed on the old and new Palestinian community.

²⁶ The fractured political situation, divisive ethnic-group politics, the deterioration of the social fabric of Iraq because of the imposition of harsh and debilitating sanctions for more than 12 years, Hussein’s repressive regime, and the devastation wrought from full-scale war led by a nation with the most powerful arsenal of weapons in the world, coalesced to make the US-led invasion a complete and utter catastrophe for the people in and of Iraq. Furthermore, these events left the ethnic minorities in even more precarious conditions.

and Faili Kurds. But unlike these other groups, according to Human Rights Watch, “the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior and Iraqi security forces have been directly implicated in arbitrary arrests, killings and torture of Palestinian refugees” (Minority Rights 2007, 15).²⁷ As a result of the lack of security and direct threats, many Palestinians were forced from their homes (Wengert & Alfaro 2006). Scores of them fled to the border countries of Syria and Jordan, only to be turned away.

Both Syria and Jordan were being overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees who had been internally displaced. While allowing Iraqis to cross their borders, these nation-states recognized they were citizens of Iraq and there was a strong possibility they would be repatriated. Palestinian refugees, on the other hand, who only had Refugee Documents administered under the Ba’thist regime and no citizenship or residency documentation in any nation, would likely stay indefinitely in the countries to which they were fleeing. As a result, thousands of Palestinians were turned away at the Jordanian and Syrian borders. With nowhere else to go, makeshift camps²⁸ were erected by UNHCR in the desert borderlands to house these displaced refugees.

Most of those interviewed for Shapiro and Issa’s film carried with them the threatening letters from militia as proof of their persecution and reason for fleeing Iraq.²⁹ The letters, which had been taped to the front doors of their homes, called the Palestinians “traitors” and “Saddam’s people.” They were told they had to leave their homes within a certain timeframe, which varied from 48 hours to 10 days, or risk being

²⁷ In Minority Rights Group International, *Assimilation, Exodus, Eradication: Iraq’s Minority Communities since 2003*, February 2007. See, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/469cbf9d0.html> [accessed 15 March 2010]

²⁸ Besides Ruweished and Al-Tanf, there were three other camps erected by UNHCR in the Syrian and Jordanian borderlands to which Palestinians were confined: Al-Hol, Al-Walid, and Al-Karama.

²⁹ The following are the names of some of the militias by whom the refugees were directly persecuted: Mehdi Army, Badr Militia, Hussein Brigade, Judgment Day Brigade, and still others had been targeted and imprisoned by commandos from the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior.

killed. Others in the camps had been abducted, tortured, and released—confirming they had no choice but to leave Iraq. Still others had photos and video footage-- some of which were included in the film--of family members who had been maimed and murdered by militia. Since hundreds of Palestinians had been killed and tortured, they had every reason to believe the threats made against them. The footage and images in the short film were moving and allowed the refugees to tell their stories to the wider world. The 20-minute documentary had enormous weight in obtaining support for a resettlement solution for the Palestinians in Ruweished and Al-Tanf.

Many people with whom I came into contact through the course of my field research, whether at UNHCR, CONARE, Cáritas, or Antonio Vieira, referenced Adam Shapiro and the documentary.³⁰ When I met with staff members of UNHCR in Brasília, a Protection Officer noted,

It's very interesting to see the video that Shapiro did because they translate the threats, the written threats. This is very interesting because it's the background of how this whole issue of Palestinians from Iraq started and how they were identified like a favored community from Saddam. And how the militias, the Shi'a militias, started persecuting them and kidnapping [them]. So, Shapiro was part of this. Of course, everybody received him as completely independent. So he took the cause and started to advocate. And he was a filmmaker and he went to Ruweished and interviewed people. (Interview/Meeting. 23 June 2010)

The use of images, “moving” or otherwise, often depoliticizes and de-historicizes humanitarian rescue efforts by wiping the slate clean of causes leading to situation(s) of displacement (Malkki 1996). Indeed, visual representations of refugees often reduce them to mere victims. At the same time such humanitarian images appeal to the

³⁰ My intent is not to erase the other filmmaker and activist, Perla Issa. However, based on my fieldwork, Adam Shapiro was the only name mentioned in affiliation with the film. Additionally, he was also the person who traveled to Brazil (Chile and Geneva, Switzerland too) to petition that country to resettle the Palestinians from Ruweished. Lastly, I had direct contact with Shapiro and was able to conduct two interviews with him: one via Skype and the other face-to-face.

sentiments of the distant “spectators,” problematically invoking pity for the “victims” while making ambiguous moral demands on the viewers to react (Boltanski 1999).³¹

As Mariella Pandolfi critically notes, “the publicity of the media, of firsthand accounts, of urgency, of interviews, of TV images have all become an intricate part of the [humanitarian] apparatus itself, which makes this peculiar contemporary and highly media-oriented form of ‘suffering in the suffering of others’ unavoidably more deceptive than it is intended to be. This industrious pity needs to be contrasted to other tentative forms of subjectification one finds in the camps to truly grasp what seems like, after the fact, the inherently voyeuristic, even pornographic, dimension to such proliferating narrations” (2010, 236). Not only do such images and narratives de-subjectify, where the complex composition of an individual is flattened³² while also foreclosing any possibility of agency, such renderings also produce a specific affective terrain, as the authors above suggest. Within this affective field, the role of historical and political aspects of state conflicts, colonial ambitions, and/or imperial endeavors leading to dispossession,

³¹ Boltanski considers the dilemma facing people who are inundated with scenes of human misery in the media. He unpacks the tension between an abstract universalism in which “spectators” too easily identify and are in solidarity with “distant suffering” and communitarianism in which attention and assistance is only offered to the misfortunate close at hand. The first elides and makes invisible local suffering and misery, while the other rests on a political indifference and turns away from the plight of those outside of their inner world. The author, however, within this tension, focuses on the spectacle of suffering and considers the moral demands foisted on the spectators. He examines how modern humanitarianism is implicated in this theater of suffering. While Boltanski does not suggest that *everyone* “suffers in the suffering of others,” he does not detail the probability of varied affective reactions to an event. Considering this, Lauren Berlant asks in the beginning of her essay “Thinking about Feeling Historical” (2008), “If one determines that an event or a relation is traumatic—that is, endowed with the capacity to produce trauma—does it follow that it communicates trauma to anyone who encounters it?” (4) She argues that “emotional states” from an “affective activity” are multiple. To suggest otherwise, according to Berlant, “under-describes the incoherence of subjects—their capacity to hold irreconcilable attachments and investments, the complexity of motives for disavowal and defense—and the work of the normative in apprehending, sensing, tracking, and being with, the event” (Ibid). Nonetheless, within humanitarian regimes, “the event” is often uniformly constructed, and the emotional states of those who experience it and those who witness it [as distant spectators] are relegated to a perceived uniformity.

³² Arguably, Palestinians (refugees or not) and other colonized peoples and places are always-already one-dimensionally constructed. However, I am specifically addressing the ways in which the “mediation” of suffering is often utilized by the humanitarian apparatus to show the precarity of life without detailing how this precarity came to be and thus telling an incomplete story.

displacement, and suffering are obfuscated and rendered invisible. In the process, the humanitarian apparatus often emerges as an apolitical, moral instrument. Michel Agier's assessment of humanitarianism is useful here: "I have designated the role that humanitarian projects play on a global scale as the left hand of empire. This 'left hand' acquires meaning at that very general level in that it follows on the heels of and smoothes over the damage wrought by military intervention..." (2010, 29).

While the documentary *Nowhere to Flee* was an instrumental vehicle allowing some of the refugees to narrate their own stories, it also told only a small part of their political histories—the one that had been getting a lot of attention in media circuits and which had been fanned by hegemonic powers. It told the story of the sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'a Muslim factions in Iraq that led to Palestinians being targeted. In corporate media outlets (in the U.S. as well as Brazil), the sectarian violence served to reproduce facile Orientalist tropes of uncivilized, savage, tribal, Arab and Muslim "terrorists" who had no regard for human life, including their own.³³ The focus on sectarian unrest silenced the brutality of the U.S. military invasion, and also silenced, for instance, the direct role the U.S. military had in fomenting the sectarian violence (i.e., a large part of which occurred under the guidance and leadership of the much lauded General Petraeus).³⁴ The longer history of Palestinian displacement and dispossession because of the Zionist settler colonial project in historic Palestine and Israeli hegemony in the region, underwritten by the United States, was also erased. However, it is likely

³³ While the focus on sectarian violence in Iraq was prominent in media outlets, the refugees spoke of a different Iraq, prior to the U.S. invasion. One where being Sunni or Shi'a was not grounds for discord and violence in the ways the media portrayed. For instance, inter-marriage between Sunnis and Shi'as was rather common. In fact, two of the resettled families reflected this exogamous composition.

³⁴ Ironically Petraeus's military career took a downfall because of an extra-marital affair and not for his role in fomenting the insurgency that claimed thousands of lives in Iraq.

the two filmmakers and activists would argue the 20-minute documentary was made to serve an express and instrumental purpose, and that was to attempt to get the refugees out of the difficult day-to-day situation they had been facing in a precarious refugee camp, in the middle of the desert, for far too long.³⁵

RUWEISHED REFUGEE CAMP

We did not know time there. I thought we would stay there for two or three days. It was not like they told us that we would be there for four and a half-years when we got there. It was week by week. When the UNHCR employers would come we would ask, ‘When are we going to leave?’ and they would often respond, ‘Maybe in a week or two.’ And the next time, ‘Maybe in a week or two.’ That is how nearly five years passed. (Heba. Interview February 2009).

Heba arrived in Ruweished camp when she was just shy of 24 years old, with her husband Nasser, his brother, her elderly in-laws, Um Nasser and Abu Nasser,³⁶ and her two sons—the oldest three years old and the youngest, just three months. Their request to enter Jordan had been turned down by state authorities, so they remained in the Ruweished camp, as they had no place else to go. After being resettled in São Paulo, Heba described the time in Ruweished as one of the most difficult periods of her life. For her, time became an abstraction and the long days wove into each other. The precarious conditions of the camp made it difficult to foresee leaving there with her family healthy and sound.

³⁵ It is worth noting Adam Shapiro, Perla Issa, and another filmmaker, Aseel Mansour, produced and filmed a 6-part comprehensive documentary series called “Chronicles of a Refugee” that looks at the global and local context of the Palestinian refugee experience over the last 60 years. It begins with documenting the experiences of refugees starting in 1947 through to the more recent and on-going forced displacement of Palestinians. I say this to indicate the filmmakers’ broader investment in the plight of Palestine and Palestinian refugees, but also to indicate the point of this particular film was to bring attention to Palestinian refugees from the Iraq war that had been languishing in the border camps of Jordan and Syria for some time.

³⁶ In Arabic naming conventions, parents are often referred to by the name of their eldest child (usually the eldest son). Abu means “father of” and Um (or Im) means “mother of.” Since Nasser is their oldest son, his parents are referred to as Mother of Nasser and Father of Nasser. I have left this naming convention in its original Arabic, albeit transliterated.



(Fig. 2: This photo of Ruweished was among several provided by Heba and Nasser)

Ruweished camp was situated in the Jordanian desert, 70 kilometers from the Iraqi border. The perimeter of the one square kilometer camp was enclosed with a barbed-wire fence and patrolled by Jordanian authorities. Many Palestinians referred to it as a prison camp, as did Adam Shapiro. No one was allowed to leave and visitors could only enter the camp if they were granted state-issued permits from Jordanian authorities. Based on descriptions of the camp by the refugees and Shapiro, day-to-day life there was experienced on a deeply sensorial level. In addition to being spatially confined and policed, there was the volatile desert climate (sandstorms, hot days, frigid nights, and rain season), constantly blowing dust, and other elements, such as scorpions and snakes, with

which to contend. Tents provided the only protection from these conditions. And waiting for reprieve from all of this, as Heba indicated, was taxing.

The vast majority of the Palestinians who entered Brazil from Ruweished had been sent to the hastily erected camp in the weeks and months after the fall of Baghdad in 2003. It specifically housed people fleeing to Jordan who were denied entry into the country.³⁷ The camp, consistent with the practices of “refugee aid regimes” (Peteet 2005) that grew out of twentieth-century wars, was administered by UNHCR, whose local offices were in Amman, Jordan. Because the camp was in Jordanian national territory, UNHCR had to comply with the requests and demands of the host country. Adam Shapiro described the situation:

It was just awful. And of course, it was a fenced in facility, so there was border police--Jordanian border police guards--at the entrance to the camp and there was no coming and going from the camp for the people in the camp--for the refugees. They were stuck in it. So it was pretty much like a prison camp. It was just awful, and everything had to be brought to the camp from UNHCR, mainly...Ruweished town is a small town and doesn't have much, so most of the stuff had to be brought over from Amman...I had been in Darfur a year and a half before that...in the refugee camps in Chad. And while those camps were really bad also, it was much different because there were thousands upon thousands of people in those camps. They still had more services at their disposal than the Palestinians in Ruweished... There was no education in Ruweished camp, formally. But in the Darfurian camps there were schools set up, there were teachers being paid. It [Ruweished] was really shocking. (Personal Interview. 7 September 2010).

At its most populace, Ruweished contained 1,500 refugees, though not all were Palestinians. Among them were Kurds, Iranians, and other ethnic minorities who had left Iraq for fear of persecution. Non-Palestinians found resettlement solutions much quicker

³⁷ These Palestinians who fled Iraq were given “no re-entry forms” by the Iraqi authorities on the border. Since they did not have permanent status or citizenship in Iraq, it would not be possible for them to return there, even if the political situation had improved.

than Palestinians since non-Palestinians had legitimating documents and the possibility of being repatriated to their country of origin.

In late 2006, there were fewer than 200 refugees left at Ruweished, the majority of whom were Palestinians. According to Shapiro, the lack of critical infrastructures in the camp, such as schools, stemmed from UNHCR's position to get the refugees placed as soon as possible. Furthermore, and perhaps more poignant, the Jordanian authorities feared the camp would become permanent if a school and healthcare facility were established there. They did not want Ruweished to go from a makeshift camp to a development project, as scores of other Palestinian refugee camps had. Historically many Palestinian camps, in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and even Palestine, started off as hastily put together structures and eventually became established communities, housing thousands who had been displaced (Feldman 2008). These refugees have not been incorporated socially and politically into the countries where they sought shelter. And despite UN Resolution 194 (ratified in 1948), which grants Palestinians the legal "right of return" to their homes in Palestine and be compensated for their losses, the Israeli government continues to prevent them from returning or receiving compensation (Takkenberg 1998; Makdisi 2008).³⁸ Furthermore, because of the precarious conditions in Ruweished and the general instability that faced the Palestinians, Jordanian authorities considered the refugees a flight risk into their national territory. As a consequence, when anyone fell ill, for instance, they were shackled while being taken to the nearest hospital, more than 400 kilometers away. The last of the Palestinian refugees from Ruweished who were resettled in Brazil had to endure these conditions for nearly five years. As

³⁸ See section 11 of UN Resolution 194: "the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for the loss of or damage to property."

Foucault suggests in his analysis of biopower, Palestinian bodies were disciplined and the population regulated, “the two poles around which the organization of power over life [is] deployed” (Foucault 1978, 139). Most refugee management regimes employ various scales of spatial and corporeal disciplining techniques which, as Julie Peteet notes, are “integral to successfully managing [a] camp” (2005, 69).

ALTERNATIVE RESETTLEMENT SOLUTIONS

When Adam Shapiro visited the camp in 2006, both he and Perla Issa did so because they had learned about the Palestinians in the border camps (Ruweished and Al-Tanf) and wanted to see if it was possible to bring attention to their plight. Efforts made by UNHCR to resettle those remaining in the desert borderlands had been unsuccessful. After being granted permission by Jordanian authorities in Amman to enter the camps for a single day, the activist filmmakers shot footage of the environment and filmed and interviewed many of the refugees to produce the 20-minute documentary, *Nowhere to Flee*.³⁹

Finding a nation that would accept the refugees had become increasingly difficult for those left in Ruweished. One nuclear family had been resettled in Sweden, but only because of the severity of their situation. A fire had torched their tent, killed their 2 year-old daughter, and left the mother with severe burns over 70 percent of her body. Others underwent a careful resettlement selection process, where their UNHCR files were

³⁹ Because of the strict policing of the camps, which made entering them extremely difficult, the Chilean embassy via a senator—Senator Navarro—intervened and requested permission from the Jordanian and Syrian authorities to allow Shapiro and Issa into Al-Tanf and Ruweished camps. In Ruweished, they were allowed entrance to the camp for only one day—from sunrise to sunset. UNHCR officials accompanied the pair. At this moment both UNHCR and the governmental authorities in the two respective countries (Jordan and Syria) understood that petitioning emerging resettlement nations might prove a viable option not only to resettle the Palestinians housed in the camps, but it would also allow for the complete closure of the camps within their national territory if those currently residing in them were all granted resettlement

screened and they were interviewed. For instance, Canada, traditionally considered a resettlement nation, reviewed the files of and interviewed nearly 200 refugees. They then offered resettlement to a group of approximately fifty. During the selection process, the resettlement team from any one country, in coordination with UNHCR, descends on the camps and decides whether the individual or the family being reviewed will be able to integrate into what would be their host society (The normative Brazilian selection process is described in detail in Chapter 3). Factors such as employability, education, health, age, and family dynamic are all taken into consideration before offering resettlement. Nasser and Heba were interviewed and selected for resettlement in Canada.⁴⁰ However, the Canadian resettlement team did not select Nasser's parents, Um Nasser and Abu Nasser. Because of this, as well as the elderly couple's health problems, which were exacerbated in the camp, Nasser and Heba decided they must decline the offer. The elderly couple, along with their children, had already undergone multiple displacements since 1967, as Um Nasser's account demonstrates:

We fled in 1967 from Deir Nasreen [in the West Bank] because of the war and went to Jordan. During the Jerash conflict [in Jordan] we fled to Lebanon. From Lebanon, during the Tal Al-Zaater conflict, we fled to Iraq. From Iraq, during the war brought on by the American invasion, we had to flee and wound up in the Ruweished [refugee] camp. From the Ruweished camp we came here to Brazil, where they thankfully allowed us in. But all of it has honestly been too much. It has been a hard life, really hard. (Interview. March 2009).⁴¹

The multiple forced migrations and dispossessions traced by Um Nasser reference significant historical moments for many Palestinians and highlights the military conflicts that compelled her, and their, family's movements. The 1967 six-day war marks the

⁴⁰ Canada's Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program conduct the selection process. For more on this program, see the following site: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/canada.asp>

⁴¹ Since arriving in Brazil, Um Nasser had been asked by different people, including news sources, about the trajectory of her displacements. As such, she was able to concisely trace and recount her multiple dispersals.

beginning of one of the longest occupations in modern history and the moment when the West Bank and Gaza came under Israel's control. This was the impetus for Um Nasser and her family's first forced migration. Pregnant with her second child, the family was dispossessed of their ancestral home in the West Bank and made their way into Jordan. After crossing into Jordan, they eventually entered Jerash camp—an emergency camp set up by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) to receive people who were displaced as a result of Israel's occupation.^{42,43} Um Nasser and her husband stayed in Jerash until 1971, when Jordanian forces entered the camp, which was considered a stronghold for members of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Its efforts to strengthen its presence in Jordan led to clashes with that government (Khalidi 1997, 197; Takkenberg 1998, 17).⁴⁴ Because Abu Nasser was considered a member of the PLO opposition in Jordan, Um Nasser's family was forced to leave and sought shelter in neighboring Lebanon.

This time the refugee camp into which they entered was Tal Al-Zaater, in East Beirut. The camp was originally established in 1948 for dispossessed Palestinian refugees but also housed refugees from 1967 and again those from the 1970-1971 conflicts in Jordan. Four years after the family's arrival in Lebanon, the Lebanese civil

⁴² Palestinians, since 1948, have been designated as a particular refugee group. Because of this, there is one UN agency exclusively dedicated to the providing assistance to Palestinians across the Middle East, UNRWA. As cited by Randa Farah in "The Marginalization of Palestinian Refugees," UNRWA developed its own definition of a Palestine refugee, which is "any person whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period of 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948 and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict" (2003, 163). The latest data by UNRWA indicates there are 5 million registered Palestinian refugees in the countries in which it operates alone (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in Palestine). See <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=47> (accessed May 11, 2013).

⁴³ Jerash camp was originally set up by UNRWA for Palestinian refugees from Gaza; it is commonly referred to as the Gaza camp. Today Jerash houses more than 24,000 refugees. For a detailed look at UNRWA and the administration of Palestinian refugee camps, see Ilana Feldman's work.

⁴⁴ This conflict and the rooting out of the PLO from Jordan during this period, which began in September 1970, is known as Black September.

war began. By 1976 the civil war intensified and the Maronite Christian right (Phalangists) made calculated efforts to remove Muslims and Palestinians from predominantly Christian East Beirut (Peteet 2005; 11, 142-145). This led to the destruction of three refugee camps there: Tal Al-Zaater, Dbiyyeh, and Jisr Al-Basha. Tal Al-Zaater fell in August 1976, and those who were not killed during the Phalangist incursion were forcibly displaced.⁴⁵ As a result of these events, Um Nasser and her family fled to Iraq, which provided the longest period of stability for the family since being displaced in 1967. They stayed in Iraq from 1976 until 2003.

With the U.S. invasion and the fall of Baghdad, the family was once again forced to flee. Their intention was to enter Jordan, where Um and Abu Nasser's two daughters then lived; however, they were not allowed entry and were instead placed in the Ruweished camp until being resettled in Brazil—a country they had little knowledge of, except for maybe its renowned soccer team. The trajectory of displacement suffered by Um Nasser and her family does not index the course of all of the Palestinian refugees resettled in Brazil from Iraq, but it provides an important lens through which to consider the scope and scale of displacement and forced migration to which the refugees have been subjected. Her narrative provides a closer look at what it means to be a “protracted refugee,” and what she calls the “hard life” of ongoing displacement and dispossession. Palestinians constitute the largest and most protracted refugee situation in the world, as verified by UNHCR.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Rashid Khalidi notes “Phalangists and allied militias [were] backed indirectly by both Israel and Syria,” as confirmed six years later, in 1982, by then Israeli Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, during a Knesset session (198 & 264).

⁴⁶ Protracted refugees, according to UNHCR, are those who belong to a group of 25,000 people or more who have been in exile for more than five years. See “Protracted refugee situations: the search for practical solutions.” <http://www.unhcr.org/4444afcb0.pdf> (accessed December 2011). More recently (2011)

By early 2007, there were 108 Palestinian refugees in Ruweished who had been passed up by traditional resettlement countries.⁴⁷ Among them were whole families with parents, children and elders (such as Heba and Nasser's family), young nuclear families, a single-parent family, several single elderly men and one single elderly woman, two elderly married couples, and several single young men. Many had health conditions, which were exacerbated by their long stay in the precarious conditions of the camp, while others developed pulmonary conditions as a result of the harsh desert climate. With mounting pressure from the Jordanian authorities to close Ruweished and the inability to convince "traditional countries" to offer resettlement to the Palestinians, UNHCR considered other possibilities, particularly countries that were emerging as resettlement nations.

Footage of the camp and the interviews obtained by Shapiro and Issa were critical to resettling the Palestinians. Through personal connections, the pair began to explore possibilities in non-traditional or emerging resettlement countries.⁴⁸ Chile, because of its large and politically influential Palestinian community, emerged as an option. Today, Chile is home to the largest Palestinian community outside of the Arab world. Some estimates put the number of Palestinians there at 300,000 (Abu Eid 2008). Shapiro recalled,

UNHCR has changed its definition, excluding the 25,000 or more numerical criteria to be considered a protracted refugee.

⁴⁷ According to UNHCR, the traditional resettlement countries are listed as: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden), and the United States. (<http://www.unhcrwashington.org/unhcr-resettlement>)

⁴⁸ The Emerging Resettlement Nations are listed by UNHCR as follows: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Iceland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. And since 2007 fourteen countries have been added, including, Paraguay, and Uruguay. See "Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement," re-accessed December 27, 2013, (<http://www.unhcr.org/524c31666.html>). Also see "Refugee Resettlement Needs Outpace Growing Number of Resettlement Countries" by Mike Nicholson, accessed December 27, 2013 (<http://www.migrationinformation.org/USFocus/display.cfm?ID=912>)

I wrote to a friend--a journalist friend---in Chile. And the reason I thought about Chile was because what I was hearing from UNHCR at the time was that they had been trying with all the typical resettlement countries and everybody was saying no. And that's because it was Iraq and that's because they were Palestinians... and you know, nobody was interested in Palestinians at this point. Chile was not a resettlement country up to that point, officially and according to UNHCR. The only other time they had ever taken refugees was in the mid-nineties [when] they'd agreed to take some Croats, who all ended up going back to Croatia after the war. They'd never had a long-term resettlement process. But the reason I thought Chile might be viable is because I knew that Chile had a very large Palestinian community that was politically connected and that could potentially be, you know--we were talking about a small number at this point-- that [Chile] could potentially be a host community. So in late September 2006, my [journalist] friend in Chile managed to get a senator who is not Palestinian, very interested. I spoke to him. [With something to show—footage and interviews] he promised to set up meetings with people in Congress and the senate, with the government. And I then reached out to people in the Palestinian community in Chile. (Personal Interview. 7 Sep. 2010)

With the documentary *Nowhere to Flee* in tow, filmed just two months earlier, Shapiro travelled to Chile in December 2006.

By the end of the 10-day visit, Shapiro was able to meet with the Deputy Foreign Minister and various members of congress, as the Chilean senator had promised. The film was used as evidence of the conditions under which Palestinians lived in the border camps and also as a tool to mobilize the Chilean government to act.⁴⁹ There was some resistance from members of the elite Palestinian community who claimed resettling these refugees would not only compromise the “right of return” (the same argument used by many Arab states for not granting Palestinians residency or citizenship), but would also cause them to lose their “culture and identity.” These latter claims appeared disingenuous in light of the widespread retention of “culture and identity” by those Palestinians already in Chile. Since a group of elite businessmen in the Palestinian community funds the

⁴⁹ Although Venezuela was also petitioned to resettle Palestinian refugees by Shapiro and Issa, this never materialized in resettling any Palestinians in that country.

Palestinian ambassador to Chile, they threatened to cease funding for the ambassador's salary if she did not stop the resettlement process.⁵⁰ When the ambassador, May Abdel Rahman, complied, however, the larger Palestinian community mobilized to counter the claims made by the elite few. The political capital of the broader Palestinian community proved invaluable. Within a month after Shapiro's trip, Chile officially told UNHCR they were willing to receive Palestinian refugees from Iraq who were in the Al-Tanf camp in Syria.⁵¹

As Shapiro notes, he also conducted some political legwork before flying to South America to ensure there would not be opposition from political heavy weights in the Palestine Liberation Organization.

I started meeting with PLO officials fairly early on, because I'm sophisticated enough in the Palestinian issue to know where the obstacles can come from. And I wanted to make sure that the PLO, if it wasn't going to do something to actively help its people, it would at least not be an obstacle... Yeah, before I went to Chile, Venezuela, or Brazil, my first thing was to meet the PLO representative in Jordan, who is responsible for refugee affairs. You know, he knew about the situation in Ruweished and, of course, when we asked him what he was doing, he's like nothing: "There's nothing we can do." So we explained to him what the goal was and why we thought resettlement was a good option. You know there was almost no...at least from his office, there was no opposition. He's dealing with the refugee affairs; he knows what the situation is like. He didn't oppose it.⁵²

Soon thereafter, the pair honed in on Brazil as another country in Latin America in which to resettle the refugees. Armed with Chile's acceptance of the Palestinians from

⁵⁰ In many countries, community funding is normative for Palestinian ambassadors.

⁵¹ Importantly, although Chile agreed first to resettle Palestinian from Iraq, the actual resettlement process in Brazil occurred before Chile resettled any of the Iraq war refugees.

⁵² PI in Sep. 2010. Meanwhile, while attempting to find a resettlement solution in South America, Shapiro was also launching a parallel effort to find an "Arab solution" for the Palestinians—that is, placement in an Arab country. Yemen was being explored as an option because of its history of strong support for Palestinians; however, Yemen was being explored not only for those in Ruweished but also thousands of Palestinians who were either in border camps because of the Iraq War and those who had been internally displaced in Iraq and needed a solution for their displacement. The number of people under consideration for resettlement in Yemen was 10,000.

Iraq, Shapiro went to the Geneva Conference on Refugees in April 2007.⁵³ There he met with the Brazilian ambassador, Sérgio de Abreu Florêncio. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, encouraged ambassador Abreu to meet with Shapiro. Guterres had been apprised of the efforts in Chile, which compelled that government to accept Palestinian refugees from Iraq. In addition, the High Commissioner discussed the critical predicament the refugees were in during his opening address to the conference:

In the most significant displacement in the Middle East since the dramatic events of 1948, one in eight Iraqis have [sic] been driven from their homes. Some 1.9 million Iraqis are currently displaced inside the country and up to 2 million others have fled abroad. The situation is dire too for non-Iraqi refugees inside the country. Palestinians in particular have been targeted amid the violence, with over 600 victims so far and over 15,000 unable to escape. (International Conference. 17 April 2007)⁵⁴

At the meeting with ambassador Abreu, Shapiro discussed Chile's plans and also broached the issue of Brazil's interest in having a greater role in the United Nations. Abreu scheduled critical meetings for Shapiro in May 2007 in Brazil. Like Chile, Brazil has had a long history of Palestinian migration. However, the number of Palestinians in Brazil, estimated at 30,000, is only about a tenth of those in Chile.⁵⁵ Additionally, where Chile's Palestinian community was already significant prior to 1948, Brazil's community only became significant after 1948.⁵⁶

⁵³ The International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in Neighboring Countries took place on April 17-18 in 2007.

⁵⁴ See "Statement by António Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees": <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=462490411&query=Iraq%20conference> (first accessed October 3, 2010)

⁵⁵ The estimates of Palestinians in Brazil range from 20,000-50,000. In an interview with the president of the Palestinian Federation (FEPAL) in Rio Grande do Sul, he said the federation asserts there are 50,000 Palestinians in Brazil, but with the newly arrived "refugees from Iraq, there are 50,108" [são 50,108 agora, com os refugiados do iraq]. As in the case of Syrians and Lebanese, there are politics involved in population estimates of Arabs in Brazil. John Karam (2007) suggests, "...Middle Easterners have overestimated themselves as a way to strengthen their place in the Brazilian nation" (11).

⁵⁶ Scholars have indicated the Palestinian migration to Chile in the late 1800s was spontaneous and primarily driven by a combination of small merchants in search of new markets and those fleeing Ottoman

A sizable wave of Palestinian migration into Brazil, and the Americas more broadly, occurred after the *nakbah* in 1948—the “dramatic events” to which the Higher Commissioner referred in his opening address in Geneva.⁵⁷ The post-1948 wave to Brazil included migrants and refugees from towns and villages throughout Palestine, and many from the West Bank. This migration was composed predominantly of Muslim young men, and intensified through the 1950s (Delval 1992; Jardim 2006).⁵⁸ The 1947 partition of Palestine (UN Resolution 181) and the subsequent formation of the Israeli nation-state had an enormous economic effect on the indigenous Palestinian population. Between the UN partition plan on 29 November 1947 and the founding of the state of Israel on May 15, 1948, an estimated 750,000 Palestinians were dispossessed and forced from their homes (Shiblak 1996; Khalidi 1997; Takkenberg 1998; Feldman 2008; Tawil-Souri 2011). Many Palestinians found themselves refugees in their own homeland, while others ended up in tents in neighboring countries. The vast majority of those who were dispossessed, like those who remained, relied on an agrarian economy. Consequently, the loss of land forced scores into deep poverty, and many sought migration to Brazil and other Latin American countries as an alternate mechanism to provide economic stability for themselves and their families.⁶⁰

conscription (Baeza 2011; Myriam Olguín & Patricia Peña 1990). Furthermore, the majority of these Palestinians were from Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and Bethlehem—historically Christian villages. While there is a dearth of resources that specifically focus on Palestinians in Brazil, those that are available indicate an influx of Palestinians post-1948. For instance, see Denise Jardim’s ethnographic work on Palestinians in Chuí, Rio Grande do Sul (2000, 2003). Also see, S.A.H Ahsani, “Muslims in Latin America: A Survey—Part I” in *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, July 1984, Vol. V, No. 2, P. 456.

⁵⁷ Nakbah (catastrophe) is the commonly used Arabic term for the deterritorialization and dispossession Palestinians endured in 1948.

⁵⁸ In Denise Fagundes Jardim’s, “Os imigrantes palestinos na América Latina,” see specifically pp. 172-173.

⁵⁹ The president of FEPAL suggested that the majority of the Palestinians in Brazil who migrated after 1948 were Muslim and came from in and around the city of Ramallah in the West Bank.

⁶⁰ In Brazil and Argentina, Syrians and Lebanese account for the majority of the Arab population. However, historically in Chile and Honduras, the majority of Arabs are Palestinians.

By late May 2007, Brazil had agreed to accept the remaining 108 refugees in Ruweished. The public announcement was ceremoniously made on 20 June, World Refugee Day [Dia Mundial do Refugiado]. The official press release from UNHCR (ACNUR) indicated that the Palestinians were victims of sectarian violence and the decision to receive the refugees was made unanimously on 25 May by CONARE. The then Coordinator General of CONARE, Nara Conceição da Silva asserted in the announcement, “This decision by the Brazilian government was humanitarian in character” [Foi uma decisão de caráter humanitário por parte do governo brasileiro].⁶¹ However, this decision was not without controversy.

BRASÍLIA: MEETING THE REFUGEES BY WAY OF FILM

In his three-day stay in Brasília in May 2007, Adam Shapiro met with Luis Paulo Teles Barreto, who was the president of CONARE as well as the Deputy Minister of Justice; a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Marcolo Bohlke; and the UNHCR representative for Brazil, Luis Varese. Separately he made efforts to meet with the Palestinian ambassador to Brazil. The ambassador at the time, Mayada Abbasi, attempted to call off the meetings arranged by ambassador Abreu from Geneva, claiming Shapiro had no authority to meet with them, nor did he have the right to act on behalf of the Palestinian refugees from Iraq. She then wrote a letter to the UN Agency in Brasilia underlining the embassy’s official position. The embassy did not agree with the resettlement proposal and the ambassador emphasized that by resettling these refugees in Brazil, the “right of return” for Palestinians would be compromised. Abbasi refused

⁶¹ Newspapers reproduced parts of ACNUR’s press release. See for example, “Brasil receberá refugiados palestinos fugindo da violência,” in Folha de S. Paulo, 20 June 2007 (<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/mundo/ult94u305935.shtml>)

outright to meet with Shapiro and instead had her deputy meet with him.

Again, the documentary film *Nowhere to Flee* was shown to demonstrate the conditions of the camps and the people within them. Despite some initial hesitation by the Palestinian embassy in Brasília, whose members thought it would be best to find a resettlement solution inside the Arab world, the film removed some doubt. It dispelled the disinformation that had gained momentum about the camps. The inaccurate information depicted the camps as places offering reasonable living conditions, while providing necessary educational and health services. This was clearly not the case. Also, the Palestinian ambassador was under the impression the refugees, at some point, would be able to return to Iraq. But re-entry would be impossible because of the continued persecution of Palestinians in Iraq and the unwillingness of the Iraqi authorities to grant Palestinian refugees re-entry documents, which would have allowed them to travel back to the country. The carceral conditions to which these persons were subjected in the desert borderlands became more apparent and made the ambassador, who is a representative of the Palestinian Authority, more amenable to, but not completely in favor of, the idea of their resettlement in Brazil. Although the choice would not ultimately be hers, it was still important to get all relevant institutions on board with the resettlement plan.⁶²

The leadership from the Palestinian community was also against the resettlement proposition. Elias Abdullah, the president of the Palestinian Federation [Federação Árabe Palestina] (FEPAL), which has branches (some more active than others) throughout the

⁶² In an email exchange to Adam Shapiro, part of which he shared with the author, the ambassador states, “I am surprised that you want to address the vice minister of justice about a major palestinian [sic] issue like to bring palestinians here, you can tell him anything but not to speak about this palestinian issue, [sic] I am aware that you have good intentions but you cannot address this to the officials here.”

country, reiterated and reflected the ideological position the Palestinian ambassador in Brasilia held. He said,

Nós colocamos pro ACNUR...que a nossa posição enquanto a Federação Palestina e enquanto representante dos palestinos politicamente era contrária á vinda dos refugiados. Por toda a questão que vocês sabem, para garantir o direito de retorno. E a gente mantém a mesma posição da Autoridade, da OLP, a de que os palestinos fiquem em regiões próximas à palestina. Essa foi a posição da embaixada e essa foi a posição da Federação também / We told UNHCR that as the Palestinian Federation and as the political representatives of Palestinians [in Brazil] we were against the refugees coming. We maintain the same position as the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, which is that Palestinians remain in regions close to Palestine. This was the embassy's position and it is the Federation's position too. (Interview. 15 July 2010)

But this ideological strategy, which on one level expects refugees in great precarity to still act as placeholders for the collective right of return, was trumped by the Brazilian government's more pragmatic approach. Aware of the mounting pressure on UNHCR by Jordanian authorities to close the camp and no "Arab solution" in sight, CONARE responded to the embassy and the Palestinian leadership by saying theirs was a political treatment of a humanitarian issue. They then stated, "this is not a political problem, this is a humanitarian problem."⁶³

Still the most crucial factor was Shapiro and Issa's film. As Shapiro recalled:

[L]iterally the week after I went to Brasilia, the CONARE commission met, showed the video that I gave them, *Nowhere to Flee*...they were so happy that I gave them a copy in Portuguese. Because I guess a lot of people don't show up in Brazil with stuff translated into Portuguese. So they showed it at the meeting and as the head of CONARE at the time told me, he's like this is the first time that we've had...the people who are seeking asylum, get to advocate for themselves. Because normally they're just reading UNHCR reports. So he said that once they saw the video, approval was given immediately. So in Brazil, from the moment I met the ambassador in Geneva, to the moment they gave the agreement to accept the refugees, to the time that they actually started the transfer from Jordan, was no more than six months. It was extremely fast. (Interview. 7 Sep. 2010)

The Brazilian representatives from the various offices named above found the

⁶³ Interview with UNHCR staff in Brasilia. 23 June 2010.

documentary very compelling. Teles Barreto highlighted the benefits of the non-normative way the officials learned about the Palestinian refugees and their predicament in Iraq. The individuals featured in the film amplified notions of their own personhood by authoring their own narratives. They were not numerical abstractions on a page, as UNHCR and NGOs customarily showcased, but instead the refugees themselves were able to tell their stories, albeit abbreviated. Their stories complicated flat humanitarian notions of victimhood and agency. Shortly after Shapiro's visit and through a tripartite agreement with CONARE, UNHCR, and two local NGO's in the states of São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul, a plan was reached to resettle the remaining 108 Palestinian refugees from Ruweished camp, without an interview or selection process.⁶⁴ At this point the Palestinian leadership felt compelled to take a different position. FEPAL's president noted:

Depois que estava definida e aprovada a vinda, nós não tínhamos o que fazer. Essa foi uma decisão do ACNUR e do Governo brasileiro. E o que nós fizemos? Nós pensamos que seria muito ruim para os refugiados chegar ao Brasil e não serem recebidos pela comunidade palestina...Então nós nos aproximamos do ACNUR, aqui no Rio Grande do Sul, estabelecemos uma relação bastante próxima, no sentido da orientação cultural, orientação no sentido da recepção, da alimentação, à forma como poderiam conduzir a chegada/
After the decision had been approved and was final, there was nothing we could do. This was a decision by UNHCR and the Brazilian government. So what did we do? We thought it would be really bad for the refugees to arrive in Brazil and not be welcomed by the Palestinian community...So we approached UNHCR, here in Rio Grande do Sul, and established fairly close relations, in the sense of cultural orientation, an orientation about the reception they would have for them, in terms of food, just the way they would navigate their arrival. (Interview. 15 July 2010)

By late September 2007, the first of three groups arrived in Brazil.

⁶⁴ The Palestinians resettled in Chile were from Al-Tanf camp, situated on the border of Syria and Iraq.

BEM VINDO AO BRASIL ~ AHLAN BIKUM FE IL BARAZEEL ~ WELCOME TO BRAZIL

They called all of us to the big tent in the camp and told us the Brazilians had accepted us. We were worried. Then they showed us a film about Brazil and about the resettlement program. After spending so much time in that camp, we finally felt like we had a little bit of hope. *Heba*. (Interview. 5 March 2009)

While the refugees were introduced to officials in Brasília by way of film, Brazil was introduced to the refugees in a similar fashion. UNHCR and the Brazilian Ministry of Justice (Ministério da Justiça) collaborated to compile a video providing information about the country and the refugee resettlement program.⁶⁵ Similar to the documentary about the Palestinian refugees in the borderland camps, the central narrative in the Brazilian video reflected hegemonic social and political ideas about the country and its people. The 16-minute film *Heba* and the other refugees viewed was narrated in Arabic and described the tripartite resettlement program. It showcased Brazil as a diverse nation-state, with a diverse population. The film emphasized the country's multi-racial, multi-ethnic character and even asserted "the population in Brazil gets its character from three blended people."⁶⁶ It goes on to describe this blend as comprised of Native Americans, Africans, and whites, showing images of each group. This triad reference inscribed, for the refugees, the racial-mixing exceptionalism through which Brazil is constructed in the national imagination. It contributed to discourses of harmonious racial plurality, producing Brazil as inherently racially and ethnically integrated and integratable. The foundational three races invoked in the film represent the particular bodies on which the mythology of Brazilian racial democracy/ *democracia racial* has been created and cultivated.

⁶⁵ The spokesperson for UNHCR Brazil, Luis Fernando Godinho, gave this author a copy of the 16-minute video the refugees were made to watch in summer 2007, while still in Ruweished.

⁶⁶ *Solidarity Resettlement in Brazil*, a UNHCR and Ministry of Justice production (2007). DVD.

Racial democracy has been debated, analyzed, and contested. It is premised on ideas about Brazil as a hybridized nation as a result of its African, Amerindian, and European roots, where the best elements of these three peoples come to constitute the national subject (Sheriff 2001). Sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre was the most influential figure in creating this national mythology. In his work, *The Masters and the Slaves* (1956 [1933]), Freyre establishes Brazil as a country with harmonious race relations because of this embodied mixed race legacy. He writes, in an often-quoted section of his text:

Every Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-haired one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike...the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro...In our affections, our excessive mimicry, our Catholicism, which so delights the senses, our music, our gait, our speech, our cradle song—in everything that is a sincere expression of our lives, we almost all of us bear the mark of that influence. (278)

In dissecting Freyre's quote, the mixed race legacy to which he alludes positions the non-European aspects of this mixture as "additive" to a European whole. That is, "the aborigine or the Negro," or *they*, are added to the already constituted European whole, or the *us*, of Brazilianness, including a European religious affiliation, "*our* Catholicism." These additive racial elements *influence* the always already European corporeality and the veins of sociality and ways of being, constructed as belonging to this specific embodied subject. Moreover, Freyre's discourse incorporates essentialized conceptions of racial *others*, or non-Europeans. This demonstrates an internal construction of the neo-Orientalist glaze, where a racialized exoticization of people inside Brazil does not come from the outside. However, this does not indicate there was not outside influence. Perhaps this is not surprising since Freyre wrote the book in 1933 after having been educated in the United States, during a period of racial apartheid. Thus while Freyre's

ideas and analysis of Brazilian society and Brazilian subjectivity were at once essentialist but somewhat radical for the times, his idea of racial democracy was steeped in mythology.

Despite the refutation of this myth by multiple scholars, who have highlighted racial inequality and discrimination in the country (Azevedo 1975; Hasenbalg 1979; Hanchard 1994, 1999; Winant 1994; Twine 1998), there has been a particular and enduring affinity to this concept. It is deployed time and again to demonstrate the exceptional, racially plural, and harmonious constitution of Brazilian society. This is evidenced in the deployment of this discourse to *orient* the incoming Palestinian refugees and also, as I will later show, to position Brazil as particularly adroit in foreign and diplomatic relations because of this “mixed” legacy.

The video also indicated that Brazil consists of various immigrant groups, including Italians, Asians, Arabs, Germans, and immigrants from neighboring Latin American countries, who live freely without prejudice and who practice different faiths without reproach. It highlights a peaceful conviviality in the country, where racial, ethnic or religious discrimination were nearly non-existent. Yet the longer history of Brazilian immigration tests the notion of plural and harmonious conviviality. Exclusions or exclusionary discourses of particular migrants are evident in past immigration laws and policies. For instance, until 1980⁶⁷ the primary immigration law determining the entrance of foreigners into Brazil was established August 1945, at the end of Getulio Vargas’s

⁶⁷ This is when the Estatuto do Estrangeiro/ Statute for Foreigners (Law: 6.815/80) was passed, which re-conceptualized ideas of immigration to instead privilege the country’s socio-economic growth and interests. Although the emphasis was no longer on the racial and ethnic composition of immigrants, this law was passed during the dictatorship period and also focused on national security, which invariably has an impact on the way racial, ethnic, and cultural “others” were constructed.

tenure as dictator. The law, Decreto-Lei N. 7.967, was established at the end of World War II and stressed the necessity of protecting Brazil's national interests.

O Presidente da República, usando da atribuição que lhe confere o artigo 180 da Constituição e considerando que se faz necessário, cessada a guerra mundial, imprimir á política imigratória do Brasil uma orientação racional e definitiva, que atenda à dupla finalidade *de proteger os interesses do trabalhador nacional e de desenvolver a imigração que fôr fator de progresso para o país*.

The President of the Republic, using the powers conferred upon him by Article 180 of the Constitution, deems it necessary upon the ending of the World War to establish a definitive and rational Brazilian immigration policy, which will serve the dual purpose of *protecting the interests of the national worker while developing an immigration that will be a factor of progress for the country* (emphasis mine).⁶⁸

The emphasis on protecting the “national worker” in the introduction to the law is relevant because Vargas's tenure, he addressed the social body as “workers of Brazil” (Holston 2008, 191); therefore, the reference to “national worker” functions as a synonym for citizen. A crucial aim of the decree, then, is to protect the citizen-worker, while making citizenship and belonging contingent upon the body that labors.

Under Vargas' tenure nationalistic ideals were undergirded through the implementation of Estado Novo (1937-1945).⁶⁹ Furthermore, during this period and as outlined in the law, ensuring the “progress” of the nation through its immigration policies implied protecting and promoting a specific form of Brazilianness. In the changing international climate and the subsequent mass movement of people at the end of World War II, Vargas wanted to ensure Brazilian nationalism would not be undermined by an influx of undesirable migrants, and this is apparent in the immigration policy. Article II

⁶⁸ The law is available online in its entirety through the Brazilian senate's website: http://www6.senado.gov.br/legislacao/ListaNormas.action?numero=7967&tipo_norma=DEL&data=19450918&link=s (accessed May 2011).

⁶⁹ Part of Estado Novo's nativist movement imposed restrictions on “ethnically” based social clubs and newspapers and mandated assimilation. I will discuss this further in Chapter 4.

of the decree indicates the nation's intent to continue to privilege the entrance of European-descended immigrants into Brazil. Article II stated that

Atender-se-á, na admissão dos imigrantes, à necessidade de preservar e desenvolver, na composição étnica da população, as características mais convenientes da sua ascendência européia, assim como a defesa do trabalhador nacional (Ibid)/ In admitting immigrants [to the nation], there is a necessity to preserve and develop the ethnic composition of the population; the most convenient characteristics of the population's European ancestry must be met, and the defense of the national worker [preserved].

The law was explicit about preserving a European presence in the country, while simultaneously amplifying this presence when opening borders to immigration. Thus European immigrants would be granted privileged entrance to secure a form of Brazilianness predicated on whiteness, which Vargas and the elite sought to maintain and expand (Klich and Lesser 1998).

Nevertheless, this 1945 law changed what Getúlio Vargas had established in the 1934 constitution--the federal government's complete control over immigration.⁷⁰ In fact, paragraph 19 of Article 5 of the Vargas constitution gave the federal government authority to legislate the “naturalização, entrada e expulsão de estrangeiros, extradição; emigração e imigração, que deverá ser regulada e orientada, podendo ser proibida totalmente, ou *em razão da procedência*/ naturalization, entrance and expulsions/deportations of foreigners, extraditions, emigration and immigration, which should be governed and guided, may be prohibited altogether *by reason of origin*” (emphasis added). The inclusion of this Article in the 1934 Estado Novo constitution, ratified in July of the same year, and the particular line indicating the prohibition of

⁷⁰ Historical records indicate that Vargas nearly single-handedly wrote the constitution of 1934. http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao34.htm, accessed June 22, 2011 See: Art. 5, paragraph 9, g. and Article 121, paragraph 6. This was cited in Jeffrey Lesser article “Immigration and Shifting Concepts of National Identity in Brazil during the Vargas Era” in *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Getúlio Vargas and His Legacy (Winter, 1994), pp. 23-44

immigrants into the country based on origin, might have been precipitated by the Assyrian refugee case of 1933-34.

This case involved a group of 20,000 ethnic minority Chaldean Christians who found themselves refugees in Iraq—their homeland—upon Iraqi independence in 1932 (Lesser 1994,1999; Husry 1974).⁷¹ The League of Nations sought Brazil as a resettlement nation and Paran  Plantation, Ltd., a British company, proposed resettling the whole group on a plot of land in Paran , where they would populate a desolate area while also engaging in agricultural work. Because of the group’s Christian affiliation and the dominant Catholic attachments in Brazil, Vargas’s regime entertained the idea the group could possibly achieve social citizenship. A strong proponent of the resettlement plan, Arthur Thomas, a representative of the British company, emphasized to the Brazilian Ministry of Labor the Assyrians refugees were “an Aryan race, without any Semitic or Arabic characteristics...their religion is Christianity [and] they are agricultural and pastoral” (Lesser 1994, 26). In citing the desirable “Aryan” characteristic of the Assyrians while emphasizing their Christian religious roots, Thomas underscored the undesirability of Arabs—Jewish⁷² and Muslim—and reproduced racist and Orientalist British colonial constructions of people in the Middle East. He did this while playing into the Brazilian biopolitics of *embranquecimento*, wherein European whiteness and Christianity were critically interlaced to the country’s nation-building project.

The global circulation of European Orientalist ideas is made apparent here, and it informed and attempted to pacify Brazilian Orientalists in this *other* West. These efforts

⁷¹ The scope of this project does not include an analysis of the British Empire’s presence in Iraq; however, it is important to consider the British invasion and occupation of the Ottoman provinces, and the subsequent League of Nations Mandate granting Great Britain administrative power over Mesopotamia (British Mandate). For more on this see Charles Tripp (2007).

⁷² Since Thomas was referring to modern day Iraq, the Jews there were Mizrahi.

by Arthur Thomas were all in vain, however. Once news of the resettlement project became public, a vehement backlash by the press and the public ensued. Nativist groups constructed the Assyrian refugees as unassimilable because they were perceived as transient and Muslim—a clearly deplorable characteristic fanning Orientalists’ anxieties in Brazil about the otherness of Islam. Moreover, newspapers that appealed to the working class framed the refugees as “future peddlers” (Lesser 1999, 67). This characterization also played into elite discourses about Arabs more generally, since peddling as an economic activity was enduringly held suspect (See further discussion in Chapter 2). With mounting internal pressure by various groups, the plan for resettling the Assyrians was abandoned in April 1934 and the prohibition of immigrants based on origin was enshrined in law. Thus, it can be argued that Brazilian Orientalism, fomented by racist ideas of Arabs, specifically Arab Muslims, compelled the changes in the immigration laws of 1934.

Even with changes in the immigration policy of 1945, eleven years later, there were still specific restrictions in place that further ensured the *measured* entry of immigrants into the country based on origin. These policies were heavily informed by and placated elite and nativist desires for whitening the nation. For instance, Article 3 of the law recalled immigration policies more than 60 years old:

A corrente imigratória espontânea de cada país não ultrapassará, anualmente a cota de dois por cento sobre o número dos respectivos nacionais que entraram no Brasil desde 1 de janeiro de 1884 até 31 de dezembro de 1933. O órgão competente poderá elevar a três mil pessoas a cota de uma nacionalidade e promover o aproveitamento dos saldos anteriores.

The current of spontaneous immigration from each country will not annually exceed the quota of two-percent of the number of nationals that arrived from the same country to Brazil between 1 January 1884 and 31 December 1933. The

relevant authority may raise the quota to 3,000 from one nationality and promote the use of previous balances.⁷³

Similar to the US, Brazil had national origin quotas, and both nations imposed an annual cap on the number of immigrants who could lawfully enter the nation. In fact, the two-percent quota imposed by Vargas is precisely the percentage indicated in the Immigration Act of 1924 or Johnson-Reed Act signed into law by President Coolidge in the United States (Ngai 2004, 17).⁷⁴ However, the US national origins quota and exclusions were lifted when the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was passed, whereas in Brazil immigration quotas did not officially end until 1980, when the relevant law was repealed.

Brazil, like other Latin American nation-states, privileged European migration, which left Arabs on the margins. At the same time, although Arabs were not considered European or white, they were also not considered black. Their ambivalent racial-ethnic positionality allowed them to enter the country (Klich & Lesser 1998; Lesser 1994). Still, they were considered less desirable, or in some circumstances undesirable. In general such attitudes were not glaring, but they were present and emerged and intensified at particular moments, as in the case of the failed resettlement attempt of Assyrian refugees.

These exclusionary historical policies and discourses were, and are, often cloaked in the claims for and of a harmonious plurality. This was the case with the film shown to the refugees. It provided a historical narrative of racial, ethnic, and religious acceptance,

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http://www6.senado.gov.br/legislacao/ListaNormas.action?numero=7967&tipo_norma=DEL&data=19450918&link=s

⁷⁴ Where the law established by Vargas based the two-percent annual quota on the number of immigrants who had entered between 1884 and 1933 from a specific country, the Johnson-Reed Act quota was based on the number of immigrants from a particularly country who had been already living in the United States in 1890. The Johnson-Reed Act included the Asian Exclusion Act and the National Origins Act. The latter was designed to specifically privilege northern and western Europeans in the US and efforts to codify this in law were begun three years earlier. In *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (1996), Ian Haney López indicates, "In 1921, Congress established a temporary quota system designed to 'confine immigration as much as possible to western and northern European stock'" (1996, 38).

while also framing the lives of current refugees in the country in a positive way. The film featured resettled Colombian refugees who briefly described their new lives and characterized Brazilians as warm, accepting, and welcoming. The local resettlement agencies were depicted as efficient and thorough. In addition to the Brazilian nation-state's discourse of harmonious racial and ethnic plurality, the video showed familiar scenic views, which often saturate the imagination when the country is conjured and serve to exoticize it. This assures an internal construction of exoticized ideas about Brazil and its outward dissemination, as the neo-Orientalist glaze suggests. There is, for instance, a wide shot of the beaches at Guanabara bay--with Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain) lording over them; there are multi-angled shots of the famous statue of Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer) in Rio, as well as images from the architectural hub of the Federal District of Brasília, and clips of the busy streets of the metropolitan city of São Paulo in the mix. For the most part, representational images of Brazil serve to exoticize and flatten the nation-state as a place of leisure and pleasure. These monolithic imaginings function similarly to images of the Middle East that construct and consolidate this vast and diverse place as mystical, dangerous, and exotic.

To give the Palestinian refugees a sense of the geographic space of Brazil, the narrator emphasizes the country's size, while a digitized map of Brazil shows 19 maps of Iraq fitted into its borders. The Brazilian economy is presented as the largest in Latin America, (and still growing), providing ample opportunity for employment. Given the refugees' lack of knowledge of the country and natural concern about employment and economic opportunities, the video attempted to put the refugees' worries to rest. As Heba indicates above: "We were worried. Then they showed us the film...." Furthermore, the

universal healthcare system, to which the refugees would have full access, offered another kind of security to the Palestinians, since health care was a scarce resource in the camp.

One of the last segments of the video highlights the Portuguese language classes that are set up for refugees. A Colombian woman who had been resettled through the tripartite program emphasized the importance of learning Portuguese in order to integrate into and get ahead in Brazilian society. The video ends with a message from Luis Paulo Teles Barreto, in which he describes the diverse constitution of Brazilian society and the government's firm commitment to protect victims of persecution. As such, "refugees will have the opportunity to construct their lives anew with dignity and without fear of persecution." He also underscores the critical importance that the refugees themselves demonstrate a willingness to integrate into "our society" and to show initiative in rebuilding their own lives.⁷⁵

Thus the Palestinian refugees' first encounter with Brazil and the Brazilian authorities' first encounter with the refugees were mediated through screens and images—vehicles through which each could get a "sense" of the other as they attempted to bridge the spaces and borders between them. The traffic in images did not cease when the refugees arrived in Brazil. As described by the UNHCR spokesperson, Luis Godinho, "there was a media frenzy" around the Palestinians. Excerpts from the documentary *Nowhere to Flee*, already subtitled in Portuguese, were shown on major television networks. Newspapers printed images of the refugees' arriving at the international airports in São Paulo and Porto Alegre. One interesting image shows a father holding his son's hand while he kneels and kisses the ground at the airport--reminiscent of the

⁷⁵ *Solidarity Resettlement in Brazil*, a UNHCR and Ministry of Justice production (2007). DVD.

gesture Pope John Paul II made when he first arrived in a country.⁷⁶ Another shows a young Palestinian boy given two Brazilian National team soccer balls upon his arrival at the airport. The Brazilian public was introduced to the refugees in much the same way as its officials were, through footage and images, some of which were provided to the media by CONARE.

And the media attention persisted. There was continued interest in the refugees. Within seven months of their arrival, a 28- minute documentary, *Filhos da Nakba* (Children of the Catastrophe), was produced by TV UNICSUL and shown on local television. The documentary featured the refugees resettled in São Paulo and captured the broader history of Palestinian dispossession and displacement. It provided a more detailed narrative of the time these refugees had spent in Ruweished by featuring videos some of them had taken (via mobile phones) of enormous sandstorms and flooded tents during the rainy season. It also described some of the difficulties the Palestinians had encountered since coming to Brazil. At least in part then, the refugees were able to constitute their political subjectivity through the very instruments that at other times produced them as victims.

Locally, notions of Brazil as racially plural and welcoming to diverse ethnic and religious groups were easily peddled. Images of mostly veiled Palestinian women arriving in the country to gestures of solidarity embodied the national discourses of receptivity, harmony, and acceptance. However, it is important to consider how resettling the Palestinians, as well as the larger “Solidarity Resettlement Program,” emerged as a means for the Brazilian nation-state to constitute itself in global regimes.

⁷⁶ See “Terceiro grupo de refugiados palestinos chega ao Brasil” 10/19/07: <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Brasil/0,,MUL153224-5598.00.html> (accessed February 15, 2009)

The next section provides insight into the Brazilian humanitarian apparatus, which allowed for the reception and resettlement of the Palestinian refugees.

BRAZIL AND HUMANITARIAN REGIMES

While Brazil boasts a robust and long history of migration and immigration, its history of resettling refugees is sparse and recent. Official statistical data from UNHCR (or ACNUR) indicates that Brazil has an unremarkable number of refugees within its borders, some 4,600.⁷⁷ It has nonetheless been signatory to critical international refugee laws. In 1960, Brazil was the first nation in the Southern Cone to ratify the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. That Convention provides the principle international codification that allows signatories to determine who is a refugee, establish their rights, and prescribe the standard of treatment and legal obligations the state has to refugees in its national territory (Takkenberg 1998).⁷⁸ The Convention refers specifically to persons who became refugees as a result of events that occurred before January 1, 1951.

Because of its temporal and geographical (it only applied to persons from Europe) limitation, the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was established to address the circumstances of those who became refugees after 1951.⁷⁹ Brazil became

⁷⁷ The most recent statistical data on the number of refugees in Brazil can be found here: “Dados sobre refúgio no Brasil,” <http://www.acnur.org/t3/portugues/recursos/estatisticas/dados-sobre-refugio-no-brasil/> (accessed April 27, 2013). The total reported number of refugees in Brazil represents 79 nations; however, the majority of them are Colombians, who have been displaced because of that nation-state’s internal conflict.

⁷⁸ The countries that house the largest numbers of Palestinian refugees, such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria have not ratified the 1951 Convention. As of April 2011 in a report by the United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 144 nation-states were party to the 1951 Convention (“States Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol” <http://www.unhcr.org/3b73b0d63.html>)

⁷⁹ To directly access the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, see <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html> (accessed December 13, 2012). As noted above, Palestinians have always occupied a particular refugee category despite efforts in international law to construct a universal “refugee” category. They often do not benefit from UNHCR protection; however, this does not

signatory to the 1967 Protocol on April 7, 1972.⁸⁰ Despite this, it still applied the 1951 Convention's geographical restrictions, accepting only refugees from Europe, and it did not implement the 1967 expansion of this category until a few years after the end of the military dictatorship (1964-1985), in 1989 (Jubilut 2006, 24). Moreover, it was only in 1997 when Brazil developed a national policy for refugees. Refugee Law 9474, adopted July 22, 1997, incorporates in items I and II of its first article, under Title I, the protections established in the 1967 Protocol and the 1951 Convention:

Article I

Será reconhecido como refugiado todo indivíduo que/ Every individual will be considered a refugee who:

- I – devido a fundados temores de perseguição por motivos de raça, religião, nacionalidade, group social ou opiniões políticas encontra-se fora de seu país de nacionalidade e não possa ou não queira acolher-se à proteção de tal país/ because of well-founded fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions finds her/himself outside of her/his country of nationality and is unable or unwilling (because of such fear) to avail herself of the protection of that country;
- II - não tendo nacionalidade e estando fora do país onde antes teve sua residência habitual, não possa ou não queira regressar a ele, em função das circunstâncias descritas no inciso anterior/ not having a nationality and being outside of the country of his prior habitual residence, is unable or unwilling to return to it because of the circumstances described in the preceding paragraph;
- III - devido a grave e generalizada violação de direitos humanos, é obrigado a deixar seu país de nacionalidade para buscar refúgio em outro país/ due to serious and generalized violations of human rights, is forced to leave her country of nationality to seek refuge in another country.⁸¹

imply that certain groups of Palestinian refugees can *never* benefit from protections afforded in the 1951 Convention. Specifically, if they are outside of UNRWA's spaces of operation and cannot be granted assistance or protection by UNRWA, Palestinian refugees would then be entitled to benefits delineated in the 1951 Convention and would fall under the jurisdiction of UNHCR. Although UNRWA operates in Jordan, the Palestinians who were in Ruweished refugee camp were seen by the Jordanian government as having entered the country illegally; thus, they could not fall under UNRWA's mandate. And since Jordan is not signatory to the 1951 Convention, they were in danger of refoulement (sending persecuted persons back to their persecutors). That is, they could be sent back to Iraq despite the eminent threat to their lives. See "Principle of Non-Refoulement" in 1951 Convention.

⁸⁰ See "States Party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol" <http://www.unhcr.org/3b73b0d63.html> (accessed December 12, 2012).

⁸¹ *Lei 9474/97 e Coletânea de Instrumentos de Proteção Internacional dos Refugiados*. 2005. Brasília, DF: UNHCR/ACNUR (A Agência da ONU para os Refugiados)

Paragraph III of the first article was incorporated into the Brazilian refugee law as a result of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration.⁸² The Declaration was an outcome of a Latin American nations colloquium, held in Colombia, and convened to address the growing number of refugees in Central America because of military conflicts. This particular paragraph in the Brazilian law significantly broadened the definition of who could be considered refugees since it inserted “human rights violations” into its lexicon. As the Coordinator General of CONARE, Renato Zerbini, noted during our conversation:

“[I]ncorporada na nossa lei: ‘grave e generalizada violação de direitos humanos’. Que aí pode ser tudo. Quer dizer, quando um Estado não consegue garantir a cidadania dos seus/ Incorporated in our law: ‘serious and generalized violations of human rights’ --which here could be anything. Meaning, any time a state is unable to guarantee citizenship [rights] of its own” (Interview. 18 June 2010).

The law also established a national organ for the exclusive purpose of addressing refugees, under Article 11 of Title III:

Fica criado o Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados - CONARE, órgão de deliberação coletiva, no âmbito do Ministério da Justiça/ The National Committee for Refugees-CONARE- is hereby created, the collective decision-making body within the Ministry of Justice.⁸³

Unlike the United States where the determination of refugee status falls under U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (now housed by the Department of Homeland Security-DHS), in Brazil the comparable entity, The National Counsel on Immigration/

⁸² To access the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees text, see <http://www.unhcr.org/45dc19084.html> (accessed December 17, 2012). Brazil did not participate in the 1984 Colloquium. The ten participating nations were Venezuela, Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Belize. There were also experts from Chile, Peru, and Uruguay participating in the Colloquium.

⁸³ *Lei 9474*.

Conselho Nacional de Imigração (CNIg), is not involved in determining refugee status. In fact the majority of South American states, like the U.S., have immigration representatives involved in determining who is granted refugee status (Jubilut 2006, 32), but in Brazil CONARE is responsible for making the determination. And according to the CONARE's Counsel General, this renders CONARE less susceptible to political pressure and focused instead on humanitarian protection.

Então, o viés de apreciação do CONARE, desde a sua inauguração, foi sempre um viés humanitário. Nunca esteve influenciado por um viés de nossa política interna ou exterior. Sim, se consagrou em uma política de Estado. Porque foi transversal a governos e a diferentes ideologias/ So the bias of assessment by CONARE, since its inauguration, was always a humanitarian bias. It was never influenced by our internal or external politics. Yes, it was established by a State policy. But it was transversal to [different] governments and different ideologies.

During my interview with Zerbini, he was clear in his assertion that CONARE does not capitulate to politics.

Immigration policies, on the other hand, embody social, political, and economic tides rife with internal and external politics. This has clearly been the case in Brazil, as demonstrated above. However, despite having a robust number of representatives from varying organizations it is worth noting that CONARE does fall under the Executive Branch of government (under the Ministry of Justice). Additionally, most of the entities participating in its functioning structure are governmental; only two of 8 are non-governmental.⁸⁴ Therefore, it appears unlikely that political influence is absent from the decision-making process of granting refugee status. Zerbini's claims also presume

⁸⁴ According to Refugee Law 9474, CONARE constitutes one representative from each of the following: Ministry of External Relations, Labor Ministry, Health Ministry, Education and Sports Ministry, the Federal Police Department, a representative from an NGO that dedicates itself to assisting and protecting refugees in the country. In addition to these seven representatives, Article 14 of this law indicates that UNHCR (ACNUR) will always be an invited member of CONARE meetings, with a right to speak but without a right to vote (*Lei 9474*).

humanitarian interventions are always outside the realm of the political. They can easily be refuted by looking at interventions in various global locations over the last twenty years that were justified as being for “humanitarian” purposes, such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Political leaders in the United States insisted that part of the rationale for intervening was to “save” Muslim women, despite the anti-woman policies many of these same leaders supported at home. And these same policies created a dangerous climate for many Muslim women, their families, and their communities (and dangerous to communities who were perceived as “Muslim”). US state policies and growing Islamophobia in civil society made for a particularly hostile atmosphere in the country and abroad. A host of scholars have revealed the scale and scope of political aims masquerading as humanitarian interventions by a wide range of regimes (For instance, Fassin 2011, Feldman & Ticktin 2010, Fernandes 2005, Hyndman 2000, Ticktin 2011, Weissman 2004, among others). The small number of refugees residing in a country as large as Brazil may also point to the politics involved in granting refugee status.

CARTAGENA TO MEXICO CITY

The 2004 Mexico Plan of Action (MPA), which marked the 20th anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration, provided refugee rights in Latin America generally and Brazil specifically.⁸⁵ During this gathering of 20 Latin American nations in Mexico City, Brazil proposed to establish a regional resettlement program to address concerns regarding refugee protection in the region. This was part of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s (known as President Lula) endeavor to establish the importance of South-South diplomatic and humanitarian relations. The plan delineates actions to be undertaken to

⁸⁵ See full text “2004 Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action to Strengthen International Protection of Refugees in Latin America”: www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/424bf6914.pdf (accessed October 28, 2009).

ensure the protection of refugees in Latin America who have been displaced as a consequence of civil wars and conflicts in their nation of origin.

Historically, no Latin American nation had made provisions for resettlement, which according to UNHCR “involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third State that has agreed to admit them- as refugees- with permanent residence status.”⁸⁶ Refugees need to be placed in a third State when their “[lives], liberty, safety, health, or other human rights are at risk in the country where they sought refuge.”⁸⁷ The impetus for Brazil proposing and establishing a resettlement program was born out of regional necessity and to provide “regional solidarity.”⁸⁸ That is, to furnish support for countries in the region experiencing internal conflict, by providing recourses to absorb people who had been [doubly] displaced as a result of these conflicts. It was also clear from the inception of President Lula’s tenure, which began in 2003, his intentions were to position Brazil as a regional and world leader in global governance.⁸⁹

The tripartite agreement has served mostly refugees from nations in Central and South America. Over the years, the ongoing conflict in Colombia has internally displaced millions and has also forced many people threatened with violence to seek refuge out of

⁸⁶ See UNHCR FAQ about Resettlement <http://www.unhcr.org/4ac0873d6.html> (accessed June 4, 2012). Importantly, Brazil has a slow process of granting permanent residency to refugees. Upon starting this research project, the law required refugees to live for six uninterrupted years in Brazil before being eligible for permanent residency. Since then, the number of years before a refugee could apply for permanent residency status has been reduced to four. As I will later show, lack of residency documents posed a significant problem for the resettled Palestinian refugees in accessing social services and getting their educational diplomas certified for job acquisition.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ When I began my first round of fieldwork, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile had established a resettlement program through which they had accepted resettled refugees.

⁸⁹ In some ways this was also a continuation of what Lula’s predecessor, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, began by establishing the Brazilian Refugee Law of 1997.

the country.⁹⁰ However, the internal conflict in that country often migrates along with those from different political factions who seek asylum outside of it. Some Colombians who sought and were granted asylum in a neighboring nation began to face similar risks of persecution in their country of refuge. Because of this situation, Colombians make up the largest number of resettled refugees in Brazil, as well as in Latin America more broadly.

The Solidarity Resettlement Program under the auspices of the 2004 Mexico/Latin America Plan of Action boasts an intensive tripartite collaboration between the Brazilian government (via CONARE), UNHCR, and Brazilian civil society (in the form of non-governmental organizations, such as *Cáritas* in São Paulo and Antônio Vieira in Rio Grande do Sul). While serving mostly refugees from nations in Central and South America, the program laid the groundwork for Brazil's humanitarian overture to resettle over 100 Palestinian refugees from the Ruweished refugee camp in 2007. Brazil is the first South American nation to extend resettlement to those outside of the geographical boundaries of Latin America.⁹¹ Moreover, this humanitarian overture provided fodder for Brazilian officials to underscore the country as a pioneer in the region and its growing role in the global stage. Teles Barreto, the Minister of Justice and President of CONARE, framed the Palestinian resettlement as an example of Brazil's regional leadership in this area: "Com este exemplo novamente o Brasil tomou a vanguarda regional em matéria de proteção de refugiados e estendeu de maneira generosa

⁹⁰ Some estimates put the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Colombia at over 4 million.

⁹¹ Prior to the 2004 MPA, in 1999, Brazil and UNHCR signed The Macro Agreement for the Resettlement of Refugees/ *O Acordo Macro para o Reassentamento de Refugiados*. It was under this accord that Brazil received its first group of resettled refugees. The group consisted of 23 Afghans who were resettled in Rio Grande do Sul (See Zerbini 2009). And while section 9.1 of the Macro Accord states that CONARE is the coordinator of all things related to the integration of refugees, it does not assume this position in practice. Instead, UNHCR and the NGOs in the cities of resettlement assume this position because, from CONARE's perspective, these institutions have direct contact with the resettled persons.

e solidária o programa de reassentamento também a 108 refugiados palestinos” [Once again with this example, Brazil was on the cutting edge at the regional level in the field of refugee protection and in a generous and solidarious way extended the resettlement program to 108 Palestinian refugees] (Barreto 2010, 58).

For Brazil, the appeal of positioning itself as a significant actor, with exceptional diplomatic and progressive characteristics, in the theater of global governance cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it is important to further situate these global and national aims in the political and economic exchanges operating within the Brazilian nation-state to contextualize the humanitarian overture and reception of Palestinian refugees from Iraq. The next section endeavors to capture these dynamics.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL & ECONOMIC EXCHANGES

With its economic global expanse, Brazil has also sought to secure a more significant role in global governance. One of the means of achieving this has been to try to secure a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC). While this endeavor had been ongoing, it was significantly invigorated under President Lula’s leadership (2003-2010). As it stands, the UNSC has no representation from Latin America and continues to consist of nations—the Permanent 5--that represent an antiquated rubric of power (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States), reflecting a post World War II world order (Caixeta 2005). Indexing its global significance by participating and taking a leadership role in peacekeeping initiatives in places like Haiti and East Timor, Brazil has continued to increase its visibility on the global stage, while simultaneously reinforcing its case for becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council (Sánchez Nieto 2012).

The former Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim, wrote an article in 2011 in *Foreign Policy Magazine*, “Let Us In: Why Barack Obama must support Brazil’s drive for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council,”⁹² where he underscored the importance of Brazil as a global player, but also the waning legitimacy of the UN Security Council because it reflected an antiquated world order. Moreover, Amorim highlighted the “new perspectives” and “fresh ideas” Brazil would bring to the table, especially as it relates to the Middle East. He asserted, “Brazil is an interlocutor that is able to talk to everyone. In the same month in 2009, for example, we received the president of Israel, the president of the Palestinian Authority, and the president of Iran.” He then posed “How many other countries are able to receive visits from these three presidents in just a matter of weeks? It was a demonstration of how well-positioned Brazil is to hold dialogue with countries with different perspectives.” Furthermore, Amorim credited Brazil’s ability to forge new paths and attributed its potential to advance stalled diplomacy in part to Brazil’s “pluralistic background—the cultural and racial mixture of our society.”⁹³ The harmonious plurality discourse was harnessed to support claims for Brazil’s exceptional capacity to deal with multiple nation-states because of the hybridized constitution of its people.

Among many of the resettled Palestinian refugees, as well as some UNHCR personnel in Brasilia, Brazil’s desire for a permanent seat in the UNSC was often highlighted as either *the* reason or part of the reason for its humanitarian overture to the Palestinian refugees. While pointing to some of the problems with the resettlement program and the difficulties encountered by refugees in finding employment and with

⁹² See http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/14/let_us_in?wp_login_redirect=0, March 14, 2011. Accessed May 17, 2011

⁹³ Ibid.

general integration, one of my interlocutors noted, “Why else would they bring us if they were not prepared to receive us?” Others suggested that resettling Palestinian refugees gave Brazil more visibility in the narrative of global governance and highlighted its significance in its diplomatic and economic endeavors in the Middle East. Part of Brazil’s grand entrance on to the global stage has been the astute ties it has forged with non-western nations.⁹⁴ Of particular relevance to this project is the recent intensification of political and economic relations between Brazil and Arab countries.

Hosting the first summit of South American and Arab Nations in Brasilia in May 2005, Brazilian leaders proposed to strengthen ties and form “a new world economic geography,” facilitating transnational flows of money and products between Latin American nations and the Arab world—a South-South exchange.⁹⁵ President Lula set the historic summit in motion when he visited several Arab countries in December 2003.⁹⁶ After careful planning with countries in Latin America and the Middle East, the summit was held on May 10-11, 2005 in Brasilia and was attended by 22 Arab and 12 Latin American countries.

In his opening remarks for the summit, President Lula invoked a historic cultural tie between Brazil and the Arab world: “O Brasil acolhe a todos com os braços abertos, na melhor tradição de nossa hospitalidade, que é aquela da América do Sul e que herdamos do mundo árabe /Brazil welcomes everyone with open arms in the best tradition of our hospitality, which is that of Latin America and the very one we inherited

⁹⁴ When being self-referential, government officials, as well as Brazilian academics, always refer to Brazil as a Western nation, “um país ocidental.”

⁹⁵ *Folha de São Paulo*, May 16, 2005, A14. Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, as cited in Karam’s *Another Arabesque*, 174.

⁹⁶ President Lula’s visit to the Middle East marked the first visit by a Brazilian Head of State to the region since Dom Pedro II’s visit in 1876. During his one-week trip, President Lula visited Syria, Lebanon, Libya, and the United Arab Emirates [Eugênio Vargas Garcia, et al. *Brazilian Foreign Policy Under Lula: A Chronology, 2003-2006* (Brasília: Ministry of External Relations, 2008), 47.]

from the Arab world.”⁹⁷ The President was directly referencing his country’s colonial history. As scholars have noted, Portuguese colonialism arrived in Brazil with a freighted memory of Moorish culture, tradition, and religion (Freyre 1956 [1933], 1959; Gomez 2005). When invoked, this colonial legacy often coalesces with the politics of multiplicity commonly attributed to the Brazilian nation-state as evidenced above--a recasting of the much-touted and contested national ideology of racial democracy. Here Portuguese colonialism is hailed as an integral history, laying the foundation to bridge two vast and distant geographical spaces.

President Lula then characterized the summit as a “reencounter,” and nodded to the history of Arab migration to Latin America. He claimed this was “O reencontro dos sul-americanos com uma civilização que nos chegou primeiro pela herança ibérica e, depois, pela imigração. Esses valores são hoje parte indissociável de nossa própria identidade/ A reencounter of South Americans with a civilization that first came to us through our Iberian heritage, and, later, by way of immigration. Today, these values are indecipherable from our own identity.”⁹⁸ The “reencounter,” as Lula posits, is with an integral and foundational subjectivity, one that is an inherent layer of South American identity and is seamless in constitution and form. This monolithic yet multiply-constituted self connects to the nationalist ideology of racial democracy, forming the hybridized national subject. At a historical moment, post September 11, 2001, when U.S. and European world powers sought to underscore differences with the Arab World, President Lula focused on sameness and a hybridized national subject, constituted in part

⁹⁷ (<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/discursos-artigos-entrevistas-e-outras-comunicacoes/presidente-da-republica-federativa-do-brasil/327792524444-discurso-do-presidente-da-republica-luiz-inacio>) (accessed September 25, 2010)

⁹⁸ Ibid. Part of this quote is cited in Karam (2007, 174).

by racial and cultural mixing with Arab peoples. Within this calculus lay a significant economic opportunity around which the summit was premised.

The “reencounter” in Brasilia, in May 2005, also countered the economic and militarized hegemonic forces operating globally after September 11. The President was forthright and reiterated the country’s opposition to the U.S. military invasion of Iraq.

O Brasil foi daqueles países que contestou a ocupação porque entendia que era preciso negociar mais. Agora, o que nós queremos é que o povo iraquiano tenha a possibilidade de reconstruir o seu país, reconstruir instituições sólidas, consolidar a democracia, consolidar o desenvolvimento, porque eu acho que, como outros povos, o povo iraquiano tem o direito de construir a sua própria felicidade e seu próprio país.

Brazil was one of those countries that was against the [US] occupation and understood the necessity to further negotiate. Now what we want is for the Iraqi people to have the opportunity to rebuild their country, rebuild solid institutions, while strengthening democracy, [and] consolidating development. Because I think, just like other people, the Iraqis have the right to build their own happiness and their own country... (South America-Arab Nations Summit)⁹⁹

During the Latin America-Arab Nations summit, in his opening and closing speeches, President Lula, in addition to citing the importance of forging “new economic geographies.” highlighted the importance of balancing wealth globally for the sake of humanity and social justice. His discourse about the Middle East ruptured notions of Western exceptionalism, where ideas about culture, modernity, and economic opportunity circulate from the West to the East and not the other way around. Instead the East is always already an indivisible component of *Brasilidade*, which produces its own form of exceptionalism. Lula emphasized the need for development in a world “where the rich get increasingly richer and the poor poorer...in a world where, despite the advances in

⁹⁹ Closing remarks by President Lula at 2005 South American- Arab Nations summit on May 11, 2005: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/discursos-artigos-entrevistas-e-outras-comunicacoes/presidente-da-republica-federativa-do-brasil/640301206444-discurso-do-presidente-da-republica-luiz-inacio>. Accessed 25 September 2010.

science and technology, one billion people go to sleep every night without enough to eat...” (Ibid).

The Declaration of Brasilia, ratified by all 34 nations in attendance at the summit, echoed President Lula’s speeches, where, among other things, the observance of international human rights would be paramount for global security and peace.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, the Declaration emphasized the necessity for revamping the United Nations, as article 2.7 states:

Lembram que, para cumprir seu papel, as Nações Unidas necessitam de uma reforma ampla e abrangente, particularmente no tocante à Assembléia Geral, ao Conselho de Segurança e ao Conselho Econômico e Social, que assegure maior eficiência, democracia, transparência e representatividade desses órgãos, de acordo com suas respectivas naturezas e funções e com seus objetivos originais/ In order for the United Nations to fulfill its role, it must undergo comprehensive reforms, particularly in regard to the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council, ensuring greater efficiency, democracy, transparency, and representation, in accordance with their original objectives and functions. (Declaração de Brasília)

The language of neoliberalism, intersected with humanitarian discourses, underpinned the purposes of the summit in Brasilia and positioned the Brazilian nation-state as the leader in these endeavors. By also critiquing the institutions within the United Nations, the Declaration of Brasilia pointed to the decades long imbalance in the UN. The ratified declaration indicates the ways in which the organs within the international body reproduce hegemonic discourses deployed by world powers (principally the five permanent UNSC members) based on their interests, instead of balancing the interests and powers of all its members.

¹⁰⁰ Cúpula América do Sul-Países Árabes - Declaração de Brasília: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2005/05/11/cupula-america-do-sul-paises-arabes-declaracao-de/?searchterm=Cúpula%20América%20do%20Sul-Pa%C3%ADses%20Árabes%20-%20Declaração%20de%20Bras%C3%ADlia>. Accessed 25 September 2010.

Moreover, in addition to reinforcing ties between the two geographical regions, the Summit provided an opportunity to forge a different political discourse about the Middle East and Palestine.

Quero também desejar ao Presidente da Autoridade Palestina e ao povo palestino, toda sorte do mundo para que a gente possa conquistar a paz definitiva. Eu fiquei impressionado com a conversa que tive com o Presidente da Autoridade Palestina, pela sua sabedoria e pela sua tranqüilidade em saber que a paz será, sobretudo, um jogo de paciência, como um jogo de xadrez, ao mesmo tempo em que temos pressa de conquistá-la, temos que ter paciência para construir as oportunidades políticas para alcançá-la. Eu nasci na política brasileira defendendo o Estado Palestino...

I would also like to wish the President of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people all the good fortune in the world, so that we might achieve a lasting peace. I was incredibly impressed with the conversation I had with the President of the Palestinian Authority [Mahmoud Abbas], impressed with his wisdom and his tranquility in knowing that peace is, above all, a game of patience, like a chess game. At the same time that we are in a rush to win it, we must have patience to build the political opportunities to achieve it. I was born in Brazilian politics defending the right to a Palestinian nation-state.... (Summit Closing Remarks 2005).¹⁰¹

The Brazilian president, by underlining his encounter with Mahmoud Abbas in his closing remarks at the Summit, signaled the formation of a new *political* geography being established by the collaboration of these two geographical blocs, while subverting hegemonic geopolitical cartographies. In expressing the necessity for a Palestinian state, the president went on to say he has also “never denied the need for the state of Israel,” and was clear that “peace is the only thing that can permit the construction of a harmonious, democratic, and socially just world” (Ibid). Thus Lula demonstrates how ideas about pluralism also form the country’s position in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Furthermore, by utilizing the collective “we” in constructing “political opportunities” to achieve peace, Lula pointed to the summit as one event which could produce political

¹⁰¹ “Closing Remarks by President Lula”

opportunities or a platform for collective action. In the process, the President seized the opportunity to demonstrate Brazil's diplomatic leadership.

The ratified Declaration of Brasilia emphasized the need for the creation of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. But instead of "land swaps," it called on Israel to withdraw from all Palestinian territories occupied on June 4, 1967.¹⁰² It urged the dismantling of all settlements established since then, including those in East Jerusalem. By delineating the borders to which Israel must unconditionally retract, the Declaration established the feasibility of creating a Palestinian nation-state on contiguous land. While President Lula appeared clear about his solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people, and although he did not address the second-class citizenship status to which over 1.6 million Palestinians (commonly referred to Arab-Israelis) who reside in Israel are subjected nor the growing numbers who believe in a one-state solution, his rhetoric was not pure showmanship. In fact, there were moments where he risked significant backlash for his actions.

¹⁰² Despite Lula's speech, many Palestinians, Palestine scholars, and activists argue that the possibility or feasibility for a "two-state solution" no longer exists. The manner in which the West Bank has been carved out to give privileged and segregated access to approximately 500,000 Jewish settlers living mostly on illegally seized Palestinian land has compromised a two-state solution. Moreover, "Israeli only" roads, the separation wall that has been built to allegedly "protect" Israelis from Palestinian "terrorists," functions to annex more land and to separate Palestinians from each other and from their own property; the fracturing of Gaza and the West Bank without contiguous access (and the lack of contiguous access within these), and the control over water, air, and land by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), have virtually erased the prospects of a two-state solution. Furthermore, critiques abound for Mahmood Abbas and the Palestinian Authority because of the way he/they have handled and demonstrated a willingness to concede to Zionist demands both from Israel and the United States. These demands, critics say, ultimately compromise what is best for Palestinians themselves. Important here too, as many have argued, is the inherent lack of congruency between demands to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, which grants full citizenship rights to Jews alone, and the insistence that Israel is a democracy. And this demand to recognize Israel as a Jewish state is a more recent phenomenon since the PLO acknowledged Israel as a state over twenty years ago, as part of the Oslo Accords. Consequently, some scholars and activists claim the only viable solution is a one-state solution. This one-state would give *all* citizens, not just Jewish ones, equal citizenship, restore the long denied right of return to Palestinians, and preserve the historical legacy of Palestine/Israel as a multi-religious and multicultural society. For more on a "one-state solution," see Ali Abunimah's *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse* (2007).

During a visit to Israel/Palestine in March 2010, the President made headlines when he refused to visit Theodor Herzl's grave, the founder of the Zionist movement. A wreath-laying ceremony on Herzl's tomb is a mandatory practice for heads of state, in addition to a 90-minute visit to the Holocaust Museum inside Yad Vashem; both are located on Mount Herzl in West Jerusalem. This has been an integral part of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's protocol since the Yad Vashem Law was passed by the Knesset in 1953. The law designated the creation of the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Since then, it is political protocol for all visiting foreign dignitaries (heads of states, as well as any political representative from a foreign nation, including senators, mayors, etc.) to visit these sites and recognize Zionism, by honoring its founder, and acknowledge the Nazi Holocaust, by visiting the Holocaust Museum.¹⁰³

A practice that Israeli historian Moshe Zimmermann claims instrumentalizes the holocaust for global political gains: "We instrumentalize the memory of the Shoah not only to make the world aware that we are traumatized but also for the sake of our specific aims in international politics, especially toward the Palestinians. This tendency in Israeli policy is getting stronger all the time" (Ahren 2012).¹⁰⁴ During Lula's visit, then Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, boycotted a meeting with the President because he had not visited Theodor Herzl's grave but had visited Arafat's Mausoleum.¹⁰⁵

While in Ramallah, on March 17, 2010, for a meeting with the Mahmood Abbas, Lula laid a wreath on Yasser Arafat's tomb in the Muqata'a, the compound where the

¹⁰³ Raphael Ahren, "The Mandatory VIP visit to Yad Vashem: A vital history or emotional blackmail?" *Times of Israel*, 18 April 2012, (<http://www.timesofisrael.com/why-does-israel-oblige-official-guests-to-visit-yad-vashem/>). The title of the report alludes to weariness about the meaning and intention of this obligatory visit

¹⁰⁴ Israeli historian Ilan Pappé makes similar claims.

¹⁰⁵ "Brazil President in West Bank: I dream of a free Palestine" sub-headline: "Brazil President meets with Abbas, lays wreath at Arafat's grave after row over refusal to visit Herzl's tomb," March 17, 2010 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/brazil-president-in-west-bank-i-dream-of-a-free-palestine-1.266534>

offices of the Palestinian Authority are located.¹⁰⁶ The photo of Lula wearing a *kaffiyeh* (checkered scarf) and laying flowers on the deceased PLO leader's tomb appeared in several Brazilian news outlets. (See Figure 3 below.)



(Fig. 3: The photo caption reads: “Visit: Lula places flowers on the tomb of Yasser Arafat, the former Palestinian leader.” This image was taken from an article in Mogi News on March 18, 2010.)

Later that same year, on December 3, 2010, before leaving office, President Lula officially recognized a Palestinian state, based on the borders prior to the 1967 Six-day war. Argentina and Uruguay followed on December 6, 2010. Soon thereafter Bolivia and Ecuador recognized a Palestinian state. And in early 2011 Paraguay, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Chile did the same.¹⁰⁷

In his article in *Foreign Policy* magazine discussed above, former Foreign Minister Celso Amorim cited Brazil's recognition of Palestine and the domino effect it had in Latin America to highlight the country's leverage in international affairs and to further underscore its deserved place in the UN Security Council. “Brazil plain and

¹⁰⁶ This is also the site where in 2002 Arafat's Fatah headquarters were famously demolished by the Israeli army, and from where Arafat was not able to physically leave. The siege by the IDF lasted for two years, until October 2004 when Arafat was granted permission by the Israeli government to be flown to Paris for medical care because of his failing health.

¹⁰⁷ See “Chile Recognizes a Palestinian State”

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2011/01/201117232287571.html> (accessed January 17, 2011)

simple has influence. In November (sic), when we decided to recognize a Palestinian state, immediately another eight or 10 Latin American countries did the same. Even some European countries are moving toward having a new kind of relationship with Palestine. To ignore the fact that Brazil has clout in the world would be foolish.”¹⁰⁸¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, Lula’s recognition came in the form of a letter to Mahmood Abbas.

Como sabe Vossa Excelência, o Brasil tem defendido historicamente, e em particular durante meu Governo, a concretização da legítima aspiração do povo palestino a um Estado coeso, seguro, democrático e economicamente viável, coexistindo em paz com Israel... Nos últimos anos, o Brasil intensificou suas relações diplomáticas com todos os países da região, seja pela abertura de novos postos, inclusive um Escritório de Representação em Ramalá... ou pelo aprofundamento das relações comerciais, como mostra a série de acordos de livre comércio assinados ou em negociação... [É] justa e coerente com os princípios defendidos pelo Brasil para a Questão Palestina, o Brasil, por meio desta carta, reconhece o Estado palestino nas fronteiras de 1967

As your Excellency is aware, Brazil has historically defended, and especially during my government, the realization of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for a cohesive, secure, democratic and economically viable State, living in peace with Israel... In recent years, Brazil has intensified its diplomatic relations with all countries in the region, by either opening new posts, including one representative office in Ramallah... or by deepening trade relations, as shown in the series of trade agreements signed or under negotiation... [It] is fair

¹⁰⁸ See http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/14/let_us_in?wp_login_redirect=0, March 14, 2011. Accessed May 17, 2011

¹⁰⁹ Not yet aware of the former Foreign Minister’s article, I had the opportunity to question Amorim directly during a talk at the Americas Society in Manhattan on May 16, 2011. While referencing Brazil’s recognition of Palestine in December 2010, the United States’ recent veto of the UN Security Council resolution declaring Israeli settlements illegal (in February 2011), I asked him what he envisioned Brazil’s role would be going forward in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He responded, “In this process of changes in the region, you may need people that are able to talk to the two sides in a way that has not [occurred] so far. He then said he was “puzzled” by the P 5 + 1 (the 5 permanent UNSC members plus Germany). “I have nothing against Germany, but why? Why? What is the value added, really? Forget about Brazil. Wouldn’t it be more *intelligent* to have Turkey, for instance, which is a Muslim country? Wouldn’t it be more *intelligent* to have Indonesia, which is also a Muslim country? I mean you *have* to have fresh air (original emphasis). And I think that is what you need in the Palestinian-Israeli process. And I think [you need] some countries who are able to see that in a non-prejudiced way.” He then referenced a Brazilian humorist who, when the dictatorship was coming to an end and the first civilian government was being formed, claimed there was a need for “inexperienced people” to form the new government, since all of the “experienced” people had lived through and thus complied with the dictatorship. “Maybe in the Arab Israeli problem, you need inexperienced people, in that sense. You need Brazil, you need South Africa, you need Turkey. You may need India, just to mention a few.” To access Celso Amorim’s talk at the Americas Society, please see <http://72.32.12.213/article.php?id=3347>. The question I posed is toward the end of his talk, at approximately 65 min 20 sec.

and consistent with the principles upheld by Brazil regarding the question of Palestine to recognize, through this letter, a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders. (Cartas dos Presidentes)¹¹⁰

After Brazil's recognition, warnings soon emerged from Israeli and US politicians alike claiming that in recognizing a Palestinian State, Brazil and other Latin American nation-states were "shattering" the peace process. But that peace process has, for the most part, given a biased broker--the United States--the ability to facilitate the ongoing Israeli land grab by Zionist settler-colonialists in the West Bank and the continued dispossession and forced displacement of Palestinians. The U.S. position in the "peace process" is best captured in Rashid Khalidi's latest book, *Brokers of Deceit: How the U.S. has Undermined Peace in the Middle East* (2013). Undeterred by criticism, in late December 2010, Lula's government announced the groundbreaking for the first constructed Palestinian Embassy in the Americas.¹¹¹

The Latin America-Arab Nations summit not only emphasized economic development and market flows between South American and Arab nations, but under the leadership of President Lula of Brazil, it also underscored the importance of forging new and creative geopolitical realities between the two blocs—realities that subvert hegemonic global practices.

¹¹⁰ See full text "Cartas dos Presidentes Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva e Mahmoud Abbas a respeito do Reconhecimento pelo Governo Brasileiro do Estado Palestino nas Fronteiras de 1967" <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/cartas-dos-presidentes-luiz-inacio-lula-da-silva-e-do-presidente-mahmoud-abbas-a-respeito-do-reconhecimento-pelo-governo-brasileiro-do-estado-palestino-nas-fronteiras-de-1967>

(Accessed December 14, 2010)

¹¹¹ According to the Palestinian ambassador to Brazil, buildings that house embassies for Palestine have either been rented or purchased already constructed. This would be the first structure exclusively built to house a Palestinian embassy. While Brazil has for years had a Palestinian ambassador in the country, s/he has worked out of a rented office. The embassy is slated for completion in 2015. See "Palestina começa construir embaixada em Brasília" (<http://www.anba.com.br/noticia/21196166/diplomacia/palestina-comeca-a-construir-embaixada-em-brasilia/>) Accessed December 29, 2013.

Given all of this, it is unlikely Brazil's overture to resettle Palestinian refugees from the Ruweished refugee camp in 2007 was uninfluenced by the economic and political priorities established in the 2005 Summit in Brasilia. This together with Brazil's growing interest in humanitarian relations, as evidenced by the 2004 Mexico Action-Plan, its desire for a seat on the UN Security Council, and its general interest in occupying a more significant role on the world stage provided opportune conditions for the nation-state to consider the resettlement of Palestinian refugees displaced as a result of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

While contextualizing its humanitarian overture to Palestinian refugees, Brazilian authorities re-deployed discourses of its historic multicultural character, harmonious plurality, and established presence of Arabs within its borders. As a result, the newly-resettled refugees, supposedly, would not have difficulty with "integrating" into Brazilian society. But an examination of labor practices and labor histories, offered in the next chapter, provides an opportunity to consider these discourses in the context of Palestinian refugees' efforts to find a place within Brazil's society and ideology.

CHAPTER 2

LABOR PRACTICES AND LABOR HISTORIES

The historical and contemporary labor practices that Arabs generally, and Palestinians specifically, have engaged in in Brazil are critical to their experiences as immigrants and refugees. These labor practices converge, diverge, and intersect with discourses of plurality and multiplicity in important ways. Moreover, there are specific gendered distinctions in the contemporary labor practices of Palestinian refugees that allow us to gauge the differential experiences of men and women in this community. These differences are particularly clear when focusing on the religious labor of Halal animal slaughter, into which young men from this resettled community have been incorporated. This type of work must be considered in light of peddling--the historic form of masculinized labor attached to Arabs in Brazil and for which there is an enduring legacy. The labor dynamics involved in Halal practices are, however, even more specific in their gender and age requirements since only young men, 20 to 40 years of age, are recruited. Moreover this form of labor absorbs the sacred/religious into its fold. In this context, Islam and Muslim identity have emerged as valued capital contributing to the development of a transnational export market in Halal food products. In other areas, however, Muslim religious affiliation can limit employment opportunities and serve as a source of stereotypes and prejudice.

Significant similarities and differences exist between the historical practice of peddling, which led to the formation of an entrepreneurial class (real and imagined), and the contemporary labor practice of Halal animal slaughter. Importantly, and in different ways, these modes of labor production have played a critical role in nation building and

have contributed to an increasingly successful globalized Brazilian economy. Drawing from reflections traced by John Tofik Karam, in *Another Arabesque* (2007), this chapter is framed by the relationships between neoliberalism, nation, and ethnicity. The first (neoliberalism) reconstitutes the Brazilian nation-state by providing new meanings to Arab ethnicities. One of Karam's principal arguments is that Arabs, once seen as parasites in Brazil's protectionist political economy, were transformed into partners when the nation opened its export markets. Their new position in the economy allowed Arabs—mostly elite Arab men—to gain recognition and respectability in Brazil. However, in shifting the focus from an established Arab elite to recently arrived refugees, the problems posed by incorporating people into Brazil's neoliberal economy is revealed, problems exacerbated by differences of gender, religion, age, class and education. Thus, the desirability of the refugees and even other ethnic groups within the category Arab are contingent upon associations with these differences.

PEDDLING ENTREPRENEURS

Peddling, the form of masculinized¹¹² labor that many Arabs who migrated to Brazil performed in the late nineteenth century and twentieth century was often frowned upon. Brazilian elites viewed this labor as parasitic and their promulgators as parasites, since peddlers were seen as achieving wealth at the nation's expense (Karam 2007; Lesser 1999). Scholars have noted that the Arab peddlers who migrated to Brazil were primarily Syrian and Lebanese, and mostly Christian (Knowlton 1960; Lesser 1999; Truzzi 1992). Many came to the nation-state seeking economic opportunities, while

¹¹² Since the majority of Arabs (as broadly defined) who arrived in Brazil in the late 19th century, through to the middle of the 20th century were men, this specific form of labor was particularly masculinized.

others were fleeing Ottoman conscription.¹¹³ The idea of a parasite lends a particular visuality to the movement of peddlers. Many of the men who engaged in this form of labor purchased their goods from wholesalers in São Paulo and made their way into small towns (organisms) in the interior of the nation-state, with a trunk or suitcase in tow. They made their way into the nation's interior using various modes of transport (i.e., emerging railway, horse and carriage, bicycles, on foot, and by boat in the Amazon region) to sell merchandise in remote areas to those who would otherwise not have access to these goods. This narrative of Arab peddlers and its accompanying imagery have been immortalized in Brazilian literary works by authors such as Jorge Amado in *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* [*Gabriela, cravo e canela*] (1958) and Milton Hatoum *The Brothers* [*Dois Irmãos*] (2000), becoming part of the national narrative of “outsiders” inside and also integral to Brazilian Orientalism and the neo-Orientalist glaze. That is, these texts are part and parcel of the knowledge production that construct monolithic ideas about the Middle East and reproduce essentialist characteristics of Arabs in the country. While doing so, these literary pieces also circulate broad stereotypes of Brazilians. This is most prominently configured in exotic and sensual depictions of Brazilian women, often characterized as domestic workers and sometimes prostitutes. Such portrayals are frequently paired with the Arab business venturer or peddler. The latter, however, is distinguished as an interloper with historical resonance.

The parasite image captures the idea held by the Brazilian elite that intrusive labor performed by “strangers” leeched the nation of profits in order to reinvest funds in their

¹¹³ These push factors were not mutually exclusive. According to Kemal Karpat, in his article, “The Ottoman Emigration to America, 1860-1914,” the primary “push” factor for Syrian emigration to the Americas, Brazil included, was the “deterioration of the Ottoman state after 1860—a deterioration that affected all population groups, Muslims as well as Christians” [International Journal of Middle East Studies, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1985): 179].

own “foreign” communities and send remittances to their homes of origin.¹¹⁴ The latter was considered particularly offensive since the Brazilian nation would not benefit from these profits. Records indicate that, in fact, there was a significant traffic in monies being sent back to Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Palestine to help support family members who stayed behind. In turn, “some [of this] money was used to buy land, help to break up large estates, and much for building houses in villages” (Issawi 1982, 86).

In 1914 remittances to geographical Syria were put at nearly \$8 million, in 1924 at \$19 million (exceeding commodity exports), and, for Lebanon alone, at \$20 million in 1952 (compared to exports of \$22 million) or 4 percent of national income...In addition, returning emigrants brought back capital and skills, founding industries and other businesses and improving agriculture (Ibid).¹¹⁵

Because the Brazilian economy from the late nineteenth century on was primarily rooted in agriculture, and the majority of immigrants were working within this economic framework, the success of Arab migrants in peddling led to them being constructed as parasitic.

In some ways, for the elite, cultivating the land through farm work had both a literal and symbolic signification. By working and cultivating the earth to yield its fruits and thus contributing to nation building, immigrants could prove their worthiness and eventually become incorporated into the nation. Although they were not of the land, working it for agricultural production earned them a place in the national body by performing labor critical to its success. Additionally, this form of labor bound

¹¹⁴ An influential intellectual and renowned anthropologist, Edgard Roquette-Pinto, who also served as director of Brazil’s primary national museum (Museu Nacional) in Rio de Janeiro (1926-1935), not only criticized the form of labor “Syrians” engaged in, but also commented on the “segregated” ways in which they lived: “From the thousands of them Brazil annually receives, there is not even a hundred [agricultural] producers...Although, by the condition of their habitual mystery [*peddling*], they are obligated to enter into relation with the Brazilians, they live perfectly segregated in their race, in their norms, in their way of doing things...” (cited in Karam 2007; 27).

¹¹⁵ According to Charles Issawi, these figures are based on remittances not only from Brazil but also from Latin America more broadly.

immigrants spatially, whereas peddling was predicated on mobility. Perhaps the untraceability and illegibility of foreign bodies in the nation through a form of labor based on movement, heightened anxieties among Brazilians. Furthermore, many Arabs arrived in Brazil under the pretense that they were migrating to engage in agricultural work. That was precisely the condition under which a visa to Brazil was obtained. In fact, in a letter written to the Ottoman Foreign Ministry on 5 March 1908, Paulo Duval, a wealthy landowner from São Paulo, requested permission to bring a significant number of immigrants, whom he envisioned would work diligently on his vast estate. Focusing on the embodied discipline and disposition supposedly involved in agricultural work, the landowner emphasized, “the activities, sobriety, and facility of adaptation of oriental workers, it seems to me, appear to embody the qualities necessary for agricultural labor” (Karpát 1985, 179; Musallam 2006).¹¹⁶

The docility attributed to “oriental workers” significantly increased the desirability of these labor migrants despite the fact that leading up to the abolition of slavery in 1888, Brazilian state policy was actively directed at “whitening the nation” (*embranquecimento*) by privileging European migration. Within this framework slave labor would be replaced with European labor (Holston 2008, 128). However, Italians—the most significant group of European immigrants and a large portion of the agricultural labor force after abolition-- began organizing for better pay and labor conditions and agitating against their elite employers. In response, the landowning elite reconsidered

¹¹⁶ This letter was sent the same year (1908) that Brazil opened its borders to Japanese immigrants, which consequently led to a vast Japanese migration to the nation-state, constituting the largest population of Japanese outside of Japan. This occurred, according to Jeffrey Lesser (1999), because there was a search for “submissive labor” (82). Since the emphasis on European migration for labor proved turbulent, in that many Italian immigrants protested the work conditions to which they were subjected, an agreement made between the Brazilian and Japanese government allowed for Japanese to enter into Brazil to conduct agricultural labor.

state immigration policy (Lesser 1999). While the project of whitening the nation was never abandoned, admitting immigrants as agricultural laborers who were defined as neither white nor black and were perceived as docile ensured the continuation of production. Hence, many labor migrants from the Ottoman-controlled Arab world obtained visas precisely on the condition that they would arrive in Brazil to engage in agricultural work.¹¹⁷ This was the case for many decades to come. But the shift in employment after entering the Brazilian nation-state, from agriculturalist to traveling merchants, and the subsequent success of many Arabs in peddling, contributed to the parasitic discourse advanced by the elite.

Others also took notice of the economic achievements of Arab migrants in the Americas. In a 1912 report by the German consul in Tripoli (Lebanon), the consul expressed astonishment with the quick attainment of economic prosperity for those emigrants engaged in peddling work. His incredulity was clear when he claimed that their rate of success was particularly notable "...if it be borne in mind that the majority of emigrants are completely uncultivated and that most of them can hardly read and write

¹¹⁷ Other Latin American countries also had specific immigration policies predicated on agricultural labor. This was evident in Honduras, for instance, where the Immigration Law of 1934 allowed for the conditional entry of Arabs on the premise they would engage exclusively in agricultural work. Article 14 of the Honduran Immigration Law of 1934 specifies that "...the entry of Arabs, Turks, Syrians, Armenians, Palestinians, Czechoslovacs, Lebanese and Poles may be permitted provided that they give a guaranty which proves to the satisfaction of the Immigration and Colonization Office that they come exclusively to devote themselves to agriculture or the introduction or improvement of new industries without prejudice of exacting other requirements established by the other laws in this respect..." (Cited in Darío A. Euraque's "The Arab-Jewish Economic Presence in San Pedro Sula, the Industrial Capital of Honduras: Formative Years, 1880s-1930s" in Klich and Lesser's *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*, 1998)). According to Euraque, these specified immigrants were obligated to engage in agricultural labor or begin new industries within six months, or they would be deported (105). Additionally, although Czechs and Poles were generally acknowledged as being white, Euraque posits that their mention in the Law was an effort to discourage Jews from immigrating to Honduras, since at the time many Eastern Europeans who had migrated to Central America were Jewish. Furthermore, the specificity of Honduran immigration laws emerged from the government's preoccupation with undesirable migration into the nation. For instance, there was a sizeable British immigrant population who were predominantly black agricultural laborers from the British colonies of the Caribbean.

their mother tongue” (Issawi 1975, 271). Yet the majority of Arab migrants who arrived in the Americas had engaged in both agricultural work (as subsistence farmers) in their country of origin (Truzzi, Issawi, Karpas) and in selling or trading the goods harvested by the family in outdoor markets (*hisbeh/suk*). Therefore, resorting to peddling work was not a significant departure from forms of labor conducted in their homelands.¹¹⁸

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CLASS

By the 1930s, in the city of São Paulo, Syrian-Lebanese immigrants began to produce their own goods in the area of Rua 25 de Março--opening factories that were minimally staffed and making textiles to be sold wholesale. This textile industry was bolstered by the Getúlio Vargas regime, whose protectionist economic policies dramatically increased import tariffs and invariably benefitted this industry (Karam 2007, 27). Consequently, the Syrian-Lebanese textile manufacturers became a critical part of an industrializing Brazil and formed important networks of production and distribution: “through the 1960s, the hundreds of store owners on 25 de Março accounted for an estimated 60 percent of wholesale profits from textiles in Brazil” (Ibid, 28). The success of these wholesale merchants entrenched this commercial district in the Brazilian imaginary as a Middle Eastern ethnic space. The Arabization of 25 de Março can be readily seen today in the names of streets (such as Rua Basílio Jafet, named after one of the first Arabs to open a business in the area, or Rua Abdo Shahin, among others) and in the names etched on awnings that frame storefronts (such as Niazi Chohfi, Comercial

¹¹⁸ Nancie Gonzalez’ text, *Dollar, Dove, and Eagle: One Hundred Years of Palestinian Migration to Honduras*, argues in Chapter 5 of her book that it is a myth that the origins of Palestinians who first arrived in Honduras were “...illiterate, penniless peasant farmers at home” (81). Her book focuses specifically on Christian Palestinians from Bethlehem. She posits that the farming economy throughout the Middle East included some form of trade, but she attributes the success of Palestinians peddlers, and Christians specifically, to their advanced experience and schooling.

Maluli, Perfumaria Jamil, Tecidos Sabah).¹¹⁹ Additionally, the intrinsic business skills that has been popularly attached to Arabs, because of the historic success of the Syrian-Lebanese migrants in São Paulo and the community's hand in Brazilian nation building from the early twentieth century onward, is reinforced by the prominent role well established, elite Arab businessmen have played in facilitating Brazilian exports to various Arab countries. Today, as Brazil's economy is increasingly export-driven, this market niche is ever more relevant to Brazil's globalizing efforts, as are the Arabs that facilitate this market (Karam 2007).

During a dinner held to commemorate the National Arab Community Day at Clube Monte Libano in São Paulo on March 25, 2010, then Brazilian president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, paid homage to the Arab community by highlighting its importance in the nation-state's development. "Nós devemos muito a vocês, porque o povo árabe ajudou o Brasil a ser o que o Brasil é. Vocês ajudaram a economia brasileira, a cultura, a medicina, a arte /We owe a lot to you, because the Arab people helped Brazil become what Brazil is [today]. You helped the Brazilian economy, the culture, medicine, the arts."¹²⁰ On the one hand, while highlighting the important contributions by Arabs in several areas of Brazilian society, the president implicitly distinguished between Us and Them, outsider/insider. That is, "you" outsiders have contributed to "us" insiders, which necessarily reflects a lack of full incorporation of Arabs as part and parcel of the fabric of the nation-state. On the other hand, Lula's discourse makes clear his favorable view of

¹¹⁹ *25 de Março-Memória da Rua dos Arabes/* Memory of an Arab Street by Rose Koraicho, documents the presence of Arabs in this commercial area of São Paulo. The author is the daughter of a Syrian merchant, Fuad Koraicho, upon whose death she discovered chests filled with documents and photos that served as artifacts and primary data for the book.

¹²⁰ Ana Maria Barbour, "Lula homenageia comunidade árabe no Monte Libano" 31 March 2010 < Accessed 19 April 2010> (<http://icarabe.provisorio.ws/noticias/lula-homenageia-comunidade-arabe-no-monte-libano>)

Arabs in the diaspora and Arab nations in the Middle East. Importantly, his speech also lends support to Brazil's increased investment in trade with the Arab world.

However, the tangible and perceived success of the Syrian-Lebanese migrants has led to a backlash against those Arab immigrants who have not succeeded as merchants and manufacturers in the "entrepreneurial class." For Palestinian refugees specifically, this construction has caused some social service providers to question their "real need" for economic assistance since the knee-jerk reaction has been to equate *all* Arabs with the successful elite. And the elite have made economic contributions to the nation-state, not requested or needed assistance from it.

Arabs in general have been lumped into the category "turco," which conjures a specific subjectivity, including an inherent aptitude for business and frugality. These characteristics are integral to Brazilian Orientalist framings of Arabs, who are invariably predisposed for commercial dealings. The broad category encompasses various ethnic and national identities (Turks, Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, Armenians, among others). As an identity category, "turco" is teeming with meaning, not only in Brazil, but also in other Latin American and Caribbean nations. While the meaning may vary in specific contexts, in São Paulo the category is attached to the migration of Syrian-Lebanese who arrived in Brazil in the late nineteenth century onward and worked as peddlers, some of whom went on to establish successful and lucrative commercial businesses.¹²¹ As a result, Arabs, regardless of their actual socio-economic class, are often imagined and constructed as successful and wealthy entrepreneurs. Despite the fact

¹²¹ Turco as an identity category, as various scholars have noted (Knowlton, Duoun, Lesser, Truzzi, Karam), emerges from the passports given to migrating subjects by Ottoman authorities. Since the Ottoman empire had the areas of Syria and greater Lebanon (not yet a nation-state) under its dominion, the men who arrived from the Middle East with these passports, despite not being ethnically Turkish were considered so by receiving authorities because of the travel documents they carried during their migration.

that the Palestinians were Iraq War refugees and had a different migratory trajectory, assumptions about their business acumen and comparisons to the established Arabs were often made.

Although the presence of Arabs in Brazil has enduring significance, accurately enumerating this migration has been difficult. According to Oswaldo Truzzi, the precise number of immigrants from specific countries in the Arab world has been difficult to determine, since when entering Brazil these immigrants were registered variously as “Turks, Arab-Turks, Syrians or Lebanese” (Truzzi 1992, 7). This categorization is particularly relevant to the time period of which he speaks, approximately 1870 to the beginning of the First World War in 1914 when large swaths of the Middle East was under Ottoman rule.

As indicated above, the broad category of turco encompassed various ethnic and national identities, which has made deciphering specific groups challenging. Additionally, distinguishing between Christian and Muslim Arab immigrants is also complicated because of the lack of precision with which this migration was documented. Despite religious differences, motivations for emigration were similar. One important impetus was—following a common narrative for migrants from many countries-- that they would acquire wealth and return to their place of origin. Some reports indicate that in the early twentieth century one-third to one-half of emigrants from greater Syria, Palestine, and other Ottoman controlled regions, returned to their country of origin (Issawi 1975).

Some scholars assert that many of the first Arab immigrants to arrive in Brazil were Christian (Hajjar, Lesser, Hilu).¹²² Yet, other scholars (Karpas, Issawi, Rupin, Jozami) suggest although the number of Muslims emigrating from the Middle East to Brazil and the Americas more generally in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was fewer than that of Christians, the size of this migration has been widely underestimated. Historian Kemal Karpat (1985) notes:

The available Ottoman documents indicate that, in fact, the number of Muslim immigrants was substantial. For example, an Ottoman consulate reported in 1904 that a ship arriving at Malta had aboard 201 'Syrians' who had embarked at Tripoli to go to the Americas and that half of these were Muslims who had left without permission; and the Ottoman consulate in Marseilles subsequently reported that there was considerable 'clandestine emigration of Muslims of 18-35 years of age' from Mamuretulaziz (Elazig), Aydin, and Trabazon in Anatolia, as well as from Syria, and that these young Muslims were escaping conscription and poverty. (182)

According to the author, Muslims experienced similar "push" factors as their Christian counterparts, namely poverty and conscription. But because large numbers seem to have clandestinely departed from the Middle East, enumerating their arrival in the Americas, principally Brazil, is indeed difficult.¹²³

Karpat indicates there are multiple reasons for this clandestine activity and the resulting dearth of evidence. For starters, furtive emigration of Muslims in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from Ottoman-controlled regions was a direct result of their being restricted from emigrating. Therefore, those Muslims who did

¹²² A significant number of Christians were either Orthodox or Maronite. In the São Paulo archive there is record of a weekly Maronite newspaper dated 1904, *Al-Manarat*, [Syrian], owned by the Beneficent Maronite Society of São Paulo: <http://www.arquivoestado.sp.gov.br/upload/pdfs/jornais/MA19040102.pdf>

¹²³ Scholars have noted that one of the contributors to economic decline in the Levant, which in turn spurred migration, was the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Himadeh 1936; Tannous 1942; Knowlton 1968; Issawi 1982). The canal connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Red Sea and was to facilitate trade to Europe. On the one hand, the Suez Canal facilitated and expedited trade between the Middle East and Europe. On the other hand, this international trade destabilized regional and local economic networks and facilitated foreign economic control of the region.

migrate often did so secretly. Additionally, those who were able to reach the Americas often hid their Muslim identity from authorities in the country of destination. Karpát concludes, “Many [Arabs] elected to pass as ‘Syrians’ and as Christians so as not to arouse the interest of Ottoman officials or otherwise jeopardize entry into their new countries” (182). Furthermore, many changed their names from an identifiably Muslim name to a Christian one.¹²⁴ Lastly, during this time period, there was a paucity of mechanisms to count and account for people’s movements across and between borders (emigration/immigration), making precise statistical information about ethnic and religious filiations difficult (Karpát 1985). However, according to sociologist Michael Humphrey, the Argentinean records indicate that at the height of Syrian-Lebanese immigration “the proportion of Muslims reached as high as 45 percent in 1909”.¹²⁵ Moreover, it appears that once in the Americas, Christians and Muslims migrating from the Ottoman region engaged in similar types of labor, making it hard to distinguish their identities once settled.

PALESTINIANS IN BRAZIL

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Palestinians were among the Arabs migrating to the Americas. Like Lebanese and Syrian immigrants, Palestinians often got a start in their new location by working as peddlers. During this time, those who went to Brazil migrated from in and around Bethlehem to the northeastern part of

¹²⁴ Often, Muslim last names can be determined by their root in one of Islam’s 99 names for God. These names are often preceded by “Abdel” (or Abdul), which in Arabic means “servant to.” On many occasions, upon migration, this prefix is dropped to shorten an individual’s last name. Of course, faith-based naming practices are ubiquitous in monotheistic religions (as well as others).

¹²⁵ “Ethnic History, Nationalism and Transnationalism in Argentine Arab and Jewish Cultures” In *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*, ed. Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser (1998), Pp. 167-188.

Brazil and were predominantly Christian identified.¹²⁶ According to João Sales Asfora in *Palestinos: A saga de seus descendentes* (2002), a visit from Emperor Don Pedro II motivated the initial emigration of Palestinians from Bethlehem.^{127 128} Given the timing of the emperor's voyage to the Middle East and Europe, some scholars suggest that he intended to inspire migration to Brazil, since the abolition of slavery was imminent, and new, more "desirable" laborers were needed to sustain the country's agricultural economy (Issawi, Hajjar). Clark S. Knowlton—one of the first cited academics to study Arabs in São Paulo in the early 1950s—in *Sírios e Libaneses: Mobilidade Social e Espacial* (1960), focuses on Syrian and Lebanese presence in Brazil. While he does not mention the emperor's two visits to the region (in 1871 and 1876), he does note the following:

O movimento emigratório começou em Bethlehem por volta de 1870 e aos poucos espalhou-se pela Síria e Líbano. A princípio confinou-se a apenas

¹²⁶ Many Palestinians from Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahour, also migrated to other South American and Central American nations, such as Chile, Argentina, Honduras, El Salvador, among others. In fact, the sizable Palestinian community in Chile is predominantly Christian and from the Palestinian cities noted above. According to the president of the FEPAL these are "the same Palestinians who are in Chile" [são os mesmos palestinos que estão no Chile]. He suggested that the Palestinians in Brazil's northeast migrated during the same time, from the same area, and shared family ties with those who migrated to Chile.

¹²⁷ Title translation is *Palestinians: The Saga of Their Descendents*. Claude Fahd Hajjar in his text, *Imigração Árabe: 100 Anos de Reflexão* (1985), also suggests that Don Pedro II's visit to the region, together with his interest in the local language(s), culture, and religious artifacts, served as a catalyst for migration to Brazil. While Hajjar asserts that the first Arabs to arrive in Brazil were a pair of Palestinians brothers (the Zacarias) in 1874 as a result of Dom Pedro's visit (219), other scholars, such as Jorge Safady (1972) and Majid Radawi (1989) suggest there had been Arabs in Brazil before then (in Pinto 2010, 45).

¹²⁸ Don Pedro II kept a diary of his trips to the Middle East and Northern Africa, which is currently housed in the Museu Imperial de Petrópolis (The Imperial Museum of Petrópolis) in Rio de Janeiro. In his second visit to the Middle East, the emperor documented the 24 days he spent in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria. In a Museum exhibit, "Dom Pedro II na Terra Santa" (Don Pedro II in the Holy Land), details about his visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Haram Al-Sharif (the Noble-Sanctuary), Islam's third holiest site, and his time in Bethlehem are documented in his own writings, as well as in photographs taken during his visit. The emperor's voyage to the Middle East re-emerged in national discourses when in March 2010, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, became the first Brazilian *president* to visit the Middle East. In newspapers nationwide it was noted that while Lula was the first Brazilian president to visit the Middle East, he was not the first Brazilian leader to visit the region (www.anba.com.br; www.museuimperial.gov.br; www2.uol.com.br/historiaviva/artigos/dom_pedro_ii_na_terra_santa).

alguns povoados, mas até 1880 a maioria das aldeias foi atingida [sic]. Em 1890 o movimento assumira proporções de dilúvio. /

The emigration movement began in Bethlehem around 1870 and gradually spread to Syria and Lebanon. At first it was confined to a few towns, but by 1880 the majority of the villages were affected. In 1890 the emigration movement reached deluge proportions (Knowlton 29).

A significant number of Palestinians who migrated to Brazil during this period settled in the state of Recife, in the northeastern part of the country (Asfora 2002). The relative success of Palestinian peddlers and merchants there contributes to the larger monolithic discourse of Arab prosperity in business and paints a broad and homogenous success story of these immigrants without attention to variability in socio-economic class.

In Brazil today, many of the descendents of the Palestinian men who migrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century from Bethlehem and neighboring towns, live in the capital city of Pernambuco, in the state of Recife.¹²⁹ In fact, according to Asfora, the capital city boasts the second largest Palestinian community in the nation. The significance of the community was officially acknowledged on 15 November 2003, when the Pernambuco State Assembly declared the date Palestinian Immigration Day/ Dia da Imigração Palestina.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Between 1920 and 1940, there was a large Palestinian presence in Mercado de São Jose—a local indoor market in Recife. Many sold miscellaneous items, such as toiletries, buttons, costume jewelry and other trinkets. After 1940, large numbers of Palestinian vendors left the indoor market to establish their own stores in neighboring streets. The trajectory of labor history that gets told about the Palestinians in Recife is similar to that of many other Arab migrants in other parts of Brazil who arrived during the same period. That is, many were itinerant merchants who eventually opened independent stores. In Recife however, the Mercado de São Jose offered an intermediary space between ambulant peddler and independent storeowner. In a 2005 newspaper article celebrating the 130th anniversary of Recife's famous market, João Sales Asfora states, "O mercado era como o vestibular do aprendizado comercial/ The market was like an entrance exam for a business apprenticeship." While peddling in urban centers, small towns, and remote locales provided an on-the-job immersion into the local geography, this was a quite different modality than having customers "find" a stationary merchant. The large market in Recife operated as a liminal space and provided a unique opportunity to grow a business before moving into a brick-and-mortar storefront.

¹³⁰ "Recife tem a segunda maior colônia palestina do Brasil"
http://www.anba.com.br/noticia_artes.kmf?cod=7415375&indice=1560

As noted in Chapter 1, by the 1950s there was a significant movement of Palestinians into the Americas. Those who came during that period are today considered part of the *colônia antiga* [the older community/migration]. I met Hussein, an interviewee, in Santa Maria-- one of five cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul where Palestinian refugees were resettled. Like many Palestinian immigrants who arrived in the country during the middle of the twentieth century, Hussein came from the West Bank, in 1955, and was influenced by both push and pull factors. A cousin who had made the journey some months earlier, had begun peddling and had established commercial contacts in São Paulo's Rua 25 de Março, facilitated Hussein's migration. Following an established pattern, goods would be purchased on consignment from already established Syrian and Lebanese merchants and wholesalers.¹³¹ Hussein's cousin arranged for someone to meet his relative and the men he was traveling with upon their arrival and direct them to the merchants in São Paulo's industrial district. The day after they arrived in the city, in July 1955, Hussein and his countrymen went to Rua 25 de Março. Each would fill up a suitcase with merchandise from a wholesaler who had already been apprised of their arrival and then head to the city or town in which they had a personal contact. Hussein headed to the South of Brazil and began peddling.

When my interviewee migrated to Brazil he entered into a nation-state with a layered social, political, racial, and ethno-religious history. This is evidenced in the immigration policies and political discourses in which immigrants were enmeshed and constructed (see Chapter 1). Hussein's first encounter in Brazil was inextricably linked with Rua 25 de Março, as were those of thousands of Arab immigrants who preceded and

¹³¹ There appears to not have been any discordance between these groups because of religious and/or ethnic differences.

followed him. Just like earlier migrants (pre-1948), this leap into peddling occurred despite work visas that clearly stipulated that entrance into the country was approved only to conduct agricultural labor (See Fig. 4). The trajectory of Hussein's migration elucidates the enduring if makeshift networks that soften the blow of estrangement on foreign soil. The established Syrian-Lebanese community, at the very least and even if inadvertently, provided an economic network that made the journey possible and provided the beginnings of a new life. After Hussein arrived in the country, he worked as a peddler for two years and then opened up a brick and mortar store. While he struggled to maintain his business in Brazil, he continued to send remittances home to his family in Palestine for 20 years.



(Fig. 4: Written in Portuguese and Arabic, the top portion of the passport reads, “I, the undersigned, declare that I will go to Brazil to live in a rural area and work in agriculture.”)¹³²

Hussein spoke freely about the history of his migration and the struggles he encountered but showed hesitation when asked about the recently resettled Palestinian refugees. However, his daughter, Rukaya, who operates a modest store in the downtown area of Santa Maria with her husband, was not measured in her response to my query. The woman was easy with critiques for the resettled refugee families. She claimed they complained about their resettlement; criticized the limited monthly stipend they received; disapproved of the general services provided by the NGO, and were dismayed by the lack of employment opportunities. Her assessment was as follows: “Eles querem a loja já montada! Não querem trabalhar. Quando o meu pai e o teu pai vieram pra cá, ninguém deu nada pra eles! Vieram com o pouco dinheiro que tinham no bolso e fizeram a vida. Foram mascatear pra por comida na mesa. Esses daí, querem tudo de graça” / They want the store already assembled! They do not want to work. When my father and your father came here, no one gave them anything! They came with the little money they had in their pockets and made their lives here. They worked as peddlers to put food on the table. These people here want everything for free (Interview. 19 March, 2009). Despite criticizing the refugees and reproducing a familiar, if problematic, narrative of immigrant economic ascension--to which her own father did not rise--Rukaya also questioned the resettlement agency’s rationale in dispersing the refugees throughout the southern state.

In contradiction to her comments, she thought the NGO should have chosen a city where

¹³² This passport, from a family’s archive, belongs to a Palestinian from the West Bank. The bottom portion indicates that the above named “Travels to Brazil on the basis of a permanent [visa]. In accordance with article 9 of Law No.7.967.” I cite extensively from this law in chapter 1. Specifically, Article 9 of the law stipulates, “A permanent visa will be granted to a foreigner who is able to permanently remain in Brazil and intends to settle there.” Like Hussein, Ismail did not work a single day in agriculture. He began working as an itinerant peddler and within a year’s time had opened up his own store.

there were more employment opportunities and one in which all of the refugees could be placed. This way they would have each other for support.

Nevertheless, when asked what she thought the difference was, if any, between those who migrated in her father's generation and the Palestinian refugees from Iraq, Rukaya returned to her initial assessment. She claimed the biggest difference was that the refugees were given recourses to build their lives, whereas those who came during her father's time were given nothing. Rukaya easily conflated Palestinians who came as immigrants and those who arrived as refugees during two distinct historical moments and under very different circumstances. Moreover, hers was a broad assessment of Palestinians, without taking into consideration socio-economic and migratory variations among Palestinians in the country. Rukaya's own father's tumultuous and ultimately failed business did not keep her from making broad assessments. This is similar to the way that Arabs generally are monolithically constructed in Brazil, as though they all have a similar trajectory and record of success in the nation-state. This then is a re-Orientalized glaze, where "outsiders" inside reproduce stereotypes of themselves based on broad Brazilian Orientalist ideas.

However, while Rukaya did conflate the two distinct categories of refugees and immigrants (and there are social, political, and economic variations in each), it is important to note that many Palestinians who left Palestine as immigrants during the middle of the twentieth century became refugees in the diaspora. They were not allowed to either return to or permanently reside again in their homeland.

NATION-BUILDING/ BUILDING NATIONS

A critical distinction between many Palestinians and the Syrians and Lebanese with whom they have often been conflated in Brazil is in nation-building processes in their home locations. In fact, as much as Arabs, broadly defined, were an integral part of Brazilian nation-building, albeit not within the economic modality the elite anticipated and condoned, Syrians and Lebanese were integral as well in nation-building in their country of origin.¹³³

For Palestinians, however, these processes did not occur in tandem and differed substantially. For those who migrated after 1948, remittances were usually not directed at nation-building, but instead toward an economy of survival. In an interview with Khalil, a Palestinian merchant in São Paulo, I asked about the much-lauded economic success of Syrians and Lebanese in national narratives and how Palestinians factored in these economic discourses. He indicated that Palestinians had not been as economically successful in Brazil because Syrians and Lebanese had been in the country far longer and in much greater numbers. The larger the number, he asserted, the better the chances of forming successful economic networks. Moreover, according to Khalil, “O Palestino, você sabe, tem um pé aqui e outro pé na Palestina. As vezes tiram mais do que podem daqui, para colocar lá. Por isso acho que não crescem. Mandam dinheiro para família...Num lado é bom, no outro lado, comercialmente, não é porque para de crescer aqui/ The Palestinian, as you know, has one foot here and the other in Palestine.

Sometimes they take more [financially] than they should from here to provide there. This

¹³³ Clearly the processes and flows for all Syrians and Lebanese did not operate in the same precise way, but, I am using generalizations to present a point of significant differentiation between these two groups and Palestinians both in the diaspora and in the home location. Also, I do not mean to imply that the *only* form of labor in which Arabs engaged (historically and contemporarily) was merchant work.

is why I think they have not grown as much. They send money back home to family...On the one hand this is good, but on the other hand, business wise, it is not because they stop growing here.”

Khalil did not explicitly discuss the economic effects that the geopolitical situation in Palestine has had on those living in the Middle East as well as those in the diaspora, but he made tacit connections when discussing the difficulty of forming an economic stronghold because of remittances sent back “home.” And although an older and larger migration of Syrians and Lebanese¹³⁴ could, in itself, place these groups in a privileged economic position, as John Karam’s book elucidates (2007), the Partition and later the Occupation of Palestine had multi-layered socio-economic effects that heightened such differences. The majority of Palestinians who entered Brazil in the 1950s, for instance, did so because the economic situation in their home location was deplorable. Thus many who left did so precisely to provide economically for the family members who remained behind.¹³⁵ A significant number of Syrians and Lebanese, too, sent money home to buy land, build homes, launch businesses, pay for education, etc., which allowed relatives to be more self-sufficient in the home location. But for many Palestinians, remittances from those in the diaspora were used for basic necessities to sustain the kin network. Instead of nation-building, sheer survival often took precedence. This became even more complicated after the 1967 six-day war resulted in the Israeli Occupation. The possibility of growing the economy and expanding state infrastructures

¹³⁴ Brazil is said to have the largest Lebanese population outside of Lebanon. Some place the number of Lebanese in Brazil (between 7 and 10 million) at nearly twice the number in Lebanon. As indicated in chapter 1, these numbers are often inflated for political purposes (see Karam 2007).

¹³⁵ In her article, “‘As mulheres voam com seus maridos’: A Experiência da Diáspora Palestina e as Relações de Gênero” (2009), Denise Jardim indicates that the creation of the Israeli state made economic viability for her interlocutors difficult at best. As a result, they migrated to Brazil to work and help their families.

became more limited and socio-economic prosperity more fleeting. While Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil contributed significantly to nation-building in their homelands, Palestinians were often differently situated.

More recently, according to John Karam (2007), beginning in the mid-1990s, middle and upper class Lebanese and Syrians and their descendants have been targeted for marketing campaigns for “homeland tourism” by travel agencies and airlines in Brazil and by the Lebanese and Syrian states.¹³⁶ These Middle Eastern nations, clearly interested in growing the tourism industry in their respective countries to bolster their national economies, have focused on emigrant communities. Moreover, the Lebanese state, specifically, has sought to “recruit emigrant tourists to improve Lebanon’s image in the world” by positively representing and publicizing “Lebanese culture and tourism” upon returning to their adoptive country (Karam 153-154). Here again there is a striking distinction between how Syrians and Lebanese in Brazil can contribute to nation building in home locations, whereas Palestinians, because of the Israeli Occupation, are foreclosed from this possibility.¹³⁷

Another interviewee, Amin, who lives in the southernmost state of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul, and is part of the *colônia antiga* discussed why he migrated to the country and his contribution to the family of eight he left behind. He owns a mini-department store in the center of the same small town to which he first migrated in 1955. Amin came from Ramallah, in the West Bank, but had become a refugee during the *nakbah* in 1948

¹³⁶ See Chapter 6 in *Another Arabesque*, “Air Turbulence in Homeland Tourism”

¹³⁷ This is not to say that Palestinians do not travel to Palestine. However, the conditions of travel and the “special treatment” to which they are subjected by Israeli authorities upon landing in Ben Gurion in Tel Aviv or upon crossing the Allenby Bridge from Jordan—the two entry points to the country—pose stark distinctions. Moreover, IDF military checkpoints (over 600) throughout the Occupied Territories, at the very least, compromise the possibility of fluid movement that would facilitate a tourism industry.

when he was 15 years old. His ancestral town was in northern Palestine, near Haifa.

Similar to Hussein, Amin had a cousin who had made the journey earlier and helped facilitate his migration. After being in Brazil for five years, he returned to Palestine with the intention of staying, but the hardship his family was enduring made it difficult:

Vi minha família, meus irmãos passando muita dificuldades. Não aguentei ver isso, e me perguntei: ‘posso viver aqui bem ao ver meus irmãos sofrendo essas dificuldades?’ Eu não sou cego. Fiquei na Palestina menos de um ano. Decidi voltar ao Brasil para trabalhar e ajudá-los mais. Eu fiz tudo que podia para ajudá-los/

I saw my family, my siblings, going through very hard times (financially). I could not bear to see that and asked myself: ‘Can I live here with a sense of well-being, while seeing my siblings suffering such difficulties?’ I am not blind. We stayed in Palestine less than a year. I decided to return to Brazil to work and to help them out more. I did everything I could to help them. (Interview. 17 March 2009)

Amin thought that in Brazil he would be better able to assist his family in Palestine financially, and in this way his narrative is closely aligned with the generalization Khalil, the merchant in São Paulo, made about the Palestinian experience in Brazil. That is, the remittances sent to struggling family members compromises, in one way or another, the sender’s financial stability in Brazil and may at times impede his establishing a sound financial foundation.

While Amin and Khalil arrived in Brazil 25 years apart, the former in 1955 and the latter in 1980, both have been implicated in the economic and geopolitical situation in their originating location. When family members are unable to subsist or get ahead because of the ever-declining socio-economic situation in Palestine, primarily as a result of the Occupation, relatives in the diaspora often contribute financially.¹³⁸ Despite the

¹³⁸ The impediment of movement within and between Palestinian towns and territory as a result of checkpoints, roadblocks by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and more recently the separation wall, make economic viability difficult at best. The control over water by the Israelis in the West Bank, where running water is often cut off from Palestinian towns (for days at a time) and siphoned to settler-colonial

significant distinction between Palestinians and other groups of Arabs, and not considering the more variegated class distinctions *within* these groups, Palestinians are too often absorbed into broader national discourses about Arabs belonging to a successful entrepreneurial class. While there certainly is merit to this broad stroke description, more nuanced socio-economic realities within and between groups in Brazil are overlooked.

LABOR: CONTINUITIES, DISCONTINUITIES, & COMMODITIZING MUSLIMNESS

Clearly in different historical moments Arabs and Arab labor practices (real and imagined) have been called into question and at times chafed against the nation-state's immigration policies related to labor practices, discourses of whiteness or *embranquecimento*, and ideas of belonging. Arabs, however, have also been credited, as underscored by former President Lula, for their integral role in Brazilian nation-building. Notably and inadvertently, the fierce protectionism and nationalism ushered in by the Vargas era catapulted a number of Arab merchants and wholesalers into an entrepreneurial class, despite being constructed as parasitic and undesirable. More recently, the economic identity of Arabs in the Brazilian imagination, narratives of their success, and local/global institutions, such as the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (CCAB), have also played a role in Brazil's contemporary economic and global expansion.¹³⁹

settlements, considered illegal in international law, compromises the possibility of an agrarian economy. (In many cases the separation wall has been built on seized property and impedes access to Palestinian farmers' own lands.) Additionally, the blockade of Gaza where again water is completely controlled by the Israelis, as is air space (in the West Bank too), and any and all supplies that come into Gaza, often dubbed as the "world's largest open-air prison," makes economic feasibility difficult at best.

¹³⁹ The Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce founded by Syrian-Lebanese entrepreneurial elite was first inaugurated in 1952. It currently claims as its objective to "[boost] economic, cultural, and tourist exchange between Arabs and Brazilians" (<http://www.ccab.org.br/arabe-brasil/en/about-us.fss>). Furthermore, it is "the only recognized representative in Brazil of the commercial interests of the League of

The labor patterns of Palestinians, and more specifically Muslim Palestinian refugees, are inextricably linked to the nation-states' more recent economic policies, its history of immigration, and its contemporary ascension onto the world stage. Although Arabs were suspect and did not fit neatly into the national project of *embranquecimento*, their contribution to Brazilian nation-building carved out a particular ethnic-economic space that proved beneficial to the country. This political and social capital has more recently earned them privilege and even an arguable identity as "white ethnics" (Karam 2010) in Brazil's fraught racial-ethnic hierarchies. However, this contemporary framing appears aligned with elite, mostly Christian, Syrian Lebanese men.¹⁴⁰ And despite their privilege, this group continues to be reinscribed into the "turco" category, which is necessarily entangled in labor histories, producing an enduring racialization or ethnicization centered on labor. Muslims, and more specifically, non-elite Muslim Palestinian men and women are subjected to a distinct form of racializing process. As with the elite, the historical labor pattern of Arabs generally, and success in this area, is still integral to this process; however, Islam surfaces as particularly significant and has

Arab States," consisting of 22 Arab nation-states (Ibid). For a more sustained discussion about the Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce see Karam (2007).

¹⁴⁰ In John Karam's article, "Belly Dancing and the (En)Gendering of Ethnic Sexuality in the "Mixed" Brazilian Nation" (2010), he suggests that through belly dancing an orientalist Middle Eastern femininity has been appropriated and commodified. This has been historically propelled in the privileged and male-dominated spaces of Syrian Lebanese country clubs. In these ethnic spaces, Arab men legitimize non-Middle Eastern, "lighter-skinned" women as promulgators of an essentialized Middle Eastern culture through belly dance (a dance which, in effect, is more of a Euro-American construction than Middle Eastern). Karam argues that this reproduces racial and sexual hierarchies within the framework of nationalist Brazilian ideology since Syrian-Lebanese men, who are the targeted audience and consumers of these performances, contract non-Arab dancers and rehearse a "transgressive male sexuality particular to Brazilian nationalism," reflecting a "whitened" racial and sexual mixing (96). Non-Arab women appropriate Middle Eastern femininity, universalize and whiten the bodily performance while "ethnic" men legitimize its authenticity through their "transgressive masculinity" by hiring, erotically dancing with, and sometimes being the musical accompanist for non-Arab dancers. At the same time the men marginalize Arab women by acting as gatekeepers for those who [can] perform in their ethnic clubs and by generally not contracting Arab dancers, nor offering dance classes for Middle Eastern women in these ethnic spaces. These country clubs, however, are not only male-centered, but cater to and are run by elite, mostly Christian, Syrian-Lebanese.

become part and parcel of a contemporary racialized labor niche. Thus religion, together with [gendered] labor, is implicated in these processes of racialization. The manner in which the “turco” is re-imagined, attests to the transformation, reproduction, and historically contingent mutability of racial (and ethnic) difference as theorized by Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986). Taking all of this into consideration, it is important to situate recent global and national economic exchanges operating within the Brazilian nation-state to further contextualize how Palestinian refugees from Iraq figure and are configured in this calculus.

Since the turn of the millennium, Brazil has been dubbed one of the emerging economic powerhouses in the globe, along with Russia, India, and China (and sometimes South Africa). The acronym BRICs, coined by economist Jim O’Neil, is often used to refer to these rising nations.¹⁴¹ In a 2009 issue of *The Economist*, Brazil was featured as having an edge over other emerging economies because it “outclasses the other BRICS” (15). According to this analysis, its democracy makes it more favorable than China; its friendly diplomatic relations with neighbors and lack of internal religious and ethnic conflicts make it more favorable than India; and its respectful treatment of foreign investors coupled with its more varied exports outranks Russia (Ibid). Apparent here is the reproduction and expansion of Brazilian racial harmony discourses--from outside/outside--to privilege the country’s position in global markets and outrank other growing economies. Discourses of racial-ethnic conviviality inside the country merge with ideas about cordiality toward outsiders. This works to substantiate and propagate a Brazilian exceptionalism, mostly based on essentialist ideas. These constructions from within Brazil, whose genesis is partly attributed to constructions from the outside, are

¹⁴¹ See “Building Better Global Economic BRICS” (Global Economics Paper No: 66, 2001).

reified for market purposes and in turn thicken the neo-Orientalist glaze. Between 2014 and 2024, Brazil is slated to become the world's fifth largest economy, surpassing France and Britain.¹⁴²

The “new economic geography” pledged by President Lula in 2005 (cited in chapter 1) has recently been seen in an explosion of Brazilian exports to Arab nations.¹⁴³ Economic trade networks between Brazil and Middle Eastern countries, further fortified by the South America-Arab Nations summit (ASPA), have also brought to the fore the Muslim practice of Halal animal slaughter and the labor niche associated with it.¹⁴⁴ This religious practice and its associated forms of labor have become of major importance in the Brazilian export market. Transnational trade networks, which include religious centers, have capitalized on local ethno-religious populations for this market. Muslims in Brazil, many of whom are Arab,¹⁴⁵ have been absorbed into this labor niche. In this respect, Arab-Muslim identity has appreciated in [market] value, both as social and economic capital. This conforms to neoliberal ideas that put the onus on individuals to appreciate in bodily value, where they become fragments of “human capital” (Feher 2009; Brown 2010). The resettled Palestinian refugees have also been absorbed into this market and factor in this equation.

¹⁴² “Brazil Takes Off.” *The Economist* 14-20 November 2009: 15-16.

¹⁴³ Exports include Bovine to Beirut, Lebanon

(http://www.anba.com.br/noticia_agronegocios.kmf?cod=7431503); a 73% increase in chicken exports to various Middle Eastern nations in the first three months of 2008 alone (http://www.anba.com.br/noticia_industria.kmf?cod=7431785). Over a \$684 mil increase from 2007 to 2008 in sales of maize and rice for which Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Algeria were the primary importers (http://www.anba.com.br/noticia_agronegocios.kmf?cod=7406292).

¹⁴⁴ The third South America Arab Nations Summit slated to take place in Peru in mid-February 2011 was cancelled because of the political unrest in Egypt and other Arab Nations in what has come to be known as the Arab Spring. The summit was rescheduled for October 2012 in Lima, Peru.

¹⁴⁵ Notably, the Muslim population in Brazil has grown significantly. This includes significant numbers who have converted to Islam.

PIOUS PROLETARIAT?

Até receber a proposta de vir para cá, as únicas coisas que já tinha ouvido falar sobre o Brasil eram Pelé, samba, café e frango da Sadia. Foi na embalagem dos frangos- um sucesso na Jordânia- que li as primeiras palavras em português./ Until receiving the offer to come here, the only things that I had already heard about Brazil was Pelé, samba, coffee, and chicken from Sadia. It was in the chicken packages- a success in Jordan- that I read my first words in Portuguese. (Revista Piauí/ Piauí Magazine)¹⁴⁶

In the above excerpt, Aisha, a resettled Palestinian living in São Paulo, refers to Sadia, a company whose name was familiar to many refugees. Sadia, a subsidiary of Brasil Foods, operates slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants in several Brazilian states and has for several years exported chicken to countries in the Middle East. Consequently, Aisha's first encounter with the Portuguese language was with products that a globalizing Brazil exported to Jordan. The irony about her and many other refugees' first encounter with Brazil through food products is that a significant number of the refugees went on to work as contract laborers for Sadia and other food production companies after their resettlement. Growing demands on Brazilian agribusiness companies to export to the Middle East assured that many refugees would be inserted into this particular form of labor for the external market. Since there are specific religious tenets for food preparation in Middle Eastern markets, resettled Muslim Palestinian men sought job opportunities

¹⁴⁶ This excerpt was taken from a diary written by one of the Palestinian women resettled in São Paulo. It appeared in the monthly magazine of a major newspaper in the city of São Paulo, Estadão, under the title "Uma palestina em Mogi"/ A Palestinian (fm) in Mogi. The diary documents her day-to-day activities and encounters in her new home location, just five months after her arrival in Brazil. The diary entries begin on February 16, 2008 and end on March 18, 2008 and were originally written in Arabic. "Uma palestina em Mogi." *Revista Piauí* Edição 19 (April 2008). <

http://www.revistapiaui.com.br/edicao_19/artigo_571/Uma_palestina_em_Mogi.aspx> 21 May 2009
Sadia Company is one of the country's main exporters of meat-based food products. In addition to exporting raw chicken and meat, Sadia also is a leading producer and exporter frozen foods.

catering to this labor niche.¹⁴⁷ Many of the resettled men were absorbed into this work via their connection to mosques in São Paulo.¹⁴⁸ Sheikh Hamdi, the Imam who regularly interacted with the refugees, introduced them to this labor opportunity.

There are two primary Muslim entities in Brazil responsible for Halal food certification: the Federation of Muslim Associations in Brazil/ Federação das Associações Muçulmanas do Brasil (FAMBRAS) and the Center for the Dissemination of Information about Islam for Latin America/ Centro de Divulgação do Islam para América Latina (CDIAL). Each entity has a Halal food certification branch; FAMBRAS has the Brazilian Islamic Center for Halal Foods/ Central Islâmica Brasileira de Alimentos Halal (CIBAL) and CDIAL has CDIAL Halal. While there are multi-tiered and multi-directional local, national, and transnational networks responsible for the significant growth in Brazilian food exports to Middle Eastern and Muslim markets, these two certification branches have been primarily responsible for training Muslim laborers, according to Islamic jurisprudence, in preparing chicken and beef products for consumption in the export market.

The Palestinian refugees who have been absorbed into the Halal foods market have been primarily trained by CDIAL. Headquartered in São Bernardo do Campos in the state of São Paulo, CDIAL Halal trains Muslim male laborers in animal slaughter practices and refers them to food production companies. These laborers are then outsourced by food production conglomerates, such as Sadia, which have Halal certified meat and/or poultry lines for target markets in Middle Eastern countries. However,

¹⁴⁷ Clearly the Middle East is not a monolith, nor singular in the realm of religion. The reference is to a specific export market that specifies religious observances.

¹⁴⁸ Despite the concentration of men in this form of labor, according to Muslim jurisprudence, women are not excluded from conducting Halal animal slaughter.

despite the fact that they were expected to be pious and embody a Muslim subjectivity in order to perform the work required of them in the slaughterhouses, many of the refugees who perform this labor do not necessarily engage in the requisite bodily practices of orthodox Islam (i.e., prayer five times a day, abstention from drinking alcoholic beverages, etc.). It is worth noting that Islam is often peculiarly affiliated with orthodoxy, but as in other religions there are differentiated modes of being and practicing and these vary in time, place, space, and according to the individual. Nevertheless, the men who engage in this form of labor are required to be Muslim and are often referred by Imams, sometimes despite the ways in which they live and lead their religious lives. With their direct engagement with food production companies, Muslim religious institutions are implicated in Brazil's globalized neoliberal markets by providing these transnational companies with what they consider authentic Muslim subjects to perform Halal slaughter for what has been dubbed a "giant market."

The consumption of Halal meat products in Brazil is not notable. According to the executive director of CIBAL Halal, Mohamed Hussein El Zoghbi, there are approximately one million people in Brazil who consume Halal meat products out of a population of nearly 200 million. The large majority of Halal products processed in Brazil are for exportation. Most recently, as a result of the South America-Arab Nations summits, these exports have increased significantly. In an interview by *Aljazeera* with Celso Amorim, the then Brazilian Foreign Minister, the fruits of the 2005 "encounter" were clearly delineated. As is commonly known, Brazil was one of the last nations to slip into the whirlwind of the global economic crisis and one of the first to emerge from its clutch. The foreign minister, in his interview during the second South America-Arab

Nations summit in Doha, Qatar in March 2009, insinuated that direct contact between the two regions was critical for both sides. This was a way to significantly de-center those world powers that had long operated as intermediaries between countries in these regions. Now Brazil proposed that these nations forge ties among themselves, independent of nations like the United States. The benefit of the South-South relations was evidenced when Amorim stated, “One of the factors that made the [economic] crisis less serious in Brazil is that we have very diversified trade. With the Arab world it went from eight billion to 20 billion dollars in three or four years” (Aljazeera 2009).¹⁴⁹

A specific example of this growth can be seen in exports between Brazil and Iraq. Since 2005, Brazilian exports to Iraq have increased by over 600% (from US \$101.7 million to \$717.8 million in 2009), and the figures for the first half of the 2010 fiscal year show continued growth, totaling \$387 million (Ibid). On August 5, 2010 a new Iraqi ambassador to Brazil was sworn in in Brasilia. Before Bakker Fatah Hussein became the ambassador, the seat had been vacant since 2002. The president of the Brasil Iraq Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jalal Chaya, proclaimed this as a critical moment “because the diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries are increasingly stronger...The ambassador’s role in this environment is crucial as it will further streamline processes and projects of common interest of both countries” (CCBI).¹⁵⁰ It should be noted those “processes and projects” which seem to be of

¹⁴⁹ Aljazeera News Online: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/03/2009331131144938569.html>). Accessed 29 August 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Brasil Iraq Chamber of Commerce and Industry (<http://www.brasiliraq.com.br/index.php?page=site.Noticia&idnoticia=200>). Accessed on 23 August 2010.

particular importance are those that will continue to amplify the exports of Brazilian goods to the Iraqi market. Currently, the primary export product is chicken.¹⁵¹

According to a 2009 study published by the Brasil Iraq Chamber of Commerce and Industry, “Exporting to Iraq,” whole, frozen chickens accounted for 66.98 percent of exports to Iraq. Chicken parts and various edible chicken products accounted for an additional 24.62 percent of exports, totaling nearly 92 percent of exports from Brazil to that country (8-9).¹⁵² In connection with this market growth, Al Kafeel Company, an Iraqi animal food products trader and the largest importer of food products to Iraq, was importing six thousand tons of chicken monthly from Brazil in 2009.¹⁵³ To eliminate “middleman trading companies” for Iraqi and other markets, Al Kafeel established its own office in Brazil in 2010.¹⁵⁴ It was slated to continue to increase chicken exports, beef exports, and negotiations were underway in early 2010 to export sugar and grains to the Middle East. Furthermore, according to an article by CDIAL, Al Kafeel was to begin marketing Brazilian food products with Halal certification to countries in the Persian Gulf as well as some European Nations.¹⁵⁵ For the most part, the animal products exported for consumption are largely processed in slaughterhouses run by Shi’a clerics. Although some religious and bodily practices differ between Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Halal

¹⁵¹ In 2009 “Iraq became the ninth largest importer of chicken from Brazil” (<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/brazil/100202/iraq-exports>). Accessed on 20 August 2010.

¹⁵² Brasil Iraq Chamber of Commerce Report: “Exporting to Iraq” (2009).

¹⁵³ In 2009, Al Kafeel had been operating in Brazil for two years.

¹⁵⁴ “Brazil- Beef for Iraq” http://www.meatradenewsdaily.co.uk/news/080811/brazil_beef_for_iraq.aspx Article release 08 August 2011, accessed 15 September 2011

¹⁵⁵ The Arab countries noted in the article were: Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain; the European nations listed were Sweden and Germany. <http://www.cdialhalal.com.br/index.php?page=Noticia&id=38>. Al Kafeel also identifies itself as a not-for-profit “company.” Despite Al Kafeel’s non-profit claims, CDIAL underscores on its website the enormous lucrative potential of the Halal industry, as it estimates it to be US\$ 2.1 trillion. The web page even provides geographical demographic breakdowns of Muslims in all continents.

processes are the same. In fact, Al-Kafeel is a Shiite company but all of the Palestinian refugees who are contracted by them are Sunni.

A large number of Palestinian refugee men, who were resettled in Brazil, are now working for these companies, and some work directly for Al-Kafeel. Sheik Hamdi, the imam from the mosque in Mogi, had a direct hand in the insertion of the young men into this transnational commerce since the vast majority of them were not absorbed into the local labor market. In part this was a result of limited Portuguese language skills that posed a great difficulty for many refugees, and the resettlement program did not provide training that ensured job-readiness or job skills. Moreover, there was not a systematic process in place to facilitate the revalidation of degrees and technical certifications, which could advance job acquisition in an individual's area of expertise. As a result, most of the refugees (men and women alike) were not able to find gainful employment. In São Paulo, a Lebanese factory owner, for whom hiring was seasonally determined, employed some young men from the resettled group. In the months leading up to Christmas, when sales for his frame products were at their highest, the owner increased his labor force. However, after the Christmas holiday his workforce decreased by more than half.

The lack of job opportunities left many refugees frustrated and disgruntled about the resettlement program since the only other means of subsistence was the monthly allowance received by UNHCR.¹⁵⁶ By December 2009, this monthly allowance ended for all families except for eleven individuals who were classified as vulnerable cases since they were elderly and/or ill. Consequently, many young men sought work in Halal

¹⁵⁶ In a traditional heteronormative family dynamic, the head would receive \$R 350.00 monthly salary and the other members a percentage of that figure, according to their position and/or age in the family. For instance the wife would receive 75% of the \$R 350.00 amount, an adult child 50%, and children 25%.

animal slaughter companies as an alternative. The significant difference in wages between the monthly minimum wage (at the time of this research it was R\$ 545, approximately US\$ 310) and what they earned in this labor market, made this work more appealing and worthwhile. For example, depending on the type of Halal slaughter, poultry or beef, they received anywhere from \$R1500 to \$R3000 (US\$ 855-1710) monthly.

Outside of their earned wages, the men were also given room and board. Because the slaughter plants require large parcels of land on which the animals can be tended and processed, the majority of plants are located in the interior of Brazil. Therefore, the men engaged in this form of labor are required to be mobile. They must temporarily relocate in order to fulfill the contracts they are given. Very similar to peddling, this type of work requires mobility and points to a nuanced continuity in Arab labor histories. For some who came in constituted families, this form of work also signaled a continuation of their multiple dispersals. A mother of three whose two sons found employment in this market reflected, “Families are all dispersed. In one family you have one member in one city and another member in another...all because of work.” While there was no doubt this type of labor was a better option for earning higher wages, it was nonetheless taxing on families and was not an assured source of continuous stable income.

Companies such as Sadia and Al Kafeel offer temporary Halal slaughter contracts that require men to leave their resettlement community. Individuals are usually contracted for only two to three months at a time, depending on market demands. Some are then re-contracted for another two or three-month period. However, reassignments are not guaranteed, and workers do not receive benefits. The quality of their work is evaluated

over a period of time and if those employed perform well, they may end up getting a “Carteira Assinada,” a formal registered work contract with worker’s rights, including benefits. This formal contract also provides monthly contributions to Brazil’s social security system, Instituto Nacional do Seguro Social (INSS), and contribution to a pension, for which they will be eligible upon retirement. However, in Halal slaughter this contract is difficult to come by. For one of my primary interlocutors, Nasser, who works for Al-Kafeel and whose story I document below, it took nearly three years before he received a contract with benefits (late 2012). The labor trajectory of Nasser and Heba’s family highlights the specific difficulties encountered in finding employment and the distinct labor opportunity Halal animal slaughter provides.

FAMILY & GENDERED LABOR

By December 2009, the young couple had been in Brazil for just over two years and each was struggling to find gainful employment. After a failed attempt to open an Internet café in the front parlor of the modest house they were renting, both found temporary employment outside of the home. Nasser conducted seasonal work in the frame factory referenced above, and Heba started working as a prosthodontic technician in the lab arm of a dental clinic in the center of the city.¹⁵⁷ Through her own networking with a Lebanese family in town, she was able to obtain this position. Meanwhile, making ends meet was difficult. Both were especially worried that the refugee assistance program was ending. Many of the refugees assumed the assistance program would be prolonged beyond the promised two years, but as previously noted, the program only continued for eleven vulnerable individuals. Two of the eleven, however, were Nasser’s elderly parents. Still, while the elderly continued to receive modest assistance from UNHCR,

¹⁵⁷ Heba was trained and licensed in Iraq in prosthodontics and Nasser worked in accounting.

albeit for an unknown amount of time, the younger and able-bodied refugees found themselves in a different predicament altogether. Finding gainful employment for them proved to be very difficult and was contingent upon and influenced by gender, by being able to relocate, and by one's level of education.

For many of the single, young men resettled in São Paulo, working in the Halal slaughter industry became an increasingly viable option, particularly since the majority of those who had been working in the frame factory were either laid off or had their hours significantly cut by the beginning of January 2010. For Nasser, however, working in the slaughter industry was not yet an option. It meant he would have to be away from Heba and their two children for months at a time, and despite the family's deep concern about making ends meet, they still tried to make things work in the resettlement city. Although he was one of the last to have his hours cut at the frame factory, it inevitably occurred. By mid January 2010, Nasser was given a staggered work schedule and was going into work every other day. Heba on the other hand was working long hours at the dental clinic and bringing in the bulk of the household income, but this would soon come to an end. Although Heba had been trained and certified as a prosthodontic technician in Iraq, she was not registered with nor authorized by the Board of Dentistry to work in São Paulo. During a surprise visit at the clinic by an inspector from the Department of Health, Heba was notified that she was under obligation to register with the Board in order to be employed there.

The process of getting Heba registered proved a bureaucratic nightmare. Despite having called the Board ahead of time about which documents were needed for registration and having gathered all said documents unexpected issues surfaced when she

arrived at the offices of the Board of Dentistry. Although Heba had an officially translated diploma, she was told it would not suffice; she needed to have the diploma validated by an equivalent institute in Brazil. This came as a surprise since not once was this mentioned to Heba by the local resettlement organization, *Cáritas*. Thus, she was instructed to go to the center that provided such validation, but she was cautioned that her status as a refugee might make her ineligible for diploma certification.¹⁵⁸ This was only offered to those with permanent or provisional status in the country.¹⁵⁹ However, the Board representative would forward her case to the Board of Dentistry's legal department and suggested in the meantime, given her work situation, she should nonetheless attempt to obtain validation.

Upon arriving at the Center for Technical Education to validate her diploma, Heba explained her situation and was met with yet another unexpected request. She was asked for her *original* high school diploma and told the document was necessary in order to validate her prosthodontic technician diploma. Heba told the agent she had not brought the document with her into the country, but she noted that she could not have obtained her prosthodontic technician diploma without having completed high school and the diploma she had should clearly serve as evidence of this. The agent reiterated that the original high school document was necessary for the validation process. Upon obtaining

¹⁵⁸ In their article, "Recognition, Respect, and Rights" (2006), Louise Humpage and Greg Marston argue that refugees (many of whom are from Iraq and Afghanistan) in Australia who receive Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) often face unanticipated roadblocks to employment and services because of this temporary status. Similarly, Palestinian refugees with the liminal and marginal status of "refugee" have faced unexpected hurdles in their attempts for economic incorporation and social belonging. And while Australia's policy in providing these documents seems more about deterrence—that is, to keep the number of refugees at a minimum and prevent more people from seeking asylum in the country—the similarity that Brazil shares is that these temporary documents prevent socio-economic integration.

¹⁵⁹ Not having permanent status and/or not being naturalized in Brazil foreclosed the resettled refugees from several opportunities. These not only include employment opportunities, but also the ability to be eligible for social programs, such as housing and benefits equivalent to SSI. I will discuss these in more detail in the following chapter.

it she should then have it translated, stamped and recognized by the Iraqi consulate or the Red Cross and validated by the Department of Education in Mogi.¹⁶⁰ After this process, she would likely have to conduct an interview with the only technical school certified in prosthodontics, located several hours away. The school would then determine her knowledge in the area and make a decision about the validation of her prosthodontics diploma, which was critical for her employment.

Heba's issues with documentation, certification, and registration were common among the refugees who had acquired higher education or professional diplomas in Iraq. There had not been a systematic processing of educational diplomas and technical licenses by the resettlement authorities. As a consequence, Heba emphasized that the likelihood of refugees gaining employment in the area of their professional training was minimal. In her case, her father was still in Iraq, but the majority of the refugees had no family members in the country that could try to obtain the requisite documents on their behalf. Additionally, many had lost documents during their forced displacement.¹⁶¹ On February 17, 2010, Heba's father was able to obtain her high school records. However, by then it was too late. In late January, the inspector from the Department of Health returned to the dental clinic where Heba worked. Despite being diligent about gathering the necessary documents to register with the Board of Dentistry, Heba was told by the inspector she could no longer work there and threatened to close down the establishment.

¹⁶⁰ Heba's other option, as she recounted in our Skype conversation on January 29, 2010, would have been to take a multi-part High School Equivalency exam (similar to the GED test in the US) that if passed would have granted her a Brazilian High School degree.

¹⁶¹ Heba was able to contact her father and asked if he could try to obtain her high school records or have someone obtain them on his behalf. Given the unstable situation in Iraq and the sectarian violence, she made sure to tell him that obtaining her high school records was not worth putting his life in jeopardy. Thus, if he was not able to safely arrive and/or request the documents from the Ministry of Education there, then it was not worth the risk and she would have to pursue other options.

The owners had no other recourse and Heba was fired from the dental clinic shortly thereafter. Notwithstanding this setback, she continued to pursue the process of getting her high school diploma certified, which finally occurred May 4, 2010, nearly two and a half years after Heba arrived in Brazil.

ENTREPRENEURS ONCE MORE/ ENTREPRENEURS NO MORE

By late January 2010, as a result of Heba losing her job and Nasser's unstable situation at the frame factory, the couple explored the possibility of once again attempting to open up a business. This time it would be in partnership with another refugee who had been resettled in the city. As alluded to earlier, the legacy of an Arab entrepreneurial class haunts the lives of the refugees. The general consensus by the resettlement agents had been that the refugees have stellar business acumen, even though some had no experience in business ventures and others had been involved in failed business endeavors while in Brazil. Nasser and Heba's Internet café, despite being an epic failure, was referenced time and again by UNHCR resettlement agents, Cáritas staff, and even the local municipality's social services employees as testament to the innate entrepreneurial abilities of Arabs.

This perceived constitutive facet of Arab identity, often considered to be a biologically determined trait, has a ubiquitous presence in Brazilian society and shows the pervasiveness of Brazilian Orientalism and the neo-Orientalist glaze. Another of Jorge Amado's books, *The Discovery of America by the Turks* (2012 [1994]), has helped to bolster this idea. In the text Ibrahim, a widower, is desperate for a suitor for his increasingly tyrannical daughter who took it upon herself to recalibrate the family's moral compass after it had gone askew following her mother's death. Amado's character

comes to the conclusion that he must find a “fellow countryman” to marry his daughter and get her off his back. But this “countryman” would also secure the future of the family’s Bargain shop, which had gone into disrepair because of Ibrahim’s lack of monitoring. The prospective husband would take over and manage the family business and consequently ensure more leisure for Ibrahim. Amado writes, “The suitor’s Arab blood would be a guarantee of his vocation for business and readiness for work” (2012, 20). This alleged “natural” Arab trait was echoed in an interview (22 December 2009) with a city worker who had had contact with the refugees as part of a municipal evaluation process. She reproduced dominant discourses about Arabs being inherently commercially inclined when she categorically assessed the refugees as “real entrepreneurs; they have a facility with business. They are ‘turcos,’ right?” [são empreendedores mesmo, tem facilidade com comércio. São ‘turcos,’ né?]. She then used the Internet café as an example.

Furthermore, when a job search began for a position with the local resettlement authorities, the advertisement for the “economic integration agent” emphasized that the prospective employee would support Palestinian refugees with business ventures:

Acompanhar e facilitar o acesso de refugiados a informações sobre o acesso ao emprego, direitos trabalhistas, gestão de negócios, microcrédito e áreas afins;
Assessorar os refugiados palestinos na implementação dos planos individuais e sugerir alterações/adaptações, quando necessário.
Elaborar plano de negócio relatando seus objetivos, os passos que devem ser dados para alcançá-los com menor grau de riscos e incertezas, sinalizando quanto a viabilidade em iniciar, manter ou ampliar o negócio;
Desenvolver com o refugiado planejamento estratégico com objetivo de direcionar os rumos administrativos do negócio e dar a ele sustentabilidade

Monitor and facilitate refugee access to employment information, worker’s rights, business management, micro-credit and related areas;
Assist Palestinian refugees in the implementation of individual plans and suggest changes/adjustments when necessary.

Develop a business plan describing their goals, the steps that must be taken to achieve them with lower risks and uncertainties, and indicating the feasibility to start, maintain or expand the business;
 Develop with the refugee strategic planning in order to direct the administrative course of the business and give it sustainability.¹⁶²

Despite vigorous efforts to fit the refugees into essentialist Orientalist ideas about Arabs/Turcos, the ad also indicated the Palestinians' failure to live up to these purported intrinsic entrepreneurial traits by pointing to the areas in which they needed assistance. This was made ever more apparent when part of the job description not only constructed the refugees as financially undisciplined but also as unable to discern between private and commercial affairs. Thus the "economic integration agent" would:

Auxiliar e treinar os refugiados sobre finanças de negócios e pessoais destinadas a minimizar os problemas causados pelo descontrole financeiro e a sistemática confusão entre o que é recurso pessoal e do negócio, visando aumentar a produtividade dos negócios através do equilíbrio financeiro do empreendimento com o pessoal

Assist with and train the refugees on business and personal finances to minimize the problems caused by uncontrolled finances and the *systematic confusion* between personal and business expenses, aiming to increase business productivity by balancing financial resources in business ventures and personal life (emphasis added).¹⁶³

The employment advertisement functioned as a broad assessment of the refugees and it reflected the resettlement authorities' perception of the group. Yet despite the glaring contradictions between the assumptions of Arab business savviness and ideas that Palestinian refugees came woefully short of these, there was a parallel effort to mold them to fit the broader stereotypes and an insistence on holding them accountable to these constructions.

¹⁶² For the full job description, see <http://empregocerto.uol.com.br/vagas/agente-de-integracao-economica-mogi-das-cruzes-sp-1083896>. First accessed, July 28, 2010.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

In the case of Nasser and Heba, their abilities to run and operate a business efficiently, productively, and lucratively were at best questionable. However, among the resettled Palestinians in Mogi, there were in effect two refugees who succeeded in opening and maintaining a viable business. One of them was a single, young man, Bilal, who was able to take over an already existing 1.99 store (Dollar store). In order to save money and make ends meet, he gave up his apartment and slept in a small stock room in the back of the store. However, more pressing and significant, because of a physical disability, Bilal was considered a vulnerable case and continued to receive a monthly assistance stipend from UNHCR. This supplemental income was part of what allowed him to maintain his business. The other individual, Hazem, was a father of four who had previously run a business in the Middle East and was operating a car wash and parking lot in the center of town.

Both men were forthcoming about the difficulties they encountered with running their own businesses. Working 12 to 16 hour days, the harsh reality was they still had a hard time paying their bills. Bilal was also quick to point out how some refugees opened businesses that quickly failed because they simply did not know how to operate them and had no experience. He pointed to his own father's failed restaurant resulting from his utter lack of knowledge of the business: "It's like me opening up a store like this without knowing how to run such a business. It would not work." Bilal's brother, Sabri, had obtained a Master's in Literature while in Iraq, but because of the difficulties with missing documentation and the complicated diploma validation processes, as Heba's dilemmas make clear, he decided to open an Arabic pastry shop. The business did not

bear fruit either, and he found that his only other viable option was to enter the Halal slaughter industry.

In part, the location of these businesses also pointed to their potential for success. Bilal's 1.99 store was located in the commercial downtown of Mogi on a narrow street but with high pedestrian traffic, and his merchandise--with some higher end ceramic vases, knickknacks, and shelves designated for 1.99 bric-a-brac—had appeal to a wide audience. The store was just a half block away from the city cathedral (Catedral de Sant'Anna) and its busy square, with plenty of benches, a snack kiosk, a taxi hub, and a central bus stop. Hazem's parking lot and car wash was located on the other side of town, near a few mid-sized office buildings and medical offices, where there was a need for parking. Those who parked there also took advantage of the car wash services he offered. Heba and Nasser's Internet café, however, housed in the front parlor of their home, was in a residential neighborhood at the top of a steep incline, where there was not much foot traffic. In fact the house was slightly set back from the sidewalk and had property partition walls on either side, making the cybercafé sign draped in front of the structure visible only when a person was nearly directly in front of the house. Moreover, the house was located in front of the Mogi mosque, which saw its highest level of attendance during Friday early afternoon prayers [*salat al jumu'ah*]*—the Muslim day of congregational worship--but otherwise did not produce much pedestrian traffic since attendants mostly drove there. While there was also a mosque square--a small, triangular shaped patch, without trees for shade and with a minaret monument--there were hardly ever people there. Like the mosque, the square was a point of drive-by tourism. At night it was common to see cars parked along the perimeter of the dimly lit square, which*

locals often used as a make-out spot. So this too did not produce any customers. The clientele, if any, were young kids who lived in the neighborhood and because of limited resources, would usually spend an hour or less in the café.

Aware of the difficulties facing Nasser, the refugee who had the parking lot and car wash, Hazem, proposed the possibility of a joint venture.¹⁶⁴ He suggested they open up an Internet Café in the premises of his establishment. According to Hazem, there would soon be a college branch inaugurated nearby and an Internet café would prove to be a lucrative venture. Since Nasser and Heba already had the necessary computer equipment from their first venture, the transition into this business seemed sensible. However, Heba was skeptical about the partnership, but she acquiesced believing it was the only option they had besides the Halal industry. Whatever money the couple had saved in the few months prior to the resettlement assistance program ending was poured into the new business. Issues soon began to emerge about the new venture. First, to Heba's consternation, her husband and his new partner seemed to constantly make changes to the business plans. What had been an initial agreement to open a cybercafé, which Nasser would operate, had been amended by Hazem. He now also wanted to open a snack bar, and Nasser went along with it. Heba also worried there had not been a clearly delineated agreement about how much money each would invest in the nascent business, or how profits would be divided. Another significant concern that materialized was the proposal to sell alcoholic beverages at the snack bar. Unlike her husband, Heba was a devout and practicing Muslim, and she was deeply concerned about earning money for the family by a means contrary to Muslim jurisprudence. She did not want to have anything to do with a business that violated religious tenets.

¹⁶⁴ Sonia Hamid corroborated the processes of this business venture.

When the two-pronged venture was slated to open, more bad news arrived. Apparently, there was a city ordinance prohibiting cybercafés within a designated number of meters (approximately 100) from any school or college—something neither Hazem nor Nasser thought to explore. Heba was disheartened by these developments and appalled her husband would invest what little they had into a business without being sure everything was in order. Despite these tensions, Nasser insisted that opening the snack bar alone would yield profits. And while Heba originally wanted to have no part in the snack bar because of the alcohol, when the business launched she worked alongside her husband as a cook. However, this too did not last long.

Heba was not earning a salary while working with her husband and any profits made in the business, were split in two. She decided it would be best for the family if she worked elsewhere to supplement the family's household income. Heba was able to get a job at a restaurant owned by the same Lebanese family whose dental clinic she had been forced to leave because of the diploma validation issue. As it turned out, this was a good decision. Her husband's business venture, while initially promising, began to decline. When the college branch opened, it also opened its own food court. That together with local street vendors dealt a blow to Nasser's business. Moreover, upon inspection from the Department of Health, modifications were needed to the refrigeration systems and the general processing of foods in order to bring the establishment up to code and keep the snack bar open. This invariably demanded more money.

Barely three months after its establishment, by June 2010, Nasser's business partnership had unraveled.¹⁶⁵ Nasser had been the primary financial contributor to the

¹⁶⁵ In a conversation via Skype in late January 2010, Heba indicated that she and her husband would give the business approximately two or three months and if it did not work, they would consider moving to the

venture, and now was only being repaid by Hazem in small amounts here and there, if at all. Once again, Heba was the only one bringing any form of steady income into the household. Her work at the restaurant demanded upwards of 10 hours per day, six days per week, and her monthly salary was R\$500. It was clear the family was in a difficult situation, and Heba was concerned and deeply unhappy with their predicament.

Heba disclosed that she told her husband that owning and operating their own business was simply not meant for them. They had twice given it an honest effort and each setback was devastating. She emphasized that they each needed stable employment with a guaranteed monthly salary because having their own business was no longer an option. It was at this point that the couple decided the only viable alternative was for Nasser to enter the Halal labor market, as so many of the young refugee men had done.¹⁶⁶

After making initial contact with CDIAL, via Sheikh Hamdi, Nasser was sent out of state for two weeks in July 2010 for training in Halal slaughter practices. Soon after returning, he received a short-term contract to work out of state for two months. Because, as previously noted, slaughter labor is contingent upon the demands of the export market, continuous work for any individual is not guaranteed. Like the other men in this labor market, after working for two or three months, Nasser found himself anxiously waiting to be called in for another contract. While the monthly salaries for work in the Halal industry are significantly higher than the federal minimum salary, the instability of employment can be taxing. Additionally, the majority of the Palestinian refugee men

state of Parana. Once there, Nasser would work at Sadia in Halal labor and she would open and operate an Internet café. As Heba indicated, this was a possible alternate plan the couple had devised going into the joint venture.

¹⁶⁶ While they had initially considered moving out of São Paulo altogether, the couple decided they did not want to disrupt their family, and especially their children's lives, by moving to a completely different state, where they would have to begin anew.

contracted in this form of labor did not have any work-related benefits such as unemployment (or worker's compensation, disability, paid sick days, etc.), and this meant that upon ending a contract, there was no other source of income until the next possible gig. However, for Nasser, this was still the most "stable" and well-compensated employment he had obtained since arriving in Brazil.

Interestingly, like many of the other young Palestinian refugee men conducting this form of labor, Nasser was not particularly religious,¹⁶⁷ but it was his Muslim identity that gave him an unexpected advantage in the labor force.¹⁶⁸ In a conversation via Skype, he joked that while in Iraq, after Saddam Hussein's regime fell and the insurgency began, Shiites cut the heads off of Sunnis, but in Brazil they worked side-by-side and together cut off chicken heads instead. Nasser continues to work for the Shiite company Al Kafeel and has finally obtained a formal work contract, making him fully eligible for employee benefits.

For Heba on the other hand, her Muslim identity factored into employment much differently. The owners of the restaurant in which she was working decided to sell the business; however, the new owner wanted to maintain the same staff. Before the business officially changed hands, he met with each of the staff members individually, reviewed each one's duties, and expressed his expectations. After a seemingly amicable meeting, Heba later received a phone call at home. She was told the new owner was concerned about her use of the veil in his establishment and her continued employment in the

¹⁶⁷ This was something his wife would occasionally get on him about, but it did not seem like a serious point of contention between the two. However, Heba did in fact express hope that perhaps in doing this form of work, her husband would become a more pious and practicing Muslim. Also, while doing fieldwork, and in the midst of all of the financial difficulties Nasser and Heba were having, an elderly refugee woman, who was friends with Nasser's mother, sarcastically suggested that perhaps if he began to pray, as a pious Muslim should, his luck would change.

¹⁶⁸ This does not imply that all the young men were not pious. In fact, at least two of the young men from Mogi were devout, practicing Muslims.

restaurant would be contingent upon her removing it. When Heba said her use of the veil was not negotiable and refused to comply with the new owner's demands, she was fired. Despite laws against this form of discrimination in the work place, Heba--who had been working and getting paid off the books--felt she had no recourse.

It is clear that artifacts affiliated with Islam, such as the veil, heightened the visibility of those Palestinian refugee women who wore it and merged local Orientalist ideas of Islam with broader global manifestations of Orientalist discourses. Whereas Nasser's [and other refugee men's] Muslim identity emerged as an asset, even a commodity in the labor market, Heba's Muslim-ness operated as an obstacle to her insertion into the workforce. In Brazil's neoliberal market, then, Muslim religio-ethnic identity has emerged as unstable and contingent. Whereas in the Halal export industry, Muslim identity is highlighted and appreciates in value, in the local service market it can emerge as excess and undesirable.

The labor patterns of Palestinians, and more recently Muslim Palestinian refugees, are inextricably linked to Brazil's economic and political policies. In the early-mid-nineteenth century Brazilian protectionism, coupled with immigration policies, allowed for the formation of an unexpected entrepreneurial class. Despite being seen as suspect and not fitting into the national project of *embaquecimento*, Arabs contributed to Brazilian nation-building by carving out a particular ethnic-economic space that proved beneficial to the state. More recently, building upon the historic presence of Arabs in the nation and redeploying discourses of harmonious plurality, Brazil has forged critical economic ties with Middle Eastern nations. This has necessitated a religious form of labor, which has significantly amplified Brazil's export economy and created a

masculinized labor niche. For the Palestinian refugees, ethnicity, age, and most prominently religion (despite level of adherence) and gender, have become determinants of labor opportunities and have made their integration into the labor force and their desirability in the nation contingent upon how their bodies are valued.

CHAPTER 3

THE REFUGEE BODY AND THE STATE

Many Palestinian refugees arrived in Brazil with broken and ailing bodies. While they were witness to and fled the death squads and torture brought on by the horrors of the Iraq War, the camps they entered presented a whole other space of non-life. Some had entered Ruweished with compromised health, while many developed respiratory illnesses because of the precarious conditions of the camp. Medical issues and conditions were compounded by the inability to access adequate healthcare during their confinement in the desert. In other cases the combination of inadequate access, prior health conditions, and advancing age exacerbated health issues. Since Brazil did not exercise a selection process for the refugees, officials there were not fully aware of how sick many of the refugees were. The resettlement teams often pointed to the camp as the culprit for refugees' ill health, even if some conditions occurred post resettlement. Time and again social service providers from the local resettlement agencies made clear they had not anticipated how sick the refugees were. They claimed they were uninformed about the gravity of the conditions that plagued a number of the Palestinians who arrived in Brazil. This is despite the fact that humanitarian discourses are saturated with health needs and medical care. Peter Redfield and Erica Bornstein underscore how humanitarianism preoccupies itself with the "physical condition...of suffering people" and in that way "the language of aid world humanitarianism is both moral and broadly medical, identifying well-being through species-level needs and health" (2010, 6).

This chapter examines the ways state and local agencies administered health care for refugees and the policies developed by Brazil as they relate to an ethics and politics of

care. Both the policies and their implementation lie at the intersection of neoliberalism, governmentality, and humanitarianism. Of particular importance are Brazil's humanitarian discourses and the continuities and discontinuities in policies and practices as they relate to access to healthcare and social benefits, specifically for non-citizen, sick and elderly persons. Because health issues emerged as ubiquitous in the lives of resettled persons, health and illness narratives can provide an intimate perspective on their lived experiences. These narratives provide more than insight into the immediate discomforts and concerns raised by sick bodies; they also map out a larger discursive field of belonging. Indeed in some cases, refugees used their ill and/or elderly bodies to make political claims by judicializing their rights and by politicizing the sick body to enter and transcend (by requesting another resettlement) the Brazilian body politic.

A tenet of juridical citizenship in Brazil is access to healthcare. Bodily health and access to the technologies of modern medicine were framed as part and parcel of the making of a modern and democratic nation-state and its corresponding modern subjects. This principal was adopted in the post-dictatorship period and was codified in the country's 1988 Constitution, which dedicates a section to health (*saúde*). Article 196 captures the responsibility the state assumes.

Art. 196. A saúde é direito de todos e dever do Estado, garantido mediante políticas sociais e econômicas que visem à redução do risco de doença e de outros agravos e ao acesso universal e igualitário às ações e serviços para sua promoção, proteção e recuperação/ Health is a right for all and a duty of the state, guaranteed by social and economic policies aimed at reducing the risk of illness and other hazards and [guaranteeing the] universal and equal access to actions and services for its promotion, protection and rehabilitation. (Federal Constitution 1988)¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ See Brazilian Federal Constitution:
http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicaocompilado.htm, accessed June 3, 2013.

In order to guarantee healthcare, the state funded a decentralized Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde, also known as SUS), which was created in 1988.¹⁷⁰ The rationale for instituting SUS was to provide the health care that Article 196 guaranteed to its citizens. The right to healthcare was considered part of the democratizing process after the twenty-year dictatorship ended.¹⁷¹

The principle entrenched in the Constitution was implemented through two federal laws (Law 8.080 and 8.142).¹⁷² The drive toward universal healthcare happened at a time when the first democratically elected president after the dictatorship was pursuing a neoliberal agenda for the country. Despite this, healthcare was declared a universal right. And perhaps because of this, the Unified Health System also contains a privatized subsystem that provides services contracted out by SUS.¹⁷³ While Brazil's neoliberal turn, as noted in Chapter 2, has seen significant market growth, particularly in opening its market to South-South trading, it has also implemented social policies and programs to address the country's poverty levels and raise the general standard of living. This has resulted in noticeable changes: between 2003 and 2009 poverty fell from 21 percent to 11 percent and abject poverty fell nearly 8 percent--from 10 to 2.2 percent

¹⁷⁰ Under SUS, healthcare is decentralized. Therefore, the federal government is not solely responsible for health; instead states and municipalities are charged with its administration. States and municipalities must contribute a minimum percentage of their annual budget to healthcare (12 and 15 percent respectively).

¹⁷¹ As noted in Chapter 1, the military dictatorship began in 1964 and ended in 1985.

¹⁷² Law 8.080 establishes that health is a fundamental right of a human being and that all persons within the national territory who are citizens or those persons who have juridical rights, can have access to healthcare. See http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/18080.htm, accessed December 2011. Law 8.142 determines the participation by the community in managing and administering the Unified Health System. It also establishes the intergovernmental (federal, state, and municipal) transfer of financial funds for healthcare, as well as provide logistical terms of functioning (i.e., meeting every 4 years with the appropriate representatives from each segment of society to evaluate the state of health). See http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/18142.htm, accessed December 2011.

¹⁷³ For a more thorough understanding of the machinations of Brazil's Sistema Único de Saúde, see "The Brazilian health system: history, advances, and challenges." Accessed online in The Lancet, [Volume 377, Issue 9779](#), Pages 1778 - 1797, (May 9, 2011). Also see, "Brazil's march towards universal coverage," in <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/9/10-020910/en/>

(World Bank 2010).¹⁷⁴ However, many programs are subject to bureaucratic delays that choke the system. These delays and their material consequences are most evident when accessing medical care through SUS. For the Palestinian refugees, this was further complicated by language barriers as the following narratives demonstrate.

NARRATIVES OF HEALTH/ NARRATIVES OF ILLNESS

Veena Das and Ranendra Das in their work, “How the Body Speaks,” discuss experiences of illness among the urban poor in Delhi, India. They assert that “illness narratives” which place the focus on “patients” enables the interrogation of “the dominant modes of biopower that Foucault (1991) identified as typical forms of governmentality under modernity” (2007, 66). They explain “the focus on the patient’s construction of her experience is a powerful tool to contest and even reform the power that the expert exercises in clinical encounters” (Ibid). Navigating the labyrinthian public health system was difficult for refugees in general. They complained they had no guidance in accessing SUS and were left to their own devices, despite serious illnesses and the inability to speak Portuguese. Personal narratives of healthcare examine, illuminate and reflect how belonging is registered at the intimate level, conditioned by bureaucratic regimes, and experienced beyond the bureaucratic. They also demonstrate moments of disenfranchisement and displacement, offering broader perspectives of sociality and economic circumstances in the lives of the resettled Palestinian refugees.

¹⁷⁴ Poverty is measured as living on US\$2 per day, and extreme or abject poverty includes those who live on US\$1.25 per day (World Bank).

Heba's Story

Heba arrived in Brazil pregnant. She was expecting her third child, but her pregnancy was a high-risk one and needed close monitoring by an obstetrician. Because Cáritas did not make translators available, Heba reported the difficulty of going to obstetric appointments without knowing what was being said or asked of her by the doctor. Conversely, she claimed she was unable to relay what she was feeling or ask questions. “I did not have the words,” she recalled. Because of a weak cervix, she had to have a cervical cerclage--a procedure in which the cervix is stitched closed to prevent premature childbirth.¹⁷⁵ Heba emphasized that she had had this procedure done when she was pregnant with each of her two sons without incident. This time, however, after having the procedure, she went home and soon began to hemorrhage. It was late, the Cáritas office was closed, and again there was no one available to translate for her. Her bleeding intensified and her husband, desperate, ran to a neighbor's and pantomimed what was happening to his wife. The neighbor borrowed her brother's car and rushed Heba to the hospital. At nearly six months pregnant, Heba had a miscarriage. And because the doctors could not stop the hemorrhaging they also performed a radical hysterectomy—she was a few months shy of turning twenty-nine. Reflecting the confusion and fear she felt at the time, she noted, “I had no idea what was happening to me. I could not understand what the doctors where saying.”

For the duration of her hospital stay, Heba described feeling isolated and vulnerable. She was poked and prodded by doctors and their medical students and had never before suffered such humiliation. Here, as so often with refugees requiring healthcare, their socio-economic status shaped the biomedical gaze. The bodies of the

¹⁷⁵ The cervix remains stitched closed until the 37th or 38th week of pregnancy.

poor, particularly in hospitals, become public domain and are often objectified and instrumentalized for what their bodies and body parts can teach physicians and physicians-in-training. Assessments move beyond the therapeutic and enter the realm of intrusion, ensuring that bodily privacy (or lack thereof) is laced to social and economic conditions. In other words, bodily privacy is afforded to those who can afford it. This is especially visible in the spaces where healthcare is provided to the poor, namely hospitals and their corresponding clinics. Tenuous partitions in examining areas and overcrowding make visible and audible what is often kept confidential and intimate during exchanges between patients and doctors in private medical offices.

“After I recovered,” Heba explained, “I told myself I would never be in such a helpless situation again. I did not care what I had to do. I was going to learn the language so that my kids would not have to suffer either.” Mindful of her marginal social standing as a refugee, she felt strongly that what happened to her was a combination of NGO irresponsibility and medical incompetence. But she also linked her isolation, vulnerability, and treatment at the hospital to her inability to communicate—to “not [having] the words.” Whatever possibility there was to foster medical intimacy and trust was foreclosed because she was silenced by not knowing the language. Some months after her ordeal, Heba and her family were featured in the short documentary referenced in Chapter 1, *Filhos da Nakba* [Children of the Catastrophe]. The documentary provided the historical context leading to the arrival of the Palestinian refugees in São Paulo, and it also captured the difficulties they encountered in Brazil. Speaking in a grating but intelligible Portuguese, Heba describes how she had no one to advocate for her while she was in the hospital.

I learned [a lot of] Portuguese in the hospital. When I arrived here I was pregnant. Five months later, I began to have complications. And I lost the baby [as a result]. I did not find anyone to help me, not UNHCR, not Cáritas, no one in the hospital. I did not speak Portuguese. I had not learned it yet, and I suffered a lot. (*Filhos da Nakba*).

Keeping to her promise, Heba reached an impressive level of fluency in Portuguese in a short period of time. By the time I met her in February 2009, she had been in Brazil for a little over a year and had gained notable proficiency in the language. Yet, as a result, she met with unanticipated responsibilities. First, because of her fluency Cáritas frequently called on her to accompany and translate for other resettled women needing medical appointments. Second, by the NGO transferring this responsibility onto Heba, the refugees' themselves began to re-imagine her role in the community. Many refugees would rely on Heba to determine if the bodily symptoms they were experiencing and describing warranted emergency medical treatment. The pressure of this responsibility sometimes caused her significant stress. After a phone call from a woman who had been diagnosed with stomach cancer and who wanted to know if the discomfort she was experiencing warranted a visit to emergency care, Heba was clearly overwhelmed. She asked no one in particular, "What do they think I am? Am I a nurse?" It was evident she was frustrated and uncomfortable with such responsibility. She said "everyone" called her.

On Christmas Eve 2009, I was with Heba when she received another of these medical-assistance calls from one of the refugees. Fadwa was having labor pains and needed to go to the hospital, and she wanted someone who spoke Portuguese to accompany her. Heba invited me to go along too, in case she needed help with translating. Fadwa's husband arrived shortly thereafter and we went to the Municipal

public hospital in the center of town. As in many public hospitals on a hot Friday night in the summer, the emergency room was teeming with people. When we entered a noticeable silence fell over the room. It is hard to say whether this was because of the women's alterity-- both Heba and Fadwa were veiled and speaking in Arabic--or also because we were rushed in to see a doctor because of Fadwa's condition. After a brief examination, the doctor told Fadwa she was barely dilated and she should see him again in a week's time. Fadwa emphasized that with her other two children the labor pains were very similar and she quickly gave birth. The doctor, in what appeared to be a patronizing manner, told her that was not the case this time. He also said the maternity wing of the hospital was closed for repairs and they would not be able to accommodate a delivery there.¹⁷⁶

At that moment, Heba asked the doctor if he remembered her: "Do you remember who I am?" [*você lembra de mim?*] And the doctor said he did. Heba continued, "You were the doctor who did the cerclage on me. Remember?" [*você foi o doutor que fez a minha cerclagem. Lembra?*] He again affirmed he knew who she was. Heba then told him that the doctor who attended her when she was rushed to the hospital was not experienced with the procedure and did not know how to competently deal with her hemorrhaging. As a result, she had a miscarriage and had to have a hysterectomy. "I lost my uterus!" [*Eu perdi meu útero!*] The doctor listened, but did not affirm or deny any of what she said. The agency with which Heba addressed the doctor was impressive. She was able to say what she had been unable to articulate a year and a half earlier

¹⁷⁶ The maternity wing for this hospital had been closed for several weeks and would be closed for several more according to the medical staff. When I enquired about what Fadwa should then do, the doctor said she could return to the same hospital. They would follow SUS protocol and call public hospitals in the surrounding towns to see which had space to accommodate her and then she would be transported by ambulance.

because of the language barrier. In doing so, Heba claimed herself as the expert of her material body, destabilizing the doctor's clinical authority. Her confidence was visible. Meanwhile, Fadwa readied herself to leave. The doctor reiterated she should only return in a week's time. Despite the doctor's certitude, Fadwa gave birth to a baby girl at around 7 o'clock the next morning (in a different hospital), less than ten hours after we had all been in the hospital emergency room.

According to Heba, the legitimacy of the medical ailments claimed by many of the resettled persons was often questioned by Cáritas and medical providers alike, and this led to delays in accessing proper care. Since Heba had accompanied several resettled women from Mogi to medical appointments, she spoke with some authority on this matter. It was apparent to her this was what had occurred with Fadwa. Along with Heba's family, Fadwa's husband who also appeared in *Filhos da Nakba*, expressed his discontent with the healthcare system but also the consequences of making demands for better access:

They told us here (in Brazil) there were children's rights, human rights, women's rights, but until today I have not seen it. It is just talk by these organizations. For example, my wife is three months pregnant and she still has not seen a doctor. When you go and complain to the organization (Cáritas), they threaten to call the police and the media and say that we are violent and aggressive. (*Filhos da Nakba*).

Throughout this early period of resettlement, when refugees language skills were least developed, interpreters were often not provided during medical visits. For example, Heba once asked me to accompany her mother-in-law to a doctor's appointment because she had to work and there was no one else to provide translation for the elderly woman. Communication difficulties clearly compounded the healthcare situation for the refugees. In many instances this delayed getting adequate healthcare, because even when

appointments were made, if there was not someone to translate, it was difficult for both the patient and provider to communicate.

By early 2010, the financial hardship and instability Heba and her family experienced were taking a toll on her health. This was exacerbated by the responsibility she had for other members of the community, particularly with healthcare translation and related issues. Heba began suffering migraine headaches, insomnia and anxiety. Some months later she shared with me that her doctor advised her to seek out a psychologist, who referred her to a psychiatrist for medication. Heba was willing to take medication at least to help her sleep, but she did not want to engage in talk therapy since to her it was “like being interviewed for a newspaper.” Because of her language proficiency, she had been the focus of many interviews and had been asked to represent the experiences of the refugees in local media outlets. She claimed the therapists asked the same types of questions the media and researchers asked. They inquired about life in the camp; why she and the others wound up in the camp in the first place; how life had been there; how life had been since their arrival in Brazil, etc. Heba claimed she was “tired of talking about that” and “tired of answering questions.” At one point, critiquing the banality of inquiries, she claimed she was going to record her responses to questions and provide them to doctors, journalists or anyone else interested in the refugees.

For Heba, “confession fatigue” had set in as she repeatedly was asked to recall and relate her near and distant history.¹⁷⁷ The very idea of having to rehash her past in a more intimate level to a therapist on a weekly basis, even if her past or current circumstances might have been contributing to her anxiety and malaise, was exhausting

¹⁷⁷ Here I am using “confessional fatigue” to capture the exhaustive process of telling and retelling the [traumatic] events of one’s past. Also, I do not exclude myself as one of the persons to whom Heba was referring despite having developed a good relationship over the course of my three field visits.

and irritating. Refusing the “disciplining mechanisms of biomedicine” (Ong 2003, 121), Heba instead subverted the talk therapy process and was prescribed medication. Evading the psychiatrist’s usual requirements allowed Heba to exercise agency over her body and emotional health. Her success in obtaining medication while rejecting the psychiatric gaze demonstrated her competency in dealing with the Brazilian medical establishment, which she felt objectified her and her experiences in much the same way media outlets had done. In this way, she was learning what it was to be Brazilian and destabilizing her position as the “other” in the medical glaze.¹⁷⁸

Reem’s story

Reem, a woman in her early 60s, was popular, gregarious, and her impish wit helped many refugees while away the monotony and hardship of living for nearly five years in the Ruweished camp. During conversations with other resettled folks, a smile would often creep across their faces whenever Reem’s name was mentioned. In the camp two of her five children were married, a son and a daughter.¹⁷⁹ Her daughter was resettled in Canada with her new husband, and her son and his new wife were resettled in São Paulo. In addition to her married son, Adnan, Reem arrived in São Paulo with two other sons and her husband of nearly forty years. Some months after resettling there, Reem began to experience stomach problems. Nearly two years after the symptoms appeared, with long waiting periods between seeing doctors and obtaining test results, she was diagnosed with stomach cancer.

¹⁷⁸ In the next chapter I examine more deeply Brazilian social competencies, such as the “jeitinho brasileiro” [Brazilian way], and the ways these techniques are utilized (and expected to be utilized) to navigate and negotiate the complex terrains of social life.

¹⁷⁹ Her eldest daughter lived with her husband and children in Jordan.

During my second field visit, I ran into Adnan at the train station. We were both making the hour-long train trek into São Paulo city. Adnan was fun loving and gregarious like his mother, and when I asked him how she was doing, having last seen her a week earlier, his affect changed completely. Somber and burdened, he calmed himself and spoke of his contempt for the resettlement program. He spoke about how long it took to get medical appointments and blamed his mother's declining health on negligence. Adnan said the Cáritas director in Mogi (Antonio) knew how sick his mother had been: "He knew my mother was sick; he knew. We waited months for her to see a doctor. And by the time we did...Just think, two years before she even began treatment. We are waiting to see another doctor now." At this point the cancer had metastasized, and Reem had already had three surgeries to remove masses from her intestines and ovaries. Because Reem's sons were not sufficiently proficient in Portuguese, the family often depended on Heba to accompany her to appointments, and Heba did precisely that until work intervened. In fact, after Cáritas ended its contract with UNHCR in December 2009 and Comissão de Defesa dos Direitos Humanos/The Commission for Human Rights (CDDH) was contracted to continue with vulnerable cases, Heba continued to be called by the new NGO to translate.

Although still a jokester and with a personality that filled a room, Reem was gaunt and ashen by the end of my second field. Yet, this bore no comparison to the condition she was in when I saw her last in July 2010. By then Reem was lying in a hospital bed in the middle of her small living room, a colostomy bag dangling beside her. The cancer had metastasized, and she had recently had stomach surgery. She had a gaping wound in her belly, about 10 centimeters wide and 6.5 centimeters long, and still

deep enough that I could visibly see what looked like part of her intestine. When Adnan told me to take a look, he optimistically posited the surgical site was looking much better. The site of Reem's recent surgery was left un-sutured. Although to me it appeared like a gaping wound begging for infection and sepsis, I was told this was an innovative and costly surgical procedure.¹⁸⁰ The director of CDDH commented: "Não é por nada não, a cirurgia que a dona Reem fez lá no hospital é uma cirurgia caríssima. Que até onde eu sei ela não ficou internada, não pegou fila, [ou] ficou esperando. Então o atendimento médico em Mogi das Cruzes não é ruim. Eles recusam-se. Querem tudo particular e vão reclamar/ Not for nothing, but the surgery Ms. Reem had at the hospital was very expensive. And as far as I know, she was not hospitalized, did not have to wait in line, or have to wait. So medical care in Mogi das Cruzes is not bad. They refuse it (speaking of the Palestinians more generally). They want everything private and will complain."

Given the nature of Reem's condition and the debilitated state of her body post-surgery, her sons had made a request to CDDH for a nurse or home health aid to visit regularly to help provide care. The request was declined. In addition to saying "they want everything private," CDDH's director emphasized that Reem's home care was her sons' responsibility and no one else's; even according to Brazilian law they had this responsibility. He was referring to Federal law 10.741,¹⁸¹ which defines the rights of the elderly and the obligations of the state, community, and principally the family to meet their needs. It stipulates "abandono moral ou material por parte dos familiares/ moral or material abandonment on the part of a family" of an elderly relative could be reported to

¹⁸⁰ Although I did not speak to a physician or surgical oncologist directly, based on information provided by Reem's son and Heba, the doctors claimed it would be best if the wound healed closed on its own, so as not to agitate cancerous cells and provoke metastasis.

¹⁸¹ Estatuto do Idoso/ Elderly Statute. I discuss this statute later in the chapter.

the Public Ministries (Ministérios Públicos), and those accused could face charges and prosecution. In Reem's case, through the vigilant gaze of CDDH, the state demonstrated its disciplining reach by ensuring her sons cared for their mother's sick body while at home. Through Reem's sick body, then, the state--via the medical establishment and the NGO--exercised control of her sons' bodies as well. In *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault traces the "medicalization of the family" beginning in the eighteenth century (1980, 172-175). He posits that children's health and wellness became a central objective of the family during this period in order to ensure their survival to adulthood. "The family is no longer to be just a system of relations inscribed in a social status, a kinship system, a mechanism for the transmission of property. It is to become a dense, saturated, permanent, continuous physical environment which envelops, maintains and develops the child's body" (172). The move toward medicalization was intended to secure the utility of the eventual adult in economic processes and to ensure the family bore the "moral" and financial responsibility for medical care (174). By extending Foucault's analysis, one can see how the "medicalization of the family" had come full circle in the neoliberal state. Where children become the focus of the family for the benefit of the larger economy, those children had now grown into adults who were required to provide for their elderly and or ill parents—an investment in care in a young body yields a return investment in the care of an aging and or ill body. This idea is codified in Brazilian law and reinforced by non-governmental institutions.

Reem's three sons took turns caring for her at home, but Adnan emerged as her primary care giver and ensured her medications were in order. Nevertheless, obtaining the medications also proved to be a point of contention. Although Reem's pain was

intense and her bodily condition fragile, Adnan noted the difficulties they had in getting both pain management and cancer medications through the public (SUS) pharmacies. If meds were not available in public dispensaries, they had to follow SUS protocol in order to purchase medicines at an affordable price and get reimbursed for them. This entailed going to two public healthcare pharmacies first, where officials documented the unavailability of the prescriptions. They would then go to private pharmacies to see if the medications were available there. If so, the documented unavailability of the meds in the SUS pharmacies would allow them to purchase the items in a private establishment at a subsidized rate.¹⁸² Difficulties in accessing essential prescription medications occur with some regularity in the country's Unified Health System. As João Biehl and Adriana Petryna document in their most recent research (2009 & 2013), and I address later in this chapter, because of the frequent unavailability of essential medicines in SUS pharmacies and because access to medical treatments and life-saving exams are often delayed for long periods of time, there has been a surge in litigation against the state regarding the "constitutional right to health." A large number of these lawsuits have sided with the plaintiffs. However, these processes take time and do not mitigate a person's immediate corporeal distress.

Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* reminds us "Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state of anterior language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (1985, 4). Scarry is not only referring to the ineffability of pain for the person experiencing it but also the unknowability of another's physical suffering. At home

¹⁸² According to the director of CDDH, the reimbursement for out-of-pocket costs for medications incurred by those refugees considered vulnerable would only continue until December 2010.

Reem appeared to be in horrible pain; with no intravenous PICC¹⁸³ line, all medications were given orally instead and took that much longer to ease her distress. The sounds that emerged from her were quiet and constant. Her face was ashen and she drifted in and out of consciousness—what hospice workers often call the “death dance.” A sharp pain descended upon her and defying Scarry’s meditation, Reem found language. She asked God to be merciful and take her, take her for mercy and for death.

Anticipating this visit to Reem, Heba, another researcher and I baked date filled cookies, *mamoul*, earlier in the day and brought some to Reem’s house. In a moment of lucid and sharp wit, Reem slowly lifted the cookie she was handed and drew her other hand into a fist and knocked on the cookie. In a halting whisper she asked, “Is it made of dates and wood?” sending everyone in the room into laughter. Reem’s painful struggle with cancer ended two months later. She died at home in September.

Most every family with whom I had contact during field research had had an unfavorable encounter with healthcare providers, some with more severe consequences than others. And yet the health services the refugees received were the same as those offered to Brazilian nationals through SUS. In fact, personnel affiliated with entities charged with resettlement often underscored this during interviews. Antonio Rodrigo, the resettlement program director for Cáritas in São Paulo, was asked during an interview with a local paper what, in his opinion, were the primary difficulties faced in the two years of the program with the Palestinian refugees. He responded in part:

As dificuldades foram basicamente pelo não entendimento dos refugiados em relação ao papel de cada organização dentro do Programa (Cáritas, Alto Comissariado da ONU para Refugiados e governo federal-CONARE). Outro ponto foi a informação muito superficial sobre as condições de saúde do grupo

¹⁸³ Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (inserted in the arm) to allow medicines to be easily delivered to a seriously ill patient.

enquanto ainda estavam no campo de refugiados. Com a precariedade do estado de saúde de várias pessoas, houve uma exigência muito grande com demandas de muito tempo somente para o atendimento de saúde. Por outro lado, eles não aceitavam as condições do sistema público, apesar dos esforços de cooperação da Secretaria de Estado da Saúde e sobretudo da Secretaria Municipal de Saúde, facilitando o agendamento, buscando médicas para atender as mulheres e médicos para os homens, etc.

The difficulties were basically a result of the refugees' lack of understanding of what role each of the organizations had in the [tripartite] Program (Cáritas, UNHCR, and CONARE—the federal government). The other point was the very superficial information we received about the refugees' health conditions while they were still in the camp. Because of the precarious health conditions of various people, there was a great demand for and a lot of time spent in medical care alone. On the other hand, they did not accept the conditions of the public health system. This was despite the collaborative efforts made by the State Health Secretariat and more importantly the Municipal Health Secretariat, who facilitated scheduling, searched for female doctors to attend the women and male doctors to attend the men, etc.¹⁸⁴ (Mogi News, September 20, 2009).

Rodrigo was forthright in declaring how unaware the resettlement agencies (Cáritas in São Paulo and Associação Antônio Vieira [ASAV] in Rio Grande do Sul) were of the precarious state of health of the refugees. The medical attention needed by the resettled persons presented an unanticipated problem, while the refugees did not acquiesce to what they considered a lack of preparedness on the part of Cáritas, and the medical establishment for that matter. Yet many were equally concerned about what the end of the program might mean for them. At the time of Rodrigo's interview, the resettlement program was soon coming to an end. Although everyone was concerned, the elderly and

¹⁸⁴ In line with the decentralized manner in which SUS is operated (see footnote 3), the Secretariat of Health in Mogi das Cruzes had partnered with Cáritas to provide health services for the refugees. When contacted for an interview, they requested that questions be sent via email (in lieu of a face-to-face interview) and a response would be provided. In the correspondence sent in December 2009, they were asked how specialist referrals were made, appointments provided, and hospitalizations managed. The response was as follows: Over the past two years, the Municipal Secretariat of Health gave full support for medical care and referrals to hospitals, when necessary. Now, most of these clients/users are already accustomed to the functions and use of existing health services in Mogi das Cruzes. Women, for example, no longer need help making their routine visits to the branch of services, Pró-Mulher, which provides gynecological and prenatal exams. (Email correspondence, Secretaria de Saúde, Mogi das Cruzes, December 2009). When this correspondence took place, language proficiency was still a pressing issue for the majority of the resettled persons and caused a great deal of frustration in accessing medical care.

those in precarious health were particularly worried about the consequences for their lives and their families.

CHOOSING HEALTHY & (CAP)ABLE BODIES

Many of the problems encountered by refugees with health needs resulted from the Brazilian resettlement process itself. The way the ill and elderly are incorporated into the system's calculus sheds light on Brazilian public policy more broadly and the constitutive element of nationalism that shapes it. Cristina, the director of the NGO (ASAV) charged with resettlement in Rio Grande do Sul, explained the normative process of selecting candidates for resettlement in Brazil.

[N]ormalmente se faz uma missão de entrevista. A gente vai lá...por exemplo, no Equador, Costa Rica, Panamá, no caso dos colombianos, e entrevistamos os casos que estão sendo apresentados para o Brasil. E aí entrevistamos e trazemos esses casos para o Brasil, que é apresentado para o comitê. Esse é o procedimento: a gente vai lá primeiro, no país de asilo, e entrevista, traz para o Brasil, apresenta, e aí é aceite ou não. E qual é o critério do aceite? O aceite não é escolher refugiado, ou se ele é mais ou menos refugiado, é para onde, e como eles podem se integrar no Brasil, e em qual região do Brasil: Então se a família tem três ou quatro idosos, com problemas crônicos de saúde, muitas vezes não é recomendado vir para o Brasil. Porque no Brasil a gente tem até um sistema de saúde bom, uma saúde bem boa, mas há limites, né? Tem que reconhecer isso, que não tem como ficar bancando para sempre uma pessoa muito doente. Já o país tipo Suécia... Aí casos de saúde crônica, vão para Suécia, Canadá... Que tem lá um sistema de atendimento exemplar. E o governo aceita isso, banca tudo. Não é nem o ACNUR, é o governo que banca tudo/

Normally we conduct an interview mission. We go there...for example, to Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, in the case of Colombian [refugees] and we interview the cases that are being presented to Brazil. Then we conduct interviews and bring these cases back to Brazil, and they are presented to the committee. That is the procedure: we go there first, to the place of asylum, and interview, bring back to Brazil, present [the cases], and then [each] is either accepted or not. And what are the criteria for acceptance? The acceptance is not about choosing refugees, or if one is more or less of a refugee; it is about where [they would be resettled] and *how* (original emphasis) they can be integrated in Brazil, and in what region of Brazil. So if a family has three or four elderly

people, with chronic health problems, a lot of times it is not recommended that they come to Brazil. Because in Brazil we even have a good health system, very good health, but there are limits, right? You have to recognize that. There is no way to forever bankroll a very ill person. Places like Sweden...chronic health cases go to Sweden, Canada. Over there, they have exemplary [health] service. And the government accepts this; they pay for it all. It's not even UNHCR; it's the government that finances it all. (Interview. 17 July 2010)

As mentioned in the first chapter, representatives from traditional or emerging resettlement nations conduct interviews to determine if individuals are good candidates for resettlement in their respective countries. Cristina relates the interview process conducted for resettlement in Brazil and emphasizes determinations are made by evaluating whether specific persons/ bodies are capable of being integrated into Brazilian society, with an emphasis on those who are able-bodied and without what are considered excessive needs.

While on the one hand the selection process is enshrined in humanitarian discourses, it also operates within a neoliberal framework in that there is an assessment of the refugee's employability and potential for self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In this way, the selection process for resettling refugees mimics neoliberal practices of determining desirable and undesirable bodies by determining what Aihwa Ong calls "marketable talents" (2005, 16). Ong asserts, "Low-skill citizens and migrants become exceptions to neoliberal mechanisms and are constructed as excludable populations in transit, shuttled in and out of zones of growth...[C]ertain rights and benefits are distributed to bearers of marketable talents and denied those who are judged to lack such capacity or potential" (Ibid). Implicit in this heuristic is the belief that young, healthy bodies, with work skills or potential, are more capable of integrating into a host nation. Refugees who do not display these market potentials (i.e., under-educated, minimal work

skills, ill health, the elderly, etc.) are often excluded or passed over for resettlement because they are viewed as void of “capacity or potential” in what would be the receiving country and are instead perceived as a burden. The screening processes function as a triage of desirable bodies for the representatives making selections for their nation-state. That is, the prospects increase for an individual to be resettled if the resettlement proves mutually beneficial.

A healthy, able-bodied, non-elderly individual who is presumed to be able to quickly learn the language, find employment, and fit neatly into the citizenship discourses of the nation will fair better in being resettled than those whose aged and/ or disabled bodies mark them as *socially dis-integratable* at the outset. The declining capital of these bodies is considered when determining the possibility of reciprocity in new social and economic contexts. Featherstone and Hepworth in “The Mask of Ageing and the Postmodern Life Course” claim, “as people become elderly and unable to reciprocate and perform responsibilities they are forced to withdraw from powerful social roles and lose prestige” (1991, 386).¹⁸⁵ We are reminded here that a form of social-political *dis-memberment* occurs with the elderly. Even though the authors are not referring to elderly refugees or even migrants, but are instead referencing the significance of age and aging in social integration and participation among the population at large, their idea can be expanded in the processes of resettlement. According to Cristina, self-financing and self-sufficiency are tethered to the able-bodied—that is, the non-eldery of sound health. She claims “there is no way to forever bankroll a very ill person.”

As noted earlier, Brazil’s resettlement program is a tripartite agreement between UNHCR, the Brazilian government (CONARE), and non-governmental organizations.

¹⁸⁵ See *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory* by Featherstone et al (1991).

The funding for the duration of the resettlement program, whether it is one year or two years--as in the case of the Palestinian refugees--is provided by UNHCR. The monthly living stipend, the housing stipend, and funding for language classes come from this UN agency and not the Brazilian government. The state, in accordance to its constitutional obligation, provides the refugees with access to healthcare through SUS. However, as Cristina emphasizes, chronic health problems raise concerns because they require more intensive investment than what might be readily available to individuals under SUS and other public “care” systems. The general coordinator for CONARE, Renato Zerbini corroborated Cristina’s account of the resettlement selection process. In an interview, he noted that Brazil generally did not resettle elderly refugees precisely because of their inability to be inserted into the labor market and general difficulties with overall integration. Exceptions are only made in the case of family reunification. That is, if an individual who has been resettled wants to bring an elderly parent. In such cases, the *requestee* assumes full responsibility for the elderly family member. However, in the case of the Palestinian refugees, according to Zerbini, Brazil’s inherent humanitarian impulse rightfully superseded the logistics of integrating the elderly. He claimed, “they would have died [in the desert]” [porque lá iriam morrer] had Brazil not made its humanitarian overture. In this declaration, Zerbini engages with what Giorgio Agamben calls “bare life” or “life exposed to death” (1998, 88). He asserts there were no political aims, dimensions, or considerations involved; instead, resettling elderly refugees was simply meant to spare them from certain death in the desert camp. But this then begs the question: what responsibility does the Brazilian state have to sustain the lives it spared?

Because of their refugee status, resettled persons in Brazil were not able to be absorbed into social programs for which permanent residency or citizenship was required. Conversely, if they were granted permanent residency status in the country immediately upon arriving, they could not qualify for funding provided by UNHCR since funding is only allotted to those with refugee status.¹⁸⁶ However, it is important to examine in some detail the implications of these policies for those who were considered vulnerable (the chronically ill and the elderly) and were not accorded access to social programs outside of the healthcare to which Brazilian nationals have automatic rights.

The vast majority of the cases categorized as vulnerable among the Palestinian refugees resulted from old age.¹⁸⁷ And the better part of those who were elderly also had serious health problems. For the resettled refugees over the age of 60 finding employment, mastering the language, and generally integrating into the local community was indeed and at best difficult. Representatives from UNHCR, CONARE, Cáritas, and ASAV acknowledged the elderly Palestinian refugee caseload posed an “unexpected challenge,” as a senior UNHCR resettlement agent told me, and “a real durable solution for them” was still being explored (Interview. 23 June 2010). Social economic nets were not readily available to them. For starters, these individuals had no work history in Brazil and therefore had not contributed to a retirement fund, so they could not receive Social Security or a pension [Previdência Social ou Aposentadoria], which by law they would have been entitled to receive if they had fulfilled the requirements.¹⁸⁸ In addition, gaps in

¹⁸⁶ When the refugees entered Brazil in 2007, Brazilian law required that they live in the country for six years before qualifying for permanent residency and an additional four years before obtaining citizenship.

¹⁸⁷ In the months leading up to the official end of the resettlement assistance program, two elderly individuals who would have been considered vulnerable cases passed away because of health complications. They would have brought the vulnerable caseload to a total of 13 people.

¹⁸⁸ See Art. 201, section 7 of the Brazil’s 1988 Federal Constitution, along with stipulations made by amendment No. 20 in 1998. In most cases the required duration of contribution is for 15 years and the

social policies exist based on ideas of social-political equality that are contingent on being a Brazilian born or naturalized citizen. For instance, because of their status as refugees, without juridical citizenship, they were not able to benefit from the federal program for elderly and or disabled persons with limited income, Benefício de Prestação Continuada de Assistência Social (BPC-LOAS).¹⁸⁹ This program, unlike the Social Security program, does not require prior contribution, and “guarantees a minimum monthly salary [which meets the federally established monthly wage] to a person with a disability and elderly persons who can prove not to be self-sufficient or be provided for by family, as stipulated in law/ garantia de um salário mínimo de benefício mensal à pessoa portadora de deficiência e ao idoso que comprovem não possuir meios de prover à própria manutenção ou de tê-la provida por sua família, conforme dispuser a lei.”¹⁹⁰ However, other than those born in the country, it only allows “estrangeiros naturalizados/ foreigners who have been naturalized” to benefit from the program.

Nasser’s parents, who were both well into their 60s, had fears about what would happen to them once the resettlement program ended. While both of them were ill,

individual must be 60 and older. Additionally, the monthly Social Security benefit can never be less than the federally determined minimum salary.

¹⁸⁹ This federal benefit is equivalent to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in the United States. In the US refugees can receive SSI benefits if they fall under the category of “Qualified Aliens”—those who have been admitted into US territory because of “special humanitarian concern.” See section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. However, refugees can receive cash assistance from the Social Security Administration for a maximum of 7 years, regardless if they are over 65 or severely disabled. (This was adopted under the 1996 Welfare Reform Law.) Upon becoming naturalized citizens, they can once again apply for SSI. But because of the waiting period to get permanent residency (they must be in the US for 1 full year before submitting an application for consideration), then the subsequent waiting period to become a naturalized citizen (5 years, not considering the record logjams and bureaucratic loops that have delayed the process for years in some areas of the country, as well as the possibility of failing the oral and written naturalization exam), it would be no sooner than 8 years for a refugee to become a naturalized citizen. This long process has left many elderly and disabled refugees in precarious living situations in the US. A New York Times article in 2010 highlighted this problem. See “Many Indigent Refugees to Lose Federal Assistance” by Robert Pear: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/01/us/01benefits.html?_r=0, first accessed in September 2010.

¹⁹⁰ See Art. 203 of the Federal Constitution.

Nasser's father was in more precarious health. They decided to petition the Brazilian National Social Security Institute [Instituto de Seguridade Social-INSS] for BPC-LOAS benefits a few months before the UNHCR resettlement program funding for the group ended; both of their requests were denied. The rationale noted in each correspondence, dated October 2, 2009 and signed by the President of INSS, Valdir Moyses Simão, was exactly the same, "Nacionalidade Estrangeira"/ Foreign Nationality. The more ample explanation did not differ for either of Nasser's parents:

Em atenção ao seu Pedido de Amparo Social ao Deficiente, da Lei Orgânica da Assistência Social-LOAS, informamos que, após análise da documentação apresentada, não foi reconhecido o direito ao benefício pleiteado, tendo em vista que não está prevista a concessão para estrangeiros/

In reference to your request for social support for the disabled, according to LOAS, we inform you that after reviewing the submitted documentation, your right to the requested benefit was not recognized, considering that there is no provision for granting this assistance to foreigners.

In 1997, INSS passed a resolution (No. 435) extending these benefits to "estrangeiros naturalizados e a indígenas/ naturalized citizens and indigenous populations," where before, surprisingly, members from neither one of these groups was granted these benefits.¹⁹¹ Thus, immigrants and refugees who are elderly and/or ill or disabled and have not been naturalized as Brazilian citizens fall outside of the purview of this state assistance--even if they were to have permanent residency status-- regardless of the vulnerable and precarious conditions in which they might find themselves.

¹⁹¹ The politics regarding citizenship rights of indigenous populations of Brazil are outside of the scope of this project; however, coming across this data shed light on historical state violence and the ideas about indigenous alterity, placing the indigenous populations squarely outside of the state's consideration. And it consequently contributed to a better understanding about who and how one belongs in the Brazilian nation-state. See item 4 in INSS Resolution 435: <http://www3.dataprev.gov.br/sislex/paginas/72/INSS-PR/1997/435.htm>, accessed June 20, 2013. For more on indigenous rights, see Maria Guadalupe Moog Rodrigues article, "Indigenous Rights in Democratic Brazil" in *Human Rights Quarterly* 24:2 (2002) 487-512.

This policy runs contrary to the constitutional guarantee of equality between nationals and foreigners, as stipulated in Article 5: “Todos são iguais perante a lei, sem distinção de qualquer natureza, garantindo-se aos brasileiros e aos estrangeiros residentes no País a inviolabilidade do direito à vida, à liberdade, à igualdade, à segurança e à propriedade/ All are equal before the law, without distinction of any kind, guaranteeing to Brazilians and foreigners residing in the country the inviolable right to life, liberty, equality, security and property.” Clearly, there are often disjunctures between what is codified in law and what takes place in practice. In this regard, Brazilian law is not much different than juridical systems in other places. However, what makes this distinct and problematic is that the provisions in the country’s INSS laws violates its own constitution. Furthermore, the citizenship requirement, particularly for refugees, some of whom like the Palestinians enter the country already advanced in age and/ or in precarious health, does not remove them from a condition of vulnerability for which they were given [humanitarian] “protection” and granted resettlement in the country in the first place.¹⁹²

Lastly, one of the durable solutions for refugees is the possibility of being repatriated. For some who do eventually become citizens, as a means to gain eligibility for social benefits, repatriation might be compromised. As the nationally recognized expert on migration and human rights in Brazil and director of Instituto Migrações e Direito Humanos (IMDH)/ Institute of Migration and Human Rights, Rosita Milesi, indicates “a exigência posta pelo INSS, que em muitos casos pode até implicar na perda

¹⁹² The elderly were also unable to apply for a housing program (Minha Casa, Minha Vida/ My House, My Life) launched in April 2009. They did not meet the naturalization requirement at the Federal level to apply for the program. And at the Municipal level, the individuals applying had to have lived in the municipality for at least three years.

da nacionalidade de origem, põe-se na contramão da perspectiva da repatriação voluntária como solução duradoura/ the requirement imposed by INSS, which in many cases can lead to a loss of the [individual's] original nationality, puts itself in opposition to the prospect of voluntary repatriation as a durable solution" (2008).¹⁹³ Because the citizenship requirement for social service assistance has not been overturned, the only other recourse for an immigrant or refugee who is compromised by the restrictions is to bring judicial action against the state for these benefits, a process that requires significant and multiple resources.

MEASURED ACTION/ ACTIVE MEASURES

There have been a few cases in which non-citizens took judicial action and the state granted benefits as a result.¹⁹⁴ The cases in which the judgment was favorable to a "foreigner" [estrangeiro] invoked Article 5 (cited above) from the federal Constitution and referenced the constitutional assurance of equal rights and access to benefits as that of a national [nacional]. And at least one case involving a non-naturalized elderly immigrant also referenced the Federal Statute for the Elderly [Estatuto do Idoso] established in 2003, which guarantees social assistance in the form of a monthly minimum wage to those who meet the age requirement and do not have any means to support themselves.¹⁹⁵ Thus far, any exceptions made by the judiciary to provide these benefits have been assessed on a case-by-case basis, but no broader measure has been enacted that would require assistance across the board on similar cases. Verdicts siding

¹⁹³ Rosita Milesi in "Políticas públicas e migrações: o acesso a direitos previdenciários e sociais" in Caderno de Debates 3, Refúgio, Migrações e Cidadania, November 2008.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, see pages 45-50.

¹⁹⁵ See case for Antônio Ferreira Marques, a Portuguese immigrant who brought legal action against INSS, cited in Milesi p. 49-50. The case was filed in 2004 and a favorable verdict, after an INSS appeal, was delivered in 2006.

with the petitioner are often appealed by INSS and can languish in court, requiring more time than is reasonable for a petitioner under precarious living circumstances.

On the one hand, “judicializing” the process for social benefits renders the petitioners legible to the state. It allows immigrants and refugees to engage in practices of citizenship by using the state’s instruments on their own behalf and delineates incongruencies in the state’s legal body. On the other hand, while these processes can be enacted, they require a cultural competency that may not be readily available to those who are most in need of engaging with them.¹⁹⁶ These obstacles include the inability to navigate unfamiliar and dense bureaucratic systems in a new place, being unable to speak the language, and not having access to social networks which might facilitate these processes.¹⁹⁷ This applies as much to judicial processes as it does to petitioning state institutions of public assistance. Both Um Nasser and Abu Nasser, who on their own might not have had the ability to petition INSS for disability benefits (BPS-LOAS), were able to do so because of their son’s and daughter-in-law’s ties to loosely organized local collectivities with whom they collaborated to make their demands.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ In the US, cultural competency is frequently and problematically deployed in discourses of multiculturalism and public health, for instance. That is, encouraging medical professionals to “learn” about the racialized others’ culture to better understand the illnesses and diseases by which “they” are afflicted. This invariably leads to essentialized constructions and ideas about the biologies of people who are read as belonging to a differentiated cultural/racial group. For examples, see works by Charles L. Briggs and Clara Mantini-Briggs.

¹⁹⁷ I do not mean to imply that if an individual were originally from a place they would always-already be equipped to navigate layered and complicated bureaucracies.

¹⁹⁸ Some members were local university student activists, community activist, others were legal activists who pursued judicial measures to make claims and invoke rights. They came to know about the refugees from the local media. In São Paulo, those who had not learned about the presence of the refugees in the flurry of media attention when they first arrived in the country, in 2007, principally learned about their presence during the Israeli incursion on Gaza in the late weeks of December 2008 and the beginning of 2009 (Operation Cast Lead). The presence of the refugees in Mogi was highlighted in the media since some had relatives in Gaza. During this time there was also media coverage of some Palestinians from the resettled group who were staging a protest in front of UNHCR headquarters in Brasília. Upon contacting the group, through Nasser and Heba, the activists learned about the difficulties the refugees were enduring. They would aggregate to make demands under the name Comitê Autônomo de Solidariedade ao Povo

In their ongoing research in Brazil's southernmost state, Rio Grande do Sul, medical anthropologists João Biehl and Adriana Petryna have been documenting an increasingly prevalent practice called the "judicialization of the right to health."¹⁹⁹ As previously indicated, since the federal Constitution guarantees "health as a right," the poor and chronically ill have not only been suing the state for access to various types of medical treatments, but a significant number of the lawsuits demand access to medications. These lawsuits have been filed at various levels of the judiciary, and many rely on "temporary collectivities," such as the Palestinians relied on, to make claims for rights. In over ninety percent of the cases, the judiciary has sided with the plaintiff or "patient-litigants." However, winning a case does not translate to immediate access to treatment or medications. Like those who petition the state for social benefits, bureaucratic delays for biomedical litigants are inevitable. Petitioners are frequently left in a state of physical precarity, where waiting for treatment or interrupting pharmaceutical interventions produce a host of "bio-hazards." However, in both circumstances, whether judicializing the right to health or judicializing the right to social benefits, the architecture of a political subjectivity emerges.

Palestino/ Autonomous Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The group gained a bit more momentum in late 2009, when the resettlement program was coming to an end. They were able to convene a meeting with the Mayor of Mogi to apprise him of the situation the Palestinians were in (housing instability, lack of work opportunities, health precarity, etc.) and to see if there were any municipal resources that would be made available to them.

¹⁹⁹ "Legal Remedies: Therapeutic Markets and the Judicialization of the Right to Health" in *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2013, p 325-346. Biehl and Petryna served as editors for the collection. I first learned about Biehl & Petryna's project at a New School conference (The Body and the State: How the State Controls and Protects the Body, February 2011), where Biehl presented their research. Their research documents the plight of the poor and chronically ill in their attempts to access medications (often out of stock in SUS medical dispensaries) and advanced medical technologies. Difficulty with accessing these in the public health system has led scores to file "right-to-health" lawsuits, which have, in turn, overwhelmed the Brazilian judiciary.

For the Palestinian refugees specifically, this process of subjectification provides a vein into cultural citizenship as formulated by Aihwa Ong in “Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making” (1996). Ong posits:

‘[C]ultural citizenship’ refer[s] to the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations with the state and its hegemonic forms that establish the criteria of belonging within a national population and territory. Cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power linked to the nation-state and civil society. (738)

By navigating and contesting the multi-tentacled systems of the state where they are erased because of their non-citizen status, the refugees with their aging and sick bodies etch themselves into visibility and contest the Brazilian nativist-nationalism tightly woven into the fabric of the judiciary. The refugee petitioners participate in the complicated and messy dual process of auto-construction and being-constructed to which Ong refers. They also illuminate Foucault’s conceptualization of power as diffuse and not hierarchical, where “[it] is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (Power/Knowledge 1980, 98). However, the abstract qualities of Ong’s and Foucault’s socio-political articulations of personhood are made clear since their ideas can help us analyze but can not mitigate the immediate material realities the refugees face.

There is an obvious disjuncture between the discourses deployed by the nation-state, where officials claim the refugees will be treated as citizens²⁰⁰ upon entering the

²⁰⁰ In Brazil, as in other places, there are indeed hierarchies of citizenship. That is, the “citizenship” to which the refugees had access is more closely aligned with the citizenship of the poor “patient-litigants” Biehl and Petryna document in their research. However, outside of the funding provided to them by the tri-partite resettlement program, there are clear distinctions between what poor Brazilians have access to, because they are nationals, and what the refugees have access to. For instance, refugees cannot benefit

country, and the actuality of their circumstances. Although the Brazilian resettlement process for Palestinian refugees veered outside of normative practices, especially with regard to the elderly, there were no changes to or exceptions made in public policies that would accommodate these individuals long-term. As a result, the elderly are dependent on UNHCR, an internationally funded entity, for their living wages and livelihood. Vulnerable resettlement cases continue to receive UNHCR funds but must undergo an annual evaluative process to determine if they continue to qualify for funding. At the same time, funding for UNHCR is contingent upon what is allocated to it by a number of nation-states, with some donations coming from private institutions and donors. This poses a constant state of insecurity for the elderly and/ or ill since they can never be sure whether they will continue to receive funding, for how long, and how much. UNHCR budgets vary from year to year; therefore, they cannot guarantee a continuation of funding until moneys reach their institutional purses. This continued sense of uncertainty became a contentious matter for the refugees, who already had reservations about UNHCR.

The elderly refugees had a distinguished history with UN institutions (UNHCR and UNRWA). The majority of them had undergone more than two forced dislocations and relocations, and for some resettlement in Brazil marked the third or fourth time they were starting their lives anew. Thus, for many who entered Ruweished camp and were later resettled in Brazil, this was not their first experience with UNHCR. In fact, some had strong opinions about what UNHCR represented and the historical role the United

from social programs, such as disability benefits (BP-LOAS), housing programs (Minha Casa, Minha Vida), the Elderly Statute, education grants, etc., because they are non-nationals.

Nations more broadly played in making them refugees in the first place.²⁰¹ They resented the fact UNHCR would be ultimately responsible for them in their new country of resettlement. Nasser's father, Abu Nasser, declared: "The irony is that the UN itself has created the refugee problem. They have created this illness/disease and infected people with it, and now they themselves come with medicine to attempt to cure it—to cure the very illness they created, which is the creation of the Palestinian refugee." Abu Nasser here refers to the UN partition of Palestine in November 1947, resulting in the creation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees and the subsequent creation of UN entities as the "medicine" to attend to the dispossessed and displaced. Notably, he refers to the social and political condition of being a Palestinian refugee as an embodied illness--a particularized corporeality that is infected and diseased and made to depend on the international institutional body which had a direct hand in creating it. Abu Nasser continued, "look at what UNHCR did with the elderly men who came here." He was referring to the single, elderly men who were resettled in São Paulo, whose experiences, as noted below, were especially harsh.

THE ELDERLY & ZONES OF DIASPORIC ISOLATION

As one senior UNCHR resettlement agent noted:

Brazil was not used to the fact that elders would be without families. You know, some of the elders they came by themselves and that's a challenge that we have been working on with the communities and with CONARE... Because one thing is to help the elder and to identify the social services for them, but the problem is when you have no family support, it's almost impossible to find a solution. (Personal Interview/Meeting. 23 June 2010)

²⁰¹ UNHCR was established on December 14, 1950 and was originally expected to exist for only three years and dissolve. See "History of UNHCR," <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646cbc.html>, accessed November 2012. While the elderly had more direct interaction with UN agencies because of multiple displacements, many of the refugees held the view that the UN was responsible for their dispossession and displacement.

Here a neoliberal logic is attached to Foucault's concept of governmentality, revealing the processes by which populations, specifically elderly Palestinian refugees, are managed in Brazil. Where self-care and self-sufficiency prove difficult, the family becomes accountable for social risks. The resettlement agent cites the fact that the Brazilian nation-state, through its social policies, removes the responsibility of care from its domain and obligates families for that care.²⁰² In the absence of families, the tenuous condition of the welfare state becomes more pronounced.

Four elderly men who arrived in São Paulo without a spouse or other family members were placed in a nursing home [asilo de idosos] Mogi das Cruzes. Within days of being placed there, they demanded to be taken out and put into their own homes. According to Cáritas, one of the men allegedly threatened to destroy the home if he was not removed within five days. A fiercely independent 60 year old (who presented as much older), Faris, was not prepared to live by the regimented guidelines of the home and thought the very idea of being there was an affront to his personhood. He perceived it to be a place for those who could not govern themselves. Furthermore, he had lived in a confined and policed place for nearly five years and refused any semblance of spatial confinement. Being unable to eat when he wanted or cook his own meals, something he took pleasure in doing, also aggravated the situation. The UNHCR resettlement agent, on

²⁰² For the Brazilian elite this is clearly different since they are able to pay for an elderly family member's care and other types of care. In a country where there are more household/domestic workers per capita than any other country (6.5 to 7 million), there certainly is an expectation for family care to be privatized. Moreover, the notorious exploitation to which these workers have been subjected led to an organized movement for reform. In March 2013, a constitutional amendment was passed in the Brazilian Senate to secure equal rights for domestic workers, guaranteeing a maximum eight-hour workday and 44-hour workweek, overtime pay, and a pension-like fund. See "Momentum grows for domestic workers legislation" http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_208727/lang--en/index.htm. Also see, "In the Servants' Quarters" <http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/a-new-law-in-brazil-advancing-the-rights-of-domestic-workers-should-be-encouraged/>.

the other hand referred to this as a cultural issue: “culturally speaking, they did not accept to be there. They wanted to be independent, with their own places, their own houses. So although we tried to have them in a place where they would receive the care, you know, culturally it was not accepted” (Interview, 23 June 2010). To make sense of their resistance to being placed in a nursing home, the agent attributed the elders’ discontent to cultural differences, instead of resistance to institutionalization as such.

Autonomy [in different scales] appears to be a ubiquitous theme that plays out in the theater of elderly life and one that is not necessarily indicative of the refugees’ “culture.” For Faris it was about being treated fairly and with dignity. Referring to UNHCR, he claimed:

They put people in charge who do not fear God, absolutely have no fear of God. Any time you needed something, you had to beg them... What I mean is look, they degrade you, treat you as lower caste. You live under these conditions and you have no choice. It is abuse, manipulation, humiliation. Do you understand me?

UNHCR and Cáritas agreed to place Faris in an apartment, which he would share with another elderly Palestinian refugee. However, problems soon developed between the two and each demanded individual homes. Although this request was eventually accommodated, Faris complained the new apartment was barely livable. He claimed it was rat infested, moldy, and located in a hilly region, which made access to necessities such as transport and supermarkets extremely difficult, especially because of his cervical and lumbar spine problems and other health issues. Nevertheless, for Faris this was not about his debility; it was about a poorly administered resettlement program, which he assessed as missing the mark in several areas

Of the four elderly men, three were able to leave the nursing home and were granted their own apartments. Cáritas and UNHCR deemed the fourth, Sami, incapable of living independently because he was said to display signs of dementia, so he remained in the nursing home. Sami was 67 years old when he arrived in Brazil. He was one of a few resettled refugees born in Palestine. His family was dispossessed from Haifa in 1948, when Sami was eight years old, and was given refuge in Iraq, where he lived until being displaced in 2003. He had never had a formal education, had never been married, and worked as a farmhand for the better part of his life.

While living in the nursing home, Sami attempted to run away several times. Each time he found his way to the Mogi mosque and claimed he did not want to return to the home. He felt isolated there since he did not speak Portuguese and had no one with whom to communicate. On a visit to the nursing home in December 2009, I got a better sense of the facility and the conditions under which Sami lived.

NURSING ESTRANGEMENT

The nursing home, Instituto Providência de Santo Antônio (hereafter Providência), named after the patron saint for the elderly, had been founded by a Roman Catholic priest in 1977. In founding the facility Father Vicente aimed to “Resgatar para o idoso o exercício de sua cidadania através da melhoria da qualidade de vida, promovendo assim seus direitos e deveres/ redeem for the elderly the exercise of their citizenship by improving their quality of life, thus promoting their rights and responsibilities.” In a classic Asadian formulation of the entanglement of religion in the state and consequently in citizenship discourses, Father Vicente also founded the Municipal Council on the Elderly in Mogi das Cruzes and went on to serve as the Alternate Director of the National

Council on the Elderly.²⁰³ The latter was integral in passing the previously mentioned federal legislation for the aged, Estatuto do Idoso/ The Statute on the Elderly in 2003 (Law 10.741).²⁰⁴ The phrasing in Providência's mission is reflected in the national law, where the aim is for collaboration between civil society (often in the form of religious institutions) and the government in solving the social problems of people who are 60 and older by promoting their quality of life. The need for tangible social policies to address the issue is compelling given the growing number of elderly people in the country. Providência claims they not only cooperate with social policies for the elderly, but they also describe their efforts as being Christian as well as social [esta nossa atividade além de social é cristã]. These claims echo discourses of Liberation Theology, where social and economic rights are at the center of the struggle for social justice.²⁰⁵

Field notes: December 18, 2009:

The road to the nursing home is long and winding, betraying the indications on Google maps that it was only a six-minute walk from Heba's house. I walked for the better part of an hour. The sun was beating down heavy and hot, making the trek in this lumbering hilly region challenging. I rested a few moments when I came to a sloped, grassy clearing where kids were launching colorful, homemade kites. Although it was sunny, humid, and hot, there was surprisingly good wind to fly a kite. I watched the kids and their kites for a short while from the narrow sidewalk, steadied my breath, and continued on. At this point, I had already stopped to ask for directions twice, and I thought about Sami making his way to the mosque without the possibility of doing the same.

²⁰³ The interaction between the state and Catholic-based organizations appear to function seamlessly at the federal, state, and local levels.

²⁰⁴ For more information on the 2003 statute, see the following link http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/2003/110.741.htm, accessed January 14, 2013.

²⁰⁵ In Latin America, Liberation Theology originated in the Catholic Church and took root in the late 1960s, gaining prominence with the Peruvian Dominican priest Gustavo Gutiérrez's book, *A Theology of Liberation*. And in Brazil specifically, theologian Leonardo Boff, a former Franciscan priest, was pivotal to the Liberation Theology movement that railed against the plight of the poor and the social injustices to which large swathes of people were/are subjected. For more, see chapters 1 & 5 of Paul Farmer's text, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (2003).

Upon reaching the nursing home, there was a seasonal sign draped on the outside of the small, weathered building where the reception area was housed. The sign wished all who read it a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and stated that Providência “Agradece a sua colaboração em apoio aos idosos/ Thanks you for your collaboration in supporting the elderly.” A crucifix separated the name of the facility and the message it conveyed. When I entered the reception area an employee greeted me warmly. She let me know the director of the facility was not in but assured me I would be able to catch her around lunchtime the next day. When I asked this woman about Sami, she said she remembered him. She noted it had been hard for him because he had experienced a lot of trauma during the Iraq War and because Sami did not speak or understand the language, so it was difficult to communicate. Wondering out loud if he had been provided with a translator at any point, she claimed it would have been impossible to have a translator all the time, but she felt sure during medical visits and other instances, Sami was provided with an interpreter through Cáritas. She gave me a pass to walk around the facility (outside and in) and said I could freely talk to the people who lived there.

It quickly became apparent that there were a number of people who were ambulatory but not lucid. Their conversations with no one in particular were audible but not necessarily intelligible. The mostly elderly people housed there straddled complex psychic worlds; however, the facility in which they resided was less sophisticated. The largest structure on the grounds was a dining hall, which doubled as an events hall and accommodated just over 100 people. The actual living quarters for the residents consisted of a series of what looked like large cement sheds, no bigger than 10 x 12 feet in size. After walking around the relatively small premises, I counted 15 of these

structures on the property and then came across a man sitting outside one of the modules. In greeting him, he appeared lucid and engaged, so we struck up a conversation. JC had been living in Providência for 13 years. Since living there, he had suffered a stroke, leaving him less mobile, but he was still able to get around using his cane. JC lived with four other people in his unit, which he said was the norm. He told me to look inside his module to have a peek at the setup. Peering inside, I saw four single-sized beds in close proximity to one another. The space was quite small but tidy. JC said he liked living there and also said he liked the nursing home over all.

He remembered Sami and recalled that it was really hard for him at the home because he did not eat the food they ate nor speak the language they spoke. Above all else, JC claimed the problem was Sami's distaste for the food, more than his lack of language skills and being unable to communicate. He said Sami was very clever [esperto] and understood and learned quickly, but it was the others, including himself, who could not understand him. JC then confessed, "eu tinha muito dó dele/ I felt very sorry for him." Pointing to a mulberry tree a few meters away, he indicated Sami would eat the unripe fruit from it ["comia isso de la verde"] to quell his hunger.

When I called the nursing home director the next day, she was not willing to meet with me in person for an interview. However, she agreed to answer some questions over the phone. She immediately invoked a nationalist discourse in discussing the resettled Palestinians generally and later condemned President Lula for allowing their resettlement. "Os palestinos exigiam muito mais do que mereciam...Sami recebia mais assistência do que os brasileiros que estão no asilo/ The Palestinians demanded much more than they deserved...Sami received more assistance than the Brazilians who are in

the nursing home.” The director quickly erected an “Us” versus “Them” framework and did not mask her belief that “worthiness” was part and parcel of social entitlements.²⁰⁶ In her article on citizenship in Puerto Rican Chicago, Ana Yolanda Ramos-Zayas deploys the concept of the “politics of worthiness” to capture the insistence that Puerto Ricans, especially the poor, “*prove their deservingness of US citizenship* in order to be legitimately entitled to civil rights and social benefits that other...populations can assume as inalienable” [original emphasis (2004, 35)]. Ramos-Zayas reminds us of the hierarchies of citizenship and the scales of social and political disenfranchisement of racialized others. Although the Palestinian refugees certainly were not citizens per se, they were expected to prove they were worthy of social benefits. However, their worthiness should not and could not compete with the deserving and imagined Brazilian nationals themselves, according to the nursing home director.

To prove the ways in which the nursing home staff went out of their way for Sami, the director claimed that when Sami needed translation, they would call the imam at the mosque, Sheikh Hamdi. Despite the claim of the receptionist the day before, it was not Caritas who provided a translator. Instead, and in the absence of NGO resources and family, the home transferred such responsibilities to those associated with the refugees (if not other refugees as shown with Heba and Reem). From my interaction with JC the previous afternoon, it was evident the food they served at the facility posed a problem for Sami, so I asked the director about it. I asked whether his religious dietary restrictions

²⁰⁶ The term “entitlement” is freighted. In association with social benefits, the term is rarely unpacked and has a tendency to connote unmerited privilege. While this is the manner in which the director would likely use the term, it does not reflect my thoughts about social benefits or “entitlements”.

were taken into consideration, such as abstention from pork.²⁰⁷ She insisted, “Muitas vezes o Sami fazia greve de fome, principalmente após visitas de outros palestinos. O Sami não tinha tratamento preferencial no asilo. Ele devia comer *tudo* que os outros comiam/ Many times Sami went on hunger strikes, principally after visiting with other Palestinians. Sami did not have preferential treatment at the home. He ought to eat *everything* the others ate” (original emphasis). Enquiring if this meant he should have also eaten pork and pork products which were religiously forbidden, she claimed “nem cozinhavam essa carne no asilo/ they didn’t even cook that meat in the nursing home.” However, Sheikh Hamdi did not think this was true since Sami would often ask the imam to pray over him for religious transgressions he had committed. The imam could not say with certainty for what Sami sought forgiveness, but it appeared likely eating pork was one of them.

Enquiring with the director about whether Sami was free to come and go from the facility whenever he wished, she said he left and stayed with the other refugees for two or three days at a time. However, Marisa, the receptionist, indicated that although most residents were free to leave and return whenever they liked, it was different for Sami. She claimed that since he did not speak the language (rather than dementia), Sami did not have the same freedom of movement as the others. This seems to be in line with classifying him as an eloper—that is, that he would “run away” as opposed to just leaving the facility. The director concluded our conversation by saying “esses assentados recebiam muito mais que os próprios brasileiros. Não concordo com o governo Lula que

²⁰⁷ As mentioned elsewhere, some of the resettled folks drank beer or other alcoholic beverages; however, even if some did consume alcohol, they by and large abstained from pork and pork products. Both are forbidden in Muslim jurisprudence, but pork is particularly affiliated with filth and disease, so there was much aversion to it.

concedia mais aos refugiados que aos nacionais. Isso não é algo brasileiro/ these resettled [people] received far more than Brazilians themselves. I do not agree with the Lula government, which granted more to the refugees than to nationals. This is not something Brazilian” (Phone Interview. 19 December 2009).

The director’s nationalist discourse suggested that in providing what she perceived as *more* (more financial assistance, more benefits, more general support) to the Palestinian refugees, the state was guilty of denying resources to its legitimate “deserving” citizenry. This was not only a betrayal but also an affront to the very meaning of Brazilianness.²⁰⁸ Without knowing the origin of the funds for the refugees more broadly, nor the origin of funds for Sami’s stay in the nursing home specifically, and despite the wide socio-economic divisions between the rich and poor in Brazil, the director “imagined” a unified nation undermined by unworthy outsiders. This brings to the foreground what Benedict Andersen writes in *Imagined Communities*, “[the nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (2006 [1983], 7). In this case, it is not clear whether the director “always” conceived of Brazil in that way, but she certainly used that imagined vision to deny any more benefits to Sami or other refugees.

Sami stayed in the nursing home just about a year. The social isolation he experienced there was evident, particularly following the departure of the other elderly Palestinians. After several attempts to run away and insisting on not wanting to be there anymore, a legal activist got involved in Sami’s case and removed him from the home,

²⁰⁸ However, despite her nativist stance, it is unclear whether the director would have vehemently advocated for services *for* the Brazilian poor as much as she argued *against* providing services for poor non-nationals.

claiming he was forcibly held captive [cárcere privada]. The day after Sami left the home in December 2008, he left São Paulo altogether and went to Brasília. There he met four other Palestinian refugees (two of whom were elderly men who had been in the same nursing home with him in São Paulo), including Faris, who were camped out in front of UNHCR. All claimed they were not able to integrate into Brazilian society, had been neglected in terms of healthcare, and demanded to be resettled in another country because Brazil was not able to ensure their human rights, including their rights to adequate medical care.

THEIR BODIES/THEIR PROTESTS

When Sami arrived in Brasília in December 2008, the other Palestinian refugees had been camped out in protest in front of the UNHCR headquarters since May. That space became an ongoing site of protest. By June UNHCR (by way of Cáritas) suspended all assistance to those refugees who were protesting in Brasília. They claimed the refugees had willingly and decidedly left their cities of resettlement and therefore abandoned the resettlement program. Now they would no longer be entitled to any of the monthly assistance previously provided by the UN agency. Meanwhile, the refugees claimed the program, by not providing adequate services and necessary medical care, had in fact abandoned them. Despite the suspension of funds, the refugees asserted their right to dissent and continued their protests. They fortified their encampment in front of the UNHCR headquarters with tents and even an improvised stove, where Faris would often cook.



(Fig. 5: Residential Street in Lago Sul where encampment had been. Photo taken by author.)

The resettlement coordinator in Rio Grande do Sul, Cristina, reflected on the comedic-tragedy of the situation: “Não, era fantástico. A gente chegava lá e tava o Faris, cortando cebola no chão. Eles faziam lá, cebola frita com pão...Cheirinho *bom* de cebola!...Tinha um cheiro muito bom/ No, it was fantastic. We would get there and there was Faris, cutting onions on the ground. They would make it there, fried onions with bread...the onions smelled so *good*. It smelled really good.” The UNHCR office was located in a rented house in an upper and upper middle class residential suburb of Brasília’s Federal District, Lago Sul. (See Fig. 5: Photo of block.) The neighbors on the block found only tragedy in the situation. While visiting the site where the protest had been, a woman who lived across the street from the encampment recounted:

Ficaram quase um ano...faltava um mês pra fazer um ano. Aí ficavam só três aqui, mas num estado horroroso. Aqui a gente não podia nem andar, parecia que era a casa deles... A gente ficava com medo. Para vir aqui conversar com a vizinha, eu vinha de carro, pra você ter idéia. [Eu] vinha de carro e parava ali, porque eu não tinha coragem de passar aqui. Porque eles ficavam morando aqui, com sujeira, com rato. E eles eram mal-encarados. Era um horror...um horror, horror, horror, horror! E nós fomos os primeiros acolher. A gente levou comida, deu cobertor, deu colchonete...Se eu soubesse que ia se dado em isso tudo, a agente não tinha feito [inicialmente]. Era só um movimento pra fazer uma reivindicação. Mas foi que o negócio foi se alastrando. Depois disso, que a gente viu depois de uma semana que eles não saíram, a gente parou de ajudar/

They stayed almost one year...one month short of a year. By then there were only three here, but in a ghastly condition. Here we could not even walk, it seemed like it was their home...We were scared. To come here to talk to the neighbor, I came by car, so that you could have an idea. [I] came by car and stopped there, because I did not have the courage to pass through here. Because they were living here with filth, with mice. And they were evil-looking. It was a horror ... a horror, horror, horror, horror!

And we were the first to embrace them. We brought food, gave a blanket, gave a mat. Had I known it would have resulted in all of this, we would not have initially done that. It was just a movement to make some demands/claims. But the thing dragged on. After that, after a week when we saw they were not leaving, we stopped helping. (Interview. 24 June 2010)

The neighbor, Marta, made what appeared to be a layered observation when she likened the manner in which the protestors occupied the public sidewalk in this upper-class neighborhood as being comparable to being in “their [own] home.” On the one hand, the political nature of the protest was hollowed out of her assessment and cast into the private domestic sphere. On the other hand, the protestors were co-opting space that was not theirs and which was geared toward a specific, more agreeable, more [socio-economically] deserving “public.” Moreover, Marta’s description of the protest site as being filthy and mouse-ridden and simultaneously appearing “like it was their home,” not only made an assessment about how the refugees would or have lived in a home, but also attributes a certain comfort to their situation of being home-less.

Despite the neighbor citing fear, which is indicative of a broad and common contemporary Orientalist response to Arab Muslims, when asked if she or anyone else had ever been threatened in any way, she said they had not. However, it did not keep the situation from being restrictive. Marta explained, “De ameaçar não, mas era constrangedor...a pessoa que não fala a lingua, ele não é bem visto, e eles sabem que não eram...Uma situação degradante, nojenta ...Um ano com uma situação dessas!/"

Threatened, no. But it was constraining...a person who does not speak the language, is not well perceived, and they knew they were not...A degrading, disgusting situation...One year with such a situation!”

For the people who lived on the block, the camped out refugees were unsightly and troubled the suburban landscape and sound-scape. They even transformed the usual odors that emanated from the neighborhood by frying onions and cooking other foods outdoors. They thus managed to significantly reconfigure the space they occupied. This was an affront to the neighborhood’s class sensibilities. There was a clear and growing tension between the refugees seeking visibility and their unsightliness as perceived by the neighbors. While the encampment was a response to the crisis the refugees had experienced since their arrival in Brazil, this elite suburban neighborhood was now in crisis because of the refugees’ encampment. After an initial sympathetic response by some families on the block, the protest situation was regarded as “degrading” and “disgusting,” and the refugees’ bodies and language were a marker of the problems that ended any sense of local support.

Marta noted that her husband was Lebanese and was thus able to communicate with the refugees in Arabic. When I asked her what they said, she related the following:

Falavam que eles queriam ir para outro lugar, que eles não queriam ficar aqui. Que o ACNUR não ajudavam eles. Mas o ACNUR ajudava. Davam casa, davam um preço salário, tinham uma casa, tinham aulas de português. Tudo isso tem. Eles reclamavam que casa não era boa, que a casa tinha mofo... Meu filho, Ué! Nem brasileiro não tem isso, e eles estão tendo! Não tem lógica! E como eles eram de idade, não tinham os documentos, não trabalham, não tem nada...aonde que vai? Eles queriam ir para Europa, mas lá eles também não queriam eles...E aí é tudo palestino tudo cabeça dura, né? Muçulmano tudo ...isso aí vai influenciando, né? Queriam ir pra outro país...mas os outros países não querem eles. Quem que vai querer aquilo? Três senhores e um mais novo, de 43. Pra que que vão querer? Não deviam de ter deixado entrar [no país]. Tinha que ter

deixado eles lá aonde estavam, né? Eles queriam que o ACNUR fizesse um acordo, só que os outros países não aceitavam...A situação estava horrível. Era a barraca de papelão e de lona, e fazendo comida. E eles sujo...Era uma coisa assim, que nem pra eles era bom. /

They said they wanted to go elsewhere; they did not want to stay here. They said UNHCR did not help them. But UNHCR did help them. They gave them a home, they gave them a salary, they had a home; they had Portuguese classes. All of that they had. They complained that the house was not good, that it had mold...Huh, my dear! Not even Brazilians have this, and they have it! There was no logic! And since they were elderly, didn't have documents, didn't work, didn't have anything...*where* are they going? They wanted to go to Europe, but over there they didn't want them either...Then they are all Palestinian, all hardheaded, right? They were all Muslim...That there will influence, right?...They wanted to go to another country...but the other countries did not want them. Who is going to want *that*? Three elderly men and one who was younger, he was 43. Why would they want them? They should not have let them in [the country]. They should have left them where they were, right? They (the refugees) wanted UNHCR to make an agreement; it's just that the other countries would not accept [them]. The situation was horrible. There was a tent made of cardboard and canvas [(See Figure 6)], and making food. And they were dirty...It was something that wasn't even good for them.



(Fig. 6: Encampment in front of UNHCR. Photo taken by Sonia Hamid.)



(Fig. 7: Residence in Brasília where UNHCR offices had been located. Photo taken by author post protest.)

As the protest continued beyond what the neighbors thought acceptable, the demands made by the refugees also entered the realm of unacceptability (See Figure 8: Elderly refugee wears vest marking 100 days of protest). Their claims for better conditions within the country, as well as their demands to be resettled elsewhere were unrealistic and illogical, according to Marta. Following the same discourse as the director of the nursing home in São Paulo, where the three elderly protestors had initially lived, she indicated the refugees had gotten more than was offered to Brazilians themselves, “Not even Brazilians have this, and they have it!” Clearly, Marta was not referring to herself here, since she, like other elite/upper-class Brazilians have much more. Furthermore, they were elderly, did not have documents, and were not employable; so, “who is going to want *that*?” To her, their demands defied logic [não tem lógica!]. The refugees’ bodies were seen as excess: excessively old, idle, “evil looking,” demanding, needy, and therefore ultimately undesirable. They were at once confined by and spilling over their own corporeality. Moreover, she characterized the people in the encampment through essentialist ideas of Palestinianness and Muslimness. Here we can see a manifestation of

the Neo-Orientalist glaze, or the stereotyping by the stereotyped, where these ethnic and religious affiliations produce Orientalist imaginings of cultural others. To her, these were indicators of what she considered as the refugees' stubborn disposition and irrational demands and behavior. Given all of this, Marta thought the refugees should have been left in the camp where they had been. While recounting the refugees' claims and underscoring their elderly status, this woman did not indicate the refugees were also ill. Yet healthcare was one of the primary reasons for which the refugees sought visibility, intervention, and a change of location. The elderly men claimed their medical issues had not been properly attended and could not be properly attended to in Brazil. They wanted to be re-resettled in a different country, where their medical problems could be addressed.

In the Macro Accord for the Resettlement of Refugees, referenced in chapter 1 (see footnote 92 in the same), signed by Brazil and UNHCR, there are two stipulations under which the Palestinian refugees demanding resettlement in another country fit. The first is section 3.4 (Refugiados sem perspectiva de integração no país do primeiro refúgio) for "refugees who are unable to integrate into their host country":

Em algumas circunstâncias, os refugiados não conseguem integrar-se no país onde se encontram, por motivos culturais, sociais e religiosos, dentre outros. Quando um refugiado permanece certo tempo em um país de refúgio sem conseguir integrar-se, inexistindo possibilidades de repatriamento em futuro próximo, ele poderá pleitear o seu reassentamento/

In some circumstances, refugees are not able to integrate into the country in which they find themselves, for cultural, social, religious and other reasons. When a refugee remains for a period of time in a country of asylum without being able to integrate, and without the possibility of being repatriated in the near future, s/he can request resettlement.



(Fig. 8: Photo taken by Sonia Hamid. The vest donned by an elderly protester reads “We have been living on the street in front of UNHCR for 100 days.”)

The three refugee men who continued the protest at UNHCR all claimed they were not able to integrate into Brazilian society for reasons of age, illness, language, living conditions in the resettlement city, and others.²⁰⁹ In addition, they did not have the possibility of being repatriated to Palestine in the “near future.” The other section of the Macro Accord that also addresses the demands made by the Palestinian refugees is section 3.5 (Pessoas com necessidades especiais), which addresses resettlement for those “persons with special needs.” Included in this clause are elders and/or those necessitating unmet medical attention. The Accord precisely indicates the conditions under which resettlement to another nation-state could occur, and these specifically fit the claims

²⁰⁹ There were many times that other refugees came from their resettlement city to protest in front of UNHCR. At one point as many as 20 refugees were gathered in front of the UNHCR office in Lago Sul. They would come for some days, make demands—some of which were met-- and then return to their resettlement city. But a handful remained for the duration of the staged protest.

made by the refugees. However, it addresses these conditions for resettlement *into* Brazil, not *from* it. Even so, whether vigorously or anemically, UNHCR Brazil proceeded to contact countries that could possibly accommodate the demands made by the refugees.

In each case where a representative from a country was contacted and a request was made for re-resettlement, they were denied, indicating the refugees were no longer in need of protection because they had been removed from the “area of risk” (the desert camp). One correspondence specifically noted, “the medical health care system in Brazil is not considered to be in such a condition that it could be a risk for their (the refugees) psychological and physical health. The health aspect can therefore not be accepted as a reason for prioritizing these refugees before others.”²¹⁰ In a general sense, Marta was correct in saying “other countries did not want them.”

JUDICIALIZING CLAIMS

While still in protest and with the help of an independent human rights attorney, the refugees began to explore ways in which they could have their monthly resettlement assistance reinstated. This process began shortly after UNHCR recused itself from providing any financial and/or other assistance to the refugees camped out in front of its office.²¹¹ Meanwhile, the protestors were not eligible for direct state assistance. As

²¹⁰ The author obtained correspondence between a UNHCR program officer and a representative from the Norwegian Embassy in which it is stated that the country [Norway] would not be able to accept the refugees, “even on the grounds of healthcare.” As indicated to the author during a meeting with UNHCR officers in Brasília, all countries, including Norway, that were asked to consider accepting the refugees who were making demands in Brasília, claimed the refugees were no longer in need of protection because they had been taken away from the “risk area”—meaning the desert camp. The original meeting between the program officer and the Norwegian representative took place at the end of May 2008, and the written response to the request was issued two days later.

²¹¹ The refugees received assistance for food and/or materials for their encampment from organized collectivities, such as Instituto Autonomia, Movimento Democracia Direta (MDD), some individual

noted above, judicialization of “the right to health” and of rights to social benefits have become a means by which petitioners can make themselves visible and hold the state accountable for rights codified in federal law. However, because UNHCR is considered a UN “Specialized Agency,” with “privileges and immunities,” the state and its courts have no jurisdiction over it. Furthermore, the agency has immunity from any lawsuits directed against it—a privilege to which UNHCR Brazil referred in its correspondence with the refugees’ lawyer.²¹²

Nevertheless, given that the resettlement program in Brazil is a tripartite agreement, which also involves the Brazilian nation-state (via CONARE) and the local civil society, the attorney who represented the Palestinians continued to file petitions in the judiciary and requests for court investigation into the matter. The attorney also asked the President of CONARE and the Minister of Justice, who at the time was one in the same, Luiz Paulo Telles Barreto, for a public hearing regarding the predicament of the refugees camped out in Lago Sul. In much of the correspondence, the attorney copied or directly sought intervention by the Attorney General of the Defense of Citizen Rights, the District Attorney’s Office for Defense of the Elderly, the Special Secretary of Human Rights, among other relevant federal and district entities. This together with the media

members of Palestinian organizations in Brazil, such as Fepal, the Palestinian consulate himself, the mosque in Brasília, as well as from independent actors and individuals in the local Arab community. This was how they were able to subsist while UNHCR refused to grant the refugees their assistance checks since they claimed they had abandoned the program.

²¹² See “Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations” (New York, 13 February 1946) and “Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies” (New York, 21 November 1947). More specifically, Article II, Section 2 states, “The United Nations, its property and assets wherever located and by whomsoever held, *shall enjoy immunity from every form of legal process except insofar as in any particular case it has expressly waived its immunity*” (emphasis mine). Conventions texts are available here: <http://untreaty.un.org/cod/avl/ha/cpiun-cpisa/cpiun-cpisa.html>. Accessed January 2013.

attention the refugees were garnering for their protest ensured a broader awareness of the situation.

Beginning in late January 2009, the Regional Attorney General of the Defense of Citizen Rights made firm recommendations to the president of CONARE, Teles Barreto, to reinstate the refugees' monthly assistance, including retroactive payment for the nine months they had been without financial support. While the Attorney General had no jurisdiction over UNHCR, she based her finding on the responsibility the Brazilian government had to refugees as codified in Federal Law 9474/97, Estatuto dos Refugiados (cited in detail in chapter 1). Despite these recommendations and many subsequent exchanges between her office, CONARE, UNHCR, and the refugees, by way of their attorney, a hearing involving all of the parties did not take place until November 2009 (18 months since they had begun their protest) and only then did UNCHR make an official commitment.

By then a lot had changed for the Palestinian protestors. In late April 2009, the three remaining people camped out in front of the office were forcibly removed from their encampment. A judge ordered their removal and claimed the encampment was a health and environmental hazard and posed a risk to the people who lived there. Marta, the neighbor, gave the following account of the removal:

Chegaram as 6 horas da manha num sabado. Aí foi horivel. Foi triste. Mesmo que eu queria que eles saíssem, fiquei bem aborrecida. Nem dormi. Foi um negócio bem ruim, sabe? Porque não era assim que a gente queria que se resolver-se. Foi a força mesmo. Mas não tinha solução, não tinha. Mas era o que tinha que ser feito...Estava afetando a comunidade aqui, né?

[The Police] came at 6 o'clock in the morning on a Saturday. It was horrible. It was sad. Even though I wanted them gone, I was very upset. I couldn't even sleep. It was something really bad, you know? Because it was not how we wanted it to be resolved. It really was by force. But there wasn't a solution; there

wasn't. It was what needed to be done. It was affecting our community here, right?

An armed military guard remained on the street for nearly three weeks to ensure the protestors would not return to the site. By then the UNHCR office had been relocated to an undisclosed location.²¹³ After the refugees were forced out, representatives from UNHCR Brazil held a meeting with the Swedish Embassy in Brasilia where they requested family reunification for two of the refugees. Sami as well as the 43 year-old, Raed, who had been camped in front of UNHCR had cousins living in Sweden. Although from the outset family reunification was an unlikely possibility, a formal request was made. In the first week of May the Swedish Embassy told UNHCR Brazil that the Swedish Board of Migration did not accept family reunification “between cousins, aunts/uncles, nieces/nephews.” Furthermore, only on extremely rare occasions would family reunification be granted to even adult children and their parents.²¹⁴

Meanwhile, the refugees decided to take their protest to a site where they would have more visibility. During the day, they went to the Esplanade of Ministries [Esplanada dos Ministérios] and protested in front of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, also known as Itamaraty. Although they were few in number,²¹⁵ the refugees refused invisibility²¹⁶ and worked diligently to highlight their presence by demonstrating in a highly visible political site and pointing to the absence of UNHCR and state responsibility. However, in public discourses, the refugees would always say they were

²¹³ When I met with representatives from UNHCR in Brasilia in June 2010, their offices were housed in a high-rise office building with tight security.

²¹⁴ The Swedish guidelines for reunification are not out of the norm. The normative family reunification for many countries is family reunification between minors and their parents.

²¹⁵ In addition to the three men who had been in the encampment, seven other refugees who had come from their resettlement cities participated in the Itamaraty protests (including a young family of four—parents and two children under the age of seven). In total there were 10 people, eight adults and two children.

²¹⁶ This is borrowed from the title of Ilana Feldman's article, “Refusing Invisibility: Documentation and Memorialization in Palestinian Refugee Claims,” in *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21:4 (2008), 498-516.

grateful to Brazil for its solidarity with the Palestinian people and directed their misgivings at UNHCR and the local resettlement agencies (principally Cáritas). One of my interlocutors referred to UNHCR as “merchants” who benefit financially from managing the poor. He explained it this way, “They are rich people, they are merchants...and we are the poor people. They are the merchants and we are the goods. Ah, they are living the high life and we cannot live.”

Raed, who had spent the latter part of his 30s in the desert camp and was eager to start his life anew in Brazil at the age of forty-one, was very critical of the resettlement. According to him the program was poorly executed; thus, it was a program in name but not in substance. His hopes were especially dashed when he realized there were not many job opportunities, nor a workforce integration component in the resettlement program. As his reference above about UNHCR indicates, Raed was clearly conscious of class dynamics between personnel who administered the program and refugees who received their services. That is, in managing the program and refugees (the poor), UNHCR personnel earn significant salaries, whereas refugees earn a meager monthly stipend that is not equivalent to a living wage. Moreover, Raed’s analysis reflects a broader critique of humanitarianism itself, where a lucrative economy is built on the ruins of lives.

With the help of collectivities, the refugees equipped themselves with flyers and printed signs to articulate their grievances and communicate with those with whom they came into contact in the Esplanade (See Figure 9).



(Fig. 9: Protest photos taken by Elizabeth Coutinho and Bruna Lira. The elderly Palestinian refugee is holding both a Brazilian and Palestinian flag, standing alongside a protest sign that reads, “This is a first cry for help to Brazil. The second cry shall be a cry for justice from the world. As though it were not enough that Israel and the United States persecutes us, now it is UNHCR/UN.”)

In June 2009 the Palestinian refugees’ protests overlapped with the National Conference for the Promotion of Racial Equality/ Conferencia Nacional de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (CONAPIR), which took place in Itamaraty. This conference emerged from an endeavor launched by President Lula himself in 2003, in the inaugural year of his presidency. In one of many of his undertakings to institutionalize and promote policies and ideas of equality, Lula created the Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial/ Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR/PR). The primary function of this new organ, as stated in the 2009 conference bylaws was as follows:

Órgão cuja missão institucional é acompanhar e coordenar políticas de diferentes ministérios e de outros órgãos do Governo Federal para a promoção da igualdade

racial; articular a execução de programas de cooperação com organismos públicos e privados, nacionais e internacionais, e promover o cumprimento de acordos e convênções internacionais assinadas pelo Brasil para combater a discriminação racial e ao racismo/

An organ whose institutional mission is to monitor and coordinate policies of different ministries and other organs of the federal government for the promotion of racial equality; execute joint cooperative programs with organizations that are public and private, national and international, and promote the compliance of international accords and conventions signed by Brazil to combat racial discrimination and racism.²¹⁷

This is followed by a bulleted list that specifies groups who have been discriminated against and how the government body should seek to promote racial equality and develop mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of citizenship rights. The groups identified as being historically discriminated against and/or whose histories have been omitted are: populações negras e indígenas/ Blacks/Afro-Brazilians and indigenous Indians/Native Indians; povos de etnia cigana/ Roma people. At the end, the list includes the claim that SEPP/PR “recognizes” the following:

- *A gravidade do antissemitismo e da islamofobia/The severity of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia;*
- *E que o Brasil, por seu exemplo de integração e convívio entre comunidades de origem árabe- palestina e judaica, deve empenhar-se em favor do processo de paz e solidariedade baseada no respeito e aplicação das resoluções da Organização das Nações Unidas. / And that Brazil, through its example of integration and conviviality between communities of Arab-Palestinian and Jewish origin, should commit itself to support the peace process based on respecting and implementing resolutions set forth by the United Nations.*

While referencing a national tradition of harmonious plurality, despite the contradiction suggested by the need to form an entity to promote and implement racial equality, the governmental organization recognizes the existence of Palestinian and Jewish peoples’ (broadly defined) conviviality inside its own borders. This, on the one hand, serves as a prime example of Brazil’s inherent harmonious quality, which invariably produces a

²¹⁷ In *Presidência da República Secretaria Especial da Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial – SEPP/PR* (2009), Pp. 3.

peaceful co-existence between two disparate groups. On the other hand, this harmonious existence inside the country signals that Brazil is exceptionally equipped to foster the same climate outside of it. Thus Brazil could promote and possibly broker peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict via the UN. Moreover, Islamophobia is listed with anti-Semitism as battles to fight internally and externally, along with other forms of discrimination.

The sense of a nationalist version of multiculturalism is complemented by the continued familiar discourse of plural harmony.

As especificidades do movimento negro, dos povos indígenas, quilombolas, de etnia cigana, das comunidades de terreiro, dos LGBT (Lésbicas, Gays, Bissexuais, e Transgêneros), dos judeus e palestinos enriqueceram a II CONAPIR, demonstrando que a diversidade é que faz do Brasil um país de todos/ The specifics of the Black movement, of indigenous peoples, of the direct descendants of enslaved subjects/Maroons, Romani, barnyard communities,²¹⁸ the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender), Jews and **Palestinians** enriched CONAPIR II, demonstrating that diversity is what makes Brazil a country for all. (Emphasis added)

2009 was the first year in which Palestinians were included in the national racial equality conference in Brasília, and the presence of refugees protesting captured the curiosity of delegates who had not known about their predicament. There were also representatives from Palestinian organizations in Brazil, such as FEPAL, as well as from an Arab-Brazilian institute, Al Watan, led by a Lebanese man, who attended and/or participated in events.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Founded by people of African origin who practice Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Candomblé. The barnyard refers to the sacralized spaces where religious rituals are carried out.

²¹⁹ FEPAL is likely the Palestinian Organization in Brazil with most political capital since they have chapters throughout the country. However, many chapters are inactive. Their politics are more mainstream (for Brazil, that is) and are in line with the Palestinian Authority. Therefore, more left-leaning Palestinian organizations have accused them of compromising important social and political issues for Palestinians and particularly for Palestinian refugees.

However, at this point there already existed some tension between many of the refugees and these organizations. Leadership from the latter felt the Palestinian refugees were demanding from UNHCR and the government much more than they should, making themselves spectacles by protesting outside the UNHCR offices and then moving their protest to a more central location. At the time of the conference, there was a lot of media attention in the area surrounding various groups that were petitioning the government, including some who participated in the conference itself. Representatives from these organizations voiced their opposition to the refugees' demands and tactics. One of Al Watan's leaders, Amir, noted that the public spectacle they were making was shameful. In fact, he asserted that he directly asked one of the refugees if he had no shame [vergonha] in "begging for things." He also claimed, in no uncertain terms, that the presence of the Palestinians in the Racial Equality conference was an embarrassment, because there did not exist any racial discrimination as far as the Palestinians were concerned. In other countries, he suggested, they would have been subjected to horrible discrimination, but "O Brasil não tem preconceito, aqui as pessoas recebem bem. E os Árabes já estão estabelecidos / There isn't discrimination in Brazil. Here people are well received. And Arabs are already well established."²²⁰

It is apparent that from Amir's perspective, a classed politics of respectability is demanded from the Palestinians if progress is to be made in Brazil.²²¹ The Palestinian refugees were not "behaving" in a respectable and becoming manner. Instead, by demanding entitlements, they were trafficking in vile acts by making unreasonable

²²⁰ Personal Interview with Sonia Hamid. 19 February 2010.

²²¹ I borrow here from both Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (1993) and Patricia Hill Collins' (2005) work and critique of ideas of respectability imposed on poor and working-poor African-American women in the early twentieth century. They were expected to comport themselves with middle-class sensibilities in order to gain approval from the broader white community (Hill Collins 2005; 72).

demands and making themselves a visual spectacle. They were also betraying what was expected of the ideal Arab (as generally imagined by Brazilians), where asking the state for additional income and services (read as dependency) was seen as abhorrent and compromised the position of the “established” and more elite Arab community. The Palestinians were not contributing to the dominant discourses of Arabness in the nation-state (as noted in chapter 2), but were representing social and political impoverishment. The refugees, however, did not intend to elaborate a broader Arabness, but instead were highlighting the specific and immediate situation they faced as Palestinians.

In “Refusing Invisibility” (2008), Ilana Feldman mines the artifacts of visibility through which Palestinians articulate themselves and make claims. For instance the use of Palestinian flags in varying times and spaces (i.e., in occupied Palestine before the 1993 Oslo Accords, Palestinian flags were often torn down and destroyed by the IDF) operates as a means to make claims not only to rights but also to existence (504). As Feldman argues, “to see one was to be forced to recognize the presence of not simply ‘Arabs’ but ‘Palestinians’” (Ibid). In the latter photos of the protests in Brasilia (See Fig. 8 and 9), the Palestinian flag is used as a marker of this distinction despite Amir’s efforts to place the refugees in the broader context of Arabness. The refugees used the flag as a tool for visual recognition and as a marker to make claims for what they were being denied. Together with the elderly bodies, this symbol also produced a particularized temporality of Palestinian refugeedom. That is, the protracted status of Palestinian refugees was etched on their aged, material bodies.

There was also an expectation that the refugees be docile and thankful to Brazil. Thus, their demands were read as a demonstration of their ungratefulness. In fact, one of

the Arabic-speaking volunteers in São Paulo whom I met in the early stages of my fieldwork echoed a similar sentiment. She claimed the refugees were “ungrateful”—especially since they were receiving from the government much more than Brazilians themselves did. As noted earlier, these ideas of the “politics of worthiness” (Ramos-Zayas 2004) were often deployed in reference to the Palestinians and in comparison to Brazilian nationals (as well as the broader Arab community). Thus some refugees were forcing their bodies to be visible and legible, refusing to be reduced to the shadows of humanitarian regimes²²² by making claims as citizen-subjects would and staging scenes of what Jacques Rancière calls *dissensus* (2004). At the same time, they were perceived and reproduced as shaming Arabness and being unworthy and ungrateful of the Brazilian nation-state’s benevolence. Ironically, the refugees were making use of the very lexicon of these humanitarian regimes to make demands for human rights, but also for civil rights, the later riddled with contradictions in that they were constitutionally guaranteed but federally denied (i.e., social programs such as BPS-LOAS).

The representative from Al Watan went on to claim that prejudice or bias did not exist in Brazil --something articulated by various people throughout the three phases of my fieldwork. This claim seems to betray the very premise of the conference and Amir’s own presence at it. This schizophrenic acknowledgement and disavowal of discrimination by government officials and even by some activists and organizers in Brazil is fascinating. The degree to which harmonious racial plurality is interwoven, echoed, and produced as a form of Brazilian exceptionalism in social and political

²²² By humanitarian regimes, as noted in Chapter 1, I am referring to the multiple actors that participate in human rights endeavors. These include nation-states, the United Nations, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other actors that fund and/ or provide services.

intercourse, while simultaneously nodding to the need to eradicate discrimination, is a testament to a discomfort with the anxious state of racial and ethnic discourses in Brazil.

After the conference, the protests began to phase out. As Raed, the 43 year-old protester told me, “You know, I got tired from the situation, really. I’m really tired. I spent five and a half years trying to make something from nothing. I’m just tired.” He and the others were worn out, and while concerned for himself, Raed also knew he might be better off than the others. He reflected, “Here (Brazil) it is too difficult...for families with kids, but for the old people also. The old people, they cannot work and they have no money to spend. So what will they do? This is the question, the big question.” At this point the refugees in Brasilia wanted to leave the country. And while representatives from UNHCR claimed the refugees had been manipulated into protesting and instrumentalized for political gains from the collectivities which aided them, it was evident they asserted their agency and were motivated to protest because of their health, dissatisfaction with the resettlement program, and a strong desire to go elsewhere. In response to claims that they had been manipulated into protesting, Raed incredulously noted, “You remain in this horrible situation for one year or more because someone else tells you?”²²³

Post Protests, Postmortem

On October 19, 2009, one of the elderly protestors, Hani, died of complications from pneumonia. Marta recalled a letter she and the other neighbors from Lago Sul received informing them of Hani’s death:

²²³ Although he would not disclose specific details, Raed managed to leave Brazil before the end of 2009. In my last communication with him, he was living in a Northern European country and was in a resettlement program there.

Depois de um tempo mais, ele morreu. Vieram aqui falar pra gente...deixaram uma cartinha que o fulano tinha morrido. Logico que ele iria morrer, porque ele estava bem velho, fumava...foi a época de frio, de chuva...tudo eles pegaram. A gente vendo eles aqui, vendo que estão sofrendo, vendo que vão ficar doente. Não vê que o velho ficou e morreu. Ele já estava ruim...Muito triste/

After some time, he died. They came here to tell us...They left a letter saying so-and-so had died. Of course he was going to die, he was already old, he smoked...it was the cold season, the rain season...they caught all of that [weather]. We were seeing them here, seeing that they were suffering, seeing they would get sick. Can't you see that the old man stayed [here] and died? He was already not well...It's very sad. (Interview. 24 June 2010)

A few weeks after Hani's death (November 11), the hearing requested by the refugees' attorney, and then by the Attorney General, finally materialized.²²⁴ In the hearing presided over by Lucia Moura, the Attorney General for Citizen Rights, UNHCR agreed to make retroactive payments to the refugees, including monthly salary, monthly housing, and the value of the furniture the refugees had left behind in their former apartments, which Cáritas had confiscated.²²⁵ Although the two remaining elderly refugees were not in attendance at the meeting, UNHCR acknowledged they had agreed to place Sami and Faris into a refugee camp, as they had requested. Both men thought by going back into a refugee camp there would be better prospects for being placed somewhere that offered better living conditions for the elderly than what Brazil offered. At the very least, they thought it would be better if they were somewhere in a predominantly Arabic speaking country, even if this meant dealing with the dismal conditions in these camps. As Julie Peteet elaborates in her book *Landscape of Hope and Despair* (2005), Palestinian refugee

²²⁴ This meeting/hearing was presided over by the Attorney General for the Defense of Citizen Rights, and the parties in attendance were representatives from UNHCR, CONARE, Cáritas, and the attorney representing the refugees, along with two of the claimants.

²²⁵ UNHCR claimed they operate on annual funding and could not access any funding left over in their institutional purses after each fiscal year. Therefore, retroactive payments to the refugees could only be made for the 2009 calendar year.

camps are contradictory spaces. On the one hand, they can be desperate places with wretched living conditions. Conversely, as Peteet notes, “The camps could be seen as a built environment...as places where possibilities for the future emerged, took shape, and were acted upon” (131). In other words, camps are not envisioned as final places of destinations but instead as transitional places where hope for a better life and future can be cultivated through creative organizing and political action. For the elderly protestors, even the encampment in Brasilia could be seen through this lens. It provided them with a sense of new possibilities in what they otherwise perceived as a hopeless situation. Therefore, going back into a refugee camp, despite the inevitability of precarious conditions there, signified hope and potentiality.

JUDICIALIZING REFUGEE RIGHTS

In an interview the Attorney General, Lucia Moura, was asked how she came to know of the situation and to evaluate the claims the refugees made in the petition filed by their attorney.²²⁶

A gente teve notícias por duas formas distintas. Primeiro por uma representação que uma advogada de uma ONG chamada... É Instituto Autonomia, a Dr. Samantha, fez ao Ministério Público do DF, a promotoria de idosos...informando que havia dois ou três refugiados idosos acampados lá na frente do ACNUR e que estavam em situação de risco, porque eram idosos, poderiam ter complicações de saúde e aí ela pediu a promotora de saúde que tomasse alguma providência. E como se trata de questões relativas a refugiados, o promotor de justiça achou melhor encaminhar o pedido ao Ministério Público Federal. E a demanda trazida pela Dra. Samantha, ela era bastante pertinente. Ela elencou dois níveis de problemas principais: um era o problema imediato em que eles estavam... Eles vieram a Brasília para reclamar de uma assistência que eles julgavam inadequada, que foi falha em alguns momentos, foi deficiente, e aí a gente precisava resolver a demanda imediata, a demanda direta deles, e em

²²⁶ While in Brasilia in 2010, I along with another researcher scheduled an interview with the attorney general; however, the interview was postponed to a later date when I would no longer be in the country. This interview was conducted by Sonia Hamid.

segundo lugar ela ainda não deixou de tecer críticas ao sistema de refúgio no Brasil, que ainda é algo assim... É não diria ineficiente, mas eu diria pouco profissional, pouco regulamentado, ele é pouco estruturado, na verdade...Na pratica a gente vê que o Estado brasileiro não vê. Não adota o programa de refugio como uma política publica que tem que ser olhada mais de perto e tem que ser mais estruturada. Então ela abriu para a gente aqui essas duas ordens de problemas, mas o nosso procedimento foi, basicamente, acabou sendo vinculado com ações judiciais, que eram essas demandas mais...pontuais/

There were two distinct ways through which we received the news. First through a depiction given by an attorney from an NGO named...Autonomy Institute, Dr. Samantha,²²⁷ to the Public Ministry of the Federal District, the District Attorney's Office for the Elderly...informing that there were two or three elderly refugees camped out in front of UNHCR, and they were at risk. Because they were old, they could have health complications, and so she asked the District Attorney for Health to take some measures. And because this involved questions related to refugees, the District Attorney for Justice thought it would be best to forward the request to the Federal Public Ministry.

And the claim brought by Dr. Samantha was quite pertinent. She listed two levels of the principle problems. The first was the immediate problem which they (the refugees) were in...They came to Brasilia to complain about a service they deemed inadequate; one that failed at certain moments and was poor. And so we had to resolve the immediate demand, their direct demands. Secondly, she launched critiques of the refuge system in Brazil, which is still something...I wouldn't say inefficient, but I would say unprofessional and lacks regulation; it is poorly structured, honestly...In practice we see what the Brazilian state/government does not see. It does not tie the refugee program with public policy. It has to be looked at more closely, and it has to be better structured. So, she opened up for us here these two sets of problems. But our proceedings basically wound up being linked to lawsuits/judicial actions, which were these more specific demands.

The Attorney General cited the lack of accountability in the tripartite resettlement program since there was no system of checks and balances capable of determining the program's efficiencies and inefficiencies, such as the ones that occurred in this case.

João Biehl and Adriana Petryna refer to Brazilians who judicialize their rights to health as "patient-litigants" who exhibit "knowledge and skill that their class position typically did not confer and were working within the state, challenging public health

²²⁷ In Brazil, it is very common for lawyers to be referred to as Drs., despite the fact that their professional degree is not a juris doctor as it is in the US.

administration to fulfill their mandates” (2013, 332). Similarly, the *refugee-litigants* worked within the state and judicialized “rights they had not” (Rancière 2004, 304) in their social and class position as refugees, but which they recuperated as subjects of human rights. Out of the folds of the technologies of humanitarian interventions, whose layered practices tend to desubjectify the humans in whose lives they intervene, the refugees found a mode and moment of subjectification by staging protests and making judicial claims. As Foucault asserts in “Subject and Power” (Faubion 2000 [1994]), “It is certain that the mechanisms of subjection cannot be studied outside their relation to the mechanisms of exploitation and domination” (332).

According to Moura, UNHCR had a signed accord with Brazil and this accord obligated the country to produce tangible effects—that is, provide the refugees with a living wage, rent, etc., as per the agreement:

[P]orque no campo do direito internacional, ele tem um acordo firmado com o Brasil e esse acordo tem que produzir efeitos, porque se ele estabelece obrigações, ele tem que produzir efeitos. E alguém tem que ser responsabilizado pelas obrigações que estão ali...inclusive garantia de direito fundamental, de garantia de efetivação de direitos humanos

Because in the international rights arena, [UNHCR] has a signed accord with Brazil and this accord has to produce effects, because if [UNHCR] establishes obligations, it has to produce effects. And someone has to be responsible for the obligations therein...including the guarantee of fundamental rights, the guarantee to effectuate human rights.

In effect Moura articulates an important distinction entrenched in human rights. That is, human rights are bounded by law and must “produce effects.” Humanitarianism, on the other hand, finds its imperative in the matrix of morality, ethics, and compassion to deliver people from suffering. While each informs the other and the two are intertwined, Miriam Ticktin reminds us of the distinction in “Where Ethics and Politics Meet” (2006):

[I]n a broad sense, human-rights institutions are largely grounded in law, constructed to further legal claims, responsibility, and accountability, whereas humanitarianism is more about the ethical and moral imperative to bring relief to those suffering and to save lives...Although both are clearly universalist discourses, they are based on different forms of action and, hence, often institute and protect different ideas of humanity. (35)

More specifically, Ticktin draws this distinction to point out how the French government has shifted its historic emphasis on human rights and has instead prioritized humanitarianism, which in turn has subsumed the rights-based system. She demonstrates how, in this humanitarian logic, undocumented persons who can prove they have an illness and/or disability from which they can potentially die if deported to their country of origin can obtain legal status under France's "illness clause." That is, the humanitarian impetus to "save lives" provides a means for undocumented migrants (*sans papier*) to obtain legitimating documentation. Therefore, an individual's precarious bodily health leads to political recognition and "rights." However, this understanding has occurred in a climate of increasingly restrictive laws on immigration and significantly reduced permits granted to refugees seeking asylum. As a consequence, some undocumented persons resort to bodily injury and infection (such as HIV) in order to obtain "rights." Furthermore, those who are granted "illness visas" are often not given work permits by the French state, even if they are able to maintain employment.

While Ticktin's project is situated in France, which has its own specific geopolitical histories, mappings, and specificities, the distinction and imbrication in human rights and humanitarianism is also applicable to the Brazilian socio-political and economic context. In Brazilian discourses, humanitarianism takes precedent over political rights. Saving lives (i.e., sparing the Palestinian refugees from death in the refugee camp) is the overarching endeavor, while far less emphasis is placed on making

those same lives socially, politically, and economically viable (i.e., integrated into public policies). However, the Palestinian refugees were in some ways able to reconstitute themselves politically.

By judicializing their rights to receive what UNHCR had denied them, the refugees were able to articulate their grievances and demonstrate the weaknesses in the resettlement program more broadly. These weaknesses were not only attributable to UNHCR but were attributable to the Brazilian government and its role in the tripartite agreement. As one former leading UNHCR official explained, “The government, CONARE, has to do more, much more. They have to ensure that the refugees—we are talking all the resettled refugees, not only the Palestinians—are actually being integrated into public policies. There *are* policies for integration--public policies. The problem is how to engage these.” He acknowledged there was a tri-partite approach, but in some areas, such as the integration aspect (public policies, labor access, education), it functioned more as “lip-service” than effective material practices.

The case the Palestinian refugees, particularly the elderly refugees, brought to the judiciary also underscored the accountability or lack thereof of the state and the necessity for its active engagement. This became even more evident when UNHCR attempted to gain permission to place the two elderly men, Faris and Sami, back into a refugee camp. The camp being considered was Al-Tanf—the border camp between Iraq and Syria. However, since the camp was soon slated for closure, Syrian authorities denied their request. In January 2010, Faris wrote a letter to UNHCR requesting to be placed in Al-Hol camp—a refugee camp inside of Syria near the district of Hasakeh. In June 2010 he received a letter denying that petition as well. The Syrian government would not consent

to Faris's relocation to the camp.²²⁸ Both men remained in Brasília, receiving monthly assistance from UNHCR as vulnerable cases since neither could access the Brazilian equivalent of SSI until and unless they were naturalized as citizens.

As the two men's uneasy sojourn continued, various media outlets and CONARE government representatives claimed the Palestinian refugees were "ungrateful." For instance, in a report in the São Paulo newspaper *Estadão*, the CONARE representative was quoted as follows: "Já o Conare, em nota enviada por e-mail, afirmou que as reclamações dos palestinos não passam de 'ingratidão', já que o Brasil, alega o Comitê, 'foi o único País que se dispôs a acolher os cidadãos palestinos que se encontravam no campo de Ruweished/ Through an emailed statement, CONARE affirmed the claims made by the Palestinians are nothing short of 'ungratefulness,' as Brazil, the Committee alleges, 'was the only country willing to accept the Palestinian citizens who found themselves in the Ruweished camp.'"²²⁹

In addition to categorizing the Palestinian refugees as "ungrateful" to Brazil's overture and willingness to resettle them when no other country would, CONARE constructed these particular refugees, and Palestinians more broadly, as unworthy and undesirable "others" in the nation-state. The president of CONARE, Luis Paulo Teles Barreto (also the Minister of Justice), told another newspaper reporter (from *Caros Amigos*) the future arrival of any Palestinian refugees into Brazil had been vetoed [vetada]: "Era isso que esses refugiados queriam, que nenhum palestino mais viesse? Conseguiram/ Is that what these refugees wanted, that no other Palestinian would come?

²²⁸ In light of Syria's recent civil war, this might have been in the elderly men's best interest. Thus far, more than 2 million Syrian refugees have fled into neighboring countries. Some 45,000 Palestinians, who already had refugee status in Syria, have once again been displaced.

²²⁹ See <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral/frustrado-grupo-de-palestinos-quer-ir-embora-do-brasil,307076,0.htm>, January 14, 2009. Accessed April 3, 2009.

They achieved it.”²³⁰ In various instances, the Palestinian refugees had been informally framed, by different actors, as “ungrateful” and “unworthy”; however, Telles Barreto’s classification of the Palestinians as ungrateful helped transform their alleged ungratefulness into a totalizing category of undesirable outsiders. This had dramatic practical effects when Palestinian refugees were no longer granted the possibility of resettlement in Brazil.²³¹

Despite government representatives’ insistence that the resettlement of refugees was a purely humanitarian endeavor, without political consideration, Telles Barreto points to the entanglement of Brazilian humanitarianism and politics. That is, the limit of humanitarianism lies at the juncture of the refugees’ political action. Only if the refugees remain speechless victims, or dehistoricized and depoliticized (Malkki 1996) individuals, who benefit from and show gratitude to the state’s benevolence (and to humanitarian actors, such as UNHCR), would they be considered desirable. However, once the refugees began to construct a political subjectivity through the socio-political and bodily precariousness for which they were granted entrance into the nation-state in the first place, they were seen as “ungrateful” and consequently undesirable. Moreover, government representatives then constructed Palestinians more broadly as monolithic and unworthy of access to Brazil.

By examining the faultlines present in Brazil’s healthcare and social benefits programs, as they relate to sick and/or elderly refugees (and immigrants), the uneven access to state programs between nationals (citizens) and foreigners (non-citizens) becomes visible. They demonstrate the discrepancies between granting resettlement and

²³⁰ In *Caros Amigos*, (November 2009) Pp. 43

²³¹ During an interview with Renato Zerbini in June 2010, he affirmed CONARE’s position on not resettling Palestinians was still in place.

the viability of integrating refugees into local society. The refugees, in making demands, claiming rights, forming coalitions, and staging scenes of dissensus, asserted themselves as political subjects, performed citizenship and pushed back on what James Holston calls “ideologies and conventions of inclusion” in Brazilian society (2008, 284). These discourses that purport “universally inclusive membership” are not only ruptured at the level of the individual, but the state itself unravels the very discourses it seeks to advance by pointing to the limits it has created and codified in law. These state practices enforced on individuals and codified in the judiciary then produce and restrict counter discourses and actions.

Furthermore, instead of attributing some of the difficulties the Palestinian refugees experienced to discrepancies in the resettlement program and questionable state policies, cultural difference was deployed as the principal root of the problems. Javier López-Cifuentes, who at the time was the UNHCR representative for Brazil, told a newspaper, “O Brasil fica muito longe culturalmente e religiosamente de onde eles vieram. A integração não é um processo fácil. Sempre tem um grupo que não consegue se integrar, é normal. Mas ao fim do programa, eles estarão integrados/ Brazil is very distant culturally and religiously from where they came. Integration is not an easy process. There is always a group that cannot be integrated; it is normal. But at the end of the program, they will be integrated.”²³²

And yet, the tale told above suggests that the final outcome is anything but certain once the complex issue of cultural difference is posed as the principle roadblock to integration. The next chapter examines this idea closely.

²³² “Frustrado, grupo de palestinos quer ir embora do Brasil” in *Estadão*, 14 January 2009

CHAPTER 4

SITUATING BRAZILIAN ORIENTALISM

[C]hegaram na época do carnaval, lá em Porto Alegre. Nossa senhora²³³ ... Aí, chega todo mundo com seus trajes, o povo pensou que fosse bloco. [E]les vão saindo na rua, e vão vendo a mulherada toda pelada, né, no carnaval. Pelada, não, mas...pensavam que tavam chegando no inferno. Aí foi um choque cultural com eles de primeira. Os brasileiros pensavam que aquilo ali era um bloco e eles pensavam que nós fôssemos loucos. Por que? Saindo do campo e chegando aqui no carnaval, já... Aquela mulherada pelada, e os outros todos... Nossa, foi muito engraçado! Foi trágico cômico...Então, tudo isso o Brasil fez na melhor das boas intenções, e nunca se tocou porque carnaval é uma coisa tão natural para nós. E chega a galera com as burkas, no meio do carnaval, andando pelas ruas, o povo ia e puxava pra dançar porque pensava que era bloco. Essa é outra realidade trágico cômica. E não tinha nada de maquiavélico. Só desceram na época do carnaval/

They arrived during Carnaval, there in Porto Alegre. My heavens...Then they all arrive with their garbs, folks thought they were a [Carnaval parade] dance troupe. They start going out to the streets and seeing all the naked womenfolk, right, during Carnaval. Naked no, but...they thought they were arriving in hell. They experienced culture shock at the outset. The Brazilians thought they were a troupe and they thought we were crazy. Why? They leave the [refugee] camp and arrive here for Carnaval...Those naked broads, and all the other stuff...Wow, it was really funny! It was a comedic tragedy...Brazil did everything with the best intentions, and the topic was never broached, because Carnaval is such a natural thing for us. And the crew arrives with burkas, in the middle of Carnaval, walking the streets; folks would approach them and pull them to dance because they thought they were a troupe. This was another tragic comedy. And there was nothing Machiavellian about it. They just arrived during carnaval. (Renato Zerbini, CONARE. Interview. 18 June 2010).

In 2002, five years prior to the resettlement of Palestinian refugees, Brazil undertook an experimental pilot resettlement project under its Acordo Macro (Macro Accord), in which

²³³ This expression is ubiquitous in Brazil and is squarely rooted in Catholicism. It refers to the Virgin Mary and translates to “Our Lady.” It is often used to show amazement, surprise, and/or disbelief.

it sought to resettle a group of 23 Afghanis.²³⁴ Before arriving in Brazil, 10 had been given protection in Iran and 13 in India (Jubilut 2006). CONARE representative Renato Zerbini's description above tells the tale of a cultural (dis) encounter between Brazilians and Afghanis upon their arrival, during a particularly ritualized annual event. The manifestation of this disencounter is specifically captured in the distinctions between Brazil's "naked womenfolk" and "'women of cover'" (as per Bush, cited in Abu-Lughod 2002). Zerbini underscored the diametrically opposed cultural worlds of Brazilians and Afghanis through two essentialized groups embodied in scantily clad women and women who wore burkas. Citing culture as an obstacle to adaptation for the more recent Palestinian refugees, he put the problem succinctly: "Eu acho que a dimensão cultural é o que joga o papel preponderante nessa dificuldade"/I think the cultural dimension is what plays a predominant role in this (adaptation) difficulty. (Interview 18 June 2010) Zerbini frames the scene in terms of comedy and tragedy, bound as it is to Carnival where there is a quintessential misrecognition of difference for sameness so that women wearing burkas are thought to be part of a carnival dance troupe and are pulled in to dance with the celebrating Brazilians. Yet the story also appears to be an invention, indeed a tale.

There is not much information publicly available about this Afghani case, and Zerbini was not willing to disclose additional information even though it was included in the printed proceedings lying right on his desk during our interview. The only thing he did offer after being directly questioned about the issue was that within two years all but nine people from this group had been repatriated to Afghanistan.²³⁵ Further research

²³⁴ I reference the Afghani resettlement in footnote 91 in Chapter 1.

²³⁵ In Jubilut's text, she suggests from the original 23 Afghanis "18 voluntarily requested repatriation, and returned to Afghanistan following the changes in the circumstances in that country" (38). The discrepancy in Jubilut's number (five instead of nine) appears to take into account a woman (and her three children)

indicated that a group of 10 arrived in Brazil on 12 April 2002, and the remaining 13 arrived two weeks later, on April 26 (Jubilut 37). By that time Carnaval, which ended on February 12, had long been over. A full two months had passed, so why this time discrepancy? And why did the representative construct this particular narrative of a cultural disencounter?

This chapter unpacks the questions posed above and instantiates the particularities and peculiarities of Brazilians' orientalist constructions, including the neo-Orientalist glaze, part of which addresses the ways in which Brazil itself has been culturally framed and imagined by outsiders and insiders. The Brazilian neo-Orientalist glaze functions as a key theoretical frame to analyze the cultural discourses launched about the Palestinian refugees by direct-service providers and others regarding their incorporation into Brazilian society. For instance, the refugees' (dis) encounters with structures of power, such as education (through language classes), the police, and members of the *Cáritas* resettlement team provides us with insight into essentialist constructions of Palestinians, which also pose Brazilians in contrast to these conceptions. However, these ideas will be explored while considering the manner in which Brazil and Brazilians are stereotypically conjured and imagined as culturally saturated. Finally, by focusing on teledramaturgy, we can deepen our understanding of Brazilian orientalism and the ways it not only reproduces and universalizes ideas of the "Arab Muslim" *other* but also further entrenches essentialist ideas of Brazil itself.

When the Palestinian refugees first arrived in Brazil in 2007, then Deputy Minister of Justice, Luis Paulo Teles Barreto, asserted to the media that they would be

whose husband requested repatriation and travelled ahead of the rest of the family and she ultimately decided not to return. The ASAV director in Porto Alegre, the city where the Afghans had been resettled, verified this.

afforded freedoms which had long been denied them: “Now, they are going to be able to behave according to their traditions, to wear their traditional clothes, eat their preferred food and practice their religion without being scared of attacks or reprisals. Brazil is a country of freedom and our new citizens are going to be part of it.”²³⁶ At a time when Euro-American discourses about belonging had grown increasingly more hostile toward immigrants (and refugees) generally, and Arab and Muslim descended subjects specifically, the Brazilian minister appeared to offer a significantly different perspective. In the US, for example, claims were made about the need to protect the “citizenry,” with Muslims and Arabs (Muslim or not) positioned as outsiders. Then by privileging security as part and parcel of “freedom” and ossifying this juridically, Congress could justify limiting free speech and other rights through the PATRIOT Act I and II. The Brazilian Minister, in contrast, made no sweeping generalizations about Islam or Arabs. In fact, a spokesperson for the Refugees Association in Brazil who was with Teles Barreto asserted, “Brazil knows how to welcome foreigners and the Arab community in this country is one of the largest worldwide” (Ibid). Moreover, racial plurality, and more recently multiculturalism (Hale 2005, Pinto 2010), continues to be framed as a positive and inherent nation-building characteristic of Brazil. It is not viewed as a potential threat to “progress” and security as it has been in the US and France, for instance. Nonetheless, multiculturalism is still articulated (in the U.S. and in Brazil) as a marker of an egalitarian society. But it is clear that the concept is very slippery and in most cases conjures very sanitized ideas of “differences.”

²³⁶ IRIN. “Iraq-Brazil: First group of Palestinians arrive in Brazil from desert camp.” 09/23/2007 11/24/08 <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/74441/IRAQ-BRAZIL-First-group-of-Palestinians-arrive-in-Brazil-from-desert-camp>

Scripts about multiculturalism, for instance, widely enshrine in the national imaginary ideas about food and dress by minoritized subjects (see Teles Barreto's quote), making for a particularized—as well as benign--configuration and commodification of difference. (You can safely experience cultural differences by eating ethnic food or admiring ethnic fashions.) However, after the events of September 11, 2001 in New York City, there has been an intensification of discourses regarding perceived “others” in Western societies, of which Brazil and Brazilians count themselves a part. This is manifested in heightened social pressures and the creation of juridical policies to ensure integration, rather than accommodating differences, which multiculturalism is often imagined as affording. The banning of hijab and other conspicuous religious symbols in schools in France (2004), for the sake of preserving secularism and the separation of church and state, instantiates the recoding of belonging in the nation. Yet the symbols that the French government outlawed have as much to do with race, gender, class, sexuality, and ethnicity as with religion.²³⁷ Similarly, in the United States, racism has been recoded through the prism of multiculturalism and ever more creative racializing regimes have arisen to replace the historic black-white divide. Furthermore, the slippery boundaries of what constitutes multiculturalism are policed and guarded to exclude disparaged groups, in which their perceived excesses are marked as uncivilized and oppressive, consequently upholding normative regimes of power.

While Brazil's social and political policies are a great leap from the United States and France, the manner in which the Palestinian refugees observed and experienced the rhetoric of multiculturalism and plurality merits deeper interrogation. Fissures in the

²³⁷ For instance, see Miriam Ticktin's article, “Sexual Violence as the Language of Border Control: Where French Feminist and Anti-Immigration Rhetoric Meet.”

discourses of multicultural and racial harmonious plurality too often give way to a particularized Brazilian Orientalism and Islamophobia, which have a direct effect on refugees' lives.

CULTURAL INCOMMENSURABILITES?

Silvia is the *Cáritas* social worker who was left in charge of the vulnerable cases of refugees in Mogi das Cruzes. Below she describes the role of the NGO and discusses serious challenges in the Palestinian resettlement process, which she attributes to cultural differences:

Silvia: Então o papel da ONG é de criar benefícios para que eles se enquadrem dentro da realidade brasileira, respeitando o seu credo e sua religião. Porque existe um passo muito grande entre a questão cultural deles e a nossa. Até mesmo no idioma. É muito diferente.

Quando eles me viram, quando eu fui buscá-los no aeroporto, uma família que chegou, acho que em maio...em Maio do ano passado. Eles vieram através de reunião familiar. Reunião familiar é outro processo que se dá através do refúgio. É...eles tomaram um susto, quando que eu era uma mulher. Porque lá a mulher ela é meio que totalmente rejeitada pela sociedade, ela não tem voz. Então, cria muito atrito. Atrito de violência seríssima entre os profissionais/

So the role of the NGO is to create benefits for which they qualify within the Brazilian reality, respecting their creed and religion. Because there is a huge gap between their culture and ours. Even the language. It's very different.

When they saw me, when I went to pick them up at the airport, we picked up a family, I think in May...in May last year. They came through family reunification. Family reunification is another process that can be obtained through refuge.

Yeah...they took a fright when they saw I was a woman. Because there, the woman is sort of totally rejected by society. She has no voice. Then, it creates a lot of friction. There was discord and very serious violence toward professionals.

INT: Você pode conta mais sobre isso?/ Can you say more about that?

Silvia: Então, eu posso dar um exemplo meu. A questão da violência com os profissionais que desenvolvem o programa de reassentamento ela é totalmente notória. Todos aqui da comunidade de Mogi das Cruzes pegaram uma aversão aos palestinos.

É. Porque a cultura ela é muito diferente. Então, é difícil você conviver. Você está no seu país, onde a sua cultura e sua identidade cultural é uma e você vem para outro país, forçado, porque eles não vêm por livre e espontânea vontade, como imigrante, pessoal que pede refugio econômico... Não é esse o processo. Eles são forçados vir. Ou eles vêm, ou eles morrem.

I can give an example. The issue of violence with the professionals who work in the resettlement program is totally notorious. Everyone here in the Mogi das Cruzes community has developed an aversion toward the Palestinians.

Yes, because the culture is very different. So it's difficult for you to coexist. You are in your country, where your culture and your cultural identity is one and you come to another country, unwillingly/forced, because they don't come by their own volition, like an immigrant, or people who ask for economic refuge (an economic migrant)... That is not the process. They are forced to come. Either they come, or they die. (Interview. 4 January 2010)

In describing *Cáritas*' role in the resettlement process in São Paulo, the social worker, at the outset, situates the refugees within a framework of difference. She attributes the differences to a wide cultural divide, particularly relative to gender roles, religion, and language.

The social worker's discourse appears to operate on two registers: the first is the essentialist idea of *who* and *how* the Palestinians are, in that they are always produced and fashioned monolithically, without regard to distinctions within the group, such as education, socio-economic class, age, etc. On the other register, the Palestinians themselves have no agency: none in the history of the conflicts that dispossessed them and none in the circumstances that brought them to Brazil, which she implies produces resentment. For the social worker, Palestinians are constructed as inherently "culturally" violent and have virtually no power or control over themselves or their circumstances. She then juxtaposes the refugees to Brazilian people, culture, and way of being, as elaborated in daily exchanges and social interactions. Anthropologist Roberto Damatta

(1999) created the term “jeitinho brasileiro” [the Brazilian way] to refer to this bundle of ideas and experiences.²³⁸ This concept, for instance, recognizes there is an allowance for soft transgressions of laws and norms that complicate social life. A person negotiates bureaucracies, unfavorable situations, and unexpected hurdles by subverting them. The “jeitinho” is best elaborated as specifically Brazilian where cordiality, personability, and friendship are harnessed as a node of power to deal with adverse circumstances. In this social formulation, individual circumstances are considered over the collective if a person demonstrates the appropriate affective skills. Thus Damatta notes, “among us Brazilians the *person* deserves solidarity, hospitality, and consideration—special treatment” (1991, 170). Individuals with this social competency earn greater social capital than those who do not embrace “o jeitinho.”²³⁹ For this social worker, Palestinian refugees are incompatible with (and likely incapable of learning) a Brazilian way of being.²⁴⁰

From Silvia’s perspective, women in the Middle East are uniformly silenced by their society and, as a result, those who arrive in Brazil view women in positions of power as a threat to the culture from whence they came. This invariably leads to discord and violence. The family to which the social worker referred consisted of a grandmother and her 10-year-old grandson, who had been living in Gaza.²⁴¹ Here the social worker, in addition to conflating several geo-political locations, affirms “lá”/ there in that ahistorical

²³⁸ Damatta’s earlier work, *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis* [*Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes*] ([1979] 1991), was a catalyst for exploring more deeply the “jeitinho brasileiro.” He examines private and public rituals to analyze social relations and aims to unpack in this earlier book what particularly “makes ‘brazil’ Brazil” (3).

²³⁹ For an interesting look at how this “jeitinho” migrates along with bodies from Brazil and is deployed and received as social capital in different geographical locations and in aspects of “integration,” such as labor, see Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas’s, *Street Therapists: Race, Affect, and Neoliberal Personhood in Latino Newark* (2012).

²⁴⁰ I do not mean to imply the Palestinians did not possess these valued attributes (as they are valued in the Brazilian context). Instead, I aim to show how the refugees were read by the service providers in juxtaposition to this Brazilian way of being.

²⁴¹ Although they were refugees from Gaza, these individuals came to Brazil in 2009 as part of family reunification to join their family members who had been resettled in 2007.

and timeless space of “there-ness,” all women are dominated or rejected. In some ways this conflation of multiple locations and ahistoricity parallels the production and reproduction of the trope of the “turco” based on essentialist ideas of Arabs, as elaborated in Chapter 2. The turco trope along with more recent constructions of Muslims--particularly gendered ideas about Islam and perceptions of a foundational Moorish influence in the country—combine to form a particularized Brazilian Orientalism. This mutation of Orientalism is certainly informed by Euro-American constructions and discourses, but is situated within the historical and local-national context of Brazil and is shaped or even subsumed by the multi-faceted *jeitinho*.

The Cáritas social service provider, who also worked with resettled Colombian refugees, made clear that major differences existed between providing assistance to Colombians and providing assistance to the Palestinians. She noted the Colombians who were resettled in Brazil were there as a result of a civil war in that country and fled because of persecution from FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia/ The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). While the two groups shared both persecution and some aspects of civil war, the socio-political contexts were different. For the service provider, despite such similarities,²⁴² the cultural differences loomed larger; and again the dominant marker of this distinction involved ideas about gender, particularly as these ideas and practices applied to women. Silvia thus juxtaposes the two

²⁴² Clearly the Colombians who were in Brazil had not held guest status in the country from whence they came. They had legitimating documentation from Colombia (citizenship, ID, passports, etc.) and could possibly be repatriated. This was not and is not the case for Palestinian refugees.

groups by noting Colombians' "cultural" similarities²⁴³ with Brazilians and the ways in which Palestinians are markedly different:

Só que eles são muito próximos da nossa cultura. Até mesmo em idioma, né? Meu pai é uruguaio então eu falo bem o espanhol, consigo me comunicar bem com eles, é bem parecido na questão de cultura, na questão de música, na questão de se vestir... A questão de que a mulher pode ir trabalhar, ela pode ir separar, ela pode ser divorciada, ela pode se casar não virgem... Então é próximo a nossa cultura. E eles entendem mais, porque é próximo. E a maior parte dos colombianos, eles foram para o Equador pedir refugio, então é tudo aqui próximo. Agora você pegar um árabe, aonde a mulher tem que casar virgem, não é ela que escolhe o marido, é o marido que escolhe ela... Onde ela tem que usar o lenço na cabeça, ela não pode tirar. Onde a vestimenta tem que ser coberta, a mulher anda atrás e o homem anda na frente... o homem sempre deseja um filho homem, nunca uma filha mulher... Então, existe um abismo de cultura, muito grande, por que como que a gente faz o processo de reinserção deles aqui? A gente fala: Ó meu amigo, aqui mulher trabalha, aqui mulher vai à luta, entendeu? Então a gente tem que reinseri-los dentro daquela comunidade de qualquer forma.

They share a culture very similar to ours. Even in language, right? My father is Uruguayan, so I speak Spanish well. I can communicate well with them. The question of culture, music, and way of dress is similar. The issue of women being able to work, to divorce, she can be divorced; she can marry without being a virgin...so it is similar to our culture. And they understand more, because it (culture) is similar. And the majority of the Colombians went to Ecuador to ask for refuge/asylum, so it is all [geographically] near here. Now you take an Arab, where the woman has to be a virgin when she marries, she does not choose her husband, instead the husband chooses her...where she has to wear a veil, and she cannot take it off. Where she has to dress all covered; the woman walks behind and the man walks in front...the man always wants a male child and never a female child. So of course, there is a very deep chasm between cultures. How then do we proceed with a reintegration process? We say: Hey my friend, here women work, here women go and fight the fight, understand? So we have to reinsert them in the community by any means.

The service provider's Orientalist discourse is deeply self-referential, with women being a crucial marker of cultural distinction between "Us" (in this case Brazilians and Colombians) and "Them" (Palestinians). While she does not specifically mention

²⁴³ This is ironic, especially since Brazilians, for the most part, like to emphasize how different they are from other Latin Americans. The Portuguese language and colonial history are often referenced as indicators of this difference.

citizenship, the similarities Silvia draws between Colombians and Brazilians suggest the ease with which Colombians can belong, on multiple plains, to Brazil. As Leti Volpp claims in “The Culture of Citizenship” (2007):

Citizenship is both a cultural and anti-cultural institution, by which I mean citizenship positions itself as oppositional to specific cultures, even as it is constituted by quite specific cultural values. The citizen is assumed to be modern and motivated by reason; the cultural other is assumed to be traditional and motivated by culture. In order to be assimilated into citizenship, the cultural other needs to shed his excessive and archaic culture. (496)

Relative to Columbian refugees, Silvia makes clear how complimentary and similar Brazilian and Colombian cultures are, leading to the latter’s seamless integration.²⁴⁴ This cultural conflation is positioned in opposition, as Volpp suggests, to the specific case of Arab and Muslim cultural others. In which case, the “Arab” (a masculine formation here) must “shed his excessive and archaic culture” in order to be inserted into the community. And while Silvia previously constructed Palestinian refugees in general as not having agency, women are the epitome of the agent-less individual; indeed, they are victims of an exceptionally oppressive masculinity and heteronormativity. She thus provides an example of what sociologist Sherene Razack recognizes as “fighting sexism with racism” (in Ticktin 2008, 865). Here, “the Arab” man takes on a distinct mutation in the Brazilian imaginary and is assembled, together with Muslimness, to formulate a racial-religious masculinity.²⁴⁵

Silvia’s assumption that all Muslim women are forced into marriage and are not allowed to divorce makes evident her lack of familiarity with Islam’s permissiveness

²⁴⁴ This is one of the few instances in which a form of Latin American solidarity is evoked.

²⁴⁵ Several authors have addressed the racialized constructions of Middle Eastern and South Asian masculinities, its connection to Muslimness, and its manifestation within and outside of the United States (Ahmad 2002; Bayoumi 2008; Fernandes 2005; Puar 2004, 2007; Ticktin 2008, among others). Acknowledging this, my aim here is to situate this formation in the time, space, location, and historical specificities of the Brazilian context.

around divorce (for men, as well as women), especially in comparison to some Catholic and Christian traditions in the region.²⁴⁶ Not only does she infer that *all* Arabs are Muslim (a historical departure from common and larger narratives of Arabs in Brazil), but she also infers that women are *always* forced to wear the veil. The meaning of the veil is static and fixed and singularly attached to oppression. For Silvia there is no potential for the veil to be an artifact of piety, or of socio-political agency, or a symbol of social justice and/or solidarity, or any of multiple complex valences that have been claimed by some Muslim women and by numerous scholars (Abu Lughod 2001; Ahmed 1993, 2011; Mahmood 2005, Scott 2010). The veil is instead always already a symbol of an exceptional Arab-Muslim patriarchy.

The social service provider also instantiates the role NGOs often play in what she claims is “reinsert[ing] [refugees] into society by any means.” She thereby affirms Aihwa Ong’s (1996) assertion about the role “civil institutions...[have] as disciplinary forces in the making of cultural citizens” by working to instill “proper normative behavior and identity in newcomers” (738). Ong continues, “hegemonic ideas about belonging in racial and cultural terms often converge in state and non-state institutional practices through which subjects are shaped in ways that are specific and diffused” (Ibid). Integrating refugees by any means captures the insistence that the “cultural other” slough off her/his culture, replace it with “normative behavior,” and embody “hegemonic ideas about belonging.” Silvia also suggests that Arab women did not work, and when she was

²⁴⁶ Divorce became legal in Brazil in 1977, when a constitutional amendment was passed. In Colombia divorce for non-Catholics was legalized in 1976 and for Catholics did not become legal until 1991 (Ibid). For more information regarding these family laws in Latin America, see Mala Htun’s *Sex and the State: Abortion, Divorce, and the Family Under Latin American Dictatorships and Democracies*, 2003. Furthermore, Brazil has rigid laws about women’s reproductive rights. Only in cases of rape or where a woman’s life is at risk because of the pregnancy, are abortions permitted. Outside of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Chile, where abortion is criminalized under any circumstance, Brazil has the most stringent abortion laws in Latin America.

provided with examples of women who do work, she claimed some did, but that it was very difficult for them and was only achieved because “they were taught” it was possible by Brazilian authorities. Thus Silvia claimed:

[Tivemos que] ensinar que aqui a mulher e o homem tem direitos iguais, porque lá não tem. Lá a mulher anda atrás. E se eu contar uma piada... Bom não é uma piada, assim, na verdade, mas eu acho assim uma coisa de extremo machismo: lá na faixa de gaza, mulher anda na frente, porque se tiver uma bomba de mina, ela pisa, e não morre o homem. Eles falavam isso! ...E lá elas apanham.

We had to teach them that here women and men have equal rights, because over there they don't. Over there women walk behind. And if I tell you a joke... Well, it's not a joke; actually, I think it's a case of extreme sexism. Over there in the Gaza Strip, women walk in front because if there is a land mine she will step on it and the man won't die. They used to say that! ...And there they (the women) are beaten.

The problematic tone of the social worker's views is apparent and, in addition, she conflates several geopolitical and geographical spaces into a nebulous totality of “there-ness,” which is constructed as the Gaza Strip. (The majority of the refugees had been born in Iraq and had never been to Palestine.) Moreover, to emphasize her point about cultural disparities between Brazil/Brazilians and the elsewhere of Palestine/Palestinians, the extreme violence inherent in Arab/Muslim/ Palestinian culture, and exceptional violence toward women, she retells a troublesome joke that appears to produce fiction as reality. However, her point is clear: “over there,” in the distant space of savage sexism and patriarchy (the “Orient”), women are disposable and their lives are solely for the benefit, assurance, and security of their male counterparts. This is similar to Euro-American discourses of “oppressed Muslim women” being victims of endemically violent brown men (Spivak 1988; Mahmood 2008). But, in this case, these poor victims will be rescued by the modern Brazilian state.

At the same time, Palestinian men were constructed as sexually licentious with an insatiable sexual appetite. During the interview with Zerbini, the CONARE representative, he reinforced his assertions about cultural differences between Palestinians and Brazilians by claiming the following:

Logo que eu assumi, quando eu fui fazer a viagem de campo em Mogi, onde é que aqueles senhores palestinos gastavam mais dinheiro? Vocês sabem? Nos puteiros de lá, tanto é que eles vinham me cobrar de mim. Toda a bolsa auxílio que eles recebiam, ia pra prostituição. Então tem essa outra dimensão. A dimensão cultural e o excesso de liberdade ou a diferença cultural entre Brasil e lá de onde eles vinham.

When I first took this position and went to do fieldwork in Mogi, where did those Palestinian men spend the most money? Do you know? In the whorehouses there--so much so that they would come to me for money. The entire assistance stipend they received went to prostitution. That is the other dimension. The cultural dimension and too much liberty/freedom, or the cultural difference between Brazil and over there where they come from. (Interview. 18 June 2010)

When asked whether he thought this particular dynamic was much different for other groups, such as the Colombians, he responded, “Culturalmente é mais fácil” [Culturally it’s easier].²⁴⁷ Thus, it appears, Colombians are well versed in a freedom that is unknown and unknowable to Palestinian men. At the same time Zerbini reproduces essentialist ideas of Brazil as a hypersexual place, where cultural “others” are not equipped to handle (in moderation) the carnal indulgences that are abundantly available. His assertion, therefore, describes another distinct essentialized and Orientalist encounter, but this time instead of women, as the opening vignette of this chapter demonstrates, the encounter is between Palestinian men and Brazilian women in brothels. The “Palestinian man” is unable to govern his lascivious inclinations in this new place because of the lack of

²⁴⁷ I did not pursue or research this claim in fieldwork partly because I conducted this interview with Zerbini in Brasilia during my last round of fieldwork. From there I went to São Paulo for a short period of time. At this point relations between the refugees and the institutions were significantly tense and I thought it would have been irresponsible to circulate this claim, enquire about it, and soon leave.

freedom in his originating culture, and the “Brazilian woman” is again constructed as hypersexual. The stereotypical “fantasy” of the Orient[al] versus the Occident[al] à la Edward Said, seem to be reproduced here. As Said notes, “as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (2003 [1978], 5). The CONARE representative demonstrates the orientalized “film” through which the subaltern body is conjured, while simultaneously deploying an exoticized and essentialist construction of Brazil (and Brazilian women), providing an example of the machinations of the Brazilian neo-Orientalist glaze. The representative’s description of Palestinian men is also similar to discourses launched about poor Brazilian men in the country and their misuse of money--more specifically, the misuse of benefits for pleasure and leisure.

For example, during a March 2011 forum held in Doha, Qatar, Brazil’s former foreign minister, Celso Amorim, told an audience at the Aljazeera Center for Studies about the importance of tackling inequality within a nation-state in order to maintain its stability. This was in light of the recent uprisings in the Middle East, commonly known as the Arab Spring. He then referenced one of Brazil’s social welfare programs, Bolsa Família (Family Allowance),²⁴⁸ which has narrowed economic disparities and produced more stability in the country. Under this program, and in a heteronormative family unit, women heads of households receive a monthly welfare benefit for themselves and their children and men cannot claim this allowance. Amorim cited the reason for this as follows: “It doesn't go this way in the Muslim world, [but] in Brazil, if you give the

²⁴⁸ This program is part of the Zero Hunger [Fome Zero] system launched by President Lula in 2003 to tackle widespread inequality in the country. The monthly allowance is transferred to a card and operates similar to an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, where food stamp benefits are electronically provided.

money to the father, they drink it all.”²⁴⁹ With this statement Amorim reifies gendered binaries about poverty and the poor in Brazil. Thus, men (fathers more specifically) are the “bad” poor who are indifferent about their and their families’ material instability and are willing to further compromise it by spending government funds for alcohol consumption and leisure. This parallels the broad sweep that Zerbini makes about refugee Palestinian men and their use/abuse of benefits for pleasure. Moreover, while Amorim reproduces ideas of Brazil as a place in which a significant number of its people are more invested in leisure than survival, he also asserts that there is a location and broad practice of alcohol abstention for this “Muslim world” of which he speaks.²⁵⁰ Just as he infers that all poor men in Brazil drink (and even abuse) alcohol, he presumes that all Muslims ascribe to an orthodox version of Islam and do not consume alcoholic beverages. On the one hand Celso Amorim reproduces monolithic notions about Muslims and, on the other hand, he also propagates stereotypical ideas about Brazil already widely circulated by those outside of it. Here again, Brazilian culture and people are already saturated with excess and leisure from the outside gaze, and the neo-Orientalist glaze reinscribes these tropes. As an “insider” Amorim undergirds and co-produces and disseminates constructions made by outsiders to outsiders. Here, however, class is intensified as the axis of this stereotyped production and the poor its catalyst. The internalization and reflection of these ideas are constitutive of constructions about the resettled group of Palestinian refugees.

²⁴⁹ Chris Arsenault, “Brazil’s ‘lessons’ for Arab rebels.”

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/03/201134183658331534.html> <Accessed May 23, 2011>

²⁵⁰ There are clearly Muslims all over the world and they are not relegated to one geographical space. That is, it is unlikely that the former minister would utilize “world” to refer to collectivities of Christians, Jews, or Hindus, since like Muslims they live in multiple places throughout the globe. However, this deployment of the “Muslim world” is quite commonly made.

Despite the fact that Brazilians are often homogenized and stereotyped as culturally laden subjects, many of the direct service providers for the Palestinians in Brazil held fast to orientalist ideas. The discourses deployed about the Palestinians by Brazilians in charge of their resettlement capture what Wendy Brown argues regarding conceptualizations of culture: “‘culture’ is what nonliberal peoples are imagined to be ruled and ordered by, liberal peoples are considered to *have* culture or cultures.” Brown poignantly reduces this notion to a simple distinction: “we *have* culture while they *are* a culture” [original emphasis] (2006, 150-151). As in Euro-American discourses, the gaze is focused on a distant place and “culture” without much consideration for or interrogation of the context in which these assertions are made.

For instance, in Brazil there were no laws criminalizing domestic violence until 2006.²⁵¹ The law emerged after decades of feminist grassroots organizing in the nation, where they mobilized to provide legal recourse to victims of domestic violence.²⁵² The movement gained more legitimacy when it rallied around a specific case, where the perpetrator of domestic violence, Marco Antonio Heredia Viveiros, twice attempted to murder his wife, Maria da Penha, in 1983. First shooting her in the back while she was sleeping (leaving her paralyzed from the waist down), he then attempted to electrocute her in the bathtub when she returned home from the hospital. Although Penha pressed charges against her husband, an economist and university professor, the case languished in the judicial system for nearly two decades.²⁵³ Meanwhile, Penha’s attempted murderer

²⁵¹ In 2003, three years prior to this federal law being enacted, Brazil became signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

²⁵² This does not imply that if something is codified in law it provides a solution to the problem, but instead my aim is to counter the discourse of exceptional and incomparable violence towards women always occurring in another space and place.

²⁵³ The anthropologist James Holston provides a close examination and critique of Brazil’s judicial system. See *Insurgent Citizenship* (2008).

remained free. The Federal Domestic Violence Law 11340 which passed in 2006 is known as Lei Maria da Penha/ Maria da Penha Law.²⁵⁴

While Penha suffered a clearly heinous crime, it is important to also consider the ways in which sexism in Latin America (broadly defined) is often imagined and conjured as particularly abhorrent in Euro-American constructions. So much so that the term is stabilized and maintained in an untranslatable term: machismo.²⁵⁵ Outside of the context of Latin America, this term generally refers to an exceptionally monstrous form of sexism and/or misogyny. The very use of the word “machismo” to refer to or discuss sexism in Latino “culture” somehow positions sexism and/or misogyny in the United States, for instance, as more genteel and less appalling.²⁵⁶ Moreover, the counterpart to this egregious sexism and/or masculinity is “marianismo,” wherein women are constructed as always submissive to men and expected to perform a femininity akin to that of the virgin

²⁵⁴ For more about this case and its legislative processes, see Jodie Roure’s article: “Domestic Violence in Brazil: Examining Obstacles and Approaches to Promote Legislative Reform,” In *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* 41(69): 67-97, 2009. Also see the full content of the Law 11340, enacted on August 7, 2006: http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2004-2006/2006/lei/11340.htm, accessed January 9, 2013. Also see “Violência de gênero e saúde: intersecções/ Gender Violence and Health” by Jacqueline Pintanguy in Berquó, Elza. *Sexo & vida: panorama da saúde reprodutiva no Brasil*. Campinas, UNICAMP, 2003. Pp.319-337.

²⁵⁵ With just a slight variation in pronunciation, machismo means sexism in both Portuguese and Spanish. This idea of exceptional and untranslatable terms can also be seen when making reference to God in association with Arabs and or Muslims. Usually the term is reproduced in articles and by media outlets in the Arabic “Allah,” as though somehow the Arabic carries an always already egregious militarized invocation, disassociated with its very common deployment by American politicians, for instance, who commonly say “God bless America.” This exceptional lexicon is also reproduced in Brazil, as I will demonstrate later on in this chapter in examining a Brazilian serial, *O Clone*.

²⁵⁶ A report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics indicated in 2007 1,640 women were murdered by a husband or boyfriend (and 700 men were killed). Since then, the average number of women killed annually in the US by a partner has been 1500. See “Female Victims of Violence,” by Shanon Catalano, Erica Smith, and Howard Snyder, released in 2009 (bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fvv.pdf). I do not mean to imply that sexism operates in a monolithic fashion either. That is, there are particularities of time, place, and space. My point in using the US is to exemplify that the “elsewhere” of sexism is always considered more violent, more toxic, and more deadly.

Mary: chaste, honorable, docile, passive.²⁵⁷ This machismo/marianismo binary bolsters “rescue” projects and sympathy for Latinas, which are not very different from the discursive Orientalist interventions made about “oppressed Muslim women” and their male counterparts.²⁵⁸ Both are ensconced in ideas about gender as it pertains to stereotyped religion and culture, and both are disconnected from political, social, economic, historical contexts and reproduced as grand narratives about people and their *cultures* in “those” places.²⁵⁹ In other words, problems are framed as arising from inherent differences and “backwardness” in the minority culture and religion, without much attention to the hegemonic machinations of power that are explicitly implicated in local contexts.

However a key element in the Brazilian context is the development of stereotyping by the stereotyped—a lateral formulation with hierarchical implications. That is, Brazil and its “culture” are subjected to a Western gaze, where images of the Brazilian Tropics dominate. This Brazil is a place of leisure, marked by beaches, *futebol*, *carnaval*, and excess sexuality, where women become the embodiment of the latter two. Women are essentialized and framed as scantily clad [mixed-race] seductresses, often on the beaches of Rio, or doing *sambas* on the streets—as though the ritual of carnival exists

²⁵⁷ Marianismo, however, is often constructed within a dichotomous framing--the Virgin/ Whore binary; however, the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. This too is comparable to Orientalist constructions of Muslim women. On the one hand Muslim women are considered oppressed and silenced, and on the other hand there is a smoldering temptress saturated with sexuality and desire (see Said 1978, particularly his analysis of Flaubert; also see Alloula 1986).

²⁵⁸ In the United States, these binary and gendered discourses about the Latino community are often amplified around undocumented migrants in the US/Mexico border and instrumentalized to fuel anti-immigration discourses. For instance, undocumented women are frequently constructed as victims of sexual violence by male smugglers (coyotes) during their crossing into United States territory. This then allows politicians to advocate for further militarizing the US/Mexico border and use “women’s rights” language to justify this militarization. It also provides fodder to further clamp down on immigration through the use of agencies (via violent immigration raids) like Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), as well as through the creation of anti-immigration legislation.

²⁵⁹ See “The Impact of Machismo on Hispanic Women” by Yolanda Quiñones Mayo and Rosa Perla Resnick in *Affilia* 11 Pp. 257-277, 1996.

perennially, without regard to place and temporality. (In the opening vignette of this chapter, the CONARE representative reproduces this very idea in the [dis]encounter he narrates.) Any complexity of geography, topography, and Brazilian regionalism gets lost in the imagined and commercially packaged place and space of Rio de Janeiro, which erringly stands in as representing all of Brazil.²⁶⁰ These images of the always already hypersexualized bodies of women do not account for the historical and problematic racialized and gendered colonial discourses from which these narratives originate.

The uncontrollable sensuality assigned to brown and black women have their beginnings in the legacy of Portuguese colonialism and Brazilian slavery. Gilberto Freyre in *Masters and the Slaves* refers to the “baianas” in the state of Bahia as Sudanese women, descendants of enslaved African women, who are known for their gait and stature. He articulates a racialized class discourse entrenched in sexual excess: “To this day, in the streets of Bahia, one may meet with these Negro women, peddling their wares...Over their many underskirts of white linen they wear a damasked one of lively hues...Their upstanding breasts appear to be bouncing out of their bodices...” (1956 [1933], 319).²⁶¹ Freyre also discusses “mulatto” women as part of Brazil’s mixed race legacy and emphasizes the ways they provide care and sexual pleasure. “Of the mulatto

²⁶⁰ This does not only take place from the outside of Brazil, but it also gets reproduced within Brazil, particularly when comparing it to other places (i.e., Morocco, India). See discussion later in this chapter on the popular cultural production of teledramaturgy.

²⁶¹ Freyre refers to the tall, statuesque “Sudanese” women in contradistinction to the “low, squat people” in South Africa, which he deems as, “Big-hipped women. Aphrodisiac curves. The Hottentot and Bushman women are truly grotesque with their protruding buttocks (steatopygia)” (319). The latter is a clear indication of Freyre’s investment in scientific racism, which cannot be disarticulated from gendered ideologies (see Jennifer Morgan [1997] and Yvette Abrahams [1998]) that permeated the disciplines of anthropology and sociology. Georges Cuvier’s pickling of Saartjie “Sara” Baartman’s (known as the Hottentot Venus) genitalia after her death advanced discourses of a “savage,” “bestial,” and hypersexual black female sexuality.

girl who relieved us our first *bicho de pé*,²⁶² of a pruriency that was so enjoyable. Who initiated us into physical love and, to the creaking of a canvas cot, gave us our first complete sensation of being a man” (278). Additionally, in a novel by Jorge Amado, *The Violent Land* (1994 [1943]), centered on the country’s emerging cacao industry, one of Amado’s characters gestures to this legacy when he asserts, “a black man who has a daughter is only bringing her up for the white man’s bed” (114). Hence, this Orientalism in the “Tropics,” or the stereotyping of the stereotyped, reflects a mutation and reformulation of the Western gaze, which is part and parcel of Brazilian Orientalism. The lateral refraction of the neo-Orientalist glaze is entrenched in racialized gendered constructions and (re) emerges as the lens through which to conceive the exoticized [othered] self as well as the the overlay to see and construct cultural “others.” This invigorates overly simplistic Us/Them cultural binaries and reinscribes hegemonic discourses.

RECLAIMING THE VEIL IN MULTICULTURAL DISCOURSES

Heba, was able to contextualize how discourses of multiculturalism and harmonious plurality often met their limit when it came to veiling practices and religion. For her, the veil emerged as the artifact of her Muslim subjectivity and was often fraught. As noted in Chapter 2, her use of the veil became an issue of contention and ultimately led to the loss of her job. This together with the difficulty of finding stable employment, even after two years in Brazil, made Heba reconsider her options. She made the decision that she would return to school. As she was trained as a prosthodontic technician in Iraq, she and her husband thought it would be best to pursue a degree in dentistry. She is still a

²⁶² This is a tick-like insect that burrows into the foot (usually the sole) and lays eggs.

few years from completing her studies. However, in her very first term at the college, she was confronted with a situation in which her veil became an issue. In a conversation via Skype, she recalled her experiences with a lab professor during her first semester.

Heba: She asked me to remove the veil in lab class because she was concerned it was a microbial contaminant. It did not feel right, but at first I was intimidated by her, so I removed the outer scarf, but kept the headdress I wear below it on.

BM: Can you say more about it? What did you think about her request? How did you feel about it?

Heba: As class went on that day, I got more and more upset; so, immediately after class I went to the dean's office. I told him what happened--that I was asked to remove the veil because the professor thought it carried germs and would contaminate the lab. And I told him, if that's the case, then my clothes carried germs too, as did my classmates'. So following her logic, all students should be required to come to and enter the class in the nude instead, to avoid contaminating the lab. He agreed with what I was saying. I also said everyone had to wear a lab cap anyway, so if anything my headdress made me even more prepared. But then I told him that Brazil was not France and there were no laws banning the headscarf. Brazil was different; it is a country of many different religions and it allowed for everything. This was supposed to be a country of freedom and I was free to wear the hijab if I chose, the same way that some women I go to school with can only wear skirts and not pants because of their religion. Then I asked, 'Would someone be able to tell a woman to wear pants if she could only wear skirts because of her religion?' Why is my headscarf any different? I said a lot that day. He completely agreed with me and said I was absolutely right. He told me not to worry and to rest assured I could wear my headscarf and no one would say anything more to me about it. He sent out an email to that professor and to the others too.

When I went to class next, the professor approached me and was apologetic, but she asked why I had not spoken to her directly, instead of going to the Dean's office. She said that she did not know the veil was so important to me and did not know how strongly I felt about wearing the hijab. She said, 'If you had told me, I would have allowed it, but you didn't say anything, instead you went directly to the dean'. And I said to her, 'you told me to take it off; you didn't ask if I could or not. You told me to remove it, and turned your face as if there could be no conversation about it'. And I also said, 'and you're the professor, you're in charge and as students we're required to do what you say. But the reason I went to the dean was for them to convey the message to all of my professors, not only you, that I want to and will wear the veil while attending school here'.

I told her I went to the Dean's office because I wanted to ensure that my rights were protected in all the classes I attended, not just hers. I told her I wanted to address it across the board, because I did not want my hijab to surface as an issue again in any of my classes.

Clearly, Heba is now well versed in the much-touted Brazilian discourses about freedom, inclusion, multiculturalism, and harmonious plurality and was quick to reproduce them as her defense in the incident that occurred during lab class. And while Heba demonstrated particular social competence in going to the Dean, she also refrained from partaking in the "jeitinho brasileiro." To her professor's dismay, Heba did not engage in this person-to-person negotiation deserving of "solidarity, hospitality, and consideration" (Damatta 1991, 170). The professor suggested Heba should have opted first for this personal exchange, in which she claims she would have acquiesced. However, Heba made clear she wanted *collective* action (meaning, she wanted all of her professors to get a clear message), instead of *personal* and individual consideration. In effect, Heba disavowed "o jeitinho" and made claims to citizenship rights instead. She utilized national discourses to support her rights despite her liminal citizenship status. By bringing up France and its policies about the hijab to the dean, she was able to point to Brazilian national discourses that professed something much different and held her college accountable for the same. Although Heba may have not followed the "Brazilian way" (jeitinho), the agency with which she approached the situation and the reasoning with which she pursued it positioned her very differently from the common Orientalist discourses of the "the oppressed Muslim woman" employed by many direct service providers.

When I asked Heba whether there were other women who wore hijab in her dentistry program, she said she was the only one. I inquired about whether she

experienced any stereotypes during her interactions with peers and she said she had not experienced anything negative at all. However, she went on to say, “Of course they ask about the veil all the time: things like, do you feel hot? Does it feel uncomfortable? And many want to see my hair; they want to throw a party for me to take off the veil. I tell them ‘fica sonhando’ [keep dreaming]. While Heba in no uncertain terms claimed she did not experience negative backlash because of the veil, she conveyed a sense of annoyance by the banal everyday questions about her headscarf couched in “personability” and “cordiality,” as the *jeitinho* would indicate. These everyday racist-inflected manifestations capture what critical race theorists call microaggressions (Williams 1987; Davis 1991) in ordinary, daily encounters, where there might be intentional (conscious) or unintentional (unconscious) racism *and* sexism in small acts and social exchanges, which get produced and reproduced in multiple areas of social and public life. The multifaceted manifestations of microaggressions at the intersection of racism and sexism accumulate over time and have a debilitating effect.²⁶³

In order to help deflect some questions regarding the veil, without directly initiating a conversation or specifically addressing her classmates about it, Heba posted a graphic on her social media site, which was widely shared with her college peers (See Figure 10 below).

²⁶³ Peggy C. Davis, “Law As Microaggression,” *In 98 Yale Law Journal* (1988-1989); Patricia Williams, “Spirit-Murdering the Messenger: The Discourse of Fingerprinting as the Law’s Response to Racism,” *In 42 U. Miami L. Rev.* 127 (1987-1988)



(Fig. 10: Social Media Post)

Box 1: * In the supermarket *

Box 2: Honey, you are in Brazil: a free country. Take that off of your head.

Box 3: This veil is my freedom and my identity as a Muslim; it is my crown. I carry it with pride and with it I reclaim the example of Mary, mother of Jesus, the woman who inspired me. It's my protection. It's my right to be known in society by my character and personality, not by my physical attributes. This scarf only covers my hair, not my thoughts.²⁶⁴

Heba laughed when she first saw the cartoon because she thought it was funny *and* familiar. Since she has many friends in her social networks, posting the graphic would explain to some why she wore the veil.

Moreover, this also conveys her experience of being marginalized because of her hijab. While the comic strip serves as an explanatory text about veiling, in using the Virgin Mary as analogy, it also contextualizes the Brazilian nation's historical affiliation with Catholicism.²⁶⁵ The last dialogue bubble in the sequence produces a discourse of

²⁶⁴ This post was reproduced from the facebook page Pérolas do Alcorão (<https://www.facebook.com/PerolasAlcorao>)

²⁶⁵ For instance, Brazil is cited as having the largest Catholic population (CIA Factbook).

sameness by likening Muslim women's veiling practice to the example of Mary, a beloved religious figure in Brazil where she is commonly invoked in daily language and social intercourse (see the first footnote in this chapter). However, while this Muslim reproduction of Marianismo uses the figure of Mary as symbolic of piety, she is also reconfigured as a feminist agent who demands recognition for the content of her character and intellect, rather than being objectified for her "physical attributes." Important too is the characterization of Brazil as a "free country" and the veil projected as a relic of restriction and unfreedom (Box 2). In response (Box 3), the language of multiculturalism and neoliberalism converge to produce a subject whose individual freedom is attached to the very religio-cultural relic that in hegemonic discourses is claimed to be a symbol of collective restriction. Here, the incident that took place in Heba's college and the individual rights discourse she deployed to respond to it, with both the dean and her professor, intersect with the claims made in the religious/political cartoon. Moreover, Heba's deployment of these discourses demonstrate the disjuncture between the social worker's (Silvia) ideas of oppression and of freedom. However, Silvia was not the only service provider who expressed questionable and totalizing ideas about the refugees.

THE LANGUAGE OF [CULTURAL] INTEGRATION

In an interview with several staff members from Centro de Defesa de Direitos Humanos (CDDH), the entity that later forged an oversight partnership with UNHCR for the resettled Palestinians, one of the social workers complained the refugees were not making

efforts to integrate. She referred mainly to what she considered the adult refugees' lack of initiative in trying to speak Portuguese. She asserted, "Eles não têm esse estímulo de conversar em casa com eles. Eles não conversam nada entre eles. Isso dificulta muito. As crianças só tem esse contato fora de casa quando tem essa oportunidade/ They do not take the initiative to speak [Portuguese] at home with them. They do not speak [Portuguese] at all among themselves. This is especially hindering. The children only have such contact outside of the house, when they have that opportunity." When the point was made that some of the parents did not speak any Portuguese themselves, she agreed some spoke very little but still emphasized the difficulty this posed for kids.

...Se eu chegar nas crianças, entre eles, tudo conversando, é em árabe. Eles não falam português...E dentro de casa também, nós observamos, as mães não falam também nada em português. Mesmo a 'Heba' que fala português, com as crianças ela fala tudo em árabe. E nós estamos insistindo nisso, que ela deve tentar falar em português porque vai ser bom para as crianças. Para a criança é muito difícil se ela só tem contato com o português na hora que ela vai para a escola e no período que ela fica na escola, mas em casa ela não tem experiência nenhuma/

If I approach the children while they are talking among themselves, everything is in Arabic. They do not speak Portuguese...And inside the home, we observed, the mothers too do not speak anything in Portuguese. Even Heba who speaks Portuguese, with the children she says everything in Arabic. And we are insisting on this, that she try to speak Portuguese because it will be good for the kids. For the child, it is very difficult if she only has contact with Portuguese when she goes to school and while she is in school, but at home she has no experience [with the language]. (Interview. 12 July 2010)

However Heba's children spoke Portuguese well, a point the social worker granted. But she still thought they needed to speak Portuguese in the home.

When I asked Heba whether she had been asked to speak Portuguese at home with her children, she sarcastically said, "Yes. And I asked them if they also want me to cook rice and beans at home." She then noted, "My kids already speak Portuguese. If I don't

“speak Arabic to them at home, tomorrow, they will forget. They speak Portuguese in school, with their friends, with the neighbors, at the store, everywhere. Everything is in Portuguese. I want them to speak Arabic too. Besides, they cannot tell me what to do inside my house.” For her, the crucial issue was maintaining her children’s knowledge of Arabic as she could see how quickly they were being integrated into Brazilian language and society.

In Brazil, the connection between language and integration has a particular historical resonance. During the Getúlio Vargas regime/ Estado Novo (1937-1945), there was a great deal of emphasis on preserving Brazilian identity, of which the Portuguese language was an integral part. This had even more resonance because Vargas’s nationalist government claimed that “many of Brazil’s ills were caused by...unassimilable immigrants,” and he thus “link[ed] Brazil’s economic problems to immigration and immigrants” (Klich & Lesser 1998, 45). During this period, ethnic social clubs and non-Portuguese newspapers were forbidden and shut down. Bilingualism was discouraged because it was thought to impede immigrant integration. Consequently, there was a ban on using foreign language in public life (Seyferth 2001). Brazilian leaders considered it urgent for immigrants to disappear into the social fabric of the nation, in order to demonstrate assimilation. Similar to U.S. discourses of assimilation in which English-only was/is emphasized, speaking and writing in Portuguese (only) was/is a measure of citizenship. Currently, for the Palestinians, however, the demand for Portuguese-only language use was expanded from the public sphere into private spaces of the home. While language surfaced as a sticking point for integrating refugees into their local community and for reformulating private interactions in the home, language

education classes involved some questionable pedagogical processes and once again pervasive Orientalist assumptions.

During language education courses at a local Cultural Center, the discourse about Palestinians was very similar to Silvia's, the social worker, particularly as it applied to culture and gender and familial relations. The manner in which Palestinians were culturally produced served as a means to explain what the refugees did and did not do inside and outside the classroom. These cultural constructions affected interactions in the classroom, without much consideration for the peculiar pedagogical approach utilized by the center. For instance, instead of being divided into classes based on levels of proficiency, classes were divided by family units. Therefore, despite vast differences in proficiency and age, an entire nuclear family was placed in one classroom. Louisa, a language instructor and head of the Cultural Center noted that *Cáritas* had requested this system. Classes were to be divided by family units and only women were to serve as language instructors. When asked why this request was made, Louisa answered:²⁶⁶

Por uma questão de cultura deles mesmos, por causa das mulheres, da cultura árabe. Então, elas ficariam mais à vontade se fossem professoras atendendo. Aí nós passamos desse primeiro contato a avaliá-los. Porque nós percebemos que haviam pessoas que conseguiam já dominar um pouco do português porque eles já estavam aqui fazia uns 8 meses. Então, alguns deles, os mais jovens já faziam contatos, então eles conseguiam dominar oralmente um pouco o português. Eles não tinham leitura ou escrita. Porém, os mais idosos, uma grande dificuldade, não falavam basicamente nada, não escreviam e não entendiam. Então, nosso primeiro contato foi esse, foi estabelecer quem sabia mais e quem não sabia. Houve uma dificuldade a princípio porque dentro de um grupo familiar, a própria cultura interferia. Então, o homem árabe leva vantagem porque era ele que dominava a aula. As mulheres e as crianças vinham em segundo plano. Então o que ele aprendia, e a mulher e os filhos ainda não dominavam, pra ele não era interessante, porque uma vez que ele dominou, seguia-se. Então foi difícil para as professoras trabalharem isso em sala de aula. Dividir a atenção. Isso foi um problema. Nós ficamos com esse projeto familiar talvez por quatro meses. Aí, a

²⁶⁶ Louisa was not available to meet until after I returned from my second round of research. This interview was conducted by Sonia Hamid.

pedido dos próprios palestinos, eles começaram a se distribuir. Então dividiu-se mais. O grupo jovem começou a se aproximar, alguns grupos familiares se dividiram, os filhos faziam aulas separado dos pais. Alguns homens desistiram, então ficaram só as mulheres. Então foi mais fácil pra nós trabalhar o ensino da língua portuguesa. Até então nós já sabíamos que tinham os analfabetos e semi-analfabetos no grupo. Então, com os analfabetos nós trabalhamos com cartilha, deixamos de lado todo o material próprio para o ensino da segunda língua. Era como se fosse alfabetizar o próprio brasileiro. Seguimos o mesmo processo com eles e surtiu um efeito muito bom, muito, muito bom.

It was a matter of their own culture. Because of the women and Arab culture, they would be more comfortable with female teachers. Then we assessed them. We realized there were already some who could master a bit of Portuguese because they had already been here eight months. So, some of them, the younger ones, had already made [social] contacts and had therefore developed some proficiency in spoken Portuguese. They could not read or write [in Portuguese]. However, the older ones had a great deal of difficulty. They basically spoke nothing, they did not write and did not understand. So, during our first encounter with them, we determined who knew more [Portuguese] and who did not. There were difficulties at first, because within a family group, cultural attitudes would interfere. The Arab man has an advantage, because he was the one who dominated the class. Women and children were in the background. So whatever he learned, and his wife and the children had not yet mastered, was not of importance to him, because he had already mastered it. So it was difficult for the teachers to work with this in the classroom. Dividing their attention. This was a problem. We stayed with this [classroom] design for about four months. Then at the request of the Palestinians themselves, they began to separate themselves, so the [class] groups were further divided. The youth in the [collective] group became close, some family groups split up, and parents and their children²⁶⁷ were placed in separate classes. Some men stopped attending, so only women remained. So it became easier for us to teach the Portuguese language. Until then we already knew there were illiterate and semi-literate people in the group. With the illiterate, we worked with a textbook. We put aside all suitable materials for teaching a second language. It was like teaching literacy to a Brazilian. We followed the same process and it had a very good effect, very, very good. (Interview. 19 January 2010)

Through a cultural framework, Louisa asserts explicitly orientalist ideas of gender, particularly when she claims that cultural attitudes interfered with the learning of women and children because Arab men dominated the class and cared little about whether their wives and children mastered the language. Although it is impossible to know whether

²⁶⁷ The age range of the “children” was wide: Anywhere from 7 to 35.

these familial dynamics existed and in how many families, if what Louisa described did occur then it would have caused a pedagogical dilemma.

However, the curious pedagogical approach employed by the Center itself seems to go unquestioned. That is, there was no sense that dividing the Portuguese language classes by family units instead of proficiency might produce discomfort for individual family members. And in this case, it seems there was also a lack of consideration for the hierarchical relations that often exist in families, irrespective of “culture,” and how this could create a difficult classroom situation. Furthermore, placing parents and their children in the same class, where they would be expected to equally partake in lessons and discussions, might lead parents, both fathers and mothers, to feel infantilized. As a result, everyone involved would likely feel uncomfortable.

In the larger group and within family units, there were clearly variations in educational levels. Some refugees had a college education (or more) and others were illiterate in Arabic. As one father observed, “This idea of putting adults and young children together was ridiculous.” He emphasized adults, those who were educated and those who were illiterate, had completely different needs than their children. They required what he called an “adult vocabulary.” This included words and phrases needed to maintain a household and negotiate in the community, such as in banks, pharmacies, with doctors, etc. Yet language education instructors saw any difficulties that arose simply as a “cultural” problem rather than a pedagogical or structural one.

Thus here again, a discourse gets produced and reproduced that emphasizes cultural incommensurability and gender is key to the resulting problems. “The Arab man,” as Louisa notes, is a fixed narcissistic, domineering, and misogynistic figure; and Arab

and Muslim women and children are invariably reduced to victims of their husbands and fathers. Once again, the neo-Orientalist glaze is advanced to produce otherness. The language teacher, similar to the social worker, proposes a monolithic logic of Arabness. In this formulation of Brazilian Orientalism, whether it was Arab culture, “the” Arab man, or “the” Arab woman, all complexities were lost: specificity of time, space, and place were erased and reduced to the singular, ahistorical “Arab,” whatever the category, in all its iterations and possibilities, could mean.

When asked about the division of the classrooms by family units, Louisa responded by saying, “Nesse caso foi bem negativo por questões culturais deles mesmo/ In this case it was really negative because of issues in their own culture.” And when a subsequent question was posed about whether the difficulties were related to different levels of proficiency and/or the distinct pedagogical methodologies employed with adults and children, Louisa provided a specific family as an example to ground the problems in culture. In this particular family there were two daughters: one aged eleven and the other eight. As she described the situation:

As meninas, nós percebemos que elas eram muito carentes, de atenção, carinho. Então isso dificulta também. Interfere muito no aprendizado. E acho que nós sentimos, conversando com as professoras, que a maior dificuldade era essa, que o homem queria a atenção pra ele, e aí existia um grau de separação. Aquilo que ele aprendia e absorvia, era pra seguir adiante. Não importava a esposa, não era pra dar...nem pras filhas, ele é chave ali, o foco é pra ele. Isso foi e é problemático.

The girls, we perceived, were very needy of attention and affection. So that makes it difficult too. It interferes a lot in the learning process. And I think we felt, talking with the other teachers, that the greatest difficulty was that one, that the man wanted attention for himself, and so then there existed a level of separation. So if he learned and absorbed something, then [the lesson] was to continue forward. His wife did not matter, even his daughters did not matter. He was key, the focus is on him. This was and is problematic.

It becomes apparent in Louisa's willingness to attribute any and all classroom difficulties to culture, she has a particular referent in mind. Her perception of this single family both reinforces and extends her ideas about *all* Palestinian refugees who were attending language education classes at the Cultural Center. In this sense, the capaciousness of Palestinian cultural otherness is evoked and predicated on a broader Arab racialized masculinity. The limits of the Arab cultural category is primarily that of non-Brazilianness; therefore, it has an expansive quality that allows teachers, social workers and other to underscore the refugees' lack of belonging.

While I never met the family described above--they had moved out of São Paulo to Paraná-- the refugees who remained made clear that the language education classes had been a disaster, principally because they were organized by family units. As Louisa herself remarks, "the Palestinians themselves" requested to be separated and divided based on proficiency, levels of literacy, and age, which she admitted had a very good effect.

The Orientalist ideas about Palestinians described above did not only effect relations between refugees and direct service providers. Instead, the refugees' resistance to these framings and their critiques of the resettlement program led Cáritas, along with CONARE and UNHCR, to get the police involved.

ORIENT-ING AND POLICING

Tensions between the refugees and the NGO charged with resettling them had been running high. There had been incidents where police had been called as a result of conflicts between the refugees and the service providers. In early February 2009, the civil and military police in the metropolitan area of São Paulo underwent training on how to

address matters in which Palestinian refugees were involved. Up until then, there had been four documented police incidents. The newspaper article that publicized the training, claimed that “Um ano depois da chegada dos estrangeiros, as ONGs que apoiam o grupo detectaram dificuldades de adaptação deles à cidade, principalmente por causa do idioma e dos costumes/ A year after the arrival of the foreigners, the NGOs that provide services to the group detected difficulties in their adaptation to the city, mainly because of the language and customs.”²⁶⁸ The article provides some insight into the strained relationship between Cáritas and the resettled Palestinian refugees. A lieutenant from the 17th Battalion of the Military Police, Raphael Machado de Campos Silva, reported the following: “Já tinham sido registradas quatro ocorrências policiais envolvendo essas famílias palestinas, desde brigas entre eles até agressões contra os membros da própria Caritas/ Four police incidents have already been documented involving these Palestinian families, from altercations between them to aggression towards Caritas members.” As noted earlier, Silvia claimed the Palestinians in the city had become notorious for violence, principally because of their interactions with members of the NGO. But clearly the problems extended beyond the supposed Palestinian penchant for violence. As Valdir Assef, the Technical Advisor to the office of the Secretary of Public Security of São Paulo, admitted to the reporter “Os policiais não entendem o idioma falado por eles e também havia um desconhecimento geral sobre a questão legal do refugiado no país/ The police do not understand the language they speak

²⁶⁸ Policiais recebem orientação para atender refugiados palestinos em SP: Objetivo é facilitar processo de adaptação dos estrangeiros” in <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/SaoPaulo/0,,MUL987286-5605,00-POLICIAIS+RECEBEM+ORIENTACAO+PARA+ATENDER+REFUGIADOS+PALESTINOS+EM+SP.html>: published online on 2/5/2009 and first accessed on 2/6/2009.

and there was also a general lack of knowledge regarding the legal issues involving refugees in the country.”

The article went on to note that the training program provided police with basic information about national policies involving refugees. Additionally, the article stated that an agreement was made among all of those involved in the program (CONARE, Cáritas, UNHCR, and the civil and military police) that any incidents involving Palestinians would be mediated by a member of Cáritas, who would facilitate dialogue between the parties: “Além disso, foi decidido que as ocorrências envolvendo os palestinos serão intermediadas por um membro da ONG Cáritas Brasil, que deverá facilitar o diálogo entre as partes.” This decision was made despite the fact some of the documented police incidents had been explicitly between the refugees and the Cáritas resettlement team.

In order to bridge what took place in the police orientation with the concerns of the refugees, a lieutenant from the Metropolitan Military Police would meet with representatives of the Palestinians.

Além disso, o tenente Mohamad Kassem El Turk, do 29º Batalhão de Polícia Militar Metropolitano...na Zona Leste de São Paulo, irá se reunir com representantes dos palestinos para explicar o trabalho da polícia e levar noções da legislação brasileira. /Additionally, Lieutenant Mohamad Kassem El Turk, of the 29th Metropolitan Military Police Battalion...in the East Zone of São Paulo, will meet with representatives of the Palestinians to explain the function of the police and impart the concepts of Brazilian law.

Para Assef, isso pode facilitar o entendimento da cultura brasileira por e reduzir o número de ocorrências envolvendo estes refugiados na cidade/ For Assef, this could facilitate their understanding of Brazilian culture and reduce the number of incidents involving these refugees in the city.

The selection of a Muslim and Arab officer²⁶⁹ to relay the information to the refugees either assumes a cultural connection between the two or assumes that only an Arab officer could communicate reliably with the Palestinians. He not only represents the categories—Arab and Muslim—to which the Palestinians are assigned, but he also becomes the representational figure of the possibility of integration and adaptation. And certainly the idea that El Turk needed to “explain the function of the police and...concepts of Brazilian law” suggests that the police may have believed the refugees lacked the sensibility of living in a civil society governed by law. Although the intent may have been to educate them specifically regarding Brazilian laws, the comment nonetheless casts them as uncivil and perhaps even “savage” (Silverstein 2005).²⁷⁰ In part, these attitudes seem to be rooted in Brazilian officials’ assumptions about the refugee camps to which they had been relegated on the Jordan-Iraq border. Any sense of a temporary sojourn there seems to disappear, and instead the Palestinians are classified as having always lived under those “uncivilized” conditions. Furthermore, there is no sense of the hyper-militarized space of the camp itself. In effect, the refugees had been *over-policed* while relegated to the desert camp.²⁷¹ To help improve their understanding of “Brazilian culture,” according to Assef, offers a means of reducing the number of incidents involving refugees. This too positions Brazilians as always already in the realm

²⁶⁹ The Lieutenant’s precise ethnic affiliation was never made clear.

²⁷⁰ Paul Silverstein in his article, “Immigrant Racialization and the New Savage Slot: Race, Migration, and Immigration in the New Europe” (2005), indicates the salience of racializing immigrants in Europe. He indicates how this racial categorization yields, “the construction of a new ‘savage slot’ through which immigrants are constructed as the European nation-state’s abject...’other’” (365). Importantly, he also indicates (citing Winant 2004) the “potential global reach” of these racial hierarchies (Ibid). While Brazil can certainly hold its own in terms of the formulation and deployment of racial hierarchies, Muslimness together with Arabness, or specifically Palestinians, seem to index the “global reach” of those considered “abject others.”

²⁷¹ While the refugees are produced as uncivil, what gets lost is the “savage events”, such as the United States’ war on Iraq, which led to the specific conditions that brought these Palestinians to Brazil in the first place.

of civility and as law abiding in contrast to the refugees, who are lawless and exhibit a cultural primitivism (Ong 2003, 14).²⁷² This contrasting, as Said suggests, is a central aspect of Orientalism. Thus, by learning about “Brazilian culture,” the Palestinians would learn how to be orderly modern subjects. Casting Brazilian culture in the realm of crimelessness is particularly fascinating since insiders as well as outsiders often construct Brazil and its cities as hyper-criminalized spaces.

Just days after reading this newspaper report, I attempted to contact the Lieutenant noted in the article, Raphael Machado de Campos Silva. After messages back and forth and nearly a month later (March 6, 2009), I was able to see someone from the 17th Battalion. Despite having an appointment with a Lieutenant other than Machado, when I arrived I instead met with a young officer by the name of Eliane.²⁷³ Apparently, Lieutenant Aislan, with whom I was slated to meet, was called to an unexpected meeting. While Officer Eliane did not have much information about the processes leading to the police training program, she was able to impart some of what took place during the training, which she attended.

Officer Eliane said there had been over 150 officers in attendance at the training, and the director of *Cáritas* and a representative from UNHCR Brazil gave presentations. They were shown a video about the refugee camp in “Alemanha” (Germany). I asked if she meant “Jordânia (Jordan), and she said “sim, tem razão/ yes, you are right.” Because of this error, I was worried about the officer’s credibility until I realized that perhaps the

²⁷² Aihwa Ong discusses how Cambodian refugees are “primitivized” as a minority group, particularly in casting them as “different from other Asian American groups” (14). Similarly, the Palestinian refugees seem to be “primitivized” in comparison to other Arab groups.

²⁷³ My intention was to conduct a formal audio-recorded interview with the Lieutenant with whom I had a scheduled appointment at the 17th Battalion. Because of the sudden changes, however, I was not able to get permission from the officer to record the conversation. Therefore, this was not a formal interview.

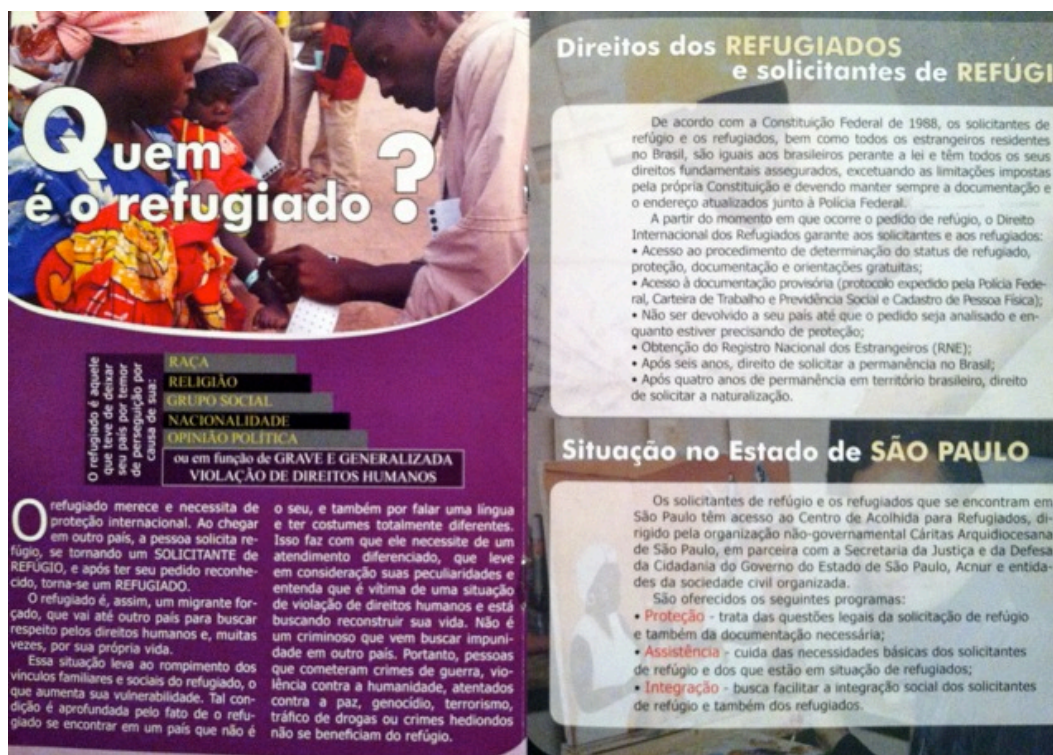
only historical referent she had for people relegated to “camps” was Nazi Germany and from this memory her association might have emerged. Of the video (*Nowhere to Flee*) the officers were shown, she recalled the refugees, “foram vitimas mesmo, [coi] tadinhos/ they really were victims, poor things.” Although the officer’s response to the footage was somewhat patronizing, it also indicated at least for some there was a level of disbelief about the circumstances that brought the refugees to Mogi. Still, the video concretized their history, but in ways that led officers to view them primarily as victims.

Eliane also described the role of Cáritas in the training. She said the Director of Resettlement in Mogi, Antonio, told those in attendance “O jeito deles, e a cultura deles é bem diferente/ Their ways and their culture are very different [from ours].” He thus clearly signaled the broad cultural incommensurabilities he saw between refugees and Brazilians and delineated these differences by fixed perceptions of the “jeito brasileiro” (see Damatta 1991, 1999) and Palestinian culture. According to Eliane, to substantiate this difference, Antonio noted that when the refugees spoke they were loud, which undermined cordiality. However, he insisted that this was not an indication they were aggressive. They just “naturally” spoke with loud voices and became over-animated, so officers should not interpret this in any other way. “Não são agressivos, é apenas o jeito deles/ They are not aggressive, it is just their way,” Eliane repeated. This characterization stands in juxtaposition to the cordiality and personability accorded to the “jeitinho brasileiro” [the Brazilian way]. When I asked if there had been any discussion or suggestions about differential approaches to dealing with women and men, she suggested that nothing like that had been discussed, but she did state that the women “são bem quietinhas/ are very quiet.” Using the diminutive form (quietinhas vs. quietas) to

describe the women further infantilizes them and instantiates the gendered hierarchies through which the women were imagined.²⁷⁴

When asked then if Antonio's reference about the appearance of aggressiveness applied only to "Arab" men, she said "foi uma coisa geral/ it was general." Yet it was evident that the constructions of refugees as "loud" and "aggressive" were deeply gendered since women were often portrayed as submissive and victimized. Eliane also mentioned in passing that she remembered one of the speakers referring to an incident where a computer was thrown to the ground by one of the refugees in the Cáritas office. However, she was not certain about the details. All the participants in the training were also given a booklet from the UNHCR representative, who reviewed its content during the training. The booklet, *Refugiados: Proteção e Assistência no Estado de São Paulo*, summarized what refugees were, the legal rights they had, and the programs offered to them in the state of São Paulo (See: Figure 11). Eliane then suggested Lieutenant Machado, who was on vacation, would be able to provide me with more details.

²⁷⁴ I am not suggesting such gendered hierarchies did not exist; however, these were not fixed and had different manifestations, as they do with other groups, including "Brazilians." Additionally, the "silence" attributed to the Palestinian women broadly was peculiar, particularly because, as I indicate in Chapter 3, Heba emerged as the "go to" person for media interviews and for other interventions.



(Fig. 11: Pamphlet distributed during police orientation)

Although I was not able to interview the lieutenant, the advisor from the Bureau of Public Safety, Valdir Assef, agreed to meet.²⁷⁵ Assef provided some context for the Bureau's involvement in the Police orientation.

[N]o final do ano passado, de 2008, o pessoal da Cáritas apareceu com essa demanda em relação aos refugiados de Mogi, aos palestinos. E aí essa conversa toda apareceu, contaram toda a história, os problemas que eles estavam tendo no atendimento...os problemas que eles vinham tendo no cotidiano, de ameaças, impedimentos de crianças freqüentarem escolas, postos de saúde, enfim toda a dificuldade que eles vinham tendo na adaptação desses refugiados e foi quando eles vieram procurar a segurança pública muito no sentido de: 'Precisamos de proteção para o nosso espaço, porque a gente sofre ameaças'. Já tinham tido problemas de vandalismo, na sede deles, lá em Mogi... E eu comecei a acompanhar um pouco essa história e vi que tinha mesmo o problema de uma autoridade constituída que fizesse um contato inicial com esse pessoal, de uma forma diferente. Que pudesse se aproximar, ao mesmo tempo, mostrando a presença do poder público, mas também dando caminhos de diálogos. Então, o que a gente fez aqui na secretaria: o primeiro passo foi procurar policiais militares

²⁷⁵ Interview carried out by Sonia Hamid.

que falassem a língua. E a gente deu uma sorte muito grande, porque além de encontrar três policiais que falavam o árabe fluentemente, dois professam a religião muçulmana, são freqüentadores de mesquitas, e aí eles foram indicados pelo comando para nos auxiliar nesse contato. Um desses policiais foi a Mogi das Cruzes...

At the end of last year, 2008, the Cáritas staff came up with this demand regarding the refugees in Mogi, the Palestinians. And then this whole conversation ensued. They told the whole story, the issues they were having with providing services... the daily problems they were having, with threats, impediments with children attending schools, seeing health care providers. In short, all the difficulty they were having in the adaptation of the refugees. And that was when they sought out [the bureau of] public safety—much in the sense of ‘we need to protect our space because we suffer threats,’ they had already had problems with vandalism in their office in Mogi ... And I began following this story a bit and saw that there indeed was a problem and there was a need for a constituted authority to make an initial contact with these people, in a different way. [An authority] who could get closer [to the refugees], but at the same time exhibiting the presence of public authority, but also providing an avenue for dialogue. So the first step we took here in the bureau was to seek military police who spoke the language. We got very lucky, because in addition to finding three officers who spoke Arabic fluently, two were Muslim and frequented mosques. They were told by their commanders to assist us in making contact. One of these officers went to Mogi das Cruzes... (Interview. 2 March 2010)

Assef was clear that Cáritas had initiated contact with São Paulo’s Bureau of Public Safety because of difficulties they had encountered with the refugees and this was not an initiative launched by the police in Mogi. It seems unlikely that the police would have generated such a large-scale effort since the police were involved with the refugees only a few times. Indeed, there were only four documented incidents involving the police in the one year the refugees had been in the area, and none of the incidents had involved felonies.

According to Assef, the Cáritas service providers felt threatened by the refugees and consequently constructed the refugees as threatening. This, once again, points to the Orientalist construction of Arab Muslim masculinity, with service providers’ perception

of a threat being directly tied to how they came to imagine “the Arab.” The police were called by *Cáritas* staff if, for instance, a Palestinian refugee was at the office loudly complaining about language education classes, the medical bureaucracy, or a stipend check that had not arrived, and s/he would not leave. While the *Cáritas* representative had explained to the police officers that even when refugees appeared aggressive this was just “their way” [*jeito deles*], not an indication of potential violence, but *Cáritas*’ initial contact with the Bureau of Public Safety framed the situation quite differently.²⁷⁶ They said they needed police protection and intervention because of threats and other problems.

Prior to the training, when the police in Mogi were called by *Cáritas* staff, the refugees responded by telling the officers they were refugees and only the federal police had jurisdiction over them. Assef asserted this was a very effective tactic used by the Palestinians:

Eles usaram isso com relativo sucesso. São refugiados, tem documentação da polícia federal, então eles são problema da polícia federal, a gente não pode mexer. Então, chamamos todos os policiais, os civis, os militares, apesar de a participação maciça ter sido do pessoal do 17º BPM mesmo, mas teve policiais civis também, para explicar pressupostos legais, a condição dos refugiados, os direitos dos refugiados...e principalmente os deveres. E a idéia foi falar que eles tem que ser tratados como qualquer cidadão brasileiro. Eles têm que cumprir as nossas leis. Se eles aceitaram o status de refugiado, eles têm que cumprir as nossas leis, seguir a legislação brasileira.

They used it with relative success. They are refugees and since they have documentation from the federal police, then they are the federal police’s problem, [and] we cannot touch them. So we called all police officers, civilian and military. Despite this, the main participants were the staff of the 17th BPM (Military Police Battalion), but there were also civil police officers to explain legal requirements, the condition of refugees...and especially their [civic] duties. And the idea was to

²⁷⁶ This also further contextualized the request for an Arab and Muslim officer, Lieutenant Mohamad Kassem El Turk cited above, to meet with some of the refugees. Perhaps he could help navigate them from “o jeito deles” [their way] to “o jeito nosso” [our way], particularly since he embodied “the possibility” (*supra*) of an Arab Muslim integrating into local Brazilian society.

say that they must be treated like any Brazilian citizen. They have to comply with our laws. If they accepted refugee status, they have to comply with our laws [and] follow Brazilian legislation.

For the resettled refugees, it quickly became apparent there was not much comprehension on the part of *Cáritas* staff members, or the local police, about where refugees stood in terms of Brazilian laws.²⁷⁷ Some used this lack of knowledge to subvert both. A number of the Palestinians who served as interlocutors for this project frequently said *Cáritas* staff hardly knew what a refugee was, let alone the circumstances under which someone was classified a refugee. This was often in reaction to being told they had the same rights, responsibilities, and duties Brazilian citizens had (see Chapter 3). Most declared that at a very fundamental level—even in terms of documentation—this was not true. So in effect this subversion was a means of disrupting situations in which refugees were often undermined. Realizing they were differentiated by technologies of governance (Foucault 1991), since they were differently positioned in state practices of population management, they utilized some of these techniques to better situate themselves in situations where police were involved. Thus, in their attempts to discipline the refugees into docile subjects (Foucault 1977, 1978, 1991), *Cáritas* and the police were confronted with an unexpected scenario in which the refugees asserted their legal rights. As Foucault conceptualizes such circumstances, “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power...[O]ne is always ‘inside’ power...” (1978, 95). In these localized confrontations

²⁷⁷ The *Cáritas* staff member Silvia had never before worked with refugees. She had previously worked in the prison system. She disclosed that she had worked for several years in a penitentiary for mentally ill criminals [*penitenciária para criminosos com doença mental*]. And before taking the position with *Cáritas*, Silvia had been working with juvenile offenders.

with the state, the refugees capitalized on the general lack of information that state representatives had--the police, in this case.

Assef claimed the training and out-reach endeavor had tangible effects. He underscored the importance of having an Arab uniformed military police officer speak to three members of the group, in their 'native' language, who were considered "problems." This conversation, produced results, as Assef noted:

[I]sso já causou um impacto grande, assim, simbolicamente, culturalmente... Então quer dizer que tem gente da policia daqui que fala a nossa língua? Então a gente não pode sair por aí alegando: Ah, não entendemos o que vocês falam... Isso já gerou um impacto neles/
This alone caused a big impact, symbolically, culturally ... You mean to say that we have police here that speak our language? So we cannot go around claiming: Oh, we do not understand what you are saying... This has created an impact on them.

The fact that Lieutenant Mohamad El Turk was selected to undertake this intervention and shared ethnic/linguistic and religious affiliations with the refugees was especially salient for the policing endeavor. According to Assef, this gave El Turk social and political leverage. In turn, his cultural and linguistic competencies were transformed into capital for the disciplinary apparatus of the police more generally.

Eles deslegitimavam as autoridades. Então o que a gente fez: Para você colocar a autoridade de segurança pública como um mediador, um parceiro disso, a coisa muda de figura. Foi muito clara a mudança de comportamento deles a partir do momento que... A primeira conversa com um agente de saúde tinha um agente policial do lado. O policial não precisou fazer nada, precisou ter a primeira conversa só do policia que falava o árabe com eles, e disse: Olha, eu sou representante da polícia brasileira, vocês tem que cumprir a nossa legislação e falou tudo isso em árabe com eles, teve essa reunião e falou: Adaptem-se a situação, porque vocês estão de refugiados no Brasil e nós vamos aplicar a lei brasileira, como fazemos com qualquer pessoa. Eu não acompanhei isso de perto, mas os dois, três relatos que eu tive do tenente, ele disse que eles receberam os policiais sem nenhum problema, que o policial simplesmente foi acompanhando...

They [the refugees] deligitimized authorities. So what we did was put the Public Safety Authority as a mediator—a partner, and the picture changes. The change in their behavior was very clear from the moment that..[For instance,] the first conversation with a health worker in which there was a police officer along side. The police did not have to do anything. The only thing that was needed was that very first conversation with the police officer who spoke Arabic with them and said: “Look, I am a representative of the Brazilian police and you have to adhere to our legislation.” And he said all of this in Arabic to them. He had this meeting and said: ‘Adapt to the situation because you are refugees in Brazil and we will implement Brazilian law, as we would with any other person.’ I did not follow this closely, but in the two or three reports that I got from the lieutenant, he said that they were receptive to the police without any problems, and the cop was simply just monitoring...

If Assef’s analysis is accurate, a single conversation between the refugees and El Turk in Arabic had a resounding impact. This, in turn, allowed other officers who did not speak Arabic to interact more easily with refugees by symbolically instantiating what Lieutenant Mohamad El Turk represented. Thus police officers who thereafter accompanied those members of the group who were considered a problem to the health clinic indicated they just watched or monitored the interactions without incident. The intervention by a police officer who spoke the same language, observed the same religion, and occupied the category of Arab thus provided a specific disciplining calculus, which shifted behaviors and interactions.

The refugees no longer claimed the local police had no legal jurisdiction over them, nor claimed they did not understand what was being said because of language barriers. Furthermore, for those who had already been coded as a “problem,” a kind of self-disciplining apparently took place, at least from Assef’s perspective. In this situation, the disciplining gaze of the police was internalized by the refugees. As Foucault argues in *Discipline & Punish* regarding the homogenizing effects of power in the Panopticon, “The efficiency of power...[has]...passed over to the other side—to the

side of its surface of application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (1977, 202-203). While Foucault is referring to the prison and the spatial dynamic of power within it, the direct disciplining gaze of the police produced a similar effect on the refugees. They internalized codes of expected comportment.

In addition, the police training involving Cáritas, CONARE, and UNHCR made this disciplining endeavor successful. According to Assef: “[D]epois a própria capacitação desse pessoal, e a proximidade com o pessoal da Cáritas ajudou a policia da área a entender melhor como lidar com isso e a atender com mais proximidade... Depois que teve essa atividade, nós não tivemos mais a ocorrência de nenhum problema lá/ The very training of the [police] personnel, and the very closeness to the Cáritas staff helped the police in the area better understand how to deal with and respond more closely...After that activity, we did not have any further [problematic] occurrences there.”

As noted in chapter 1, while in the Ruweished refugee camp in Jordan, when any of the refugees fell ill and needed medical attention, they were first shackled and taken to a hospital some 400 kilometers (approximately 250 miles) away. According to Jordanian authorities, these Palestinian refugees were considered a flight risk so shackling sick people was a common measure exercised by the Jordanian Military Police. This practice was widely known by members of Cáritas, CONARE, and UNHCR, and this was also imparted to the local police in Mogi. Lieutenant Machado in the article: "O palestino tem

um problema com a área militar, um certo temor, e esses encontros podem aproximar a PM desse povo /The Palestinian has a problem with the military, a certain fear, and these encounters [with local military police] can appear similar to their own experiences with their [the Jordanian] military police,” explained Machado.²⁷⁸ Indeed, many of the refugees took issue with the way they were treated by Jordanian authorities and did not have good experiences with them. Therefore, the use of Military Police officers to accompany resettled refugees on health care visits—a practice that resulted from the police training and had not been previously used on other refugee groups--was freighted from the beginning. Not only was this tactic used as a disciplining measure, but it also recalled the very carcerality to which the Palestinians were relegated for nearly five years, while in the Ruweished refugee camp.

With these new policing measures in place, any time one of the refugees had a meeting at the Cáritas office in Mogi, the staff would request a police presence. When Silvia, the social worker, described the office she said the following:

E o escritório que eu fazia atendimento antes, ele parecia uma prisão. Quando ia fazer atendimento a gente tem um acordo com inteligência da polícia daqui de Mogi das Cruzes. Ligava para a polícia, a polícia ficava na porta e eu ia fazer o atendimento, porque se não, não rola/

And the office where we provided service was like a prison. When we would provide service, we had an agreement with the police intelligence here in Mogi das Cruzes. We would call the police, and the police would stay at the door while I provided service; otherwise, it's not happening.

The first time I met Silvia, prior to any formal interview, these were the precise conditions under which the Cáritas staff engaged with the Palestinian refugees. I accompanied Heba and her husband Nasser to the Cáritas office because there had been

²⁷⁸ While Machado does not clarify which specific military police he associates with being “theirs,” or belonging to the Palestinians, I am here associating it with the Jordanian authorities charged with policing the Ruweished refugee camp.

some delays with Nasser's mother's assistance check. Since delays had occurred in the past because of paperwork errors, the couple wanted to ensure everything was fine and the check would come through. Heba called the office ahead of time, as was now required, to let them know she and her husband were coming. Upon arriving at the office, an unmarked house *Cáritas* had rented, there was a police squad car in front of the premises and a uniformed officer standing at the gated entranceway of the structure (See Figure 12). We rang the bell and through the intercom system a voice told us to wait a few more moments. Apparently the officer had arrived just before we had, and the social worker did not yet know. At that moment he announced himself through the intercom and we were then all allowed in. While Heba and Nasser talked with Silvia in the makeshift reception area about the stipend delay, the officer stood in the doorway watching. The meeting was brief, cordial, and uneventful. At this particular phase of my research I did not know the details about the *Cáritas* agreement with the local police, nor the context for the officer's presence. When I asked Heba about this, she said she did not know, but only knew that if there was an opportunity for *Cáritas* to complicate things, they would.



(Fig. 12: Cáritas office located in an unmarked rented house)

Heba's words resonated deeply during my second round of fieldwork. By December 2009, Cáritas had stopped conducting home visits with Palestinian refugees. According to Silvia, they had stopped long before because it had become a safety issue: "E visita domiciliar a gente fazia antes. Só não faz mais por questão de se preservar... Porque a gente acabou ficando refém deles. Trancam a porta, não deixam sair, pegam faca, falam que vão matar a gente, jogar bomba, matar o filho. Então visita domiciliar a gente não faz mais/ We used to do home visits. But we no longer do it because it is a matter of self-preservation (safety)...Because we would end up being held hostage by them. They lock the door, won't let you leave, get a knife, say they are going to kill you, throw a bomb, kill your child. So, we no longer do home visits." While I wondered about

the veracity of Silvia's claims, it was evident they had currency and that she had a direct hand in circulating them.

By late December 2009, the Mogi das Cruzes Department of Social Services had conducted an assessment of all of the Palestinian refugees who were still in the municipality (31 total, as per the DSS records). City social workers had visited eight families to evaluate their socio-economic situations and health conditions.²⁷⁹ Eva, whom I interviewed on 22 December, was among the city social workers who conducted these home visits. She said she received several desperate messages from Silvia to call her back and to do so before going on any home visits. When Eva finally spoke to Silvia, she was told that she and the other social service providers should exercise extreme caution because it was dangerous to go to the refugees' homes. Silvia proceeded to suggest that they reconsider the plan since she feared they would be 'attacked': "Falou que eram muito agressivos e violentos /She said they were very aggressive and violent."²⁸⁰ I asked Eva if at any moment she felt at risk and she said: "Nossa, ao contrário, foram muito atenciosos e hospitaleiros/ Goodness, on the contrary, they were very accommodating and hospitable." Although Eva admitted to being guarded at first because Silvia framed the refugees as violent and dangerous, none of the visits corroborated those claims. However, it is important to emphasize how heavily the police relied on such information from Cáritas staff.

²⁷⁹ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of health care and resettled refugees.

²⁸⁰ It is not unusual for refugees to be constructed within discourses of criminality and violence in places where they seek asylum and/ or are granted resettlement (Ong 2003; Humpage & Marston 2006; Ticktin 2006), however, Silvia's employment history within the prison system might have further informed her constructions of the Palestinians with whom she worked as "violent and aggressive."

Thus Valdir Assef based a lot of his assessments about the glaring cultural differences between Brazilians and refugees on reports from Cáritas staff. In an interview, for instance, he claimed the following:

De novo, eu vou falar dos relatos que eu ouvi. Eu acho que o principal problema era na questão da igualdade de gênero e dos direitos da criança. Que era uma sociedade muito patriarcal e que quem define o que a mulher e os filhos vão fazer é o pai. E aqui você tem esses direitos muito garantidos. Aqui a criança tem que ir para a escola, a criança tem que receber o atendimento de saúde, o pai não tem o direito de tirar o filho do sistema de educação. E isso para eles era uma questão bem difícil, tanto que eles escondiam crianças das escolas, e a questão da mulher principalmente no sistema de saúde, que para eles era bastante complicado, porque são exames que mexem com a intimidade... Mas de novo eu vou dizendo o que eu ouvi do pessoal da Cáritas e do pessoal que estava lá, não ouvi isso *in locu*.

Again, I am going to talk about the reports I heard. I think the principal problem was the issue of gender equality and the rights of children. That it was a very patriarchal society and who decides what the wife and kids do and will do is the father. And here [in Brazil] you have these rights very guaranteed. Here a child has to go to school, the child has to receive health care, the father has no right to take his children out of the education system. And this was a difficult matter for them. So much so that they hid their children from schools. And the question of women, especially in the health system, which for them was quite complicated, because there are [medical] exams that require touching intimate parts... But again I'm telling you what I heard from the staff of Cáritas and the people who were there, I did not hear that *in locus*.

Here again the idea of Palestinian culture as exceptionally patriarchal, with women and children wholly dominated, is juxtaposed to Brazil where the rights of women and children are multiply protected.²⁸¹

Perhaps because of the information imparted to him by Cáritas staff, Assef overgeneralizes when he asserts that fathers kept children from or hid them from school.

²⁸¹ This is in tension with the documented frequent extra-judicial killings of children by the Military Police, which have a long history in Brazil. A report by Amnesty International in 1992 revealed the killings of hundreds of street children in Rio de Janeiro by Police (See: "Impunity and the Law: The Killing of Street Children in Rio de Janeiro State," *Amnesty International* 1992, AI Index: AMR 19/92/05). In a more recent investigation by Human Rights Watch (in 2009), the resulting report indicated between 2003 and 2009 11,000 people had been killed by Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo police alone (See "Lethal Force: Police Violence and Public Security in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo" *Human Rights Watch Report*, December 2009).

There was one case in which a father kept one of his two daughters out of school. Part of the reason for this was the daughter was being bullied for wearing a veil. After this was brought to the attention of UNHCR and Cáritas, they intervened and the daughter was transferred to another school where she was no longer harrassed. This was corroborated during my interveiw with a senior resettlement representative from UNHCR in Brasilia. Furthermore, if there had been requests made for same-sex doctors, they were made by the women themselves. The repeated emphasis on this request being made by or because of men (husbands particularly) completely elides the women's personal preferences. As would be expected, among the refugees there were different ideas about these issues. In one exchange between Nasser and his elderly mother, Um Nasser, who needed surgery for a prolapsed bladder and wanted a female surgeon, he told her there was no use in "being old-fashioned." She just needed to go with the doctor who was most qualified, whether it was a woman or a man. To which she responded, "I want the best qualified woman." Nasser then goaded his mother by telling her what would occur when she was put under anesthesia. He said "they invite everyone to come in and see," and she will never know; "so, there is no use in being old-fashioned," as he mischievously put it.²⁸²

These nuances—created by gender and generation--seem to get lost in the larger universalized Orientalist construction of refugees. The far reaching and sometimes damaging claims by Cáritas staff, like Silvia and the director, cannot be overlooked since much of the essentialist discourse about Palestinian culture that circulated among local civil and social service providers appears to be constructed initially through the reports

²⁸² My aim here is to show not only how ideas diverge, shift, and alter, but also how play factors into these [cross-generational] exchanges about "modern" and "old-fashion" ideas. And while Nasser's teasing may appear cruel or unsympathetic to a reader who is unfamiliar with his interactions with his mother, her reaction and laughter and their general dynamic when this conversation took place did not indicate that.

passed on by *Cáritas*. In efforts to explain and construct the refugees, they passed on ideas of an exceptionally intransigent Palestinian cultural regime. This in effect coalesced with the particular mutation of Orientalism in the Brazilian context, which was informed by ideas of race, gender, belonging and history, but also by global discourses about Arab Muslims that had taken hold of public consciousness in Brazil after the attacks of September 11, 2001. As in other spaces, ideas about Muslims were played out on women's bodies.

NATIONHOOD & ITS DRAMATIZED ORIENTALIZED OTHERS

While discourses and images of Arab Muslim-ness were transformed after September 11, 2001, there was already an entangled history of Arab and African Muslim influence in the colonial foundation of the Brazilian nation-state. Luís da Câmara Cascudo observed its resonance, “O mouro viajou para Brasil na memória do colonizador. E ficou. Até hoje sentimos sua presença na cultura popular brasileira/ Moors traveled to Brazil nestled in the colonizer's memory, and stayed. Until today, we feel their presence in Brazilian popular culture” (1967, 17). One aspect of the Moorish Muslim presence that survived and was enmeshed in local Brazilian culture was head covering. According to Cascudo, “O torço, turbante provisório...envolvendo parte da cabeça feminina, ocultando os cabelos...tão conhecido no Brasil, e um elemento mouro/ The provisional turban...wrapping part of a woman's head, concealing her hair... so well known in Brazil, is a Moorish element” (Cascudo 19-20).²⁸³ Contemporarily, this

²⁸³ More recently, there has been a competing narrative about the origins of the “turbante” in Brazil. When the Braganza royal family fled Portugal because of Napoleon's invasion (1807), they embarked on a 100-day journey to Brazil. The living conditions on the convoy were less than desirable and a lice epidemic broke out. In the latter part of the journey, the royal women and their court had to shave their heads to rid

influence is often more closely associated with Baianas in the state of Bahia in the Northeastern part of the country. This connection between turbans and women, particularly African descended women in Bahia are registered but are often rendered invisible because of the common association between two. This occurs in much the same way as Catholic nuns donning veils are registered but not truly noticed, since there is a normative logic attributed to their “covering” practices. However, the association between veiling and “othered” Orientalized bodies takes on distinct meanings, as the experiences of the Palestinian refugees indicate. These and other differences can be mapped through the medium of serial dramas.

In fall 2001 a few years prior to the arrival of the Palestinians in Brazil, a widely accessible and wildly popular cultural genre, the telenovela, played a critical role in the more contemporary orientalist framing of Muslim Arabs through the soap opera *O Clone*.²⁸⁴ John

Karam, in *Another Arabesque*, writes about the reception and distribution of this soap opera and the work it did in giving Islam greater visibility, while simultaneously reproducing essentialist ideas about it. The primary plot of *O Clone* addresses forbidden love between a Muslim Moroccan/Brazilian woman and a Brazilian Christian man.

However, the promotional video situates the series in an Us/Them binary, the female

themselves of the lice. When they finally arrived in Bahia in late January 1808, they all wore turbans to hide their shaved heads. According to Laurentino Gomes’s text, *1808* (2007), the locals in Salvador, Bahia perceived this as a European fashion and took this on as a mode of dress. However, it appears enslaved women (and some men) wore the turban long before the arrival of the royal family (Diouf 1998; Gomez 2005).

²⁸⁴ In partnership with the Brazilian network, Globo, which originally produced the telenovela, the Spanish-language television network Telemundo, remade *O Clone* for a US Latino audience/market in 2010. Although the original Brazilian soap opera was dubbed in Spanish and aired on telemundo in 2002, this new release, titled *El Clon*, would feature Spanish-speaking actors and the two geographical locations in which the novela would take place would be Miami, Florida and Fez, Morocco. Glória Perez, the original screenwriter for the series, was recruited for the Telemundo project. In January 2011, *O Clone* was re-aired on Rede Globo in Brazil.

protagonist is referred to as “a Muçulmana” [the Muslim woman] and her male counterpart as “o Brasileiro” [the Brazilian man], which seemingly unravels the national discourses of harmonious plurality and racial mixing. The series is set in Rio and Fez and serves to compare and highlight distinctions between people and practices in each location. The female protagonist, Jade, is forced into an arranged marriage, which emphasizes “a Muslim Arab woman’s struggle against male dominance and allegedly Islamic rules of marriage and sexuality....” (Karam 2007, 114).

A close examination of some of the images captured in the soap opera for this project advances our understanding of the use and distribution of facile representational binaries pervasive in the serial. For instance, the scenic shots portraying Morocco and Brazil juxtapose two very distinct spaces, one moment featuring the arid desert landscape, replete with camel caravan, representing the Middle East; and the next shots of the Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer) and the lush beaches of Rio.²⁸⁵ While the Middle East is visually depicted as a pre-modern totality, representations of Brazil often fall into hegemonic discourses about the essentialized “tropics,” with modern framings. However, this representation and construction of Brazil is not from the outside in but is being reproduced from within. This practice demonstrates the internalization or locking-in of the gaze and its refraction onto the *other* other.

In some featured clips of the soap opera,²⁸⁶ Muslim women are depicted through caricatured visual representations. In one scene women are covered with the veil, niqab, and jilbab, and later the same women are belly dancing in full belly dancer regalia. In one

²⁸⁵ I write Middle East here and not Morocco specifically because in Rede Globo’s ads in anticipation of the soap being re-aired in 2011, references were made about what the soap opera offers to its audience, including “rever imagens espetaculosas lá do Oriente Médio/ re-see spectacular images from over there in the Middle East.”

²⁸⁶ These were displayed on Rede Globo’s website.

dance sequence, Jade, in a red belly dancing outfit performs before a suitor with a boa constrictor wrapped around her torso, a still image of which could easily replace *The Snake Charmer* cover, by Jean-Léon Gérôme, on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). The exoticized orient is manifested by and through the representations of women in the serial. On the one hand, these images of women are accompanied by characterizations of an exceptional patriarchal culture, in which the veil functions as its symbol. On the other hand, there is an implicit sexual excess lying in wait beneath the veil, which ultimately reveals itself in the overloaded images of belly dancing seductresses (an orientalist framing of the Virgin/Whore binary). Here the unharnessed sensuality often attributed *to* and widely distributed *about* Brazilian women is transferred onto Arab Muslim women—the refraction of the neo-Orientalist glaze. Said attends to the role of media in circulating Orientalist representations when he notes, “One aspect of the electronic, posmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media’s resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified...” (Said 1978, 26).

Another featured clip, “Esposas de Ali reclamam do dote de Zoraide” [Ali’s Wives Complain about Zoraide’s Dowry], depicts a wedding ceremony where the protagonist’s uncle, Ali, takes on a third wife, while his two other wives jealously bicker over the new wife’s dowry, which is greater than theirs combined.²⁸⁷ Preceding this sequence, Ali makes the announcement he is going to marry again, and unbeknownst to Zoraide, she is to become his wife. The scenes are saturated with essentialist ideas which

²⁸⁷ I originally accessed this video clip on Rede Globo’s website in July 2012:
<http://globotv.globo.com/rede-globo/o-clone/v/esposas-de-ali-reclamam-do-dote-de-zoraide/1623246/>

have much currency in the Euro-American popular imagination about Arab Muslim men and women, and which were reproduced by the social worker Silvia's discussion regarding "the" Arab man and Arab woman. Polygamy and forced marriages are constructed as the norm for all Muslims, as is the monolithic figure of the "oppressed Muslim woman" who has no agency. And while all of the characters in the serial appear to be animated by an orientalist gaze, the ideas about men and women are made manifest and ultimately ossified in Jade's character.²⁸⁸ As Karam writes:

In focusing on the transgressions of one Muslim Arab woman, *The Clone*, subtextually represented Muslim Arab family regimes (run by men) that defend allegedly Islamic rules of marriage and sexuality. Although it gave more visibility to Islam in a historically dominant Christian community, the soap opera presented Muslims as clones of the Orientalist imagination, as critiqued by Edward Said [(1978) Karam 2007, 114].

Karam explicates the Orientalist framing of the soap opera in its perpetuation of subjugated Muslim women and unwavering patriarchal family structures. The stereotypes are easily legitimated by many non-Muslim Arabs in Brazil, thus ensuring they belong in the Euro-Christian Brazilian culture, which Muslims can never be integrated into.²⁸⁹

The telenovela made its encore appearance on Brazilian primetime beginning January, 2011 to mark the 10 year anniversary of its original broadcast. Once again, it set records for viewership. And while clearly this novela is not the only means by which

²⁸⁸ In a video montage about the television serial, the actress who plays the protagonist of the story, Jade, said she spent her days in classes: belly dancing classes and Arabic classes. It is unclear whether Arabic classes implies language lessons alone or whether it encompassed classes that offered readings and lectures about the Middle East. (<http://globotv.globo.com/rede-globo/video-show/v/vale-a-pena-ver-de-novo-volta-a-exibir-a-novela-o-clone/1407654/>)

²⁸⁹ See Karam 2007, Chapter Four: "Mixing Christians, Cloning Muslims." Relative here too, for instance, is the way in which the Lebanese are conceptualized and conceptualize themselves. Brazil has the largest Lebanese population outside of Lebanon and the elite from this group commonly attach themselves to "modernity". For instance, prior to the civil war in the mid-1970s, Beirut was often referred to and considered the "Paris of the Middle East."

Brazilians gathered ideas about Arabs and Muslims, it is important to note the wide circulation and currency of serials in the nation's popular culture, the role they have in public discourse and in decimating ideas which persist in the collective memory and imagination. In effect, Brazilian teledramaturgy functions as a national pedagogy of sorts.²⁹⁰ That is, people are informed and “educated” about national culture and citizenship through this medium. In this ubiquitous form of media production, hegemonic ideas about Brazil and Brazilians are also reified and internalized. Helga Tawil-Souri thus reminds us, “media [is] a mechanism by which we learn and internalize values, beliefs, and norms of (*our*) culture and as a material device in which are encoded the dominant beliefs and norms of society” (2011, 83 emphasis added).²⁹¹ *O Clone*, more specifically also functioned as a national pedagogy about “cultural others”.

After the events of September 11 and the declaration of the “war on terror” by the Bush administration, this particular serial provided a lens to offer “insight” into the “other’s” culture and religious practices. Karam indicates that media executives from Globo “Capitalized on tumultuous world events...[and] reinvented the soap opera as a way to *educate* the Brazilian public about the Muslim Arab world” (2007, 14 emphasis added). And while the creator of the serial, Glória Perez, was quick to state Arabs and

²⁹⁰ In *Dramas of Nationhood* (2005), Lila Abu-Lughod discusses the historical and contemporary role serial dramas have in Egypt. In this context, serials, along with national media more broadly, functioned as a means to promote cultural literacy and were “yoked to political and social projects” (10). As per the author, these dramas continue to function as pedagogical projects producing a “national pedagogy,” particularly in rural areas. These same melodramas reproduce ideas of ignorant and uneducated Egyptians (what not to be) juxtaposed to modern, educated, and “cultured” Egyptians (what to become), with what Abu-Lughod calls “stock themes of rural backwardness...violence...[and] patriarchal authority expressed most often in the control over women and the institution of forced arranged marriage...” (58). Also see Lauren Berlant’s engagement with “national pedagogy” and media in American culture in “The Theory of Infante Citizenship” (*Public Culture* 1993).

²⁹¹ Tawil-Souri utilizes the term media more specifically in relation to the color-coded ID cards distributed to Palestinians in Israel/Palestine, which operate as surveillance, determine mobility, foster exclusions, among other things. But Tawil also conceptualizes the term more broadly and that is the sense through which I deploy it here.

Muslims were people just like Brazilians were, the hegemonic representation of these groups in the soap opera had enduring effects. In Spring 2009, for instance, it was common to hear references about the serial in connection to the Palestinian refugees. This was particularly true in relation to representations of “veiled” women as well as of belly dancing which featured so prominently in the telecast. In fact, in a conversation with a fellow researcher, she expressed surprise and dismay by serious inquiries from members of her graduate cohort about whether the belly dancing that went on in refugees’ homes was just like the dancing in the soap opera.

During my research, another Orientalist telenovela captured the popular imagination of the Brazilian public: *Caminho das Índias*.²⁹² Once again the primary plot was about forbidden love and the creator was Glória Perez. In this serial, the forbidden love was between a man and a woman from different castes. The male protagonist is a Dalit (untouchable) and the woman who captures his heart is from the merchant class. As in *O Clone*, Rio de Janeiro is featured as the space of modernity and progress and Rajasthan, India (instead of Morocco/the Middle East), as its pre-modern opposite. And once again arranged marriages, excess sexuality embodied in dance, and women’s lack of agency is prominently figured in the narrative. Even the name of the telenovela is subject to interpretation. While the official English title is *India- A Love Story*,²⁹³ it can also be translated as “Passage to India,” or the “Path of Indian Women.” The existence and popularity of this second telenovela makes clear that representations of cultural “others” and “their” cultural practices have an enduring effect in the national imagination. And they also have material implications.

²⁹² See: <http://caminhodasindias.globo.com>.

²⁹³ This translation is the translation listed in the Internet Movie Database (IMDb)-- <http://www.imdb.com/>

For the Palestinian refugees, for instance, variations on wearing the sari and its draping (pallu) that appear in this novela were at times mistaken for the veils the women wore. While running errands with Heba and Nasser during the first leg of fieldwork, we went to an electronic shop to return a blown router for their Internet café. The woman who had sold Nasser the router invited Heba and me to sit at her desk while we waited for the manager. She then asked if Heba and I were related. When we said we were not, the salesperson said she should have known since I was not wearing a veil like Heba was. Heba then noted that I was Muslim, too, and that it was her choice to wear the veil but plenty of Muslim women did not. Seeming a bit confused, the salesperson then said she thought the veil was “divine” [divino] and really beautiful [muito lindo], and asked if we had been watching “a novela” [*Caminhos das Índias*] because the veils they wore were gorgeous. In an attempt to briefly explain distinctions, Heba said Muslims and Hindus were not the same and then said “isso é o mais importante para lembrar” [this is the most important thing to remember]. After this encounter, I wondered how common this conflation was more broadly in Brazil, a measure of the role soap operas, an incredibly accessible medium, had in disseminating ideas of “other” cultures. What gets masqueraded as cultural truths about religion, Arabness and Indianness, *and* their interchangeability, are peddled in the telenovelas. Edward Said addresses this conflation as being a central aspect of Orientalism. He posits that whether in India or Egypt and “although circumstances might differ slightly here and there...Orientals were almost everywhere nearly the same” according to Orientalists (1978, 38). In Brazil, these ideas linger, morph, and serve to make facile connections, in much the same way cultural depictions and ideas of Brazil and Brazilians steal themselves into constructions of

Brazilian self-hood. It is evident that sensationalist media informs and sells (in Brazil as elsewhere), reducing and reproducing people and places into consumable bits.

While having a multicultural valence, teledramaturgy also commodifies orientalized subjectivities. Karam notes the commodification and consumption of what are framed as “Muslim” and “Arab” cultural goods. He cites a proliferation in the popularity of belly dancing classes, things “Moroccan,” etc. Similarly, with *Caminhos das Índias*, local markets were flooded with things considered “Indian” and “Hindu” (which were often conflated). In fact, a local Brazilian woman indicated how the soap opera had taken the country by storm: “A febre agora é com a Índia. Aconteceu a mesma coisa na época da novela *O Clone*/ There is Indian fever now. The same thing happened during the time the serial *O Clone* aired.”²⁹⁴ She was nodding to the influence of soap operas in producing waves of consumption of items perceived, in this case, as authentic Indian cultural artifacts, in the form of music, scarves, henna tattoos, bangle bracelets, salwar camises, etc.

Such consumer trends fuel and perpetuate the wide reach of media, specifically serial dramas. In the mid-80s, a Brazilian Globo executive underscored the significance of media “for a productive system: to transform the population into an active consumer market, generating the disposition to consume, by relating each consumer good, product, or service to the social group to which it is appropriate, reaching all the social strata,

²⁹⁴ I am reminded here of a refrain from a song by Seu Jorge called “Zé do Carão,” originally written and performed by Leci Brandão. Referring to the social, political, and economic situation in Brazil (more specifically within and about a favela), s/he positions the “novela brasileira” as a red herring: “e na hora que a televisão brasileira, destrói toda gente com sua novela é que o Zé bota a boca no mundo, ele faz um discurso profundo” [in a time where Brazilian television distracts everyone with its soap opera that’s when Zé excoriates the world, with a profound (socio-political) discourse]. In a subsequent refrain, “destrói” is substituted with “destrói” [destroys]. In other words, teledramaturgy serves as a national distraction. It exoticizes Brazilians and cultural others, while helping to silence the issues that afflict the poor in the country.

simultaneously, and making markets more dynamic and agile” (in Abu-Lughod 2005, 193). In both of these serials the national pedagogy of cultural others also includes “educating” the national subject in practices of consumerism, particularly as an integral part of citizenship, for a well rehearsed “consumer-citizen” (Trentmann 2007). In an increasingly globalizing and neoliberal Brazil, the cultural other becomes the subject of difference (and sameness) and the object of consumption. Furthermore, the exoticization of the “cultural *other* other” and the exotic, pre-modern, and distant places to which they are laced reflects and refracts the exoticized cultural constructions of Brazilians and Brazil itself.

By tracing discourses of national Brazilian culture and of its cultural others through the lives and experiences of Palestinian refugees, we can map the ways in which “cultural others” are expected to learn to become Brazilians, while being subjects of and disciplined by a particularized Brazilian Orientalism. This occurs in tandem with reproductions of essentialized ideas of Brazilianess that reify representations of Brazil and its people in hegemonic discourses, as indicated in the construction of the cultural dis-encounter that begins this chapter.

Furthermore, while racial mixing has been a long lasting discourse in the national imaginary, where the plurality of race has served as the marker of Brazilian exceptionalism, the manner in which Palestinian refugees were read and framed did not coalesce with these ideas. Attorney General, Lucia Moura, cited extensively in chapter 3, took notice. She questioned the overarching concept of culture repeatedly emerging as the culprit for the misgivings and problems in the Palestinian resettlement program. She claimed this ran counter to Brazilian discourses of “racial mixing” and miscegenation.

Furthermore, it made no sense, according to Moura, to situate “culture” as a problem when it was clear the very idea of providing resettlement to refugees (Palestinian or otherwise) entailed the incorporation of people from different places into Brazilian society. As Moura noted, “E acho que a questão de diversidade cultural faz parte da própria essência do refugio, porque a gente não vai receber refugiado brasileiro, né? Não tem sentido/ And I think the question of cultural diversity is part of the very essence of providing refuge, because you are not going to receive Brazilian refugees, right? It does not make sense.”

This inconsistency gives way to a different reading of “racial mixing” and *democracia racial*/ racial democracy. While racial mixing is considered part and parcel of the fabric of the nation, cultural mixing is outside of its purview. A singularity of culture appears to accompany this discourse, where the potentialities of *Democracia Racial*/Racial Democracy is circumscribed by an *Autocracia Cultural*/Cultural Autocracy and disrupts ideas of a harmonious plural society. The examination of Orientalized cultural others as they relate to public and private life, education, policing, and media representations make clear that in Brazil an Neo-Orientalist glaze complicates our understandings of essentialized cultural constructions of Brazilians by outsiders *and* insiders and it illuminates how these very constructions are laterally refracted. That is, discourses about Arab Muslim cultural “others” are in part framed by the very hegemonic discourses by which Brazilians are racialized and exoticized.

EPILOGUE

Forty-eight hours before the last of the Palestinian refugees left Ruweished camp for their resettlement country in 2007, a Brazilian film crew descended on the outpost to film a documentary, *A Chave da Casa* [The House Key]. The title of the film represents an item that, like a flag, is part of the collective objects in what Ilana Feldman calls “Palestinian visibility practices” that serve to memorialize “the Palestinian past and future” for those inside and outside the community (2008, 503-504). Many refugees, whose families were dispossessed, still have keys to their homes in Palestine. The old fashioned skeleton key is a tangible reminder of what was lost and what there is to regain. The film title captures this important object in Palestinian refugee iconography. And the content of the film traces the movement of Palestinian refugees from their makeshift tent homes in the Ruweished desert camp to which they were resigned for nearly five years, to their new homes in Brazil nine months after their arrival in the country.

The filmmakers shot footage of the Iraq War refugees packing their bags, at once excited and nervous about what awaited them in their country of resettlement. In one vignette a refugee I recognize looks out a hand-carved window in his tent and says, “Life in the camp has been hard, but I’m going to miss it.” In another vignette, a 78 year-old woman who lost her eldest son to a heart attack while in the camp is filmed watering the plants that she nurtured with love and persistence in the extreme temperatures of the desert. She says “tomorrow they will die...since there will be no one to water them anymore.” Nine months later, in Venancio Aires in Rio Grande do Sul, this woman lives alone and says, “Sometimes I get lonely, but then I think, God is generous and kind and I realize that I’m not alone.”

I watched this documentary at the end of my first round of field research in an independent movie theater off of Avenida Paulista in São Paulo's city center.

Unbeknownst to me, I would watch the film again three days later. The second time it was at the Mogi mosque with a large group of resettled refugees. Many choked back tears as they watched the first act of the documentary filmed in the desert camp. There before them once again was the desperate place they had all survived. But it was also a place they survived together; where they laughed and made memories—a home. There was sadness, anger, and loss there but there were also friendships built, alliances forged, marriages and births, and even pets. In this “grave yard for the living” there were many of the things that make life alive. In some ways the peculiar nostalgia the refugees displayed was understandable.

Less than two years after that film screening, three of the just over fifteen refugees in attendance that day had died. Among them was Reem, who died of stomach cancer and whose story I have highlighted in this dissertation. Abu Khalil, whose two of three sons found work in Halal slaughter and whose family I came to know well but do not document here, died at the age of 55 from thyroid cancer. And Abu Nasser died very suddenly of an asthma attack.

Abu Nasser's death was a shock to the family. The irony was not lost on them. He had survived several violent displacements (1967, 1971, 1975, 2003), where his life hung in the balance, but he would ultimately succumb to asthma on a very hot and humid February day in São Paulo upon returning home from food shopping with his wife. Fortunately, Nasser had arrived home from a Halal contract job two days earlier, after being away for nearly three months, and had spent the previous day with his father.

Although he was grateful for having had the opportunity to see his father one last time, it reminded him of what he missed out on while being away for work for long periods.

Today Nasser continues to work in the Halal industry, as do many of the men, and he has been promoted to a supervisor position in the company. As a result, his contracts stretch for even longer periods and he has to be away from his home and family for multiple months, which makes it difficult for everyone. Despite being a single parent to her boys for the better part of the year, Heba is still pursuing her education and is now two years shy of completing her Bachelor of Dental Surgery (B.D.S.). She also has processed her family's paperwork for Brazilian naturalization.

In December 2012, after not seeing her siblings or parents for nearly ten years, Heba was able to travel overseas to where they live in Lebanon. She spent one month with her family. She described the reunion as one of the most joyous occasions of her life and said the most disappointing part of the trip was leaving her family to return to Brazil. However, Heba plans to visit again soon and this time she will take her two sons to visit with her.

The two elderly men who were in Brasilia, Faris and Sami, never returned to Mogi das Cruzes and continue to live in the nation's capital. UNHCR provides them with a housing and living stipend. Um Nasser continues to guard the skeleton key to her family's home in Palestine closely and also receives a monthly stipend from UNHCR, as do the surviving elderly and ill refugees (a total of seven have died).

However, Um Nasser has seen a reduction in her monthly stipend from the UN Refugee Agency. Presumably budget constraints at the UN and the unending refugee crisis in Syria and other parts of the globe may have contributed to this. In fact the civil

war in Syria has been under way for three years now. It has claimed tens of thousands of lives, forced over 2.5 million to flee to neighboring countries (Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq), and internally displaced 6.5 million persons according to UNHCR. When the uprisings began, which then led to the civil war, there were 530,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria and more than half have been displaced. Like the Palestinian Iraq War refugees, many Palestinians in Syria were dispossessed and forced from their homeland in 1948 and found refuge in a neighboring country. Others arrived because of conflicts at different historical moments, and for some Syria has been their second or third exile. Despite the time period or the events that led to their arrival in Syria, all Palestinians still have refugee status in the country. And as during the Iraq War, Palestinian refugees are particularly vulnerable.

Neighboring nation-states, such as Jordan, have been flooded with hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees; however, they do not grant entry to Palestinians fleeing the civil war for the same reasons they did not grant entry to displaced Palestinians from Iraq. That is, because they do not have permanent status in any country, Palestinian refugees would remain in Jordan indefinitely. In Syria, the Palestinian camps have been targeted and under siege. For instance, Yarmouk refugee camp in the southern district of Damascus was home to some 150,000 Palestinians before the conflict began. There are now 20,000 Palestinian refugees left in the camp, which has been under siege since April 2013. Armed opposition groups have entered the camp and Syrian government forces, in efforts to contain them, have secured the perimeter of the area, denying entry to UN vehicles carrying food and medical supplies. The current head of UNRWA, Filippo

Grandi, has recently made pleas to all functions to allow unrestricted delivery of humanitarian aid to the area.²⁹⁵

I include this here to underscore the ongoing instability for Palestinians in the Middle East, especially during military conflicts in the region. Moreover, resettlement options for Palestinians are few, given the number of displaced refugees and the few countries willing to provide refuge. For instance, as of summer 2013, Brazil was still upholding its new policy of not granting asylum or resettling Palestinian refugees.

However, exceptions in Brazilian policies are made when they prove mutually beneficial. Despite denying them asylum and instead of deporting them, Brazil has recently granted permanent residency to more than 1,800 Bangladeshis who entered the country in 2013 seeking refuge.²⁹⁶ According to CONARE the number of asylum seekers from Bangladesh has risen every year since 2011.²⁹⁷ The Justice Ministry attributes the rise in asylum claims to the growing Halal export market in Brazil for which there is a need for Muslim laborers. Despite not fitting the criteria for refugee status, since these are economic migrants, the government, along with the National Council on Migration (CNIg) granted all of them permanent residency.

The president of CNIg, Paulo Almeida, justified the decision by stating, “A grande maioria possui emprego e vêm conseguindo se integrar de forma satisfatória ao nosso país/ The vast majority of them are employed and have been able to integrate in a

²⁹⁵ UN News Centre, “Senior UN official spotlights plight of Palestinian refugees caught in Syrian conflict”: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47122&Cr=syria&Cr1=palestin#.Uyh1aV5fICZ>, Accessed 20 February 2014.

²⁹⁶ Mariana Della Barba, “Brasil vira rota de bengalis em busca de refúgio”: http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/02/140129_bengalis_brasil_mdb.shtml, Accessed 15 February 2014.

²⁹⁷ In 2011, 74 sought asylum; in 2012, 280 made requests, and in 2013 the claims increased by more than 6.5 times from the previous year to 1,830.

satisfactory manner into our country.’’²⁹⁸ In referencing their ability to integrate, presumably through this labor niche, Almeida underscores the desirability of these migrants. Not only is Halal animal slaughter fostering the growth of a new immigrant (mostly male) community in Brazil through an explicit labor migration, it is also incentivizes the government to make exceptions for those “others” who are able to fortify and help expand Brazil’s export economy. This reminds us of Aihwa Ong’s observation of making exceptions for “marketable talent” (2005). That is, in neoliberal practices benefits and rights are granted to those with skills or affiliations (in this case Muslim) that satisfy market needs, thus determining who is desirable and undesirable for and in the nation-state.

Moreover, the Muslim Bangladeshis are reported to be fleeing a climate of poverty, few employment opportunities, and violence in their home location. And Brazil is framed as its opposite. Here Brazilian Orientalism plays a part in constructing outsiders in juxtaposition to insiders. This is notwithstanding that some of these very descriptors are used to describe Brazil as the neo-Orientalist glaze has shown in the corpus of this work.

²⁹⁸ See http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2014/02/140129_bengalis_brasil_mdb.shtml.

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