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The Social Justice Community of Practice Report, Spring 2025, Emily Carr University

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With incredible support from Dr. Amel Aldehaib, and Ece Arslan

Celebra

The Social Justice Community of Practice was an initiative taken by Ece Arslan, the coordinator of EDI Capacity Building at Emily Carr. I was fortunate to have been selected to be part of the team (with Ece, and Hyein Lee) organizing six events for the Spring 2025 semester. For my part, I organized three talks, "Transnational Feminist Partnership for Collective Liberation: From Sudan to the Salish Sea" with Dr. Amel Aldehaib and Dr. Magnolia Pauker; "Once Upon a Land: Palestine's Journey from Nakba to Genocide" with Dr. Ghada Ageel; and "Challenging Frameworks of Scarcity: How the Multilingual Project Nourished Existing Abundance to Shift Institutional Culture towards More Just Language Practices (Social Justice Community of Practice)" with Tara Wren and Debora O.

My organizing principles for these events were A) that the talks were given by non-regular faculty so that those with precarious positions at the periphery of institutional imagination could receive the allocated CARFAC fee for guest speakers; B) that the talks were given by non-regular faculty who have years of experience as social justice activists in their personal and work lives. And C) that the second talk which coincided with the Anti-Apartheid and Black History Month had to be about the ongoing genocide in Palestine and delivered by a Palestinian scholar. Below are notes from these events respectively. The notes have been taken by Dr. Aldehaib, and I have compiled and edited them as follows. My sincere gratitude to Dr. Aldehaib for their invaluable support.

THIS REPORT WAS TRANSPOSED INTO THIS ZINE ON APRIL 8 2025 BY LOIS KLASSEN USING A BOOK STRUCTURE BY HYEIN LEE.

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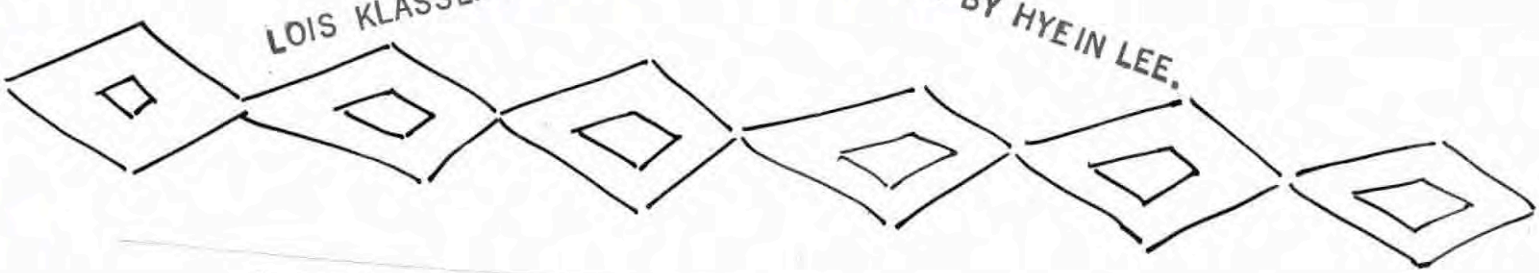


1. **January 21: "Transnational Feminist Partnership for Collective Liberation: From Sudan to the Salish Sea"** with **Dr. Amel Aldehaib and Dr. Magnolia Pauker**

Sudan's current conflict is rooted in decades of systemic violence and civilian suffering. It is not just a simple power struggle between two groups. It's a complex issue with deep historical and structural roots.

Sudan is a country with incredible ethnic and cultural diversity. However, since gaining independence in 1956 from Anglo-Egyptian Sudan administration, building a

cohesive nation-state has been a major challenge. Unfortunately, successive governments have failed to address this challenge, instead exploiting the country's diversity for their own interests.

The conflict in Sudan began shortly after independence, with a struggle for power and resources. The legacy of colonialism and the underdevelopment of peripheral regions have contributed to the conflict. This legacy has created long-standing tensions and divisions that continue to shape the country's politics and society.

In April 2019, a Sudanese Revolution using the slogan "freedom, peace, justice" led by Sudanese youth, with young women at the forefront overthrew longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir, creating an opportunity for a democratic transition. A civilian–military coalition government was formed to lead the country through the transition, based on power-sharing between a broad-based civilian coalition led by the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) and the military (Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Force (RFS) and security forces of the former authoritarian regime.

However, less than five years into the transition, the civilian-military coalition government failed due to disagreement among partners. On October 25, 2021, the Sudanese Armed Forces-led coup under the leadership of General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan dissolved civilian-led political institutions.

A devastating tension and power struggle between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) has escalated into a full-blown civil war. On April 15, 2023, the conflict escalated further, with widespread fighting reported across the country. Regional and international powers have taken sides, with UAE backing the RSF and Russia and Iran supporting the SAF. This conflict has unleashed horrific violence, widespread human rights abuses including sexual valence, and atrocities on a massive scale, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and allegations of genocide. The war caused immense human suffering, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure, homes, businesses, and institutions.

Sudan's ongoing conflict has shattered its social fabric, fueling ethnicization and ethnic profiling. The polarization of Sudanese society, driven by years of exploitation and marginalization, has created a complex web of divisions. The Various factions compete for power, widening the ethnic divide.

Now Sudan is experiencing a critical escalation of conflict, marked by the Sudanese army's takeover of areas previously controlled by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). This has resulted in widespread displacement, human rights abuses, and a dire humanitarian crisis. Due to Severe underfunding of UN humanitarian response plan, Millions lack shelter, food, water, and medical care with the ongoing fighting, putting lives at risk

International and local aid organizations are responding to the needs of civilians affected by the war in Sudan by providing emergency food aid, medical care, and supporting displaced populations among other ways. However, their efforts are hindered by insecurity, access constraints, funding shortages, and the politicization of aid. Some groups have framed international humanitarian aid as a form of "colonialism" or "interference," creating obstacles for international organizations trying to deliver essential assistance.

Goodness Radiance is a local, voluntary, women-led initiative that Dr. Aldehaib has been co-leading for almost two years now in Aba Island, White Nile regions of Sudan. Their mission is "Unlocking the potential of vulnerable individuals and communities, including both displaced and host communities, by providing access to livelihood opportunities, education, and humanitarian assistance, while promoting dignity and advancing social justice." They started in response to the growing humanitarian life-saving needs, particularly among internally displaced persons (IDPs). The changing dynamics of the conflict, however, has significantly impacted their work. The escalation of violence and insecurity especially against human rights defenders in the last three months forced some of the initiative members to flee the region or Sudan and support the organization remotely.

As a Sudanese activist, Dr. Aldehaib firmly believes that the path to lasting peace in Sudan is rooted in three fundamental principles: Freedom, Justice, and Peace. These principles, embodied in the revolution's slogan, provides a framework for tackling the complex challenges facing Sudan. International community plays a crucial role in supporting Sudan's journey towards peace and responding to humanitarian crises.

2. **March 5: "Once Upon a Land: Palestine's Journey from Nakba to Genocide"** with **Dr. Ghada Ageel**

The Zionist takeover led to the displacement of Palestinians as refugees, and the erasure of their society. The ethnic cleansing of Palestine was justified as a means to provide a safe haven for European Jews who survived the Nazi atrocities. However, this solution came at a terrible cost, as Europe sought to export its "Jewish question" to a distant land, disregarding the catastrophic consequences for the indigenous Palestinian population and the war crimes that would be committed in the process.

Hannah Arendt, the renowned Jewish philosopher, astutely observed that the post-war solution to the "Jewish question" was, in fact, resolved through the colonization and conquest of a territory. However, this solution did not address the issues of minority rights or statelessness. Instead, it created a new category of stateless people: the Arabs, with an additional 700,000 to 800,000 individuals being displaced and denied their right to a homeland.

In his seminal work, *The Question of Palestine*, Edward Said posed two profound questions that remain eerily relevant today. What moral or political justification can be invoked to demand that a people relinquish their right to national self-determination, their ancestral land, and their fundamental human rights? In what world is it acceptable for an entire nation to be legally erased, as military forces wage war not only against its people but also against their very identity, history, and existence? Furthermore, Palestine holds the distinction of being the sole colony abandoned by Britain, only to be handed over to the Zionist settler colonial project.

As World War I drew to a close, Britain and France, driven by colonial ambitions, secretly agreed to divide the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire through the Sykes-Picot Accords of 1916. The British promised Arabs independence in exchange for their support against the Ottomans. However, simultaneously, the British government issued the notorious Balfour Declaration in 1917, which abruptly shifted their support to the Zionists, promising to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine.

The British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, exemplifying the colonialist and racist mentality of his time, explicitly stated in the declaration: "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." This declaration was a landmark example of colonial disregard for the national and political rights of indigenous peoples, as Balfour and his administration demonstrated a callous indifference to the interests of Palestine's native inhabitants.

In a stark display of colonial arrogance, Britain recognized the right to national self-determination for a minority group, while denying it to the overwhelming native majority. In 1917, Jews comprised less than 9% of Palestine's population and owned a mere 2% of the land, whereas the indigenous majority made up over 91% of the population and owned 98% of the land. As Said aptly noted, the Balfour Declaration was a decree issued by a European power regarding a non-European territory, demonstrating a blatant disregard for the presence, rights, and wishes of the native Palestinian majority.

Following the war's conclusion, Britain opted to pursue its strategic interests in Palestine by backing Zionism. To this end, Britain established a mandatory regime in Palestine, which flagrantly violated the League of Nations' covenant, specifically the principles of self-determination. The covenant's terms were unequivocal, yet Britain disregarded them, prioritizing its own ambitions over the rights of the Palestinian people.

According to the mandate system, countries like Palestine were deemed ready for independence, requiring only administrative guidance from the governing power. However, Britain's mandatory regime in Palestine deviated from this principle, denying the native Palestinians recognition as an independent nation. In contrast, Iraqis, Syrians, and Lebanese were treated as sovereign nations under the same mandate system. Notably, the 1922 mandate omitted the term "Palestine," instead referring to the Arab majority, who comprised 92% of the population, as the "non-Jewish community."

The 92% Arab majority, referred to as the "non-Jewish community," was granted civil and religious rights, but denied political and national rights. Between 1922 and 1948, Britain actively enabled the colonial project in Palestine, allowing the Jewish population to grow exponentially through both sanctioned and unauthorized immigration, ultimately reaching one-third of the total population.

In May 1948, just one day after Britain's withdrawal, Zionist militias declared Israel's independence, forcibly displacing a staggering 80% of the native Palestinian population. This catastrophic event led to the world's oldest, largest, and longest-standing refugee crisis. Israel seized 78% of historic Palestine, enabling the Nakba, or "catastrophe" in Arabic, which systematically erased and destroyed Palestinian society.

The elimination of the native Palestinian population was a deliberate and systematic plan, not a coincidence or accident. As early as 1895, Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist movement, wrote in his diaries about the need to address the presence of Palestinian natives. He proposed spreading the impoverished population across the border by arranging employment for them in transit countries, while denying them employment opportunities in their own country. Herzl advocated for the expropriation and removal of the poor to be carried out discreetly. Fast-forward 130 years, and the Zionist leadership, backed by the US administration, has become more brazen in their intentions. They have openly discussed ethnically cleansing Gaza, even before Trump's proposal to empty Gaza and expel its population. This stark shift in rhetoric underscores the ongoing systematic effort to eliminate the native Palestinian population.

The violence in Gaza isn't a recent development or a reaction to the events of October 7. Rather, it's a deliberate and systematic campaign that's been identified as genocide by scholars and experts. Craig Mokhiber, the former director of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, resigned in protest of the UN's inaction just three weeks after the war began. In his resignation letter, he stated that Israel's military actions in Gaza constituted a "textbook case of genocide." This assessment is shared by Raz Segal, a prominent Israeli genocide scholar, who describes the situation as a clear example of "intent to commit genocide." These conclusions are backed by experts and scholars who've studied the situation, leaving no doubt that the violence in Gaza is a deliberate and systematic attempt to destroy the Palestinian population. Dr. Ageel's has lost over 400 relatives, cousins, granddaughter, and many more until April 2025.

The violence in Gaza is eerily similar to the policies and practices employed in 1948, with patterns of massacre, mass dispossession, and displacement repeating themselves. The parallels are striking: the massacre in Deir Yassin in 1948 mirrors the bombing of the Baptist hospital in 2023, and the UN and Fahoura schools today. The displacement of one million Palestinians in 1948 has been followed by the displacement of over 1.9 million today.
These incidents aren't isolated; they're a stark manifestation of history repeating itself. The same fabricated stories of atrocities, amplified by mainstream media and politicians, are being used to justify the genocide. As the UN has noted, Israel's actions in Gaza amount to "genocidal acts" and "crimes against humanity." The personal stories of devastation and loss, like the author's own experience of receiving news of the bombing of their apartment tower, drive home the human cost of this conflict.

3. **March 11: "Challenging Frameworks of Scarcity: How the Multilingual Project Nourished Existing Abundance to Shift Institutional Culture towards More Just Language Practices (Social Justice Community of Practice)"** with **Tara Wren and Debora O**

This event was a more casual and participatory event that spoke to a pre-COVID initiative at ECU taken by Debora O and Tara Wren. The event, based on the initiative, explored a unique perspective: What if students are seen as experts of their own learning experiences, and teachers act as supportive partners who experiment with strategies to enhance learning? Debora O and Tara Wren led this discussion, inviting both students and teachers to share ideas on improving learning across languages and challenging the academic culture that prioritizes perfection in fluency.

Deborah O and Tara Wren spearheaded the Multilingual ECU Project in collaboration with a diverse group of students and faculty members at ECU. This initiative was thoughtfully outlined on their project website, where they articulated its mission and goals as "dedicated to fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment that celebrates and supports linguistic and cultural diversity... Our primary focus is to address the challenges faced by multilingual students who encounter barriers to education and inclusion, as well as to provide support for the educators and staff who work closely with them. Grounded in an anti-oppression and social justice framework, our work recognizes and challenges the systemic forces that perpetuate social inequality within our community."

The key terms explored by this initiative included recognizing multilingual students as experts of their own experiences, and seeing teachers as their collaborators and allies who facilitate and amplify the learning process. In this framework perfectionism and fluency are challenged while multilingual students are empowered and celebrated.

The Multilingual project aimed to inspire a cultural shift, making space for non-traditional and multilingual students to thrive, emphasizing that inclusion of diverse voices is not just fair but essential for the success of the institution and the broader community. The event challenged traditional roles and expectations, encouraging a more inclusive and collaborative approach to education. By valuing students as experts and teachers as partners, the discussion aimed to create a more supportive and innovative learning environment.

Interestingly, the majority of students and teachers viewed multilingualism as an advantage for learning, recognizing the unique perspectives and skills that multilingual individuals bring to the table. However, it was noted that teachers valued multilingualism in themselves more than in their students, suggesting a potential disconnect between the perceived benefits of multilingualism and its practical applications in the classroom.

The project led to several initiatives aimed at supporting multilingual students and promoting a culture of inclusivity. One key outcome was the creation of a booklet featuring strategies for teaching multilingual students, compiled from the expertise of faculty members. Additionally, the project organized social gatherings for students to build community around their shared experiences of multilingualism.

Faculty workshops were also conducted to address specific challenges, such as facilitating participation in the classroom and addressing plagiarism in a way that is sensitive to the needs of multilingual students. These workshops encouraged teachers to adopt a more empathetic approach, recognizing that plagiarism is often a result of cultural or linguistic differences rather than intentional dishonesty.

The project's outcomes were multifaceted, with increased empathy and compassion from teachers towards multilingual students being a notable highlight. Students also reported feeling more confident in sharing their multilingual experiences, fostering a sense of community and belonging within the university. Although the project was ultimately cut short due to the pandemic, its legacy continues to promote a positive, inclusive view of multilingualism at Emily Carr University.

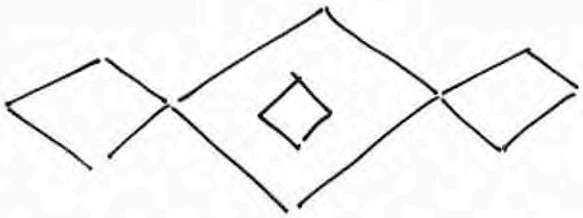
Lessons from the Social Justice Community of Practice Event

The event created a much-needed space for collaboration and co-learning between ECU faculty and scholar allies from other institutions. Since joining Emily Carr, I have had the privilege of getting to know many faculty members who have been working with social justice and human rights issues for years now. I saw my position as a facilitator who could provide a small space for these activist-scholars to come together to think together and co-create knowledge. I believe the

success of these three events speaks to the ongoing need for creation of such spaces where otherwise siloed knowledges and scholars have the opportunity to learn with and from one another. This success also speaks to the need for more anti-racist events in a world seized with racism, Islamophobia, right-wing fascist politics, and suppression of liberatory student movements. Here are some suggestions for future events of the same spirit:

1. Better communication: there exists a huge communicatory gap in ECU. Information about the events were not communicated broadly and faculty did not receive reminders.
2. A uniform platform: while online pages were created for the first and the second events, the event about Palestine was not given an event page. It is important, particularly when events are about social justice, that there is no discrimination in the ways in which events are advertised.
3. Zoom meetings instead of webinars: online events function better when a highly restricted webinar format is replaced with regular online meetings in which participants can a) turn on their cameras; b) unmute and ask questions, and c) use chat to communicate with one another and the hosts. Having restricted webinars limits methods of communications and creates an oppressive space which stands in contrast with the nature and goal of events on and about social justice and anti-racism.

4. Lack of surveillance: academic conversations on social justice and anti-racism always flourish better when there is no surveillance. As a rule of thumb, everyone speaks more freely when there is no fear of being observed and reported on. As such, it's best practices to have a single host, speakers, and audience all of whom can see and interact with one another freely in the absence of a hierarchical structure.



Ultimately, this event would not have been made possible without the support of my incredible colleagues. My sincere gratitude goes to Drs. Rita Wong, Sue Shon, Magnolia Pauker, and Sarah Shamash. I'm also grateful to all the faculty and students who showed up to these events and supported this work.

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