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Israel/Palestine And The Queer International



Synopsis

In this chronicle of political awakening and queer solidarity, the activist and novelist Sarah Schulman describes her dawning consciousness of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Invited to Israel to give the keynote address at an LGBT studies conference at Tel Aviv University, Schulman declines, joining other artists and academics honoring the Palestinian call for an academic and cultural boycott of Israel. Anti-occupation activists in the United States, Canada, Israel, and Palestine come together to help organize an alternative solidarity visit for the American activist. Schulman takes us to an anarchist, vegan café in Tel Aviv, where she meets anti-occupation queer Israelis, and through border checkpoints into the West Bank, where queer Palestinian activists welcome her into their spaces for conversations that will change the course of her life. She describes the dusty roads through the West Bank, where Palestinians are cut off from water and subjected to endless restrictions while Israeli settler neighborhoods have full freedoms and resources. As Schulman learns more, she questions the contradiction between Israel's investment in presenting itself as gay friendly "financially sponsoring gay film festivals and parades" and its denial of the rights of Palestinians. At the same time, she talks with straight Palestinian activists about their position in relation to homosexuality and gay rights in Palestine and internationally. Back in the United States, Schulman draws on her extensive activist experience to organize a speaking tour for some of the Palestinian queer leaders whom she had met and trusted. Dubbed "Al-Tour," it takes the activists to LGBT community centers, conferences, and universities throughout the United States. Its success solidifies her commitment to working to end Israel's occupation of Palestine, and it kindles her larger hope that a new "queer international" will emerge and join other movements demanding human rights across the globe.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books (October 12, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822353733

ISBN-13: 978-0822353737

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.5 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #747,130 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #89 in [Books > Gay & Lesbian >](#)

Nonfiction > Activism #228 inÂ Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Civil Rights #360
inÂ Books > Gay & Lesbian > History

Customer Reviews

I read this book during the recent conflict between Israel and Palestine (November 2012). It was perfect timing. This is a must-read book for anyone interested in peace. Anytime.Schulman's thoughtful reflection on her own intellectual journey as she unpacks her relationship to Israel and U.S. policy in the Middle East is an excellent example of the kind of intellectual work we must all do when it comes to U.S. foreign policy and globalization. It takes a lot of work to sort out the sources of our assumptions; she does that in this book with a thoughtfulness that I deeply admire.The book is not only about her intellectual journey, but also how she worked to examine and expose the intersections of Israel/Palestine with queer identity and how social justice activism thus engaged is challenging but also successful.Israel/Palestine is something I care deeply about, but I walked away from this book with more insight and even more commitment--and looking for a way to take a solidarity trip too.

This book needs at least one review! This is a great introductory read for queer folks about the boycott/divestment/sanctions movement and the Israel/Palestine issue. I really enjoy how Sarah Schulman interweaves her personal stories and experiences with the larger political issues at hand throughout the book. This book has made me much more informed about and committed to the anti-occupation struggle. It holds a special place on my bookshelf and will be a gift for my critical queer friends this holiday season.

I was lucky enough to get my money back from when i returned it. It was not a very good read. Please do not waste your money.Schulman does her best to make her insane choice sound reasonable. She devotes most of a page to rationalizing her decision to march alongside members of Hamas in a protest against Israeli attacks on Gaza. After all, she says, "I have marched in the same gay pride parade with gay Republicans for decades." Similarly, apropos of a Palestinian leader's dim view of gays, she reflects: "He couldn't be worse than a U.S. theater producer who refuses to do a lesbian play or a U.S. publisher who refuses to publish lesbian novels." The naïveté here is through the roof.Gradually, the reader of Schulman's book realizes that in some sense, the appalling human-rights offenses that are being committed right this very minute by dozens of horrific regimes around the globe just don't exist for her, because they

have no place in her personal psychohistory. Talk about denial: when an Israeli friend asks her "What about honor killing? What about women? What about feminism?" she replies that "right now, that is not my job." She's an expert at blocking out all those aspects of reality that might halt her advance on what she sees as her progressive journey. In honor of Sarah Schulman, I'm going to Gaza and organizing a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer pride parade. Just kidding I do not want Hamas to target practice with me.

Personal, yet journalistic, breaking new ground in depicting the possibilities of coalitions with Palestinian queer leaders and others, in mapping an Israeli nationalism that needs to be critiqued, Schulman is deeply readable while making us think and feel about our own positionings. Joan Nestle

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