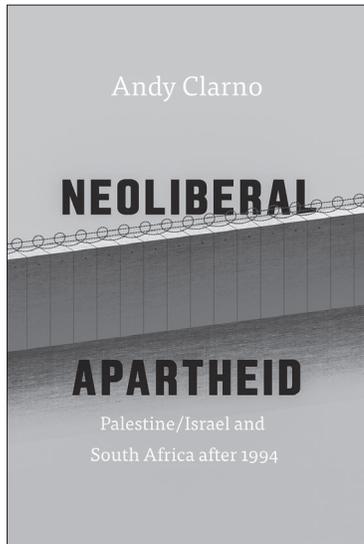




Recent Books



Neoliberal Apartheid: Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994, by Andy Clarno. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. 288 pages. \$90.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper, e-book available.

REVIEWED BY LOUBNA QUTAMI

Scholars and activists across the world have increasingly drawn comparisons between the Palestinian and South African struggles, partially due to acknowledgments from South Africans that conditions on the ground in Palestine are strikingly similar to apartheid in their country. While leaders of the two causes have historically offered solidarity to one another, questions have emerged regarding the utility of the analogy between the two struggles. What are the limits of viewing the South African experience as a blueprint for the Palestinian struggle? Why have Palestinians not yet achieved their freedom despite parallels with South Africans, who realized a *de jure* end to apartheid in 1994, one year

after the Palestinians had reached a negotiated settlement with their own occupiers?

Taking on these questions and more, Andy Clarno's *Neoliberal Apartheid: Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994* is a groundbreaking and intellectually provocative political intervention. This comparative study focuses on the effects of "the neoliberalization of racial capitalism" (p. 11) on the political economy, securitization, and social conditions of Palestine/Israel and South Africa after 1994 to advance an alternative theory "which brings together an analysis of racial domination and racial capitalism" (p. 196).

The author offers two key interventions. First, Clarno situates Palestine as part of the global phenomenon of neoliberal racial capitalism and offers new points of departure for emergent solidarities. He does so by challenging the dominant scholarship on the Oslo Accords paradigm, which is oversaturated with political analysis of state violence. Instead, the author "analyzes the political economy of settler colonialism and racial capitalism" (p. 4). Second, Clarno admonishes that South Africa's post-1994 "deracialization," which was accompanied by a slew of human rights rectifications and democratic freedoms, should not be mistaken for

“decolonization” (p. 4). An abundance of scholarship has taken up the limitations of negotiated liberation in South Africa, but *Neoliberal Apartheid* freshly examines how those limitations might apply to Palestine.

In chapter 1, Clarno offers a lucid introduction to the two sites of struggle, drawing parallels while differentiating their contexts and histories. In chapter 2, he explores the precarity of Black social and economic conditions in South Africa’s Alexandra township, demonstrating how the neoliberalization of racial capitalism has induced “high rates of unemployment, a defensive labor movement, the casualization of wage labor, and the increasing disposability of Black labor” (p. 61). Chapter 3 scrutinizes similar marginalization in Bethlehem: to describe the region’s fragmentation, Clarno coins the term “neoliberal enclosures,” which “contain a colonized population which has become increasingly disposable with the restructuring of Israel’s economy” (p. 90). Chapters 4 and 5 examine securitization, a critical feature of neoliberal racial capitalism. Both chapters foreground how neoliberalized racial capitalist security regimes rely on racial tropes (“terrorism” in the Palestinian context and “Black crime” in the South African context), restrict mobility, and cater to the insecurities of the dominant classes. The book concludes by acknowledging the utility of the apartheid framework as a legal tool—as demonstrated by Palestinian reliance on the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and 2004 International Court of Justice ruling that the Israeli “barrier” be regarded as illegal—but cautioning that South Africa is far from being a model for Palestinian liberation.

Using archival research, ethnography, and qualitative interviews conducted throughout a decade of fieldwork in Palestine/Israel and South Africa, *Neoliberal Apartheid* demonstrates the brilliance of paced, nuanced, and ethically mature research for social transformation (p. 18). The author brings together interdisciplinary approaches of comparative historical sociology and comparative urban ethnography to shed light on how a complex web of interconnected systems conditions people’s everyday lives. Among the most noteworthy features of the project is Clarno’s tactful engagement with theory that allows the voices of over two hundred interviewees to either uphold and/or challenge characteristics of canonical theoretical frameworks. Building on the foundational works of Cedric Robinson and Neville Alexander, Clarno elucidates how neoliberalization maintains the logics and function of historical modalities of racial capitalism but shifts their processes of implementation. He suggests that “the South African transition calls into question a narrow focus on the state” (p. 196) and instead offers a more robust analysis of apartheid which accounts for colonial settlement, racial domination, and racial capitalism.

As *Neoliberal Apartheid* illustrates, only by recognizing an incomplete decolonial process can Palestinians make sense of the chronic, widespread political inequity, racialized poverty, unequal distribution of land and wealth, government corruption, social marginalization, and violence in South Africa. Applicable to scholars, legal experts, activists, and policymakers concerned with justice and liberation across the world and in South Africa and Palestine in particular, this book speaks to the revitalized solidarities that must/can necessarily grow if we are to account for racial capitalism in the definition of apartheid (p. 200). The book is a must read for scholars concerned with settler colonialism, colonialism, racial capitalism, empire, and neoliberalism, because Clarno provides a poised articulation of how these various frameworks

are not antithetical to one another but necessarily coconstitutive in the post-1994 conditions of both South Africa and Palestine.

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