

"Cultural Boycotts - are means for individual and cultural institutions to express their opposition to Israeli occupation and apartheid by refusing to perform in Israel, refusing to issue copyright and distribution rights to Israeli institutions and companies, and opposing Israeli participation in cultural initiatives." CAIA endapartheid@riseup.net

As I am a low income musician and composer, and not in demand for performance in Israel, my role is in the realm of an artist transforming consciousness, within her art, in her intellectual and persuasive powers of communication and organizing within her own community, and among communities. It is in actual resistance, in organizing, that we uncover and overcome the systemic racism and cultural nationalism that allows Canada to be a key player in an imperialist war in which Israel is the prow of the ship of the American led aggressions in the Middle East. Israel is a colonialist power. Canada is a colonialist power. Islamophobia is the cultural nationalism that is justifying our bogus "war on terror".

Never mind right wing Zionists, how did so many Jews, and people who identity with Jewish democratic traditions, get to be "liberal" and "left wing" Zionists?

As a half Jewish Euro-American born White Canadian, I am from a long heritage of settler communities. My newly arrived great grandparents got jobs in cities or settled on land recently taken from the natives, As recently in my lifetime, Palestine was taken from the Palestinians and made into a Jewish Apartheid State . Israel was set up as a racist state, as was America with slavery, as was Canada by the subjugation of its native people and the subordination of Quebec. Imperialism uses genocided people to commit genocide. It is not anti-Semitic to say that Gaza, is the Warsaw Ghetto. To face this truth is the issue of the day. My cultural boycott has to do with the consumption of ideas.

I use the concept of "White Blindness" to describe the denial of unconscious racism, unconscious privilege and fear of losing that privilege, among whites, that paralyzes most Canadians into complicity with colonialist atrocities. I am always trying to take this apart in myself, to find ways to overcome our paralysis to act. I think it is normal for whites, including Jewish whites, to be oblivious to privilege, no matter how economically poor we might be, or have been, or how victimized our ancestors. If we don't face our part in the terrible things going on in Israel, Lebanon, and the Middle East, and resist, we will be consumed by unconscious guilt and shame. A cultural boycott involves refusing to live with a prosperity that depends on racist colonialism.

Transformation of consciousness is a creative act, deepened in communication with others with very different assets, and burdens, and memories, than our own. We connect within our conscience, and we can get there.

Every time you talk to someone who is just starting to realize what has been going on in Israel, you enter into a space with them, and in yourself - a place long after you stop believing the lies, but where you still can't face the truth, wherein you lose your bearings. For an artist that's not a bad place to be. It is not our role to be an anchor.

Charnie Guettel Sept 2006

Charnie Guettel is a composer and performer living in Toronto. Her current song cycle in performance in both French and English is **LE DROIT D'ETRE LA/ A RIGHT TO BE HERE**. She is in the Toronto Jewish group Not In Our Name (NION), The War Resisters Support Campaign, and CAIA (Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid).