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CULTURE

Apartheid & Cultural Boycott:  
Then and now

Ben White

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Cover: *Placard from a 2012 protest in London against the performance of Habima, the Israeli National Theatre Company's performance at the historical Globe Theatre. Photo by Kim Bullimore (Live from Occupied Palestine).*

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In May 2002, an article appeared in Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* by their correspondent Amira Hass, following the Israeli military's withdrawal from the Ministry of Culture in Ramallah. The context was a large-scale assault and invasion by the Israeli army of the main West Bank urban centres, some 18 months or so into the Second Intifada - an uprising Israel brutally crushed.

The Palestinian Ministry of Culture was one of many private and public buildings occupied by Israeli soldiers and turned into temporary military bases, interrogation centres, and look-outs. Once the army had redeployed elsewhere, local Palestinians and journalists had the opportunity to assess the damage. [Amira Hass wrote](#) the following:

*In the department for the encouragement of children's art, the soldiers had dirtied all the walls with gouache paints they found there and destroyed the children's paintings that hung there. In every room of the various departments - literature, film, culture for children and youth books, discs, pamphlets and documents were piled up, soiled with urine and excrement.*

This violence was part of a colonial past and present that seeks the erasure of the Palestinians' presence in their homeland - and does not spare culture. During the Nakba of 1948, the 'catastrophe' that saw the State of Israel established through the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and the destruction of more than 400 villages, some 70,000 books from private Palestinian libraries were looted. At least [6,000 of them remain in Israel's National Library](#).

And so it continues. In 2009, the Arab League and UNESCO designated Jerusalem as the year's Capital of Arab Culture. Israel, who has illegally annexed Occupied East Jerusalem and claims

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the entire, expanded city as its 'eternal capital', [banned all displays of culture connected with the celebrations](#). Police broke up cultural gatherings in venues across Occupied East Jerusalem, and arrested twenty festival organisers and participants.

## **The Palestinian cultural boycott call**

In July 2004, two years after the Ministry of Culture was trashed, a number of Palestinian groups operating under the umbrella name of the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) issued a call for boycott. PACBI urged cultural workers and academics worldwide to “comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions as a contribution to the struggle to end Israel's occupation, colonization and system of apartheid.”

[The call was based on four key points](#): the direct contribution to, defence of, or silent complicity in, the oppression of Palestinians by Israeli academic institutions; the failure of various “forms of international intervention” to force Israel to end such oppression; the historical precedent of “people of conscience” globally fighting injustice, such as with Apartheid South Africa; and “the need for a Palestinian frame of reference outlining guiding principles” for a growing boycott movement.

Based on the above, “Palestinian academics and intellectuals” urged “colleagues in the international community to comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions as a contribution to the struggle to end Israel's occupation, colonisation and system of apartheid, by applying the following”:

1. Refrain from participation in any form of academic and cultural cooperation, collaboration or joint projects with Israeli institutions;
2. Advocate a comprehensive boycott of Israeli institutions at the national and international levels, including suspension of all forms of funding and subsidies to these institutions;

*PACBI urged cultural workers and academics worldwide to 'comprehensively and consistently boycott all Israeli academic and cultural institutions*

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3. Promote divestment and disinvestment from Israel by international academic institutions;

4. Work toward the condemnation of Israeli policies by pressing for resolutions to be adopted by academic, professional and cultural associations and organisations;

5. Support Palestinian academic and cultural institutions directly without requiring them to partner with Israeli counterparts as an explicit or implicit condition for such support.

In order to “enable a consistent and [effective implementation](#) of the institutional cultural boycott of Israel”, PACBI has developed, and fine-tuned, a [set of guidelines](#) “for a coordinated, principled and focused approach to ending complicity in Israel’s violations of Palestinian rights.”

Significantly, the guidelines note that “mere affiliation of Israeli cultural workers to an Israeli cultural institution is...not grounds for applying the boycott.” However, if “an individual is representing the state of Israel or a complicit Israeli institution, or is commissioned/ recruited to participate in Israel’s efforts to ‘rebrand’ itself, then her/his activities are subject to the institutional boycott the BDS movement is calling for.” The guidelines continue:

*The cultural boycott campaign against apartheid South Africa has been a major source of inspiration in formulating the Palestinian boycott calls and their criteria, despite some crucial differences. In particular, the Palestinian boycott, unlike the South African cultural boycott, is institutional and does not target individuals as such.*

Thus there is a [distinction](#) between “common sense” boycotts - where any individual artist may attract protests because of her/his political activities and opinions (e.g. racism, support for war crimes, etc.) - and “the BDS institutional boycott guidelines.” This point regarding the nature of the BDS call and guidelines is important, particularly with regards to one of the main issues

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raised in the context of the cultural boycott, that of ‘artistic freedom’.

Personally, I do not believe in the fetishization of ‘artistic freedom’ or ‘freedom of expression’, or the prioritisation of such a ‘freedom’ above, for example, the freedom to attend university classes without being stopped by a soldier, the freedom to eat with your family without being blown to pieces by a drone-delivered missile, or the freedom to live in dignity and freedom in your own country. As an item on [PACBI’s website](#) put it:

*Palestinian artists face tremendous challenges with stifling travel restrictions, arbitrary detention, political repression and various roadblocks that get in the way of them holding rehearsals, exhibiting their work or even performing the simplest tasks, which becomes quite impossible under occupation.*

Indeed, what are often defended as ‘freedoms’ are perhaps better understood as ‘[privileges](#)’ - privileges enjoyed in the context of a settler colonial regime in which cultural institutions are complicit. In 1984, the director of the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid responded to criticism that the cultural boycott of South Africa infringed freedom of expression by [saying](#):

*It is rather strange, to say the least, that the South African regime which denies all freedoms - including freedom of residence, movement and employment - to the African majority, which deprives them even of their citizenship rights, and which restricts and jails people without due process or rule of law, should become a defender of the freedom of artists and sportsmen of the world.*

A year after the PACBI call, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign was launched by dozens of Palestinian trade unions, NGOs, and other civil society groups. The [BDS call](#) urges the isolation of Israel until it “meets its obligation to recognise the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international

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law” by the following:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognising the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality;
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

Since 2004-2005, hundreds of artists and cultural figures from around the world have heeded the call: Alice Walker, Henning Mankell, Roger Waters, Naomi Klein, Ken Loach, Judith Butler, Elvis Costello, and Mira Nair are just a few, more well-known examples. In February 2015, almost a thousand UK artists [signed a pledge](#) in support of the cultural boycott (including this author).

In May 2014, New York-based, Israeli writer [Reuven Namdar wrote](#) of how “the international boycott...is slowly solidifying around Israel’s cultural life”. Earlier this year, curators held a meeting in Tel Aviv on “The Cultural Boycott of Israel and What It Means for Israeli Contemporary Art.” According to a [report on the gathering](#), the boycott “is practiced overtly as well as covertly, officially and unofficially, and by a variety of groups within the art world.”

## South Africa: precedent and inspiration

The Palestinians’ call for boycott, and the support it is finding around the world, draws considerable inspiration from the South African precedent. Although the boycott of Apartheid South Africa, including a cultural boycott, is most often associated in the public imagination with its climax in the 1980s and early 1990s, international [efforts to boycott the racist regime go back](#) to as early as the 1940s. It was in the 1960s, however, that the boycott campaign [really took off](#).

In 1961, the British Musicians Union adopted a policy decision

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that its members should not perform in South Africa as long as apartheid exists. Two years later, forty-five prominent British playwrights signed a Declaration announcing they had instructed their agents to insert a clause in all future contracts automatically refusing performing rights in any theatre “where discrimination is made among audiences on grounds of colour.” In 1964, 28 Irish playwrights declared that they would not permit their work to be performed before segregated audiences in South Africa.

In 1965, the British Screenwriters Guild called for a ban on the distribution of British films in South Africa, while the British Actors’ Union, Equity, invited individual members to sign a declaration pledging not to work in South Africa. The same year, the American Committee on Africa sponsored a declaration signed by more than 60 cultural personalities. It read:

*We say no to apartheid. We take this pledge: in solemn resolve to refuse any encouragement of, or indeed, any professional association with the present Republic of South Africa, this until the day when all its people shall equally enjoy the educational and cultural advantages of that rich and beautiful land.*

By the 1970s, South African theatre groups were met by protesters in Western cities, and in 1981, the board of the Associated Actors and Artists of America - and umbrella organisation of all major actors’ unions with a total membership of over 240,000 actors - took a unanimous decision that its members should not perform in South Africa. In 1980, the [United Nation General Assembly passed a resolution](#) urging a cultural and academic boycott of South Africa; those who violated the boycott, were named and shamed by the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid.

The logic of the boycott was clear. Anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Kathrada, who was tried alongside Nelson Mandela and spent 26 years in prison, wrote an article in 1956 on the importance of the cultural boycott, explaining: “the believers of the international boycott base their premise on the point of view that at this stage

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of development international pressure against South Africa's racial policies coupled with the local struggle, will greatly further the cause of freedom." He went on:

*They base their stand primarily on the view that the perpetrators of racialism in this country derive strength and courage from the closeness that they (the racialists) feel to the outer world; indeed from the almost tacit consent and recognition that they receive from particularly the Western countries in the form of cultural and sports contact, economic and military association.*

Thus, Kathrada concluded, "racialist South Africans must be made to feel more and more that they stand alone in the whole world in their belief of racial superiority. They must be made to feel the pinch of isolation from the civilised world in the spheres of culture, sports, etc." (Note that Kathrada has more recently [stated](#) his belief that "Israel is indeed an apartheid state.")

In a [position paper](#) published by the African National Congress in 1989, "the cultural and academic boycott" were described as "important aspects of the ANC's strategy for the total isolation of the racist minority regime." Referring to the campaign's successes, the ANC said the "multi-pronged offensive" had "resulted in the transfer of the initiative from the oppressor regime to the people."

A 1988 [article](#) by the 'People's Poet' Mzwakhe Mbuli reported that the Australian cricket team were told by the chief of the South African Defence Force that "the arms boycott and the sport boycott have been the most damaging of our enemies' weapons." That is why, he added, "the army is so concerned that teams from overseas keep coming here." In 1991, the [Los Angeles Times](#) described the cultural boycott as "one of the most effective sanctions ever imposed on South Africans."

South African Artists Against Apartheid, a contemporary Palestine solidarity group, has [affirmed](#) the important role cultural boycott played in the historic anti-apartheid movement. Speaking as "a people whose parents and grandparents suffered under (and

*Desmond Tutu:  
"Just as we said during apartheid that it was inappropriate for international artists to perform in South Africa in a society founded on discriminatory laws and racial exclusivity, so it would be wrong for Cape Town Opera to perform in Israel."*

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resisted) Apartheid in South Africa”, the group say their history “is testament to the value and legitimacy that the international boycott had in bringing to an end the Apartheid regime” in their own country.

*When artists and sportspeople began refusing to perform in South Africa, the world's eyes turned to the injustices that were happening here to people of colour. This then created a wave of pressure on politicians and world leaders representing their constituencies, to insist on a regime-change - this contributed to a free, democratic and non-racial South Africa.*

This is one example of many South Africans who, having fought long and hard against their own apartheid regime, now back the call of Palestinians today. In 2010, [Desmond Tutu explained](#) it like this: “Just as we said during apartheid that it was inappropriate for international artists to perform in South Africa in a society founded on discriminatory laws and racial exclusivity, so it would be wrong for Cape Town Opera to perform in Israel.”

## Questions about the boycott

I am going to address three common objections, or questions, about the cultural boycott, but before doing so, it is important to look at the question of the BDS campaign more generally. A boycott is about applying pressure in an effort to effect change, a nonviolent way of expressing opposition to a particular policy. As part of a wider campaign, it is a way to challenge and/or end complicity in a practice viewed as objectionable.

Boycotts and divestments of this type are typically strategies of the weak against the powerful, and, in some contexts - such as Palestine - they are also responses of solidarity with a group that has asked for outside support in a struggle for justice.

The case for a boycott of Israel is multidimensional, but can be effectively summarised by the following, three-part argument: the *reality* of Israel's crimes and violations, the *impunity* it enjoys while committing those actions, and the *utility* of boycott as a tactic – all

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of which is underpinned, strengthened, and informed by, the Palestinian call.

First, the reality of Israel's ongoing policies of colonisation and apartheid. Israel's settlements in the Occupied West Bank are built in defiance of international law, a position clarified in various UN resolutions, by the EU, UK government, and others. Every single Israeli government since 1967, whether Labour or Likud, has maintained and expanded these settlements. The Apartheid Wall has also been condemned, most notably by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague in 2004.

Israeli occupation forces routinely carries out gross violations of rights: demolishing homes outside the context of military necessity; holding Palestinians without trial; controlling people's freedom of movement based on what kind of ID they hold, and carrying out the wilful killings of unarmed civilian demonstrators. In Occupied East Jerusalem, meanwhile, Palestinian residents suffer from harsh discriminatory practices, including the rescinding of their very 'right' to live in the city.

In the Gaza Strip, 1.8 million Palestinians are fenced-in, and subjected to periodic brutalisation by one of the most advanced militaries in the world. In 2014, Israel's assault on Gaza killed 2,200 Palestinians - a death toll that included 550 Palestinian children. The blockade, which has deliberately targeted Gaza's economic and social fabric, continues.

Palestinian citizens of Israel, meanwhile, are subjected to institutionalised discrimination – [a fact acknowledged even by the US State Department](#). Racist laws and policies affect where they can live, who they can marry, the quality of their education, and much more besides.

Finally, and critically, millions of Palestinians remain refugees, the legacy of the ethnic cleansing that took place with Israel's establishment in 1948, when the majority of Palestinians inside the newly-established borders were excluded, forbidden from returning, and their property confiscated.

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Despite all of the above, despite the fact that Israel's conduct has been exhaustively documented and slammed in dozens of UN resolutions and by numerous human rights bodies, there have been no serious attempts by Western governments to enforce basic international norms. This therefore leads us to the second reason for BDS: Israel's impunity.

Boycott is about accountability for Israeli crimes, and it is also about ending our own complicity - of our governments and institutions - in them. Not only does Israel perpetrate serious crimes without sanction - it actually receives preferential trade agreements, diplomatic protection, and military aid.

The BDS call was intentionally issued on July 9, 2005, the first anniversary of the ICJ's advisory opinion on the Wall, to underline and highlight the disparity between Israel's violations of international law, and the lack of political will to ensure that such violations have consequences.

So there is the reality, the ongoing impunity, and now the third part of the argument: the utility of boycott as a tactic. Boycott resonates as a way of taking action because people are familiar with it from many different contexts; from consumer campaigns challenging sweatshop labour to more famous historical examples such as the US Civil Rights movement. People 'get' boycotts.

Israel is vulnerable to the isolation of a boycott, and change from within is not going to work - at least not without external pressure. As Yonatan Shapira, a former captain in the Israeli Air Force turned anti-apartheid activist, [put it](#): "It is no longer enough to try and change Israel from within. Israel has to be pressured in the same way apartheid South Africa was forced to change."

BDS educates, stimulates debate and discussion, and provides an invaluable opportunity to increase awareness about the facts on the ground. It empowers people to take action and make a difference. The Palestinian call for action offers an alternative to apathy or complicity.

*To say that art is  
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## Three questions about boycotts

I will now turn to three common objections, or questions, about the cultural boycott (though they can also apply to the BDS campaign more broadly). The first, oft-repeated question is simple: why 'single out' Israel?

The magazine *Ethical Consumer* lists more than 60 current boycotts over a host of issues (including companies and countries). The EU has "[restrictive measures \(sanctions\)](#)" in force with numerous countries e.g. Burma, Moldova, Zimbabwe etc. The [UK government](#), meanwhile, lists arms embargos for 14 countries. Thus in reality, it is Israel who is singled out by our governments for impunity, for diplomatic protection and preferential trade deals; and a civil society-driven boycott is the response.

Some, meanwhile, like to invoke other human rights crises as a means of undermining the legitimacy of protesting the abuses for which Israel is responsible (the 'but what about' game). Note that this is rarely a question posed to Tibetan solidarity activists, or climate change campaigners. Only the Palestinians, it seems, are required to justify their right to resistance and solidarity.

In 1958, [Nelson Mandela](#) explained that "the boycott is in no way a matter of principle but a tactical weapon whose application should, like all other political weapons of the struggle, be related to the concrete conditions prevailing at the given time." Ian McEwan, defending his decision to accept the Jerusalem Prize for literature in 2011, [said](#): "If I only went to countries that I approve of, I probably would never get out of bed." This is a perfect example of how the inability - or refusal - to engage with the BDS call as a specific tactic, leads to passivity - and complicity.

A second commonly-asked question goes as follows: Surely a boycott isolates the moderates and emboldens the Right? Unfortunately, the hard truth is that there is no genuine 'peace camp' in Israel - if, by peace camp, one means a sizeable body of Jewish Israelis who support equality for Palestinians and organise against their government's denial of Palestinian basic rights. In

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fact, Palestinians need less of a so-called ‘peace camp’, and more of an ‘anti-apartheid camp’.

Take a look at Israel’s so-called opposition, the Zionist Union, a political group dominated by the Isaac Herzog-led Labour Party. In July 2015, [Herzog declared](#) that: “With regard to security, I am more extreme than Netanyahu.” The group’s [election manifesto](#) was a blueprint for a Bantustan solution, the borders of a Palestinian ‘state’ shaped by Israel’s colonial interests and assets in the West Bank. Or take the Zionist Union’s election campaign – one advert featured Israeli army veterans praising Herzog as someone who “understands the Arab mentality” and “has seen Arabs in all kinds of situations,” including “in the crosshairs.”

Or take Amos Oz, the kind of liberal Zionist adored in some Western circles as a voice of moderation, can sound very much like an apartheid South African apologist of old. Earlier this year, railing against the idea of one democratic state for Jews and Palestinians, [Oz wrote](#): “Let’s start with a matter of life and death. If there are not two states, there will be one. If there is one, it will be Arab. If Arab it is, there is no telling the fate of our children and theirs.”

Why? What is so terrible about this prospect? [As I wrote in March](#), what is telling is that Oz never really explains, directly, why ‘an Arab state’ would be such a terrible prospect for his children and grandchildren - it’s just assumed. In other words, there is something intrinsic to ‘Arabs’ that would make a state in which they form a majority unbearable.

Oz’s talk of “delusional” cohabitation, the “fantasy” of “equality” and a future “internal bloodbath”, is reminiscent of the paranoia of white South Africans who [similarly feared](#) that a transition to majority rule would mean “violence, total collapse, expulsion and flight.”

Finally, question number three: isn’t art above politics? Before unpacking this further, it is vital to understand that Israel has already ‘politicised’ art, or more specifically, mobilised art and

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culture in the services of rebranding its apartheid regime. In 2005, for example, an official from Israel's [Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(MFA\) admitted](#): “We see culture as a propaganda tool of the first rank, and I do not differentiate between propaganda and culture.”

In 2008, the head of the [MFA's brand management unit said](#): “It is more important for Israel to be attractive than to be right.” The same year, Israel's MFA has [hired](#) a British firm to “craft” a “new image” for the country based on “Israel's scientific and cultural achievements”. In 2009, shortly after the Gaza massacre, the MFA's deputy director general for [cultural affairs stated](#): “We will send well-known novelists and writers overseas, theatre companies, exhibits. This way, you show Israel's prettier face, so we are not thought of purely in the context of war.”

The Israeli government's “efforts to broaden public perceptions of Israel”, in the [words](#) of the *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, are intended to “tell the Western world, ‘Hey, we're just like you’.” In 2011, leading Israeli chef [Michael Katz described](#) how “the government decided, through culture, to start improving Israel's image. They started sending artists, singers, painters, filmmakers and then the idea came of sending chefs.”

The disparity between this propagandized cultural diplomacy and the horror of settler colonialism is best exemplified by Idan Raichel, an [Israeli musician hailed](#) internationally for his “embrace of diversity and coexistence”. Contrast this image, however, [with his publicly-stated belief](#) that the “role” of artists “is to be recruited into Israeli hasbara [propaganda]” – or [his defence](#) in 2013 of ‘Captain George’, a former Israeli army interrogator accused of torture.

To say that art is ‘above politics’ is to claim an exceptional status for art that it does not and cannot possess. It is, at best, an abdication of the responsibility that each one of us has to critically examine how our own actions and relationships affect others – in other words, how they are ‘political’. At worst, it is a disingenuous and deliberate attempt to drown out the voices of the imprisoned and tortured with the sound of the orchestra.

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Even when a particular piece of art, a painting, a piece of music, a play, has no explicit 'political' content or 'message', there are other questions to be asked: Why was it created, and by whom? Who is able to attend the concert, and who cannot? Who invited the artist to perform, and why? What are the implications or significance of an exhibition in a particular location? And so on.

Consider the [words of Elvis Costello in 2010](#), when refusing to perform in Israel. He said: "There are occasions when merely having your name added to a concert schedule may be interpreted as a political act that resonates more than anything that might be sung and it may be assumed that one has no mind for the suffering of the innocent."

[Norwegian artist Moddi](#) explained his decision in 2014 to cancel a Tel Aviv show in the following terms: "I have always had an unwavering belief in art as a unique arena for public debate. Faced with the political situation in Israel I have for the first time been forced to ask myself if silence can sometimes be the strongest message."

*When I choose to cancel the Tel Aviv show, it is because dialogue has failed. In fact, it has been abused for decades. A discourse of peace has served as a thick veil, concealing...the siege of Gaza, the fragmentation of the West Bank and the discrimination of Arab-Israeli citizens... Silence is the loudest song that I can sing.*

Part of the problem here is that some see artists and academics as existing in an exceptional 'apolitical' category; that their work exists in a bubble, separate from the political questions and responsibilities that affect everyone else. I do not accept that. I insist on the presence of the political, to reassert its centrality, is not 'reductionist'; of course, the political dimension is only one of many. But to remove it entirely, to actively seek its erasure or marginalisation, is impossible, and, I would add, such a move is itself highly political.

*BDS is not mysterious or new: a boycott is a well-trodden path as a means of effecting change and challenging the powerful*

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Indeed, it is possible to argue precisely the opposite; that it is *more* incumbent on cultural workers and artists to take a stand. A [recently-published booklet](#), 'The Case for a Cultural Boycott of Israel', puts it like this: "Because of art's power to move and to influence people, those who work in the cultural field have a particular responsibility to speak out when art and platforms for cultural exchange are used to mask injustice."

Ahmed Kathrada, in the previously mentioned 1956 piece, addressed the question of whether it was better for artists to appear in South Africa, if they were to use such a trip for criticism. "All right," he wrote, "one in a hundred of these artists goes back and makes statements or appears on public platforms to condemn racial discrimination. This gives rise to a furore in the White press and accusations are levelled about abuse of hospitality, about incompetence to judge a country by a few weeks' visit, etc. etc."

*But all this is momentary. While they have a good effect, in a few days it is forgotten; life returns to normal and the plight of South Africa once again fades away from people's minds and press columns. All is quiet until there is a repetition and again the same process. All this is becoming too monotonous. The time has come when we must move forward. The chain of criticism, the pinch to racist South Africa must become continuous, unending, until they are made to think; until they are made to realise that each unit in society has its responsibilities to the greater whole; until they are made to appreciate the indispensability of interdependence.*

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## In conclusion

Between 1972 and 1991, South African poet [James Matthews](#) published four volumes of poetry, all of which were banned by the government, the same Apartheid regime who for years denied him a passport, and detained him for three months in 1976. The [words of his 1972 poem](#) 'Dialogue' ring true today as a powerful indictment of those who seek to frustrate or oppose boycotts on the grounds that such acts of solidarity create 'divisions'.

*Dialogue*  
*the bribe offered by the oppressor*  
*glitters like fool's gold*  
*dazzling the eyes of the oppressed*  
*as they sit at the council table*  
*listening to empty discourse promising*  
*empty promises*  
*beguiled by meaningless talk*  
*they do not realize ointment-smear'd words*  
*will not heal open wounds*  
*the oppressor sits seared with his spoils*  
*with no desire to share equality*  
*leaving the oppressed seeking warmth*  
*at the cold fire of*  
*Dialogue*

BDS is not mysterious or new: a boycott is a well-trodden path as a means of effecting change and challenging the powerful. It is a grassroots strategy steeped in a rich, historical tradition of opposition to all sorts of injustice. It is a sign of hope, not despair.

It is not the only means of showing solidarity with Palestinians, and BDS must be part of a bigger picture, one element in a broader programme for Palestinian liberation. But it is our part to play. It is our response to the call from Palestinians, and, in taking action, we can make our own, vital contribution to the end of apartheid.

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