



SEPARATION WALL JUDY PRICE

Ramzi Safid, a quarry security guard at Rafat Quarry on the outskirts of Ramallah, talks about separation the wall and poverty in the West Bank.

Ramzi Safid, a quarry security guard at Rafat Quarry on the outskirts of Ramallah, spends five nights a week sleeping in a porter cabin before going to his day job as a plumber. His narrative conveys the spatial dynamics of the West Bank, now closed off by the wall and the poverty in the West Bank.

Prior to the separation wall the quarries were used as fluid spaces by the Palestinians to travel to university and work. They were no-man's lands that allowed those prepared to navigate off the traditional routes on to minor roads and paths to find gaps and cuts in the landscape that were not surveyed by the Occupying Force. These no-man's lands enabled access to Jerusalem and Israel as well as being shortcuts past the checkpoints that had sprung up all over the Occupied Palestinian Territories. With the construction of the Separation Wall, the quarries no longer fulfil this purpose and are now merely desolate spaces in the landscapes, standing in as markers for the transfer of stones and sand to Israel. (1)

Unemployment for Palestinians rose steeply with the construction of the Separation Wall. Prior to the Separation Wall Palestinians were one of the main sources of cheap labour in Israel and were to be found in all spheres of manual work.

As well as poverty in the West Bank Ramzi refers to the acceleration of a neo-liberal society in Palestine subsequent to the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1996. He discusses the opening up of banks and credit systems he claims had not previously been part of Palestinian society within the West Bank before 1996. This is not strictly historically accurate as the Arab Bank was founded in 1930 in Jerusalem by seven Palestinian investors. With 600 branches spanning thirty countries in five continents it has since become one of the largest banking conglomerates in the Middle East. (2) However, what Ramzi is referring to here is the rise of neo-liberalism and the push by the Palestinian Authority for Palestinians to invest in property and material growth, which only became possible as a credit system became more readily available with Oslo Accord in 1996.

1) The Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar's single screen film *Infiltrators* (2012) tracks the movements of Palestinians of all background attempting to find gaps and holes in the

Separation Wall as a means of seeking routes through this oppressive barrier in connecting with loved ones, places of work, lost homelands and sites of worship. The film takes the form of a road movie in which Jarrar documents these feats of resistance.

2) Arab Bank, *Beginning the Journey* (2013) <

<http://www.arabbank.com/en/avisionfulfilled.aspx?CSRT=4716726333281015104>>

[accessed 16 September 2013].

Cluster: White Oil

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