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Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color by Michael Fischbach is a unique and necessary contribution to the fields of black, Middle Eastern, and world history. It creates a panoramic and simultaneously nuanced narrative about the history of Black Power solidarity with Palestinians. The historical time frame of the book is complex and spans beyond the 1960s and 1970s. The Black Power era, its organizations, leaders, and sister movements like the Black Arts Movement are the focus of the book. The author also provides a substantial background of the genesis and development of black/Palestinian solidarity movement, tracing it back to the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X. He also dedicates some discussion to implications for the movement after the end of Black Power, focusing on the scandal in the aftermath of Andrew Young’s firing as US ambassador to the UN in 1978.

The author concludes the complex, multifaceted history of the catalysts, fomentation, and transformation of Black Power solidarity with Palestinians with an examination of legacies of the movement. His analysis is interdisciplinary and points not only to the recent political manifestations of black and Palestinian solidarity like #GazatoFerguson, Black Lives Matter, and Palestinian activism, but also to the artistic and cultural legacies of the alliance, specifically Hip Hop. He provides a compelling explanation as to why so many prolific Hip Hop artists like Talib Kweli, Lupe Fiasco, Mos Def, and many others chose their art as a platform to express identification and support with Palestinian liberation.

The book offers invaluable contributions to scholarship, examining the connections between black America and Palestine and combining extensive archival research spanning two continents (North America and the Middle East), including rare documents in Arabic and English. It also includes interviews with some of the major engineers of black/Palestinian solidarity movement.

Fischbach expands the history of black and Palestinian liberation by adding names and organizations rarely discussed at length previously. For example, he unearths pro-Palestinian aspects of the history of Congress of Racial Unity (CORE) and how and why the organization that began its political career as a civil rights organization transformed into a Black Power organization. Not unlike the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, CORE’s change of political direction was also influenced by its developing pro-Palestinian stances. The author adds new, previously unknown or under-researched names to the narrative of black and Palestinian solidarity. Notably,
he explores Martin Luther King Jr.’s little-known incidental visit to Jerusalem. He creates a detailed narrative of the visit, King’s meetings with Palestinian intellectuals, and how they impacted his vision of the conflict.

The book’s scope and analysis are multidimensional. Fischbach is not only concerned with presenting and analyzing the history of black solidarity with Palestinians, but also presents an alternative narrative. He examines the history of mid-twentieth-century black Zionism and its key figures like Bayard Rustin, and organizations like the NAACP and Urban League. Fischbach presents a dialectical history of black discourse on Palestine/Israel that transcends black politics, revealing how the discourse on the conflict shaped US domestic and international policy.

Lastly, Black Power and Palestine’s significant and unique contribution is to add a number of female voices to the narrative of black and Palestinian solidarity: Randa Khalidi Al Fattal, a Palestinian-Lebanese scholar and writer; Shirley Du Bois, a prominent black intellectual and scholar; Kathleen Cleaver, one of the icons of Black Panther Party; Leila Khaled, Palestinian freedom fighter; and Shirley Chisholm, a prominent black politician and civil rights activist, along with better-known names like Ethel Minor and, of course, Angela Davis. Even though these women and their contributions to the black/Palestinian solidarity discourse are not discussed in detail, the book lays important groundwork for future research focusing on the female figures who built strong bridges between Palestine and black America.

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