

TEMPEST

Seattle educators endorse BDS

An interview with six SEA members

by **Darrin Hoop**

Seattle Education Association member Darrin Hoop interviews six other union members who organized to pass a Palestine solidarity resolution, Cameron Payne, Emma Klein, Erica Wood, Jeff, Josh, and Kelsey.

Rank and file members of the Seattle Education Association released the following statement in solidarity with the Palestinian people on June 14:

“In response to the ongoing Israeli colonization, occupation, and bombardment of Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, rooted in principles of justice, human rights, and equality, Seattle Education Association (SEA) representatives passed a resolution in solidarity with the people of Palestine. The resolution endorses the Palestinian call to boycott, divest, and sanction (BDS) Israel. Furthermore, the resolution endorses End the Deadly Exchange Seattle, a coalition of individuals and organizations demanding the end to exchanges and collaboration between the Seattle Police Department and the Israeli military and police. The recommendation overwhelmingly passed by a vote of 90 percent. Within this resolution, SEA representatives from across the district voted to:

1. *Express our solidarity with the Palestinian people and call for Israel to end all current and future bombings of Gaza and immediately stop forced displacement of Palestinians.*
2. *Call on the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden to stop aid to Israel.*
3. *Endorse and hold Seattle Public Schools accountable to the international campaign for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against apartheid in Israel.*
4. *Endorse the demand of End the Deadly Exchange Seattle for an end to police exchanges between the Seattle Police Department and the Israeli military and police.*
5. *Call on other unions in the Martin Luther King Jr. County Labor Council to pass the same or a similar resolution in solidarity with the Palestinian people.*
6. *The SEA leadership will use all existing means of communication (email, Facebook, texts, and any other social media the union uses) to encourage all SEA members and community allies to learn about these issues and to encourage people in their communities to stand in solidarity with unions and oppressed people in Palestine.*

The Seattle resolution is closely modeled after the United Educators of San Francisco resolution which is the first U.S. public school educators' union to endorse the Palestinian BDS call.

SEA passes this resolution in the interests of workers in and consumers of public education and sees the passage of this resolution as an opportunity to increase respect for the profession and public education, improve the quality of and access to public education for all students, forge partnerships with families, businesses, other unions, and community groups, and stand in solidarity with oppressed and exploited people internationally.”

Darrin Hoop: Kelsey, you started the organizing for this new business item (NBI), which, in National Education Association language, is essentially a resolution tied to action. What led you to want to get moving on this NBI?

Kelsey: I saw a post from [Adalah Justice Project](https://www.instagram.com/p/CPHBtDVAT0z/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link) (https://www.instagram.com/p/CPHBtDVAT0z/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link) that was sharing how educators in [San Francisco](https://tempestmag.org/2021/05/san-francisco-educators-endorse-bds/) (<https://tempestmag.org/2021/05/san-francisco-educators-endorse-bds/>) had just passed a resolution in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Coming off the heels of the previous rep assembly meeting, where we passed an NBI in solidarity with Colombia, I knew that that was a type of action that our union could take. So, I reached out to you, Darrin, because you had sponsored the Colombia NBI that I spoke in favor of and thought let's do this in Seattle.

Darrin: Why is supporting Palestine important to you?

Kelsey: Ending settler colonialism around the world is necessary and a massive part of building liberated worlds. For me as an abolitionist, being in solidarity with Palestine is part of that fight. Coming off May, with very intense bombings in Gaza, the urgency feels really real at this time.

Darrin: After Kelsey and I touched base, we began to reach out to other educators and groups like [Social Equity Educators](http://socialequityeducators.org) (<http://socialequityeducators.org>) caucus and Educators for [Nikkita Oliver](http://nikkitaforfine.com) (<http://nikkitaforfine.com>), who is campaigning for Seattle City Council Position 9. One of the educators we reached out to was Josh. We've known each other for a bit, you were active in Iraq Veterans Against the War back in the mid-2000s, way before either of us became educators. Could you talk about your journey from being a soldier, fighting a war for U.S. oil interests and dominance in the Middle East, to being an activist in the IVAW to supporting Palestine?

Josh: When I got back from Iraq, I was very opposed to the war. I decided to stay in the area and go to school in Olympia. Palestine is always a topic of discussion there because Evergreen student Rachel Corrie was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. Losing someone who was a student and a well-known activist in that community—murdered by the [Israel Defense Forces] while preventing a home demolition—that put Palestine in everyone’s periphery.

I served in Iraq and I was already intimately familiar with military occupations. I was developing a critique of imperialism and the military-industrial complex, it was easy to see how Israel was another extension of those two things in the Middle East.

While I was in school in Olympia, I was involved in two [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions] campaigns. One was at my college where the student body voted twice to endorse BDS. And then there was a boycott of Israeli products at the Olympian Food Co-op. I ended up serving as a board member of the food co-op to ensure that they stayed true to their BDS vote.

During this process, I met my wife. Me and my wife met at Rachel Corrie’s parents’ house. We were building a mock apartheid wall. My wife has been involved in Jewish Voices for Peace and other Palestine solidarity groups as well. She’s also been targeted by Israeli-backed groups like Canary Mission. Both of us have been pretty involved in Palestine solidarity. After college, right after we got married, we visited Palestine ourselves and hung out with some mutual acquaintances.

I was a bit concerned about how sudden it seemed to try to pass a BDS resolution through our representative assembly, but there’s a lot of momentum on our side this time. You’re starting to see a real shift in people’s perceptions of the issue.

Darrin: Josh broadened out our team by contacting Emma, who wrote up a brilliant op-ed with Cameron that was published at both [Mondoweiss](https://mondoweiss.net/2021/06/seattle-teachers-stand-with-palestine/) and [Palestine Chronicle](https://palestinechronicle.com/seattle-teachers-stand-with-palestine/). Emma, can you talk about how long you’ve been organizing solidarity with Palestine and why this issue is so important to you?

Emma Klein: As a member of the Jewish American community, and a secular Jewish community back in Boston called the [Workmen's Circle](https://circleboston.org), I was raised with my Jewish identity very closely linked with the idea of justice.

For as long as I can remember, Palestine was a central part of my education around my responsibility as a Jew and as a Jewish American. I started organizing with folks in Massachusetts when I was in college. When I came out to Seattle, I joined [Jewish Voice for Peace](https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org), as well as [American Jews for a Just Peace](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Organization/American-Jews-For-A-Just-Peace-29377854397/).

I ended up traveling to Palestine in 2010–2011 on a health and human rights delegation. I met with organizers in Palestine as well as Israel and walked away from that experience with the understanding that [BDS]—a call that was coming from Palestinian civil society—was where I needed to put my energy when it came to working for an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid. I see [BDS] as a powerful movement that has worked—whether it was apartheid South Africa, whether it was the civil rights movement in the United States—boycott, divestment, and sanctions are nonviolent tactics that we can employ to pressure governments to change. Since traveling to Palestine, I have become more involved in [BDS] efforts in the United States, so when I heard about this NBI, I was thrilled.

One of the powerful parts of this NBI was illustrated in the op-ed that Cameron and I wrote. There is a deep connection between struggles for justice and liberation, whether it is Black Lives Matter or Palestine. If we unify across struggles and stand in solidarity with one another, it really helps to propel everyone forward. One of the reasons I'm excited for this NBI is that it directly calls attention to police violence in Seattle that Black and Brown folks have been experiencing and how that violence is connected to the same sort of oppressive violence that Palestinians are experiencing.

Darrin: One of the arguments that is always raised is that we are being antisemitic by criticizing Israel. How would you respond to those charges?

Emma: It's important that we separate the Zionist political movement with Jewish religion and cultural practices. I am a Jewish person and I do not identify with the Israeli government. It's problematic that there's an assumption that all Jews will stand with Israel, no matter what.

When folks use that term antisemitism to shut down conversation, to shut down resistance, I feel it's absolutely inappropriate use of that term. Claiming that resistance is antisemitic is a tool that's used to silence people, to frighten people, to make people feel like they can't speak up. In fact, what Israel is doing has nothing to do with the Jewish faith, but the Israeli government is using Jewish identity to propel itself forward.

Darrin: Can you tell us how you connected with Cameron?

Emma: Cameron and I have worked together for the past year in Seattle Public Schools. Our offices are in the same room, so we've had some time to get to know each other and chat. Being an educator and being a political person or an activist are very much entwined. Throughout the year we have collaborated on various lessons around Black Lives Matter and justice in Palestine. So when I heard about this NBI, I immediately thought to reach out to Cameron and see if she's interested in organizing with us.

Darrin: Cameron, could you talk about your family's history in Palestine?

Cameron Payne: My mom is Palestinian and my dad is Jewish, so my mom's side of the family are the ones who are from Palestine. My grandparents' grandparents' grandparents' were all from Ramallah near the West Bank. My mom and her three brothers all grew up in Palestine, in Ramallah. When my mom turned

15, things started getting really bad in terms of the personal effects the occupation was having on them.

My grandpa ran nightclubs, he ran a bakery, and he had a convenience store, a bunch of different businesses that served the West Bank. They were repeatedly getting bombed and destroyed. They were getting evicted and then finding new land and then getting evicted. It got to a point where it made more sense for them to leave. My grandparents had been in Palestine for their whole lives—thirty, forty years—and then they moved to San Francisco.

My grandpa tried to go back before he passed away and he couldn't get past the checkpoint because of how brutal it was knowing that he was Palestinian trying to go to Palestine. None of them have been back. I don't think most of them can go back. Most family ended up here. We have a few family friends [in Palestine,] my mom has cousins. Everyone in Palestine is kind of like an aunt and an uncle. Everyone who lives in Ramallah knows us, knows who we are, and we know them. We don't hear from them often, the communication is very difficult.

Ideally, I'll go back someday, I would really love to. I have some cousins here who went back, but I haven't yet been able to. Someday me and my brother will hopefully take a trip and be able to go back to Ramallah.

Darrin: One of the three demands of the BDS movement is the right of return—UN resolution 194. What would that mean for you and your family if that was actually honored?

Cameron: A lot of times this issue is hard to contextualize, but it's really just as simple as going home. Someone who is born in California moved to Europe to study abroad and then was told they couldn't come back. It just doesn't make any sense. And it's so hard being a diaspora. I never lived [in Palestine] and I wasn't born there. I feel so disconnected from my culture and my land. It makes me feel far from my mom at times. It's important for us to be able to connect to our ancestors in that way and we're completely denied that.

So yeah, it would be amazing if that was a possibility and something that was encouraged. With the rise of Birthright, it's interesting to see Jewish Americans who have no tie to Palestine or even Israel, who are given this free, intense, extravagant trip. I can't even consider getting on a plane to go back, that's the ethnic cleansing and the removal of Palestinians from Palestine. If they can't come back, then there's less Palestinian people and that's ideal for the Israeli government. There needs to be a Palestinian presence because that's our land.



<https://tempestmag.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SEA.jpg>

SEA members on the march. Photo Credit: Darrin Hoop.

Darrin: Going into the June 14 SEA representative assembly, you weren't yet a member of the union. Why did you decide to join and how did it make you feel to see your union pass this NBI by 90 percent?

Cameron: I'm only officially an employee of Seattle Public Schools for the last year, but I've worked in SPS for the last five years. Cultural responsiveness has been important to me in my work with kids. SPS does seem like they have a passion for educational justice, I see the ways that that is important in a global context. I realized that it's going to be hard to make any change or have any impact without being a member of the union.

It's really exciting to see the 90 percent pass. My mom has been doing Palestinian advocacy since she moved here, not as much now because she has a family and is doing her own thing, but she did intense activism for Palestine into her late twenties. When I told her about [the BDS vote] she was shocked. She was like, when I was doing this there's absolutely no way that there would be any conversation even surrounding that. You wouldn't even have been let in the room to have that conversation.

It's cool for me to see. I'm glad we did it and it's just the beginning, but she'd been working her whole life just to even see that type of success. It was really exciting in that way.

Darrin: Erica, you hooked up with all of us through the Educators for Nikkita Oliver group. Why was it important for you as an activist for Nikkita Oliver to also support Palestine? What kind of connections do you see between their struggle to be elected and Palestine?

Erica Wood: I am a Christian, and I'm a pacifist, but an active pacifist for the thriving of people in community and around our world. I hadn't really done any activism before around Palestine. I came into Educators for Nikkita group because I see the connections with advocating for marginalized people in our communities and feeling the sense of responsibility as a dominant culture person who has benefited from things like white supremacy culture.

My goal in life is to take ownership of those privileges and to create equity in my community. So when I see someone like Nikkita Oliver, who knows how to help the community thrive in so many ways, whether that's through advocating for our neighbors without homes, our neighbors who've been incarcerated, our youth, it comes through that same line of seeking restorative practices in our communities that create wholeness and thriving for people.

There's such a connection there with the liberation struggle of Black people in America, with struggles for Palestinians. There's also connections when we reckon with our own past as a colonized land that perpetuated ethnic cleansing over Native Americans in this space. If learning from our own history means anything then we need to stand up when we see that happening again. We have to say, we're not going to let this happen again.

Darrin: Jeff you've been active around many things: Social Equity Educators, Educators For Nikkita Oliver. Recently, you were arrested in Minnesota protesting [Line 3. \(https://stopline3.org\)](https://stopline3.org) You actually jumped on one of our organizing calls while you were on the road to Minnesota to protest Line 3. You were building solidarity with Anishinaabe people at the same time you were building solidarity with Palestinians. What kind of similarities do you see in these two struggles? Why is it important to connect these issues?

Jeff: I think solidarity with the Anishinaabe and Palestinians are linked by the common thread of settler colonialism. The United States began and continues to operate as a settler colonial project. Israel, through the U.S., is operating in the same vein, using force, political power, and capital, to push people out from their indigenous lands.

Line 3, that looks like treaty rights being violated. The Anishinaabe people and the activists who were working against [Line 3], being violently suppressed and abused by local police. In Palestine, that looks like Palestinian people being violently oppressed, abused, and displaced. The two causes have to be seen as intrinsically linked.

The fourth recommendation that we passed by a 90 percent vote is to:

Darrin: *endorse the demand of [End the Deadly Exchange Seattle](https://seattledeadlyexchange.com) (<https://seattledeadlyexchange.com>) for an end to police exchanges between the Seattle Police Department and the Israeli military and police.*

You were the one who suggested adding endorsement of that demand to our NBI, could you discuss that issue?

Jeff: End the Deadly Exchange is a demand for the U.S to end all law enforcement tactics exchange programs with Israel. For several decades, the U.S. has been sending law enforcement officers, folks from the CIA, the FBI, to Israel to train on what they call best practice law enforcement techniques, including crowd control, surveillance, and racial profiling. They're exchanging these together and coming up with their oppressive programs, and then coming back to the U.S. and implementing them here in our cities. End the Deadly Exchange Seattle has been mobilizing against this practice for years now.

I'm happy that we were able to sign onto it. I've been working with an organization called [Labor for Black Lives](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Not-a-Business/Labor-for-Black-Lives-Collective-Seattle-101808241715327/) (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Not-a-Business/Labor-for-Black-Lives-Collective-Seattle-101808241715327/>)—formed around the cause of getting the police union out of the labor council. I've been working with them and other organizations around this as Black Lives Matter has exploded into the powerful movement it is after the murder of George Floyd. Especially after having been hospitalized due to police violence and seeing firsthand the deadly tactics that are exchanged, I think it's essential that we end this in Seattle and across the country.

Darrin: The second recommendation that we passed is to “call on the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden to stop aid to Israel.” Could someone talk about the role of the U.S. funding Israel with around \$4 billion annually?

Jeff: My father, unfortunately, works for the U.S. Air Force and facilitates arms sales to Israel. So, I know close up, what those programs look like and where they land. My father spends a lot of time in Israel selling them planes and bombs that are used as threats and also actively used against Palestinians. It is a direct link to our colonialist efforts in the Middle East to use Israel as a settler colonial state to push a U.S. agenda of violence in the region.

Josh: We're educators and we know how tight our budgets are in our own school buildings. Coming from being in the military, I could see how much money was wasted constantly. Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid. This aid is not humanitarian, this aid is in the form of weapons and bombs. Companies in the Northwest are involved in manufacturing weapons that are sent to Israel—Boeing, for example. When it comes to crowd control measures, people will see tear gas canisters that are made in the U.S., Israeli soldiers are holding American weapons. It's an apartheid state that is funded with U.S. taxpayer money and with U.S. weapons.

Darrin: [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, \(https://bdsmovement.net\)](https://bdsmovement.net) what is it? How does it relate to Seattle Education Association and Seattle Public Schools?

Emma: The call was put out in 2005 by Palestinian civil society. There are three demands: that the occupation is ended, that the right of return is respected—based off UN resolutions that have been in place for years—and that Palestinians who are living in Israel are not treated as second-class citizens.

Palestinians make up 20 percent of the Israeli population. This is not a small percentage of the Israeli population that are living in ghettos, that do not have access to the same social services as their Jewish Israeli neighbors, such as sanitation, schools, roads, and healthcare. Gaza is the largest open-air prison in the world. The economy is completely managed by Israel both in the West Bank and in Gaza. BDS is a call that requires that the international community responds.

Related to SEA and what [SPS] can do as a district, there are products such as Sabra hummus that we can discontinue serving in our schools, as well as the investments, whether it is retirement investments, that we can analyze as a district, as a union, and divest from corporations that are profiting off of the occupation. These are not just corporations that are Israeli. These are corporations, such as Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Caterpillar, that are profiting off of Israeli occupation in Gaza and the West Bank.

Kelsey: I can add a few more specifics about how does this relate to SEA and Seattle Public Schools. You mentioned Sabra hummus, and that is part of the Strauss company which provides financial support to the Israeli army. We also use Pillsbury products and Pillsbury products are made on stolen Palestinian lands in illegal Israeli settlements.

Hewlett Packard runs the biometric ID system that Israel uses to restrict Palestinian movement. We can call on our district and hold them accountable to not using these products that are complicit in and profiteering from Israeli apartheid, in addition to divesting from the banks that are profiteering there.

Darrin: SEA has pensions, that's another area that we should be looking into.

Kelsey: I think that is part of this call. This is a mandate for our union to do the research and to analyze where we are invested and how we can divest from corporations that are profiting off of brutalization.

We have to move with conviction and have liberation be the goal, and that's not going to come through making things less radical or watering them down.

Darrin: When this NBI was raised, not a single union member spoke against the six recommendations, and it passed overwhelmingly. However, there was one issue of contention—our background info. The first line read:

Since Israeli Zionist colonization of Palestine in 1948 that displaced and ethnically ethnically cleansed over 750,000 Palestinians, Palestinians have been living under a brutal apartheid occupation and millions more have become refugees exiled from their homeland.

When we're talking about apartheid in Israel and Palestine, why is it important to go all the way back to 1948 and even before to describe what happened then as ethnic cleansing?

Cameron: It's just as important as keeping our family stories alive. It's hurtful to watch when people try to only talk about what's happening now or describe the *Nakba* (catastrophe)—what happened in 1948—as a really long time ago. My grandparents lived through it, the most important people to me. My grandpa died not being able to see a free Palestine, which devastates me whenever I think about it too hard. So you can't talk about what's happening in Israel and Palestine now without talking about Palestine before there was an Israel because just factually Israel did not exist that long ago. My grandparents were both older than Israel. There's simply no other way to describe it.

Emma: As a Jewish person, the conversation that I've had with a lot of Jews who cringe at the term ethnic cleansing and feel that it's an inappropriate use of the term, is that it's essential as Jews that we call out what is happening. It's important that Jews understand that just because Jews have been victims of ethnic cleansing, it doesn't mean that a state operating in Jewish name is not capable of ethnically cleansing another people. It's important that we make that connection between our own experience and what is now happening and has happened over almost the last hundred years to the Palestinian people.

Jeff: The historical context for this and naming ethnic cleansing [are] important because if you go back to 1948, and especially if you go back to the origins of the Zionist movement, which began in the late 1800s, you'll see the intention has been very clear. Prior to 1948, those calling for the creation of a Jewish ethno-state in Palestine were talking about displacing the population. They were talking about moving the Palestinian population away through violent means in order to establish the state. It's important that when we talk about this, we also talk about the other powers that were a part of making this happen, specifically the U.S. and Britain, two nations that have a long history of settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing, and their involvement in propping up and creating this state during an era when colonization was happening all around the globe.

Darrin: Do you all see any other crucial debates within our union or things that you think we should be thinking about? And are there any lessons learned through this organizing that might benefit other educators or other unions thinking about trying to pass something like this?

Erica: There's a considerable amount of ignorance about the history of this issue and, in general, there's a need for more education and discussion around what's going on in Israel and Palestine. Too often, we see one side of the story and we don't hear both in the news, in the media. When presented with the idea of this injustice that's going on, our union voted overwhelmingly to

support marginalized people. When we are aware of what's going on, there is huge support.

Kelsey: In terms of lessons learned, one: just not being afraid to jump in and get it going is huge. Two: making sure that you are connecting with other people who care about the issue, have information, experience, and expanding that network. It's been really awesome to have continued building upon previous connections with End the Deadly Exchange, as well as forge other connections with [Falastiniyat\(\)](#) and other local Seattle organizers. For me personally, the last lesson is not [trying] to appease people that you think might actually be against your resolution. We have to move with conviction and have liberation be the goal, and that's not going to come through making things less radical or watering them down.

Darrin: What are the next steps for this struggle? What kind of actions, events, or education are we talking about doing? And what are some of the steps we've taken since the NBI was passed?

Kelsey: I can speak to one of the things that we've done since we passed the NBI and that is build community support for it, physical community support. Falastiniyat is a feminist collective here that has been leading the [#BlockTheBoat \(https://tempestmag.org/2021/07/blocktheboat-seattle/\)](https://tempestmag.org/2021/07/blocktheboat-seattle/) campaign in the Seattle port to prevent the profiteering Zim apartheid ship from being unloaded at the Seattle port.

We connected with them because we know that a lot of their members and followers support solidarity with Palestine. We wanted to have the community write letters to the Seattle Education Association and Seattle Public Schools leadership to share with them that they were really grateful and supportive of this NBI being passed so that SEA and SPS know that people in our community support this resolution and will hold them accountable to it.

Emma: The NBI was really exciting and, I believe, a historic move, but now the work to actually realize what we put forward has begun. This NBI is super powerful. It's calling for Biden to defund Israel. It's calling for the union to endorse End the Deadly Exchange, to endorse BDS, and to use all methods of communication to do so. It is now our work, and the work of the folks who we are in coalition with, to actually hold our union accountable. And one thing that I find really exciting is that we passed this NBI with a 90 percent vote by the representative assembly, which means that there is really strong support for this NBI. We have the ability to use that energy to propel our union forward.

Kelsey: A potential action that we can be organizing going forward is doing a teach-in, as we are educators and we believe that education is necessary for building collective power. We'd like to partner with other organizations and hold a teach-in, or a few teach-ins, to help get people up to speed and working in solidarity with this cause.

Jeff: I want to jump in with a statement about union organizing through this, not only as educators, but as a union, as workers. As I had mentioned before, I'm a part of Labor for Black Lives, which is a collective of rank and file organizing that's cross-union, anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist. We're devoted to this struggle and to helping workers realize our power that we have when we organize as rank and file members of our unions to push these collectives of the workers who make these machines work, these machines of settler colonialism.

When we mobilize, we have so much power. So there's a reason these calls for BDS came out of labor unions and there's a reason that labor unions are the ones who are answering these calls. It's important that we continue to hold our own members accountable and continue to organize with other workers so that we can push the powers that be in the direction that we need them to go to actually make these changes happen for liberation and freedom from exploitation for everyone.

Cameron: In terms of crucial debates that we saw pop up, [there] is the conversation surrounding antisemitism and the way this affects Jewish communities. I try not to give this too much airtime usually because I feel like it centers Zionism in this conversation, but I just do want to make it clear that Palestinian liberation is inherently pro-Jewish. Zionism is antisemitic, as far as I'm concerned. The Israeli government is antisemitic for committing genocide, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing on the back of Judaism and using it as a guise. It's really problematic and needs to be critically analyzed.

I have met so many amazing, lovely Jewish organizers who are working for Palestinian liberation. It is encouraging to see because I did grow up with this opposition from some folks who would say we were antisemitic or say that even just by me being Palestinian, I'm antisemitic.

I want us to think critically about Palestinian positionality when it comes to Jewish communities. This is not Palestine versus Jewish people. This is Palestine versus the Israeli government. Palestine is not a systemic oppressor of Jewish people or Judaism as a religion. In the fight [between] Israel and Palestine, there is a clear oppressor and that is Israel, and that has nothing to do with Jewish Americans or people who identify as Jewish in America. We need to move as far away from that conversation as possible.

I want everyone advocating for a free Palestine. Remember that we have Palestinian students and employees and families who see the way you talk about them and Palestine. It's not this faraway issue. I also want to encourage people to move away from not taking a stance because they feel like it's too complicated. Especially people who have felt this awakening when it comes to activism since last summer, I encourage folks to understand that America is such a small piece of the world. If we're not looking at issues in a global context we're not doing anyone justice. It's not as complicated as it sounds, nothing really is, and with research, it's able to be understood.

There are people that are dying and there are people here in your communities who are suffering because of it, and when you're deciding that it's not important or it's too difficult, you're talking about real people who know you and love you.

Darrin Hoop is a teacher in Seattle and a member of the Seattle Education Association and the Seattle Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators. In addition, he's a member of Tempest and helps lead National Educators United.